Paradoxes were used by the Stoics since the school’s inception; Zeno already is known to have employed them. The mechanics of the type of paradox I am here concerned with are very simple, and relate directly to Stoic ethics. ‘Die Stoiker kennen in ihrer Ethik im Prinzip nur das Entweder-Oder’ (Max Pohlenz); this leads to the basic dichotomy σπουδάζω–φαῦλοι. Even if allowance is made for the subsequent philosophical modification of this uncompromising division, the φαῦλοι in one form or another continue, in Stoic polemic, to provide a useful rhetorical foil to the ideal of the sapiens. Basic to Stoic moral philosophy is the assumption that there are two opposing value scales: at the pinnacle of the Stoic ethical hierarchy—which we shall term the ‘spiritual’ scale—stands virtue, possession of which renders the sapiens both happy and self-sufficient; opposed to this is what we may call the ‘material’ scale comprising the external goods, which by their very nature are antagonistic to the philosophical and abstract ideals of the former. In terms of this scheme paradox may be described as a process in which a word passes from the ‘material’ to the ‘spiritual’ scale; this entails a semantic shift from concrete to abstract. For example, a common word like ‘wealth’ or ‘riches’ will have, in the ‘material’ scale, a concrete value, denoting gold, money or the like; but when the philosopher employs the same term against his own framework of reference—the ‘spiritual’ scale—it will acquire a correspondingly abstract (or metaphorical) meaning and denote what he regards as valuable, namely wisdom, virtue and so on. The precise meaning of the word, whether concrete or abstract, is therefore relative to and determined by the user’s material or spiritual values and preoccupations. Clearly then the different meanings of a single word—concrete and abstract—are a vital constituent of paradox. In Stoic parlance paradox may thus be described: a word denoting the relative value of an object (i.e. a term referring to the material scale and thus designating a concrete object) is employed to describe the absolute good (i.e. it becomes an abstract term, referring to the spiritual hierarchy); or, to express the same idea the other way round, the summum bonum and related ideas are verbally expressed in terms of the indifferentia.

The co-existence of the two value-scales outlined above and the transference of terms from the one to the other as a source of paradox are well illustrated in the following quotation (SVF III 595):

ei γὰρ τῶν πολλῶν πλοῦσιν λεγόντων μόνον τὸν πολυκτήμων μὴ κατὰ τούτον τε χρήσει τὸ ὁνόματι τούτῳ, κατὰ δὲ τοῦ σοφοῦ καὶ τοῦ τὰς ἀρετὰς ἔχοντος παραβαίνου τὸν κείμενον τῆς τῶν ὁνομάτων χρήσεσας διορισμὸν . . . πάλιν οἱ μὲν πόλλοι εὐτυχῇ λέγουσι τὸν ἐν τοῖς τυχηρῶς ὑγιοθείς εὐθυμοῦντα· οἱ δὲ τὸν τὴν ἀρετὴν ἔχοντα φασίν εὐτυχῇ, ὅσικ ἔστιν τῶν
Most people use the term ‘rich’ (πλούσιος) only of the man with many possessions (πολυκτήμονα); but if one were to employ this word with reference not to such a man, but to the philosopher and the individual possessing virtues, one would be passing beyond the generally established limit of word usage. . . . Again the majority call ‘lucky’ (εὕτυχη) the man who prospers in the gifts of fortune; but others use the term of the man who possesses virtue, which is not one of the gifts of fortune. Therefore these people too go beyond the conventional usage of words.

While πλούσιος in its popular sense (= πολυκτήμονα) thus has a concrete meaning,4 when qualifying the σοφός and his spiritual and philosophical values it is used metaphorically;5 so too the adjective εὕτυχης. Given the general drift of the argument, the process referred to in παραβαινούσιν οὖν καὶ οὕτῳ τῆς προσήκουσαν χρήσει τῶν ὁνομάτων may be identified as the shift from a concrete to an abstract meaning.6 Apparent verbal ambiguities are thus resolved when it is remembered that the Stoic’s framework of reference is the animus as opposed to the corpus, as Cicero makes clear in the following extract:

recte eius omnia dicentur, qui scit uti solus omnibus, recte etiam pulcher appellabitur (animi enim liniamenta sunt pulchriora quam corporis), recte solus liber nec dominatione cuiusquam parens nec oboediens cupiditati, recte invictus, cuius etiam corpus constringatur, animo tamen vincula inici nulla possint (SVF III 591 = Fin. 2,75).

Against this background the philosopher, attaching no or at most a relative value to the material, may also ‘upgrade’ what is generally regarded as negative, e.g. mala bonae praefere fortunam liber (Seneca Thy. 454).9 A Weltanschauung which goes against the grain of what is commonly accepted—as in the following passage—demands a correspondingly jarring and unorthodox form of verbal expression; paradox, which challenges and opposes the popular values, will best mirror the philosopher’s stance:

quis enim nescit nihil ex his, quae creduntur mala aut bona, ita videri sapienti ut omnibus? Non respicit, quid homines turpe indicent aut miserum, non it qua populus, sed ut sidera contrarium mundo iter intendunt, ita hic adversus opinionem omnium vadit (Seneca Const. 14,3).

In the verbal ambiguities of paradox is mirrored Stoic dualism; paradox is a striking vehicle of expression which challenges the reader to reflect on the underlying philosophical questions, assumptions and implicit comparisons. In the first of Cicero’s Paradoxa Stoicorum the ambivalence in bona/bonum (= ‘property, possessions’/‘that which is morally good’) is exploited and leads to an attack on the popular conception of what should be termed ‘good’; pecuniae, secta magnifica, opes, imperia and voluptates generally (6) are dismissed as mere
ludibria fortunae (9), and *bonum* is philosophically defined as follows:

si quod recte fit et honeste et cum virtute id bene fieri vere dicitur, quod rectum et honestum et cum virtute est id solum opinor bonum (9).

This new (abstract) idea of the *bonum* as a moral factor dependent not upon externals or fortune, but alone on the possessor’s frame of mind, leads to the philosophical autarky exemplified in Bias who, though his native Priene is going up in smoke, can still say *omnia mecum porto mea* (9). A distinction must be drawn between the *name* (popularly referring to something material) and the *philosophical truth* it denotes. Thus the procedure followed by Cicero in his essay on the paradoxes is exactly the same as that outlined in the Greek quotation above: words whose field of reference is generally material are ‘transferred’ into the ‘spiritual’ hierarchy, i.e. used of the philosophical values, with a concomitant shift in meaning from concrete to abstract. For example, *mancipia* in Cicero’s argument refers not to slaves as physical objects, but the term is used of a servile state of mind, *oboedientia fracti animi et abiecti et arbitrio carentis suo* (35). Similarly wealth is taken as referring not to a bank balance but to a philosophical attitude: *animus oportet tuus te iudicet divitem, non hominem sermo neque possessiones tuae* (43); *animus hominis dives, non arca appellari solet: quamvis illa sit plena, dum te inanem videbo, divitem non putabo* (44); *quis igitur... dubitet quin in virtute divitiae sint, quoniam nulla possessio, nulla vis auri et argenti pluris quam virtus aestimanda est?* (48). At the end of the sixth paradox occur three good examples in which the philosophical ideal (the first member in the *sententia*) is described in terms of the *dóλφορον* (the second member): *non esse cupidum pecunia est, non esse emacem vectigal est; contentum vero suis rebus esse maximae sunt certissimaeque divitiae* (51). In each case the *dóλφορον*—*pecunia, vectigal, divitiae*—which usually refer to the material, here qualify an abstract ideal (*non esse cupidum, non esse emacem, contentum... suis rebus esse*) i.e. the *dóλφορον* are used as metaphors.

A particularly pointed form of paradox is generated when the verbal description of the wise man’s *inner state* (metaphorically in terms of an *dóλφορον*) is in glaring contrast to his tangible *external state*; verbal antithesis is philosophically resolved:

|溶sholos sapientes esse, si distortissimi sit, formosos, si mendicissimi, divites, si servititudinem serviant, reges (Cicero Pro Murena 61); |
|dicunt Stoici sapientem divitem esse, si mendicet, et nobilem esse, si servus sit, et pulcherrimum esse, quamvis sit sondidissimus (SVF III 597 = Acro ad Horace Sat. 1,3,124).|

There is of course humour in these extracts; rigid application of the paradox could not fail to attract laughter and mockery from the critics. 14
THY. 470: IMMANNIS REGNUM EST POSSE SINE REGNO PATI.

The high frequency in the *Thyestes* of words denoting political power—*rex*, *regnum*, *regnare*, *sceptrum*, *arx*, *imperium*—is indicative of Seneca’s preoccupation with this motif; indeed, kingship is both the dramatic and the philosophical mainspring of the drama. In the scene with the *satelles* Atreus divests kingship of its ethical basis (205–7, 213–5, 217–8) and reveals himself as a power-hungry and unbridled tyrant (177). Parallel to Atreus’ perverted idea of tyranny and serving as a comment upon it runs the *verum–falsum* motif:

SAT. at qui favoris gloriam *veri* petit
animo magis quam voce laudari volet.

ATR. laus *vera* et humili saeppe contigit viro,
non nisi potenti *falsa* (209–212);

the tyrant lives in a world of his own illusions. This idea is further emphasised by his hallucination (281–3) and by the chorus’ comment,

illi mors gravis incumbat
qui, notus nimis omnibus,
ignotus moritur sibi (401–3),

where the inversion of the Delphic dictum clearly refers back to Atreus.

Atreus’ fundamental misconception of *regnum* raises the question of its true nature. In his mad frenzy he had seen in Thyestes an alter ego, thirsting for power (288–294, 302), and lures him back with the promise of *regnum*; but this notion is wide of the mark and bears little resemblance to Thyestes as portrayed by Seneca. The chorus, 336–403, picks up the *regnum*-motif from the previous scene and, anticipating the character of Thyestes, redefines it in accordance with Stoic ethical criteria. The fundamental idea here is that the true king is the man who is independent of externals—

regem non faciunt opes,
non vestis Tyriæ color,
non frontis nota regiae,
non auro nitidae fores (344–347)—

and is to be identified with the Stoic *sapiens* who has attained αὐτάρκεια and ἀτάθεια:—

rex est qui posuit metus
et diri mala pectoris (348–9);
qui tuto positus loco
infra se videt omnia
occurretque suo libens
fato nec queritur mori (365–9);
mens *regnum* bona possidet (380).
rex est qui metuit nihil,
rex est qui cupiet nihil.

hoc regnum sibi quisque dat (388–390).

(Compare also par ille regi, par superis erit./ o quam miserum est nescire mori! Ag. 610–11.) In lines 209–212, quoted above, verum–falsum was accompanied by the antithesis humilis–potens; the latter is also present in the choral ode, illuminating the philosophical polarities and foreshadowing Thyestes’ (potens 391, culmine lubrico 392: obscuro loco 394, plebeius senex 400). A hint of paradox is contained in the lines:

nescitis, cupidi arcium,
regnum quo iaceat loco (342–3);

for while one normally thinks of arces and regnum as belonging together (i.e. in their usual concrete sense) they are here mutually exclusive; the causal force of cupidi arcium underscores the antagonism.

In the scene immediately following, Thyestes enters with his sons, and the theoretical issues discussed in the ode become dramatic reality. The scene Thyestes-Tantalus parallels in a number of ways the Atreus-satelles episode. In either case the interlocutors represent, as Knoche has argued, ‘die dialektische Stimme der eigenen Ratio’; rex/regnum is in each case the central issue, and the verum–falsum antithesis appears in both scenes. But while Atreus lives in a tyrannical world of fantasy and self-delusion, Thyestes’ exile and concomitant asceticism have fundamentally altered his ideas and cleared his vision, bringing it in line with the philosophical ideal advocated in the preceding ode; like the chorus, he is no longer dazzled by the outward trappings of kingship but discerns behind the glitter the true essence of regnum in a frame of mind:

clarus hic regni nitor
fulgore non est quod oculos falsus auferat . . .
modo inter illa, quae putant curzti aspera,
fortis fui laetusque (414–5, 417–8);
mihi crede, falsis magna nominibus placent,
frustra timentur dura (446–7).

Clarus nitor (414) and fulgor (415) signify the seductive tinsel of the indifferentia (cf. auro nitidae fores 347, fulget 457); but behind these attractions lurks danger (venenum in auro bibitur 453). Falsis/falsis harks back to the Atreus-satelles scene, and it is clear that even if Thyestes is not represented as a sage consistently adhering to Stoic principles, here at least Seneca conceives of him as a philosophical counterpart to Atreus. The antitheses high-low, great-small, fear-tranquillity, introduced by the chorus, reappear in Thyestes’ speech; Seneca is thinking in terms of philosophical antipodes.

Like the chorus, Thyestes understands regnum not in physical terms as political power, but as the Stoic ideal of ἀυτάρκεια. The two types of kingship are
graphically juxtaposed in the antilabai 442–5, where Thyestes parries his son’s material and political thrusts by appealing to the philosophical ideal:

TANT. pater, potes regnare. THY. Cum possim mori.
TANT. Summa est potestas—THY. Nulla: si cupias nihil.
TANT. Natis relinquques. THY. Non capit regnum duos.
TANT. Miser esse mavult esse qui felix potest?

‘In den wenigen Worten der Gesprächsverdichtung sind entscheidende Antinomien des Dramas enthalten: richtige und falsche Beurteilung der Herrschaft und der Macht und, nicht davon zu trennen, richtige und falsche Beurteilung von Elend und Glück’ (B. Seidensticker). Finally the motif of kingship in this scene culminates in the paradox:

\[ \text{rebusque parvis magna praestatur quies,} \]
\[ \text{immane regnum est posse sine regno pati (469–470);} \]

\[ \text{immane regnum is αὐτάρκεια (the summum bonum), sine regno refers to tangible political power (an διδασκόντων) i.e. the positive abstract ideal is defined in terms of its negative and concrete counterpart.} \]

After the chorus’ treatment of the theme of kingship and in the light of the antilabai, the meaning of 470 is quite clear; the chiastic correspondence with 469 further establishes the terms of reference. The principle illustrated in 470 is exactly that which we have identified as a characteristic of Stoic paradox: regnum is used once with reference to the ‘spiritual’ hierarchy (= metaphorically), and then referring to the ‘material’ scale (= with concrete meaning). It is the juxtaposition of these two perspectives which is both provocative and a pointer to the underlying issues. From the context, both immediate and general, the apparent irreconcilables may be harmonised. Remarkable too is the manner in which the terms of the paradox are thematically integrated into and arise out of the dramatic situation as a whole. And finally one cannot miss the specifically Stoic slant since one of the best known of the Stoic paradoxes makes the wise man the only true king. That the antithesis Atreus-Thyestes centres around the opposing interpretations of regnum is put beyond doubt by the emphatic reappearance of the motif—in its political sense—at the moment of Atreus’ fiendish triumph over his brother:

\[ \text{o me caelitum excelssimum,} \]
\[ \text{regum atque regem! (911–912).} \]

AG. 869: VICIMUS VICTI PHYRGES!

Coming from the mouth of the seer Cassandra, who has been brought back as a captive to Mycenae after the sack of Ilium and here speaks on behalf of the defeated Trojans, these provocatively ambiguous words challenge the reader to reflect on and unravel any deeper significance they may have. ‘Victory’ is a key word and concept in the Agamemnon, and commentators have not been slow to
point to the important and indeed decisive role played in the drama by the vincere/vinci motif; the following is a typical statement: 'Die Idee des Sieges, die nicht nur für Seneca’s Dramen, sondern auch für sein philosophisches Denken etwas Zentrales ist, ist in dieser Tragödie in ihrer paradoxesten und... am mächtigsten ausgreifender Form dargestellt: vicimus victi Phryges'. The role of this motif, and in particular the meaning of Ag. 869, will form the substance of the following discussion.

In terms simply of military success and failure at Troy, the Greeks are victorious and the Trojans the vanquished (victor... Asiae feroci 294–5, victrix Graecia 220, victor Agamemnon 396a, victos Phrygas 206, victa... tellus 516). But this clear dichotomy becomes blurred and ambiguity arises when the perspective is widened to include also subsequent events (outside the Trojan war), viz. Agamemnon’s losses during the sea-storm on his return home, and his murder at the hands of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Thus the oddity in the expression victo similis... victor (412–3a)—where victo is in verbal antithesis to victor (i.e. at Troy)—results from a conflation of war- and post-war events, in this case the ruinous tempest. Juxtaposition of perspectives as a source of dramatic suspense and tension is used to good effect in those passages which anticipate or refer to the victor’s ‘defeat’ i.e. his murder (39–43, 378–40, 789–99, 1006–09).30

In the above instances the ideas of victory and defeat, reflecting as they do different chronological perspectives of the Agamemnon story, stand to each other quite simply in a relationship of verbal antithesis; there is no need to see behind this word-play a metaphysical concatenation of cause and effect. Notwithstanding, modern scholarship has been generally unanimous in postulating just such a connection and in using the vincere/vinci motif to buttress the popular ‘Vergeltungstheorie’, an interpretation one encounters frequently in Agamemnon literature subsequent to Theodor Birt’s essay of 1911.31 Supporters of this view point, for additional evidence, to the parallelism Mycenae-Troy.32 Against this widely held view serious and to my mind valid objections have been raised: the action of the drama requires no ‘external’ impetus and can be fully explained ‘internally’; for the ‘objective’ Aeschylean curse Seneca has substituted subjective freedom and responsibility.33 It goes without saying that this internal motivation, which sees the mainspring of the action in the characters themselves, is more in keeping with an interpretatio Stoica than the ‘Vergeltungstheorie’.

The crucial passage is 867–871 (the speaker is Cassandra):

\[
\text{Res agitur intus magna, par annis decem.}
\]
\[
\text{ehiu quid hoc est? anime, consurge et cape}
\]
\[
\text{preatum furor—vicimus victi Phryges!}
\]
\[
\text{bene est, resurgit Troia; traxisti iacens,}
\]
\[
\text{parens, Mycenas, terga dat victor tuus!}
\]

Taken literally, it gives little sense. The contradiction vicimus victi is repeated in resurgit... iacens. The fortunes not of two individuals but of two states are being contrasted (Troia–Mycenas); and while it is true that Troy as a whole has
suffered defeat, it cannot be argued that the murder of one man, Agamemnon, may be equated with the military or political defeat of the whole of Mycenae, as is suggested by 871. Electra’s *versa domus est funditus, regna occidit* (912) is an emotional exaggeration; as the nurse makes clear early on, Greece will ‘avenge’ the crime, i.e. restore order after at most momentary anarchy—*victrix inultum Graecia hoc facinus feret?* (200)

To yield any intelligible meaning, therefore, the prophetess’ cryptic utterance must be interpreted differently. This has been done (correctly, in my view) by W.-L. Liebermann and E. Lefèvre, who see the ‘reversal’ in relative terms:


From this point of view also the parallelism Mycenae-Troy appears in a different light: it is not a symbolic pointer to a relationship of cause and effect between Agamemnon’s sacking of Troy and his murder by Clytemnestra, but simply emphasises that the victor is finally reduced to the same level of defeat (= death) as the conquered Trojans: ‘der Sieger geht dieselbe Bahn wie der Besiegte. In diesem Sinn konnte Cassandra ihren Triumph mit der Wiederaufstehung Trojas beginnen . . . .’

If the ‘Vergeltungstheorie’ is thus untenable, as Liebermann and Lefèvre have convincingly argued, we may now go back and interpret *vicimus victi Phryges* (869) according to different criteria. The apparent contradiction *vicimus victi* clearly marks 869 as the focus of attention. Expressions of this type with *capere* and *vincere* are quite often used to indicate a remarkable reversal; but it remains to define precisely the nature of Cassandra’s and the Trojans’ ‘reversal’ i.e. in what sense they are to be regarded as victorious on the one hand and defeated on the other. Obviously *victi* is used in its literal sense—they have been defeated in war (cf. 206, 516, 556). But since *vicimus* cannot be used of any ‘Vergeltungstheorie’, and reflects rather the relative position of the Trojans, I propose that on another level we have here a Stoic paradox in which *victi* and *vicimus* are used respectively with concrete and abstract meaning, whereby the two value scales mentioned above are implicitly juxtaposed. The abstract ‘victory’ referred to in *vicimus* may be equated with the triumph of philosophy: it is the attainment of
Thus the sense of 869 is, ‘Although we Trojans have been defeated in war by the Greeks, our spirit is undefeated’. This ‘victory’ (abstract or philosophical) is diametrically opposed to their external fortunes; the verbal expression in 869 recalls victamque victicemque (754)—describing the physical situation—where victam refers to Cassandra and victicem to Agamemnon. One aspect in particular of ωὐτρῆκαίω is heavily stressed both in the third chorus (589–658) and at lines 796–7 of the antilabai with Agamemnon: in both cases the philosophical ‘victory’ over fear and external vicissitudes derives from the knowledge that suicide is a legitimate way to freedom. In the first part of the chorus, 589–611, attention is paid to the contrast between external unrest, particularly that caused by war, and the inner tranquillity attained by the man who has overcome fear of death; note especially:

perrumpet omne servitium
contemptor levium deorum,
qui vultus Acherontis atri,
qui Styga tristem non tristis videt
audetque vitae ponere finem (605–9).

Such an attitude will transform one who is mizer (cf. 591) to the status of a king, par ille regi, par superis erit (610); he will not fear minaces victoris iras (597–8) since the triumph of the Stoic view makes him a victor in his own right. At 796–7 of the antilabai with Agamemnon, Cassandra refers to the same idea:

AG. Ne metue dominam famula. CASS. Libertas adest.
AG. Secura. CASS. Mihi mori est securitas.

Physical bondage, which picks up the servitium motif of 605 and is here pointedly expressed by the juxtaposition dominam famula, is balanced in Cassandra’s reply by metaphysical freedom; death is a haven of tranquillity. Against a life of slavery Cassandra holds up the ideal of the liberty afforded by death. Libertas is commonly used of suicide and death in Seneca’s prose works, as is the antithesis between physical servitude and the libertas which comes from suicide.

Further, Cassandra’s use of libertas harks back to and is amplified by the ode’s libera mors (591); it may also be noted that the image, in the chorus, of death as a harbour, portus aeterna placidus quiete (592)—which is ironically used by Agamemnon in its literal sense, optatus ille portus aeternis adest (790)—has parallels in the prose works.

Thus in the paradox vicimus victi we are firmly on Stoic ground. Not only does suicide play an important role in the system, but the notion of the ‘philosophical victory’ can also be paralleled. Verbal paradox here results from the sharp antithesis between external situation (negative) and frame of mind (positive); the best commentary on this juxtaposition of perspectives is provided in the following quotations from Cicero, who uses the same metaphor:

invictus. cuius etiam corpus constringatur. animo tamen vincula inci nulla possint (Fin. 3, 75);
non enim magnitudo animi eius (= M. Reguli) excruciatatur a Poenis, non gravitas non fides non constantia non ulla virtus, non denique animus ipse, qui tot virtutum praesidio tantoque comitatu, cum corpus eius caperetur, capi ipse non potuit (Parad. Stoic. 16).

From Seneca himself the following extract may be cited as illustrating the ‘triumph of philosophy’:


Both situation and ‘victory’ of Cassandra and the Trojans are exactly the same as those of the philosopher Stilbon.

To summarize and conclude, ambiguity in the crucial passage 868–71 is generated by the juxtaposition of different perspectives: 869 describes the ‘reversal’, from physical defeat to metaphysical victory, of Cassandra and the Trojans, and in 870–1 — subjective and relative to the Trojan viewpoint — the idea of ‘defeat’ is then extended to the Greeks: these lines express the Trojan satisfaction at Agamemnon’s death,47 and have nothing to do with the ‘Schicksalspendel’. But if the Trojan ‘victory’ is equated with the triumph of ἀντίπαρη, the Greek ‘defeat’ may be measured against the same criteria; and it is possible, by applying τὸ ἱερὰ διά victor tuus (871) the philosophical interpretation of victory/defeat — which is in antithesis to outward appearances — to understand these words as meaning ἀρμὶς vicit, vitiis victus est (Ep. 51,6): certainly Stoic ideas have caused Seneca to reshape the character of Agamemnon as against his Aeschylean counterpart, and as such he provides to some extent a negative foil to the Stoic values embodied in Cassandra.48 In passing, too, it might be mentioned that our interpretation of the vincere/vinci motif has corroborated Lefèvre’s view that Cassandra is very largely the persona triumphant in the drama: ‘Die Gestalt der griechischen Cassandra, die sich gegen ihr Schicksal aufbäumt, aber dennoch ‘darein ergibt, hat Seneca in die sich hoch über das Fatum erhebende Repräsentantin stoischer Gelassenheit umgewertet.’49
2. Cf. *SVF* 1216, 559 (a feature shared with the Cynics).
5. 'Whenever the natural and supernatural meet, they are bound to generate paradox' (L. Nelson, *The Rhetoric of Ineffability...*), *Comparative Literature* 8 (1956) 325; the same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the Stoic paradox where the philosophical and the secular meet. What Nelson says of the mystical poets applies equally well to the writers of philosophical paradox: they cannot often free themselves of the natural dimensions of time and space. When they attempt to express their ecstasies they are encumbered, like the rest of the poets, with earth-bound words' (ibid.).

6. Cf. *SVF* III 596: to the 'uninitiated' the meaning of πλούσιος is restricted to the concrete, ἄρα ὑδάναι τινα των ἄνθρωπων τις καὶ παρεμβολάς καὶ μέχρες τῶν ἀρχηγῶν ἢ ἑκτιμάτων πλούσιον νομίζοντες. (tōn) ἐκτὸς is their framework of reference, to which are implicitly opposed the philosophical values. For the two meanings, concrete and abstract, of πλούσιος, cf. also Plato *Rep.* 521 A: οἱ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁ χρυσός ἄλλα ὁ δεῖ τῶν υἱῶν ἐπικείμενον πλουτᾶν, ξοῖς ἄνθρωπος τε καὶ ἄριστος.
7. For πλούσιος used thus metaphorically of the σοφός cf. also *SVF* III 593, 594, 597, 598, 603 (οὗ πλουσίος, ἄλλα πάσης φονοῦ); Cic. *Parad. Stoic.* 42–52.
8. So too *III* 594: παραβαίνοντες τὴν καμίνην λέξιν.

hic nullo fine beatissimae
componit opes gaziis inhatans
et composito paupere in auro.
13. Matthew 10, 39 has an analogous type of paradox, based on sharp verbal antithesis, to contrast human and divine: ὁ εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀλοίπως αὐτῆς, καὶ ὁ ἀπολάτορας τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ ἐκείνη ἐν οἷον ἐλπίσεως αὐτῆς. ἐκείνη ἐν οἷον establishes that there are two levels involved, and thus resolves the ambiguity. See also Matt. 19, 30: πολλοὶ δὲ ἔστωσαν πρῶτοι ἔφοιτο καὶ ἔφοιτοι πρῶτοι, and cf. Gans 36.
16. Atreus' 'selbstgeschaffene Welt des Wahnes' is fully discussed by Knoch.
The repetition nihil . . . nihil (388–9) echoes nil . . . nihil (381–2) the self-sufficiency of the sapiens, a positive ideal, is expressed negatively as independence of externals. On the repetition of lines 388–9, generally deleted, see B. Seidensticker, Die Gespräche der in den Tragödien Senecas, Heidelberg 1969, 106 note 76.


Verice alti mantis (451), eminentius (446), excelsus (447), alta . . . tectis (447), calaminibus (464); humi iacentem (451), mensa angusta (452), civitas humilis (456), rebus parvis (469). Note, in 455ff., the repeated non and nullus, as in the chorus. Fear plagues the lofty (pavere 448, timere 449) while the humble man enjoys tranquillity (securas dapes 450, tutissimus 455–6, tua . . . domus 466, rebus parvis magnus (1) praesaut quies 467). Thyestes’ emphasis on the parvum counterbalances the motif of spatial growth used of Atreus (cf. Poe 362–3).

Seidensticker 105. For the opposing perspectives and value-judgements cf. Opelt 78–9 and Bruder 96.

An exact parallel, verbal and philosophical, is found at Ben. 3,37,3; hoc est regimen rolle regnare, cum possis.

Rex—βασιλεύεις in the Stoic paradox: SVF I 216; III 597, 599, 603; Diog. Laert. 7,122; Lucil. (Warmington) 1189–90; Cic. Pro Mur. 61; Fin. 3,75; Hor. Sat. 1,3,125; Ep. 1,1,107.


Seidensticker 121ff.; Streubel 16f.; Trabert 41.

endorses the view of ‘die Schicksalserkennung als ein beliebtes Motiv senecanischer Tragik . . . die sich besonders im Agamemnon zeigt’.


38. Cf. Tarrant *ad Ag.* 590ff.

39. For the general sentiment compare Seneca *Const.* 6.


41. Juxtaposition: *Ep.* 51, 9; 77, 15; *Iov* 3, 13, 3, *Marc.* 1, 20, 3; suicide as *libertas*: *Ep.* 12, 10; 26, 10; 70, 14, 16; *Prov.* 6, 7; cf. G. J. Herington, ‘Senecan Tragedy’, *Arion* 5 (1966) 435.

42. ‘The phrase suggests (a) a death freely chosen . . . (b) a death which sets one free’, Tarrant *ad Ag.* 591.

43. E.g. *Ep.* 70, 3; *Polyb.* 9, 7, 1, in hoc tam procelslso et ad amnes tempestates exposito marinavagniantibus *nullus portus nisi invitlus est*.


45. For *invicteā*/*invictus* of the *sapiens*, see e.g. *SVF* I 216, 218; *IH* 570, 576 (*triumphator et victor*).

46. Seneca relates the same incident at *Com.* 5, 6ff., where the word-play on *vincer*/*victoria* is again found: *res circunfusa victoris exercitus armis ex superior loco rogitabit. At ille victoriam illi ecceavit et se urbe capita non invictum tanum sed indemnem esse resitatur est* (5, 6–7); *Teneo, habeo quicquid nee habui. Non est quod me victum victoremque te credas. Vicit fortuna tua fornament meam. Caduca illa et dominum musitian ubi sint nescio; quod ad res meas perivit, mecum sunt, mecum erunt* (6, 8). The principle assumed by Stilbon is explained at 5, 4: *virtum autem non dat (sc. fortuna),ideo nec deminiit:libera est, inviolabilis, invicta, inconcussa, sic contra causas indurit, ut neclustersi quietem, nulium vini passis*. For other examples of word-play on *vincer* in Seneca, see e.g. *Ep.* 51, 6; 71, 37; *Prov.* 4, 2 (the two types of victory): *Ep.* 71, 8; 94, 61; *Clem.* 1, 9, 8; 1, 21, 3. Cf. A. Paul, ‘Untersuchungen zur Eigenart von Senecas Phoenixn*, Bonn 1953, 18.

47. Cf Corsaro 320.


49. Lefèvre *ibid.* 491. Cf. Corsaro 322: ‘ella appare la vera protagonista’; contra: Liebermann 219 note 59. Cassandra’s eagerness to die is typical of the *sapiens*:

   *CLYT*. trahite, ut sequatur coniugem ereptum mihi.
   *CASS*. Ne trahite, vestros ipsa procedam gradus . . .
   nihil moramur (1003–4, 1010)

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