

Bioethical reflections on the old age from the stoicism of Seneca

Reflexiones bioéticas acerca de la ancianidad desde el estoicismo de Séneca

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Abstract

The article exposes how the analysis of certain works of Seneca, show us a thinker who sees old age as a state worth living. As Seneca conceives it, it can be valuable and wise according to what the individual desires, but there are no-unavoidable or «essential» negative characteristics of old age as presented, for example, by Aristotle. To achieve this in the first section of this work, the concept of old age as a decline is exposed, as it was sometimes conceived in Greek and Roman ancient times. In sections 2 to 5 using two stoic categories presented by Seneca: the relativity of time and submission to reason, in combination with key issues of an old-age ethics: work, death, finitude and autonomy, the study of Old age value is analyzed in the work of this author. In the conclusions, it is stated that the study of the texts show that Seneca considers old age as worthy and valuable in itself, it remains in the fields of reason and defends so that old age is not necessarily the decline of people, although bodily functions decrease.

Keywords: old age, autonomy, reason, suicide, death.

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1. Introduction: Old age as a decay

It is known that, in classical old ages, in general, there was a tendency to associate old age with disease.¹ The disease was understood not only as a temporary condition but also as an essential constitution of old age. Simply put, some claimed that aging was a disease in itself.²

However, here it is interesting to consider, more than the pathology of the elderly, to analyze the moral and mental characterization of the same. The preceding with the objective of extracting pedagogical and ethical guidelines on old age: the value and the way of behaving in the same, according to Seneca's³ point of view. For the above, Aristotle thinking is taken as the starting point from the text of *Rhetoric* and hence establish the pessimistic view of old age and the characterization that the Estagirite⁴ (philosopher) gives it. The previous characterization is contrasted with the valuation and certain judgments about Seneca's old age and thus try to clarify the negative posture of old age as a period of life.

Unlike the archaic periods where the old man was conceived as a pillar of their communities, in the classical Greek societies, that same vision no longer appears or at least, the vision of old age appears as the decay of life. Life is seen as a sequence where there is a climax or zenith after which the decay of existence occurs.

Aristotle describes old age as the state of men opposed to youth or, in other words, within his theory of the middle ground, the old man is constituted as the defect, being the character of the young man, the opposite pole: the excess. In *Rhetoric* (II, 12, 1389b 15 and following), Aristotle describes the character of the old men with quite negative categories. The old man does not put the proper effort to things to be done; they believe without assuring firmly; they are of bad character since they suppose the worst of things; they are also suspicious, they want only the essentials to live; they are petty, cowards, shameless, pessimistic, slaves of

interest, charlatans, complaining and compassionate, but out of weakness.⁵

In the Roman period, there was also a pessimism about old age. According to Gracia:

The old man is of no interest to anyone... because he is considered a sick subject... ugly and bad. From this perspective it is from which you have to read *De Senectute* texts written in the classical era... Old age is not praised... it is of stoically accepting the accusations of old age, of coping with patience, and of getting the best possible out of them.⁶

In this essay, it is proposed that these characteristics can be interpreted in a nuanced way from Seneca's Stoicism optics. It is thus suggested to reread the characteristics of old age as presented by this philosopher, and assess whether they could be interpreted as true virtues from the stoic point of view. In other words, to highlight from Seneca's texts, the valuable aspects of old age and thus move away from the negative characteristics indicated by Aristotle, and the ancient classical period in general. For that, the description of old age is centered according to the *Letters to Lucilius*⁷ since they have specific topics related to old age. The above is supplemented by references to other philosophical works by the same author.⁸

2. Categories for the analysis of Seneca's writings

It can be shown that many pessimistic comments are found in Seneca or we would say perhaps «realistic» about the weakened nature of the body in old age. Although, as it is expected to show in the writing, old age is not presented as decadent in itself, although the finite reality of man is pointed out, on the horizon of the end of life.

Seneca's observations in general are scattered throughout the *Letters*. Some of them, however, deal with the subject almost specifically, such as *Letters XII, XXVI, LXI, XCIII, XCVI*. In practically all the *Letters* there is the practical principle of Stoicism, in that what most affects our existence is the opinion that one has of things, more than things in themselves, including old age (see Table 1). This principle regulates many of the responses around old age and its ailments.

Letter	Central Ideas
XII	Life is a series of cycles. We must thank every day of life that God has given. It is not forcible to remain alive.
XXVI	Old age can be decrepit. In old age, strength is lost, but if Nature is accepted, the process is perceived differently. You have to learn to die.
LXI	Every day should be taken as if it were the last. It is not necessary to wish in old age what is desired as a young person. Before being old, you have to live well, and in the old age die well.
XCIII	We must obey Nature. You should live well and not much time: «What good is it to one eighty years if you spend them in inertia? He did not live but stopped in life, nor died late, but for a long time. He lived eighty years.» ⁹ Living does not equal duration. Living is being while duration is alien to us. Living to wisdom is the goal.
XCVI	He who desires old age desires the things that come with it. Hard and adverse things are accepted as decreed by God. Life is a war.

It can be analyzed from the stoic concepts to show that double facet of old age: it is shown crudely, as the weakness of age, but on the other hand, you can and should live, according to the wisdom that knows how to make the correct judgment of things putting them in their fair value. Since the right judgment about things, applies to any stage of life, including old age.

Now, this contrast between old age as deplorable, and as a valuable stage in itself, appears in many passages of his work. For example, in *Letter XII* Seneca begins, lamenting the devastating conditions of his property, the plants on his estate and the deplorable physical state of a friend of his. The tone is of a certain bitterness when faced with the deterioration of their environment and friends. But suddenly Seneca, affirms with respect to old age that «Let us embrace her and love her; full of pleasure if we know how to use it».¹⁰ The phrase, of course, can be read in a bitter tone; since old age comes anyway, it is wiser to take it with good sense. However, the phrase implies that in fact old age is worthy in itself when it states, «in all pleasure, the most pleasant is what is at the end».¹¹

The above is reinforced in another of his *Letters* in which he indicates that he is already in decrepitude, although «the mood is vigorous».¹² In the *Consolation to Mother Helvia*, Seneca, referring to the inevitable human emigrations, points out: «In these migrations, even women, children and old people were dragged down by the weight of age».¹³ Again, it is not a disqualification but a certain recognition that old people also have various situations, such as young people, but assuming the limitations of age.

Seneca, as a good stoic, defends the role of good judgment in the face of events as shown in the previous fragments. In addition, God, who puts the destiny that governs our existence, governs the Universe:

Therefore, it is convenient to suffer all the events with strength, because not all things happen as we think; they come as it is arranged, and if since its beginnings it is so ordered... What is proper of the good man? Surrender to fate, because it is great comfort to be taken away with the universe (*Of Providence*, V).¹⁴

Naturally, being an elder does not exclude that attitude to life even in circumstances such as the loss of property and being alone (*On the constancy of the wise*, VI).¹⁵ It is a true pedagogy in the face of old

age. As Iacub summarizes, Seneca's thinking who, considering that the human being could modify the negative of his existence, because it is not essential in him, in such a way that:

...It implied that man should make a change, a learning... from criticism and reflection on himself... He put this idea to the point of turning old age into a positive goal of existence, polarizing with his own values the entire course of life.¹⁶

Another stoic category of analysis can be referred to as «relativity of time». The chronological time is not crucial but the time lived wisely:

The time we have is not short; but losing much of it, we make it so, and life is long enough to execute great things in it, if we would use it well (*From the briefness of life, I*).¹⁷

Additionally, as Domingo points out, in order to classify the analysis, the ideas of Seneca's texts can be grouped into four philosophical problems:

...To those who cannot ignore an ethic of old age: finitude, work, autonomy and death... A time lived from which we do not resign oneself to thinking ourselves mortal... The finitude... The old age awakens us for a less perfect and almighty moral life... This perhaps stoic adaptation lends itself to infinite nuances... joyful, resigned or melancholic...¹⁸

Taking these categories of death, finitude, work and autonomy suggested by Domingo and the two taken from Seneca: the acceptance of destiny using reason and the relativity of time let us analyze other facets of old age according to Seneca.

3. Old age and death

It seems to me that for Seneca, as can be seen in the aforementioned, old age has a certain air of defeat in the face of life, but,

on the other hand, it considers that it does not only *cope* with it, as Gracia pointed out, but it really contributes something to become typical of existence.

A repetitive idea in Seneca is that one must learn to die or prepare for death (*From the brevity of life, VII*).¹⁹ Life must be considered among subservient things and learning to die well should not be avoided (*Of the tranquility of the soul, II*).²⁰ Old age then, is to recognize the worth of the person himself. According to his proposal, that preparation for death implies that the time elapsed towards the same, it is not reduced to the chronological. The time really lived, if it is directed towards virtue, is perceived as abundant, while if spent in frivolities make it lost. Death appears as a limit that is faced with meaning, while accepting it, but prepared in a future that always has it in mind.

On the other hand, Seneca points out that there is always the option of suicide: «Let us thank the gods that no one can be forced to live».²¹ However, in the same *Letters* when he addresses the specific issue of suicide in no way delimits it to old age, but to any circumstance where an unworthy life is lived: «...make it very clear that the dirtiest death should be preferred to the cleanest servitude».²² Of course, this last reference fits the stoic idea of living according to reason. Suicide is not lawful for whim or despair, but for a decision affirming the dignity of the person who executes it. Thus, note that Seneca does not see life as an absolute value, but living it in accordance to reason. In sum, old age, it does not constitute a particular quality for suicide. Although it may seem like an air of defeat in the face of Seneca's life, he believes that «adequate» suicide gives sense of existence. It is as Domingo points out:

When we talk about personal death, self-death or dignified death, we want to express the need that death be an exercise of freedom, a biographical act with which to respond to a biological fact.²³

Thus, Seneca does not see suicide as «an easy way out», but as a worthy way out, when life's circumstances demand it that way. Of

course, that is a personal decision, and will depend on each case, but in itself, it is not determined by the age of the person as such, but by their existential situation, so to speak.

One of the criteria for choosing death –according to the Stoics criteria–, it is the case of an external power that threatens the person, such as war. The criterion seems to be, rather, «If one death is with torments and the other simple and easy why not use it?».²⁴ In sum, the decision is strictly personal, although one element to consider is that death should not be the longest. Thus, for Seneca, the situation of old age as painful and full of discomforts does not oblige to live it, since you can choose to leave life. It must be remembered that the time lived as a duration is not the value, but how it has been lived and has been directed to wisdom. Naturally, the above raises whether Seneca is not questioned regarding issues such as the death penalty and euthanasia. According to his postulates, it is lawful in certain circumstances, but the question is how to combine that idea with obedience to what God pointed out as the destiny of man. The question that arises is How to establish the rational hierarchy between the autonomy of suicide and obeying what God has indicated as part of what must be lived? An answer to that question was not found in his texts. In any case, what matters for the purpose of the article is that suicide is not limited only to illness or old age. Seneca points out, however, that death as such is not bad, but only the judgment about it. Understood in this way it could be argued why the Philosopher does not consider that suicide does not go against the divine will, since a good given by Him is not rejected.

However, there may be reasons not to take your own life, even if you like. One reason he uses is the effects on other people. Thus, Seneca points out that he did not commit suicide when his father lived, since he would not have endured his absence. From what can perhaps be deduced, it is that, according to the Philosopher, as long as the others are not disproportionately affected, suicide could be allowed.

In any case, we should not be afraid of death. It is not as such good or bad.²⁵ Although Seneca clarifies: «Death is among the things that are not bad, but have the appearance of evil».²⁶ Self-esteem and the instinct of conservation is what produces the appearance of loss before death. In addition, ignorance of what death will be like is what makes it fearful. You have to have a virtuous spirit to know how to face death.

Therefore, it is not a necessary aspiration to have a long life, but a coherent and full life:

What is the use of eighty years for a person, if it happens in inertia? He did not live, but stopped in life; nor did he die late, but for a long time... it is interesting to know from what day you count his death... unless you say that he lived as it is said that trees live... Age is between external things. How long I have to live, is something else; what I have to be as long as it exists, is my thing.²⁷

In short, it is important to live well no matter the duration over time. Having death in front is not typical of old age but of life. Life is lived day by day and in that old age is no different from youth.

4. The finitude and the disease

Reference has already been made to passages that connect old age with loss of function and strength. Seneca refers to disease situations. In all of them, he emphasizes a certain resignation, but he also makes allusions that wisdom and right action must be practiced at any age and give meaning to life. Thus, Seneca rejects the Aristotelian idea that was mentioned at the beginning: the old as faint-hearted and with little firm opinions.

In fact, the disease shows us our limitation as an element of life that I do not control, but I do control my opinion about it: «...in all hard and adverse things, I behave not as if obeying God, but as if I agreed with Him».²⁸ Old age diseases are accepted as expected companions of old age.

The perception of time is relative to judgment, not to absolute time. So for a child the discomfort is perceived long. The one who lives a lot does not necessarily have an advantage over the one who dies young. Human life is tiny, in relation to eternity. We spend most of our time in worldly concerns, half of the time we remain asleep. Dying young: «Who will not grant you who is better off who is allowed to return soon. Whoever finished the road before he got tired? Life is neither a good nor a bad; it is the place of good and evil».²⁹

Old age may not be a disease, but it oppresses us (*From the brevity of life, IX*).³⁰ In the section of time it was pointed out that being always busy causes time to be lost, and if we dedicate it to virtue and reflection, the wise man, having a meaningful life, will not be disturbed by the appearance of death. On the other hand, men who deal with different needs, their life ends in an instant, and there for sure, old age is seen as a torment:

Mending the old decrepit, by force of votes, the increase of some years. Pretend to be younger and flatter themselves with lies: deceiving themselves, as if they deceive the fates... they die as frightened, not as those who leave life, but as excluded from it. They say... that they were ignorant in not having lived, and that if they escape from that disease, they must live at rest.³¹ (*Seneca, From the brevity of life, XI*).

The foregoing leads us to recognize that caring for the soul is central and that caring for the body implies not living for the body but «as one who cannot live without the body».³² In an old age like this, there is no difference, if you lived badly, the arrival of old age is terrible, but if you lived well, it is assumed properly...

5. Autonomy and work

There is no term «autonomy» as such in Seneca's work, but some ideas of self-determination and old age can be found. One of

them and that appears in the writings is that you should never give up the study of philosophy at any age. That aspiration to rationality is the goal of all men:

In each thing, the best thing must be that for which he was born, and for which he values himself. What is the best in man? The reason... the reason is its own good.³³

Seneca rejects the idea that the exercise of virtue should be «left at the end» of existence. Do not stop using, yes, a derogatory character of old age:

You will hear many say that reaching fifty years of age, they have to withdraw to the stillness, and that the sixty will retire from all trades and positions. Tell me: when this is your intention, what security do you have for a longer life? ...Are you not ashamed to reserve yourself for the leftovers of life, using virtue only for that time that is of no use for anything? (*From the brevity of life, III*).³⁴

Philosophy orders life and gives the guidelines to live properly. The duty of the philosopher and of any man is to be removed from vain desires. This applies, therefore, at any stage of life. In this sense, when in old age someone thinks cautiously, it does not have to be understood as a faint-hearted attitude of old age. At any time in life, one must act prudently. Thus, in stoic optics, «believing without assuring firmly» in automatic is not a defect of the elderly. The elderly and all men, Seneca points out, get worse out of life as they entered, but not as a product of age, but because of the passions, fears, and superstitions.

As a stoic, Seneca insists that perception, or judgment, makes a difference:

...The straight and whole man corrects the evils of fortune and softens the hard and the rough of it with the art of coping with it, so that it receives the favorable with gratitude and modesty and the adverse with constancy and strength.³⁵

Autonomy, then, is not to control destiny, but to accept it with integrity as already has been indicated in the other sections. But it is not a «passive» acceptance of the flow of time, but a continuous confrontation with evil and overcome it on the basis of daily effort, which guarantees a calm conscience when reflecting on his/her past (*Of the brevity of life, XII*).³⁶

As noted earlier, man can decide on his death to avoid suffering, but in general the wise man lives in tranquility: «The Greeks call this firmness of mind: stability... and I call it tranquility» (*Of the tranquility of soul II*).³⁷

True human occupation is the wisdom that provides stillness and tranquility in life and is beneficial in all ages (*From the brevity of life, XIV*).³⁸ However, Seneca clarifies that wisdom is not to discuss scholarly issues, but to discern good.³⁹

The wisdom is that of the philosophers and there yes the old age is not negative: «What happiness and what honest old age (*pulchra senectus manet*) awaits the one who was placed under the protection of this one!» (*From the brevity of life, XV*).⁴⁰ Seneca does not doubt so old age has a meaning, while the other occupations only wither life.

The old man, and all men guided by appearances and fame and not according to nature, become greedy and interested and thus to greed, as another of the defects pointed out by Aristotle, is not exclusive to the elders. Seneca is true, he is not optimistic about the «practical» aspect of human greed: «If the lonely old would change their wills, those who come to greet them will knock on another door».⁴¹

Autonomy consists, in short, in the rational judgment about the nature of things. That does not mean that Seneca did not see the miseries of life, but the sense of possessions, for example, is in the control of desire: «Because he is poor, not he who has little, but he who desires more».⁴²

The above gives us clues about work: Seneca thinks that we should not take ourselves by the occupations of life and get lost in

them. It has already been pointed out that the true path is wisdom. The occupation in old age, working until the end, does not seem wise and sound to this philosopher: «Clumsy is the one who, being in old age, takes death busy in business... and clumsy the one who is tired of living rather than from work, he died among his occupations» (*From the brevity of life, XX*).⁴³

Work is necessary, but it only makes sense if it is subject to reason and the search for wisdom.

6. Conclusions

It was mentioned at the beginning of this work, that Gracia indicated that the stoic perception of old age is resignation. The above is partially correct, but it has been shown to have nuances. Seneca's stoicism does not indicate a peculiar and exclusive resignation towards old age as such. Resignation, in this case, is to recognize the cosmic order that drives us to accept all the circumstances of life at any stage of it, be it youth, maturity or old age.

Seneca gives examples of evils and nuisances of life in youth, in maturity, in poverty, in wealth and of course, in old age. Wisdom is what must govern and what gives existential meaning and does not depend as such, on age. The stoic attitude shows us that rationality guidelines can be obtained to face old age: reason must regulate all behavior so that its adequate value is achieved, relationships with others, coping with death and sorrows of existence.⁴⁴ Again this characteristic is contrasted with the vision of exaggerated pessimism of Aristotle, facing the old man. If the old man is truly wise, he is not intimidated by the vicissitudes of life.

From what has been seen, the category of rationality does not imply not making decisions «before destiny», but it cannot simply be ascribed to the concept of autonomy of our time, since Seneca believes that rationality is a reflection of order of the world, that we obey and we are not creators of norms and value. However, as

shown in the texts, death is conceived as neutral, it is neither good nor bad, for we can choose for it. Thus, suicide is permissible, because in the opinion of this philosopher the requirement to act with full rationality is covered and as such, death and life are not goods, they are states where acting right or wrong occurs.

As for a job's ethics, Seneca's insistence on the importance of leisure to devote himself to philosophy and criticism to those who leave their study until the end is discovered. Seneca also insists that dying at work is undesirable. So old age should be dedicated to philosophy, but also not only wait for it, since the philosophy itself prepares us to die well and live well; leave it at the end when there are also inconveniences of age, is a foolishness.

As for the category of time and finitude, Seneca's insistence is to live well every day and not project our expectations into the future. Living well is not then, accumulate neither honors nor wealth, which also by being unstable, alter the mood. Old age does not have the goal of having accumulated goods to enjoy them when most of the existence has passed before us. Thus, in Seneca's perspective, living well does not match the notion of contemporary quality of life. To live well, is to assume the rationality of the world decreed by God, and learn to cope with the deficiencies or abundances, keeping the mind in peace.

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- ¹ See GRACIA, DIEGO. *History of old age*. In Ethics and Old Age. Comillas Pontifical University, Madrid, 2009.
- ² It should be noted that some authors such as Galen did not consider old age itself as a disease, but did point out that there were diseases associated with old age and true functional impairment of the elderly. In current terms: they recognized what we now call geriatric syndromes and the condition of frailty of the elderly (RODRÍGUEZ, R. ET AL. *Geriatrics*. McGraw-Hill, México, 2004).
- ³ In fact, research materials on ethics and old age in Seneca are few, so this work seeks to fill partially that space.
- ⁴ Aristotle was born in Estágira city of Ancient Greece in the Chalkidiki peninsula, in the province of Macedonia, in 384 BC.
- ⁵ ARISTOTLE. *Rhetoric*. Gredos, Madrid, 1999, pp. 381-385.
- ⁶ GRACIA, DIEGO. *History of old age*, p. 2-3.
- ⁷ SENECA L. *Letters to Lucilius*. Hundred World Collection. SEP, Mexico, 1985.
- ⁸ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treatises*. Porrúa, México, 2016. References of specific works are added in the text in brackets to facilitate search in other editions.
- ⁹ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 329.
- ¹⁰ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 49. As Ricardo Iacub points out: «...the stoic strategy is to think of old age as a moment in which the subject is confronted with a fault that would prove the consistency of the wise. On the other hand would allow to get rid of the heavy burden that the body produces to the soul» (IACUB, R. *Stoic therapy with old age*. Estud. Interdiscip. Envelhec., Porto Alegre, 2009, p. 95). I would add that this undoing is not literal, something impossible, but through the right judgment to value the soul as the rational component of the man who tempers the whole life.
- ¹¹ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 49.
- ¹² SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 89.
- ¹³ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treatises*, p. 74.
- ¹⁴ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treatises*, p. 99.
- ¹⁵ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treatises*, p. 108.

- ¹⁶ IACUB, R. *Stoic therapy with old age*, p. 97.
- ¹⁷ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treaties*, p. 119.
- ¹⁸ DOMINGO, A. *Ethics and old age: between guardianship and respect*. In: *Ethics and Old Age*. Comillas Pontifical University, Madrid, 2009, pp. 70-71.
- ¹⁹ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treaties*, p. 124.
- ²⁰ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treaties*, p. 181.
- ²¹ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 51.
- ²² SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 201.
- ²³ DOMINGO, A. *Ethics and old age: between guardianship and respect*, p. 79.
- ²⁴ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 199.
- ²⁵ Seneca believes that there are firm moral norms that we must follow and do not depend on our decisions, for example, Seneca considers that sexuality has reproductive purposes: «He considers that the desires of love have not been given to man for voluptuousness, but for the spread of the species» (*Consolation to Mother Helvia, XIII. Philosophical Treaties*, p. 82).
- ²⁶ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 259.
- ²⁷ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, pp. 329-330.
- ²⁸ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 362.
- ²⁹ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 372-373.
- ³⁰ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treaties*, p. 126.
- ³¹ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treaties*, p. 128.
- ³² SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 55.
- ³³ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 227.
- ³⁴ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treaties*, p. 121. «Non pudet te reliquias vitae tibi reservare et id solum tempus bonae menti destinare, quod in nullam rem conferri possit?» From *brevitate vitae*. Perseus project Taken from: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0016%3Abook%3D10%3Achapter%3D3>
- ³⁵ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 367.
- ³⁶ SENECA, L. *Philosophical treatises*, p. 127.
- ³⁷ SENECA, L. *Philosophical treatises*, p. 169. «Hanc stabilem animi sedem Graeci euthymian vocant... ego tranquillitatem voco». *De tranquillitate animi*. Retrieved from: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0021%3Abook%3D9%3Achapter%3D2>
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- ³⁸ SENECA, L. *Philosophical treatises*, p. 131.
- ³⁹ SENECA, L. *Philosophical treatises*, p. 130.
- ⁴⁰ SENECA, L. *Philosophical treatises*, p. 132.
- ⁴¹ SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 69.
- ⁴² SENECA, L. *Letters to Lucilius*, p. 29. In addition, that by the way is easily transferable to our time and the sense of old age and retirement: «The moral problem that arises with retirement is not solved by delaying or advancing the age at which

a worker is considered retired. The problem lies in the assessment of people for the work they do, considering them useful only if they are 'busy' in a conventional job... old age is a call for permanent attention so as not to build a society of fools who confuse value and price». (DOMINGO, *Ethics and old age: between guardianship and respect*, p. 72).

⁴³ SENECA, L. *Philosophical Treaties*, p. 137.

⁴⁴ «It is not more adult he who shows greater capacity for rupture, but the one who makes his limitations more fruitful» (DOMINGO, 2009: 74).