
Seneca's On the Happy Life and Stoic Individualism

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Two features especially have attracted attention about Seneca's essay *On the Happy Life* (*de Vita Beata*). One is that Seneca's defence of wealth is inconsistent with his repudiation of wealth in his other writings. The other, related point is that Seneca here defends his own wealth. These observations have quite naturally led readers to focus attention on the real-life Seneca, with strong suspicions of hypocrisy.¹ By contrast, little attention has been paid to the philosophical content of the essay.

In this paper, I would like to redirect attention to the text. Although I shall draw on some evidence external to the text, my aim is to get a view of Seneca as he appears in the text, as the author of a philosophical message rather than as someone who failed to live up to it. I shall not attempt to derive information from the text about the 'real' Seneca; I am inclined to think that the portrait is the real Seneca, or part of him. I shall suggest that what Seneca says in *de Vita Beata* is not simply self-serving, but an interesting moment in the evolution of Seneca's thought and of Stoic ethics in general.

In one of his *Letters to Lucilius*, Seneca distinguishes between two kinds of philosophical discourse: the calmer words and greater intimacy of conversation (*sermo*) as exemplified by his *Letters*, and the more noisy, urgent tone of public lectures, which may be called 'harangues' (*con-tiones*). The two kinds of discourse have different aims: the former aims to make the listener learn; the latter tries to make the listener want

1 Griffin (1976), 286-314, discusses in detail Seneca's wealth, the charges brought against him, and the inconsistency of his views on wealth in *de Vita Beata* with those in his other writings. *de Vita Beata* is commonly described as a self-defence; see esp. Pohlenz (1941), 69-81.

to learn. In public lectures, 'the doubtful must be impelled' by an abundance of words.² As Seneca demands in another *Letter*, this flow of words must not be rushed. For the philosophical speaker aims to heal the soul; and his words must 'sink into us'.³ Moreover, it befits a philosophical speaker to remain in control of his words. Like any other public speaker, he cannot preserve his 'dignity of character' if he speaks at a frenetic pace.⁴

Seneca's remarks on philosophical speaking agree with traditional rhetorical precepts. In addition to arguing a case, a speaker must influence the emotions (*πάθη*) of the listener, as well as present his own character (*ἦθος*). At the same time, Seneca recognizes a fundamental distinction between philosophical and non-philosophical rhetoric. The philosophical speaker aims not only to influence, but also to heal the emotions. Moreover, he must heal not only others, but also himself. Philosophers must speak, Seneca demands, 'to become better and to make others better'.⁵ Stating a belief that was especially strong among the Romans, Seneca insists that philosophical discourse is useless unless it serves the practical purpose of living a happy life. Both students and teachers of philosophy must put into practice the learning they acquire; the philosophical teacher, especially, must prove what he says by doing it.⁶ There was no dearth in Seneca's time of persons who denounced philosophers as charlatans. It was therefore incumbent on the philosophical speaker to present his own character, *ἦθος*, as a paradigm of his teachings.

Although Seneca wrote *de Vita Beata* to be read in private, it is a public address, intended to impel a variety of doubters. It is noisy, full of rhetorical amplification and repetition, and carefully adjusted to different listeners. It is also pervasively self-reflexive. Throughout

2 *Ep* 38 1: qui dubitat impellendus est.

3 *Ep* 40 4. 'What doctor', Seneca asks (40 5), 'heals the sick on the run?' (*Quis medicus aegros in transitu curat?*)

4 *Ep* 40 7-8 (*salva dignitate morum*), cf. 40 14.

5 *Ep* 52 9: ut meliores fiant faciantque meliores.

6 At *Ep* 52 8 Seneca demands that we should choose philosophical teachers 'who, after saying what must be done, prove it by doing it' (*qui cum dixerunt quid faciendum sit probant faciendo*); cf. *Ep* 108 38 (*quomodo probare possint sua esse monstrabo: faciant quae dixerint*). At *Ep* 108 35, Seneca demands: *auditionem philosophorum lectionemque ad propositum beatae vitae trahendam*.

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the essay, Seneca presents a self-portrait that is both highly self-conscious and surprisingly introspective. While Seneca takes the measure of his audience, he also takes his own measure; and as speaker, he also addresses himself. Seneca's self-examination is, indeed, very different from that of a Socrates, for example. But it would be a mistake to think that Seneca's public stance excludes private reflection about himself. In *de Vita Beata*, Seneca submits to public scrutiny and tests his own adherence to his philosophical message. The result is a complex interplay of message, listener, and speaker, in which listener and speaker keep exchanging roles and the message shifts according to their needs.

de Vita Beata falls into three sections: an exordium (1-3 1); a series of definitions of the happy life (3 2-16 3); and a final section in which Seneca defends his own pursuit of happiness (17-28). There is no clear demarcation between the second and third sections. Instead, Seneca slides from his last definition of happiness into a defence of his own way of life. The extant text ends abruptly; probably only a short passage is lost.⁷ The entire essay is carefully structured, even though it veers in unexpected directions. In my examination, I shall follow the course of Seneca's discussion in order to see how he progressively fashions an ethical position that suits not only others, but especially himself.

In his calm, reflective exordium, Seneca does everything that a speaker should do: he sets out the problem; and he wins the good will of the audience, while stimulating their interest. The problem, Seneca says, is that all men want to live happily, but don't know what makes them happy. It is necessary therefore to determine, first, what happiness is, and, secondly, how we may move toward this goal. The second part of this project is crucial: a mere definition of happiness is not enough to set people on the path of happiness; it is also necessary to know how to put one's knowledge into practice.

Seneca shares his concern, in the first place, with his brother Gallio, whom he addresses in the opening sentence. But in stating the

7 The emotion-charged address at the end makes a fitting close, so that it is plausible that little of Seneca's text is lost; so Grimal (1969), 9, cf. Pohlenz (1941), 77. The last complete word of the manuscript text, *adlisos*, would make a weak ending; but another sentence or so, rounding off the speech in the same way as the sentence that concludes 26 3, could readily have completed the essay.

problem as a universal problem that affects all of us, he attempts to draw everyone into a common philosophical search. In his repeated use of the pronoun 'we', Seneca places himself on the side of all who are searching for happiness. Although Seneca mentions that there is need of an experienced guide, he does not identify himself as this guide.⁸ Seneca reveals a strong disdain for the masses; but he does not exclude anyone from the search. Rather, he exhorts all to separate themselves from the masses, by whom, he says, he does not mean a particular social group, but the many unenlightened.⁹

While Seneca shows a sympathetic concern for his fellow humans, he also tries to jolt them into separation from the crowd. He compares the experience of those who follow the opinions of the crowd to mass slaughter: just as persons who fall in a crowd bring about the fall and destruction of those who press on behind, so the opinions of the many drag down those who cling to them.¹⁰ This image, though not restricted to a military rout, anticipates Seneca's frequent use of military metaphors in the rest of the essay. Whereas a crowd constitutes a self-destructive environment in which no member has any defences, the wise person is fortified like a well-ordered army and can conquer any obstacle. In the exordium, Seneca does not yet reveal this defence, but shows the listener that he has a way out of his calamitous situation: he has an intellect, which is his own. Using the first person pronoun, Seneca professes: 'I have a better and more certain light' by which to judge the truth. Then he lets the intellect speak a long, searching confession: 'I would prefer that everything I have done so far were undone'; for all the means by which 'I' have sought to raise myself above the crowd – eloquence, wealth, influence, power – have done nothing except provoke envy.¹¹

The intellect's list of spurious achievements fits Seneca very well, both as he is known from other sources and as his character emerges in *de Vita Beata*. Although Seneca has carefully chosen his words so that the 'I' of the intellect may apply to anyone at all, the reference includes himself, together with anyone who cares to join him. In the

8 1 2

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intellect's confession, Seneca lays bare his own doubts. The sentiments of the speaker merge with those of the audience as Seneca invites the audience to take the very first step necessary to philosophical progress: a confession of moral ignorance.

In addition to adopting this Socratic stance, Seneca gives evidence of his debt to Socrates in the final, climactic paragraph of the exordium. What we seek is a treasure:

Let us look for something that is not a specious good, but solid, constant, and more beautiful in the area that is more hidden. Let's dig it out; it is not far; it will be found; you just need to know where to stretch out your hand. As it is, we pass by what is next to us as though it were in darkness, striking against the very things that we desire.¹²

The passage recalls Socrates' hunt for the fourth virtue, justice, in the *Republic*.¹³ Socrates urges his companions to close in on the quarry like hunters: the place is dark, and the track is hard to find; what they are seeking is rolling just before their feet; and they are like people looking for what they already have in their hands. Seneca conveys the same breathless excitement. But he has sought to improve upon Socrates' words by varying the details and shortening his passage. Socrates' prolonged exclamations prompt Glaucon to comment: 'This is a long preamble for someone who is eager to hear'.¹⁴ Seneca forestalls this response, and at the same time shows the profound difference of his way of doing philosophy from that of Socrates, by adding immediately after the cited words: 'So I won't drag you around in circles, I will omit the opinions of others – for it takes a long time to list and refute them –; receive ours.'¹⁵

With this announcement, Seneca begins the exposition of his subject matter. He now assumes philosophical leadership openly for the first time. When he orders Gallio to receive 'our' opinion, he means

12 3 1: Quaeramus aliquod non in speciem bonum, sed solidum et aequale et a secretiore parte formosius; hoc eruamus. Nec longe positum est: invenietur, scire tantum opus est quo manum porrigas; nunc velut in tenebris vicina transimus, offensantes ea ipsa quae desideramus.

13 432b-d

14 432e

15 3 2

'Stoic'. This opinion, Seneca points out, is not that of any particular Stoic. Using the language of political process, Seneca says that he may follow a particular Stoic, or ask him to divide his opinion, or he may say something more.¹⁶ In claiming the right to dissent, Seneca places himself in a long tradition of Stoic philosophical innovation. From the time of Zeno, the Stoics kept revitalizing Stoic philosophy by expanding and modifying selected views of their predecessors. Seneca proposes to follow this trend.

Seneca's development of his subject matter conforms roughly to the plan he outlined in the exordium; but there are surprises. In the exordium, wealth made only the briefest appearance, as one in a list of false achievements. Seneca gradually turns the discussion toward a defence of wealth in the last part of the essay. He starts his exposition with a definition of happiness, just as he had promised. In fact, he launches a whole series of definitions, noting in passing that he is proceeding 'more freely'.¹⁷ The second part of his presentation is dominated by the objection that what he said previously is nothing but empty words. In his response Seneca deals, in general, with how one should act in order to attain happiness, Seneca's second announced topic. But it has a much narrower focus: Seneca now turns from a general analysis of happiness to a defence of his own pursuit of it.

Seneca appropriately asserts his philosophical authority just before revealing what happiness is. After saying that he agrees with all other Stoics in assenting to 'the nature of things' (*rerum naturae*), he states his first definition:

A happy life, then, is a life in agreement with one's own nature (*beata est ergo vita conveniens naturae suae*), which cannot happen otherwise than if the mind is, first, healthy and in perpetual possession of its own health, next, brave and bold, then, enduring most nobly, suitably to the occasion, caring without anxiety for one's own body and the things that pertain to it, cherishing too the other things that equip life, without admiring anything, ready to use the gifts of fortune

¹⁶ 3 2. In *Ep* 21 9, Seneca extends this procedure to his use of non-Stoic philosophers. He writes that one should adopt the same procedure in philosophy as in the senate: if another person has said something that he likes in part, he asks him to divide his opinion and follows what he approves. In this *Letter* (as in others), Seneca takes something from Epicurus.

¹⁷ 5 1

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without serving them. You understand, even if I don't add it, that perpetual tranquillity and liberty follow when the things that excite or frighten us have been driven away. For [in place of] pleasures and instead of things that are small and fragile ... huge joy enters, unshaken and constant, then peace and harmony of mind, and greatness of soul together with gentleness; for all ferocity arises from weakness.¹⁸

What stands out immediately in Seneca's definition is the addition of the word *suae*, 'one's own'. Zeno defined the goal of human life – happiness – as 'living in agreement' or 'living in agreement with nature' (τὸ ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν).¹⁹ Chrysippus explained 'nature' in this definition as 'both common nature and human nature in particular'. He held that 'our natures are parts of the nature of the whole', so that the goal of humans is to live 'in accordance with one's own nature and that of the whole' (κατὰ τε τὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ κατὰ τὴν τῶν ὅλων).²⁰ 'Some younger Stoics' are said to have defined the goal as 'living in accordance with the constitution of a human being' (τὸ ζῆν ἀκολουθῶς τῇ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατασκευῇ).²¹ Seneca's formulation *vita conveniens naturae suae* is a translation of τὸ ὁμολογουμένως τῇ αὐτοῦ

18 3 3: Beata est ergo vita conveniens naturae suae, quae non aliter contingere potest quam si primum sana mens est et in perpetua possessione sanitatis suae, deinde fortis ac vehemens, tunc pulcherrime patiens, apta temporibus, corporis sui pertinentiumque ad id curiosa non anxie, tum aliarum rerum quae vitam instruunt diligens sine admiratione cuiusquam, usura fortunae muneribus, non servitura. Intellegis, etiam si non adiciam, sequi perpetuam tranquillitatem, libertatem, depulsis iis quae aut irritant nos aut teritant; nam voluptatibus et***pro illis quae parva ac fragilia sunt et *ipsis flagitiis noxia* ingens gaudium subit, inconcussum et aequale, tum pax et concordia animi et magnitudo cum mansuetudine; omnis enim ex infirmitate feritas est. (This is the text of L.D. Reynold's Oxford edition. The extent of the corruption seems small.)

19 SVF I 179. Cicero previously used the translation *convenientiam* for ὁμολογίαν (*de Finibus* III 21). Zeno also defined happiness as εὖροια βίου (SVF I 184). According to Stobaeus (*Ecl* II 76, SVF III 12), Cleanthes added τῇ φύσει to Zeno's definition 'living in agreement'.

20 SVF III 4, including: τὴν τε κοινὴν καὶ ἰδίως τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην (Diogenes Laertius VII 89).

21 Clemens *Strom* II 21 129 (Posidonius fr. 186 Edelstein).

φύσει ζῆν. In this revision of Zeno's definition, Seneca has divided Chrysippus' explanation and accepted part of it.

This division does not imply that Seneca abandoned the demand for agreement with universal nature. Seneca has already said that he agrees with all Stoics that one must follow 'the nature of things'. Later in *de Vita Beata* Seneca identifies the happy life simply with a life 'in accordance with nature';²² and he demands that one must accept what is imposed by the constitution of the 'universe'.²³ But by singling out 'one's own nature' in his first definition of happiness, Seneca proposes our own human nature as the foundation of happiness, and he leaves the reader to understand that agreement with universal nature follows from this agreement.

'One's own nature' is, however, an ambiguous expression. It can denote human nature in general, as characterized by rationality; and it can also denote each human being's individual nature. There is insufficient evidence to show whether Chrysippus took into account individual human nature, although his reference to 'our natures' is some indication that he did.²⁴ There is, however, ample evidence for Panaetius, who may be classified as the first of the 'younger' Stoics. Panaetius argued in detail that each person must follow not only human nature in general, but also his own individual nature.²⁵ Panaetius' definition of the human goal as 'living in accordance with the starting-points given to us by nature' takes into account both kinds of nature.²⁶ Following Plato, Panaetius drew a basic distinction between two main character types, a vehement, more severe type and a softer, more

22 8 2: idem est ergo beate vivere et secundum naturam.

23 15 7: quidquid ex universi constitutione patiendum est, magno suscipiatur animo.

24 Grimal (1978), 357, suggests that Seneca follows Chrysippus in referring to individual natures in his use of *suae*.

25 Cicero *de Officiis* I 107-21, including at 110; sic enim est faciendum, ut contra universam naturam nihil contendamus, ea tamen conservata propriam nostram sequamur. Panaetius' emphasis on individual human nature is discussed by Pohlenz (1934), 67-74, van Straaten (1946), 140-4, Rist (1969), 186-9, De Lacy (1977), and Gill (1988). Panaetius is traditionally regarded as the founder of the 'Middle Stoa'. As Pohlenz (1959), I 191, points out, Panaetius was an innovator, but the term 'Middle Stoa' is a modern invention.

26 τὸ ζῆν κατὰ τὰς δεδομένας ἡμῖν ἐκ φύσεως ἀφορμὰς (fr. 96 van Straaten).

easygoing type, each admitting of manifold variations.²⁷ Just like an actor, Panaetius held, an individual should assume a role that suits his own inclinations.²⁸ For example, it was appropriate for the compliant, affable Odysseus to put up with Circe, Calypso, and even the taunts of his own servants, whereas the spirited Ajax would have died a thousand deaths rather than suffer these indignities.²⁹ Because of natural differences, as well as differences in circumstances and choices, it is appropriate for humans to aim for different virtues.³⁰ Just as archers

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- 27 *de Officiis* I 108-14. At *Politicus* 306a-10a (as anticipated in the *Republic*, esp. 375a-d), Plato differentiates between two main character types: a quick, courageous type, which has a 'rigid' (στερεόν, *Politicus* 309b) character, and a gentle, temperate type, which is 'soft'. Through excess, both types degenerate into vicious forms, violence and madness on the one hand, and cowardice and sluggishness on the other (*Politicus* 307b-c). Panaetius makes the same basic distinction between character types and between the corresponding virtues and vices. Gill (1988), 180-6, finds a moral awkwardness in Panaetius' account, for the reason that some of the personality traits exemplified by Panaetius are morally dubious. Gill attributes this awkwardness to Panaetius' moral pragmatism. In my view, the Platonic origin of Panaetius' distinction explains the range of moral and immoral characteristics. Like Plato, Panaetius assigns both virtues and vices to the two types. Panaetius' distinction between character types is evidence, I suggest, that, following Plato, he divided the impulses (ὁρμαί) of the mind into spirit and a propensity for pleasure; see below n 70. In Panaetius' analysis, the former type of impulse, when controlled by reason, results in the virtue of magnanimity, the latter in temperance.
- 28 *de Officiis* I 114. Panaetius' position looks like a response to Aristo's view that, like a good actor, the wise man performs any role suitably, whether it is that of Thersites or of Agamemnon (SVF I 351).
- 29 *de Officiis* I 113. This example may well be Panaetius' own. Cicero also offers examples of his own, including the following variation on the contrast between Odysseus and Ajax: it was appropriate for the incredibly stern, unbending Cato to commit suicide rather than submit to Caesar, whereas this course of action might have been inappropriate for those of a softer disposition (I 112). Cicero's careful wording (esp. *ceteris forsitan vitio datum esset* and *incredibilem*) suggests that he may be exonerating his own accommodation with Caesar by an appeal to Panaetian individualism. Gill (1988), 186-7, suggests that Cicero is here abandoning Panaetian neutrality by favoring the stern type of character exemplified by Cato. As I interpret Cicero, he portrays Cato as so utterly exceptional that he invites sympathy for those ordinary mortals who submitted.
- 30 According to Panaetius, in addition to the two personae which we have by nature (*Cicero de Officiis* I 107), we have a third persona which is imposed by circumstances, and a fourth which we assume by making choices (*de Officiis* I 115).

aim for a single target by aiming at different lines on the target, Panaetius proposed, so humans aim for the single goal of happiness, which consists in agreement with nature, by practicing different virtues.³¹

Seneca's addition of *suae* to Zeno's definition of happiness is a signal that Seneca views happiness as a condition that, though single and unchanging in its perfection, varies from individual to individual. Although Seneca does not explain what he means by *suae*, his emphatic use of the term at the very outset of his definitions suggests that he is using the term in the full sense of 'one's own' individual nature, together with 'one's own' common human nature. As Seneca shows in other writings, he agrees that a person must follow his or her individual character.³² In *de Vita Beata*, the subsequent, long series of definitions, each elaborated with different details, is further evidence that Seneca intends the term in its full sense. Other Stoics, too, offered alternative definitions of happiness; and they kept modifying their predecessors' definitions. But Seneca's list of definitions has a different purpose. Seneca does not base his series of definitions on different theoretical presuppositions; nor does he attempt to adjudicate among different versions. Instead, he selects features from the whole range of Stoic definitions and descriptions of happiness, and bundles them into packages that suit different persons differently.

According to Seneca, each of his definitions presents a different aspect, or 'face' (*facies*), of happiness, while the 'power' (*potestas*) remains the same.³³ In a simile that appears very strange at first, Seneca likens this power to that of an army:

31 Stobaeus *Ecl* 2 7 (fr. 109 van Straaten, = SVF III 280).

32 At *de Tranquillitate* 6 1-2 and 7 2, Seneca writes that, in order to heal ourselves, we must first 'look into ourselves' (6 1) in order to determine what our individual nature is, in particular whether 'your own nature' (*natura tua*, 7 2) is more suited to a practical or a contemplative life. A 'fierce and impatient' nature, he warns, should not pursue public life (6 2). At *de Ira* 2 19 1, Seneca attributes individual differences in temperament, including proneness to anger, to the preponderance of different elements, such as fire, in the mind. At *Ep* 94 30-1, Seneca proposes different precepts for different natures. Hadot (1969), 153-8, discusses in detail how Seneca takes into account individual differences.

33 4 3: licet, si evagari velis, idem in aliam atque aliam faciem salva et integra potestate transferre. Using different terminology at *Ep* 66 7, Seneca proposes that whereas virtue has a single 'face' (*facies*) or 'aspect' (*aspectus*), it consists of many kinds (*species*) that differ 'depending on the variety of life and actions' (*pro vitae varietate et actionibus*).

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Just as [when] the same army is sometimes deployed more widely and sometimes pressed into a narrow compass, and is either curved in the center with bent wings or unfolded with a straight front, its force is the same, in whatever way it is drawn up, and so is its will to stand for the same cause: so the definition of the supreme good can be expanded and drawn out at times, and at other times can be drawn together and compressed.³⁴

The definition of the supreme good – the goal of human life – preserves its power, just like an army, whether it is compressed or expanded. In one of his *Letters*, Seneca writes that he was much impressed by Sextius' comparison of the wise man to an army on the march: just as an army, marching in square formation, is prepared to ward off any attack from any direction, so the wise man deploys all his virtues in all directions, ready to cope with any attack from any side.³⁵ In *de Vita Beata*, Seneca also likens the mental strength of the wise person to an army. But in place of an army marching in a single, square formation, he shows an army deployed in various battle formations – drawn out or compressed, curved or straight. These formations correspond not only to the verbal form of Seneca's definitions, but also to the mental state designated by the words. Seneca deploys his definitions, like a general, as different kinds of fighting forces to be used by different persons according to their abilities and needs. 'To live is to be a soldier' (*vivere ... militare est*), Seneca says in another *Letter*.³⁶ In this struggle, the mind may unfold an assortment of attitudes or adopt a more focussed point of view, depending on both external circumstances and individual inclinations.

In his initial, expansive definition, Seneca first emphasizes the general condition of mental health, then singles out one of the four main virtues, courage, with the subdivisions of boldness and endurance. Next

34 4 1: quemadmodum idem exercitus modo latius panditur modo in angustum coartatur et aut in cornua sinuata media parte curvatur aut recta fronte explicatur, vis illi, utcumque ordinatus est, eadem est et voluntas pro eisdem partibus standi, ita finitio summi boni alias diffundi potest et exporrigi, alias colligi et in se cogi.

35 *Ep* 59 7. In this simile, the four sides of the square correspond to the four main virtues.

36 *Ep* 96 5

he describes the attitude of the mind to the body and external circumstances. After listing several mental states that attend virtue, he ends his definition by citing magnanimity joined by gentleness.³⁷ In his second, very compressed definition, Seneca continues to emphasize magnanimity, the quality of being superior to fortune, by singling out 'looking down' on fortune as the only virtue. The second and third definitions together are:

It will be the same if I say that 'the supreme good is a mind that looks down on chance events, glad in its virtue,' or else 'an unconquered force of mind, experienced in affairs, calm in action, with much humanity and care for the people it deals with'.³⁸

In the third definition, Seneca picks out a quality closely related to magnanimity, the mental state of being unconquered. In addition, he emphasizes the social virtue of caring for one's fellow human beings.³⁹ In his subsequent, increasingly diffuse definitions, Seneca continues to stress indifference to fortune.⁴⁰ He also gives attention to the virtue of temperance, to which he alluded in his first definition.⁴¹ In his fifth definition he finally leads to the claim, which he develops at length in his sixth definition, that happiness is based on knowledge. His

37 *Vehemens* corresponds to θαρραλεότης, *patiens* to καρτερία. Orthodox Stoics added μεγαλοψυχία, defined as the disposition that 'makes one superior to events', as another subdivision (SVF III 264, 269, 270), whereas Panaetius elevated magnanimity to the status of courage (see below n 43). *Corporis ... curiosa non anxie* and *aliarum rerum ... diligens sine admiratione cuiusquam* designate the right attitude to things of the body and external things respectively: we care about them as things in accordance with nature, but do not admire them as goods. In this part of the definition, Seneca draws on Stoic definitions of the supreme good as a selection of, or effort to obtain, the things according to nature (Diogenes SVF III 44-6, and Antipater SVF III 57-9).

38 4 2: Idem itaque erit, si dixerō 'summum bonum est animus fortuita despicens, virtute laetus,' aut 'invicta vis animi, perita rerum, placida in actu cum humanitate multa et conversantium cura'.

39 In the remainder of this definition, *perita rerum* is an elliptical reference to Chrysippus' definition of the supreme good as 'living in accordance with experience (κατ' ἐμπειρίαν) of the things that happen by nature' (SVF III 4).

40 4 2-3, 4 5, and 5 3.

41 See esp. 4 4.

references to human judgment round out his highly selective depiction of the four main virtues.⁴²

As in Panaetius' simile of the archers, persons may achieve the single goal of happiness by aiming for different virtues. The happy person, of course, has all the virtues; for by attaining one virtue, he attains them all. Nonetheless, he will practice some virtues rather than others, depending on his particular circumstances and inclinations. In his chart of the virtues, Seneca sets out a great variety of virtues, under various descriptions, to entice and impel the student. By selecting any one of these virtues or any particular definition, the student may attain the goal of happiness. Although Seneca does not base his definitions on an analysis of different kinds of human nature, his deployment of virtues offers a variety of strategies from which the student may choose one that suits his personal inclinations. A student who is more inclined toward a public life, for example, may be more attracted by Seneca's third definition; one who is inclined toward an intellectual life may be more attracted by the sixth definition; a person who is more inclined toward indulgence may make temperance his aim; another may aim for courage.

Although Seneca's definitions cover the entire range of virtues, he gives special prominence to magnanimity, as joined by gentleness and sociability. In this particular view of the virtues too, Seneca seems to have been influenced by Panaetius. Whereas the early Stoics regarded magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία) as a subdivision of courage, Panaetius substituted it for courage as one of the four main virtues.⁴³ Panaetius insisted that magnanimity must lack the brutality that is typical of beasts

42 4 5-6 2

43 Following Panaetius, Cicero lists *magnanimitas* as one of the four virtues at *de Officiis* I 152; he also refers to magnanimity at *de Officiis* I 13, 15, 17 and 61 under various descriptions, all of them including mention of a 'great' mind. Pohlenz (1934), 40-55, and Dyck (1981), among others, have shown that Panaetius elevated magnanimity to the status of courage (contra Rist [1969], 194-5). According to Panaetius, magnanimity is subdivided into *rerum externarum despicentia* and a willingness to toil (Cicero *de Officiis* I 66). The latter quality is φιλοπονία, which earlier Stoics recognized as a subdivision of courage (SVF III 269). *Invictus* is part of Cicero's description of magnanimity at *de Officiis* I 15 (*animi excelsi atque invicti magnitudine ac robore*). Invincibility characterizes εὐψυχία in particular, which the early Stoics recognized as a subdivision of courage and defined as 'knowledge of a soul that keeps itself unconquered' (ἀήττητον) (SVF III 264).

and be joined by justice and humanity.⁴⁴ He also assigned new importance to human cooperative values by substituting sociability for the virtue of justice and classifying justice as one of two subdivisions of sociability, together with liberality. In his series of definitions, Seneca refers to justice only by referring to the general social virtue of 'humanity and care for one's associates'.⁴⁵

In his effort to rally his students, Seneca considers not only their personal needs, but also the strong resistance commonly offered to the Stoic view of happiness. One entrenched perception was that Stoic happiness is a stern and cheerless ideal – hardly such as to make a person happy. Seneca counters this perception by emphasizing, from the beginning of his definitions, the joy (*gaudium*) that follows upon virtue. Seneca describes this joy in his first definition as 'huge, unchanging, constant', by contrast with the trivial pleasures (*voluptates*) that arise from the body. In his second definition, he sums up the mind's attitude toward itself as that of being 'glad in its virtue', *virtute laetus*. 'True pleasure', he writes pointedly in his fourth definition, is 'the disdain of pleasures' (*vera voluptas erit voluptatum contemptio*).⁴⁶ In

⁴⁴ Cicero *de Officiis* I 61 and 81.

⁴⁵ According to Cicero's report (*de Officiis* I 20, cf. 42), Panaetius divided sociability into justice and beneficence (*beneficentia*), the latter of which is identical with liberality (*liberalitas*). Cicero refers to sociability as *communitas* at *de Officiis* I 152 and 159; cf. I 20 and 157. It is plausible that Panaetius used the term κοινωνία to designate this main virtue; he might also have used εὐκοινωνησία, which the early Stoics classified as a subdivision of justice (SVF III 264). It is also possible that Panaetius identified sociability with φιланθρωπία. In Seneca's account, *humanitas* and *conversantium cura* together may be a translation of φιλανθρωπία, which the early Stoics defined as φιλική χρῆσις ἀνθρώπων (SVF III 292).

⁴⁶ In this gnomic statement (4 2), Seneca exceptionally uses the term *voluptas* instead of *gaudium* to refer to the joy of a virtuous mind, in order to score a rhetorical point. *Gaudium* corresponds to χαρά, *voluptas* to ἡδονή. The early Stoics subdivided χαρά, one of the three εὐπάθειαι, into τέρψις, εὐφροσύνη, and εὐθυμία (SVF III 432). It is possible that Seneca designates either of the first two subdivisions by *hilaritas* or *laetitia* (both of which are used at 4 4); but his use of these and related terms throughout *de Vita Beata* is fluid. His use of the adjectival and verbal forms is especially free. In *de Tranquillitate*, Seneca translates εὐθυμία ('contentment') by *tranquillitas* (2 3); his definition of tranquillity as 'not being shaken' (*non concuti* 1 3) and his extended treatment of it as satisfaction with one's circumstances suits the Stoic definition of εὐθυμία as 'joy in one's way of life or in being satisfied (ἀνεπιζητησία) with everything' (SVF III 432).

his fifth definition, Seneca expands on the contrast between joy and pleasure: the virtuous mind is attended by 'continuous cheerfulness (*hilaritas*) and gladness (*laetitia*) that is deep and comes from the depths'. This joy is 'great and unmoved'. It far outweighs the pleasure that arises from the 'tiny, trivial, fleeting motions of the insignificant body'.⁴⁷

In opposing joy (*gaudium*) to pleasure (*voluptas*), Seneca has heightened a contrast that was standardly accepted by the Stoics. The Stoics were agreed in opposing joy (*χαρά*), defined as 'reasonable elation', to pleasure (*ἡδονή*), understood both as the sensation of bodily pleasure and as the emotion of 'irrational elation'.⁴⁸ They were also agreed that joy is something that supervenes on virtue, a so-called *ἐπιγέννημα*.⁴⁹ But whereas other Stoics held that joy accompanies virtue only intermittently, Seneca maintains that joy follows virtue continuously, regardless of circumstances.⁵⁰ Seneca sets out the orthodox

It is likely that in *de Vita Beata* Seneca also uses *tranquillitas* as the equivalent of *εὐθυμία*, although it is not clear whether he views it as a subdivision of *gaudium*. At 15 2 Seneca distinguishes *gaudium* from *laetitia* and *tranquillitas*, and at 22 3 he uses the term *laetitia* to refer to either *gaudium* or a subdivision of it.

47 4 4-5

48 On the difference between joy and the emotion, or mental affection (*πάθος*), of pleasure, see SVF III 431-4, 438; the two definitions are *εὐλογος ἔπαρσις* and *ἄλογος ἔπαρσις*. The sensation of bodily pleasure must be distinguished from the affection of pleasure (see Rist [1969], 38-46); the former may accompany virtue, the latter is something bad. As Cicero points out (*de Finibus* III 35), the Stoics used the term *ἡδονή* to refer to both bodily and mental pleasure. In *de Vita Beata*, Seneca generally uses *voluptas* to refer to the sensation of bodily pleasure. He refers to the *πάθη* of fear (*metus* 43, *timor* 15 5), desire (*cupiditas* 4 3), and grief (*dolor* 15 5), but (probably to avoid confusion) avoids naming the fourth *πάθος*, pleasure, except insofar as he lists various kinds of vicious mental pleasure (*voluptas*) at 10 2.

49 SVF III 76

50 Diogenes Laertius (VII 98, = SVF III 102) and Stobaeus (*Ecl* II 68, = SVF III 103) both report that, like prudent walking, joy is a good that is not always present. In agreement with this view, Stobaeus (*Ecl* II 77, = SVF III 113) reports that joy is not a necessary good. Neither source states under what circumstances joy follows upon virtue; and modern scholars seem to have overlooked the information provided by Seneca's *Ep* 66. In addition to describing joy as something 'continuous' (*continua* 4 4) that attends the virtuous mind 'in any case' (*velit nolit* 4 4), Seneca later in *de Vita Beata* describes it as 'perpetual' (*perpetua* 22 3). Also, in his first definition Seneca describes *tranquillitas*, which is related to *gaudium*, as 'perpetual' (3 4).

Stoic doctrine in one of his *Letters*. He writes that 'our' people, the Stoics, hold that there are three types of goods: 'primary' goods, such as joy, which are found in a 'material' that is 'according to nature' (for example, wealth or a healthy body); 'secondary' goods, such as courageous endurance, which are found in a material that is contrary to nature (for example, torture, illness, or poverty); and intermediate goods, such as a modest walk or bearing, which are found in a wholly indifferent material.⁵¹ According to this division of goods, joy attends virtue only in the presence of external advantages. Seneca does not agree with this position, as he shows elsewhere in his *Letters* and his essays. In his view, joy depends only on virtue and accompanies it unceasingly.⁵²

51 *Ep* 66; see esp. 66 5 (partly at SVF III 115), where Seneca attributes the position to *nostris*, 14-15, 22-3, and 36-9. Seneca assumes the same threefold division in *Ep* 67. In *Ep* 66, Seneca consistently contrasts joy with pain or suffering (see esp. 66.14, 19, and 29). He also reports that, in the view of 'our' people, primary goods are 'to be wished for', *optanda*, and secondary goods 'to be avoided', *aversanda* (66.6). Translated into Greek terminology, primary goods are βουλητά (βουλευτέα, SVF III 91), that is, the object of βούλησις, one of the three εὐπάθειαι; secondary goods are the object of εὐλάβεια, another εὐπάθεια, which was defined as εὐλογος ἐκκλισις (SVF III 431). Joy, the third εὐπάθεια, results when one attains an object of βούλησις. While Seneca accepts this restricted view of joy in *Ep* 66, he modifies the Stoic position: he concludes *Ep* 66 by saying that he praises secondary goods more than primary goods, and that he even wishes for them (*Ep* 66 49-53). In *Ep* 67, Seneca attributes the view that only the primary type of good is 'to be wished for' (*optabile*) to 'some of our people' (*quidam ex nostris* 67 5); and he continues to defend his view that secondary goods are just as much to be wished for (*Ep* 67 3-16). This modification, which implies a subordination of εὐλάβεια to βούλησις, is a step toward the position that joy follows perpetually on virtue. Since Seneca does not commit himself to the position of 'our' people or 'some of our people', there is no contradiction with his view of joy as a perpetual consequence of virtue. It is not clear which Stoics may have preceded Seneca in claiming that joy follows perpetually on virtue. It is tempting to suppose that Panaetius may have had a part in this revision of Stoic doctrine. He wrote a (lost) book *Περὶ εὐθυμίας*, which Seneca probably used as one of the sources of *de Tranquillitate*, where *gaudium* is described as a perpetual consequence of virtue (2 4). Sandbach (1975), 67-8 and Inwood (1985), 174-5 have briefly discussed the relationship of external advantages to joy; their accounts run into difficulty, it seems to me, because they do not distinguish Seneca's position from that of other Stoics.

52 See esp. *Ep* 59 2 and 59 18, also *Ep* 23 4, 27 3, 72 4-9, 98 1, *de Constantia* 9 3, and *de Tranquillitate* 2 4. At *Ep* 23 4-5 and 98 1, Seneca contrasts the *gaudium* that requires external advantages with the *gaudium* that is based on virtue;

By assuming the inseparability of joy from virtue, Seneca gives special importance to joy, in contrast with the transient pleasures of the body. Later in *de Vita Beata*, as we shall see, he will modify the contrast between joy and pleasures by arguing that, even though pleasant circumstances add nothing to happiness, they add something to the wise person's joy.⁵³ Seneca holds this concession in reserve. For now, he insists that joy attends virtue regardless of circumstances. He exalts the joy that arises from virtue in order to reduce into insignificance the pleasures that arise from the body.

Only after fortifying the Stoic virtuous person with a deep and perpetual joy does Seneca take on his first critic. Seneca has just presented another 'face' of Stoic happiness, his sixth definition: the happy life 'is founded on correct and certain judgment, and is immutable' (*in recto certoque iudicio stabilita et immutabilis*).⁵⁴ Seneca has deferred this intellectualist view of happiness until he has shown the happy person thoroughly involved in practical endeavors and reaping joy from them. He now contrasts the mind's secure rationality with the blandishments of the body. Then he meets his first objection: 'But the mind, too, will have its own pleasures.'⁵⁵ Seneca does not identify his objector; but he is clearly a spokesman for the Epicureans. His point is that the person who seeks pleasure values not only bodily pleasures, but also mental pleasures. Seneca answers that these mental pleasures, which consist in dwelling on the pleasures of the body, belong to a madman. The Epicurean happy person, who is always enjoying pleasure because he can always enjoy mental pleasure, is no match for the joyful Stoic sage.

This skirmish is preliminary to a sustained debate in which Seneca defends virtue against pleasure as the source of happiness. This is a topic that Cleanthes and Chrysippus treated in detail; and it is likely that Seneca's account is strongly indebted to them.⁵⁶ Seneca's main

here (as in other places) Seneca uses the term *gaudium* to refer not only to the joy (*χαρά*) of the wise person, but also to the pleasure (*ἡδονή*) of fools.

53 22 3

54 5 3. Here Seneca makes use of the Stoic definition of the good as τὸ ἀμετάπτωτον ἐν ταῖς κρίσεσι καὶ βέβαιον (SVF III 542).

55 6 1

56 Seneca uses the same imagery of handmaid and mistress as Cleanthes (SVF I 553, cf. *de Vita Beata* 11 2, 13 10). Like Chrysippus (SVF III 21-2, 156), Seneca stresses the incompatibility of virtue with pleasure, including the existence of disgraceful pleasures (see esp. 7 1-3 and 15 3-4).

opponents are the Epicureans, who held that pleasure is the goal of life and that virtue is inseparably linked with pleasure as the means to it. Seneca argues energetically that pleasure cannot be admitted as a good jointly with virtue because, as a good, it would be incompatible with virtue. At the same time, Seneca grants that pleasures – that is, the sensory pleasures of the body – are admissible to the happy life, so long as they serve us and we do not serve them.

Seneca resumes the image of the army to show the place of pleasures in a happy life. After explaining that reason uses nature as its guide, he depicts the happy life as follows:

If we preserve the endowments of the body and the things according to nature with diligence and fearlessly, as though given for the day and fleeting, if we do not become slaves to them nor let these alien things occupy us, if we assign the adventitious gratifications of the body (*corpori grata et adventicia*) to the place that auxiliaries and light-armed troops have in a camp – let them serve, not command – : then indeed they are useful to the mind.⁵⁷

Like auxiliaries in an army, the pleasures of the body are useful, so long as they serve. According to one report, it was a Stoic view that pleasure has come into life as something that follows (ἐπακολουθήμα) on natural needs, such as hunger, thirst, and sex, in order to serve them, in the same way that salt serves the purpose of digestion; if pleasure rebels and ‘gets control of the house’, it generates the irrational striving of desire.⁵⁸ Seneca endorses this view in one of his *Letters*: ‘nature mixed pleasure in necessary things, not in order that we should seek it, but that its accession (*accessio*) should make the things without which we cannot live pleasant for us; if it should come with rights of its own, it is luxury’.⁵⁹ In *de Vita Beata*, Seneca highlights this serving function

57 8 2: Si corporis dotes et apta naturae conservavimus diligenter et inpavide tamquam in diem data et fugacia, si non subierimus eorum servitutem nec nos aliena possederint, si corpori grata et adventicia eo nobis loco fuerint quo sunt in castris auxilia et armaturae leves – serviant ista, non imperent – ita demum utilia sunt menti.

58 Clemens *Strom* II 491 (= SVF III 405); Clemens explains that there would be no need of pleasure if one could eat, drink, and have children without it; pleasure is not necessary in itself, but exists ‘for the sake of service’ (ὕπουργίας ἔνεκα).

59 *Ep* 116 3: voluptatem natura necessariis rebus admiscuit, non ut illam petere-mus, sed ut ea, sine quibus non possumus vivere, grata nobis illius faceret

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of pleasures by comparing them to military auxiliaries: they must serve the commanding authority, not usurp its place. In keeping with Stoic theory, Seneca presents pleasures as spontaneous accompaniments of natural needs ('adventitious gratifications'), having no function except to serve natural ends such as health and strength of the body.

Varying the military metaphor, Seneca demands: let virtue precede, bearing the standards.⁶⁰ If pleasure attends, it must follow, hovering 'like a shadow' around the body.⁶¹ These shadowy pleasures are nothing like the vehement, insane pleasures of the voluptuary:

By contrast, the pleasures (*voluptates*) of the wise are relaxed, moderate, almost languid, restrained, and hardly noticeable, since they come without being sought and, although they come by themselves (*per se accesserint*), they are not honored and are not received with any joy (*gaudio*) by those who perceive them. For they mingle and distribute them in life as play and jesting among serious things (*ut ludum iocumque inter seria*).⁶²

In the case of the wise person, the pleasures of the body come unsought; and they are so mild as to be hardly noticeable, unlike the huge, perpetual joy that comes from virtue. The pleasures of the body do not give rise to joy; for the wise person rejoices in his temperance, not in his pleasures.⁶³

Although the pleasures of the wise are restrained, they are a welcome amusement. In another image, which takes us far from the army,

accessio; suo veniat iure, luxuria est. In agreement with Clemens (see previous note), Seneca considers that pleasures are not necessary in themselves, but serve necessary natural ends, such as growth and procreation.

60 14 1

61 13 5. This description is indebted to Plato, who in the ninth book of the *Republic* (586a-8b) describes the pleasures of the desiring part of the soul as shadowy and unstable (esp. 586a-b) in contrast with the vastly greater, true pleasures of the rational faculty.

62 12 2: At contra sapientium remissae voluptates et modestae ac paene languidae sunt compressaeque et vix notabiles, ut quae neque accersitae veniant nec, quamvis per se accesserint, in honore sint neque ullo gaudio percipientium exceptae; miscent enim illas et interponunt vitae ut ludum iocumque inter seria.

63 At 10 3, Seneca writes that virtue 'is not glad in the use of pleasures but in temperance' (nec usu earum sed temperantia laeta est).

Seneca shows himself surprisingly susceptible to their delights. He admits that virtue may result in pleasure, but denies that virtue is sought because of pleasure:

Just as in a field which has been ploughed for a crop some flowers grow intermittently, yet so much work has not been undertaken for these little grasses, although they delight the eyes – for the sower had a different aim and this supervened (*supervenit*) – so pleasure (*voluptas*) is not a reward or cause of virtue but an accession (*accessio*); nor does it please because it delights, but if it pleases, it also delights.⁶⁴

For the virtuous person, pleasures are like the little flowers that come up spontaneously and intermittently in a field that is ploughed to bear a crop. Seneca admits these pleasures as a delight, although he insists that this delight is dependent on the virtuous person's approval. What makes the virtuous person approve is that the pleasures have been moderated by virtue.

Seneca's flowers are based on a Stoic image. According to another report about the Stoics, pleasure (ἡδονή) is something that supervenes (ἐπιγέννημα) on the attainment of natural ends: it comes about 'whenever nature by itself has sought the things that fit its constitution and acquires them, in the way that animals are cheerful and plants flourish'.⁶⁵ The things sought by nature as suitable to its constitution are such things as health and strength; nature seeks these ends through eating, drinking, and so forth. Described in the previous report as an ἐπακολουθήμα of natural needs, pleasure is now described more precisely as an ἐπιγέννημα of natural ends, with the addition that it is a kind of bloom.⁶⁶ Joy (χαρά) is also an ἐπιγέννημα, but of an entirely

64 9 2: Sicut in arvo quod segeti proscissum est aliqui flores internascuntur, non tamen huic herbulae, quamvis delectet oculos, tantum operis insumptum est – aliud fuit serenti propositum, hoc supervenit – sic voluptas non est merces nec causa virtutis sed accessio, nec quia delectat placet, sed, si placet, et delectat.

65 Diogenes Laertius VII 85 (SVF III 178): ἐπιγέννημα γὰρ φασίν, εἰ ἄρα ἐστίν, ἡδονὴν εἶναι ὅταν αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν ἢ φύσις ἐπιζητήσασα τὰ ἐναρμόζοντα τῇ συστάσει ἀπολάβῃ, ὃν τρόπον ἀφιλαρύνεται τὰ ζῶα καὶ θάλλει τὰ φυτά.

66 The Stoic simile of flourishing plants and animals, no less than the notion of 'accompaniment' or 'supervenience', is indebted to Aristotle's description of pleasure at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1174b31-33 as something that 'perfects' (τελειοῖ) an activity (ἐνέργεια) as 'a supervenient end' (ἐπιγιγνόμενόν τι τέλος) and not

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different kind. Analogously with pleasure, joy supervenes on the ultimate natural goal, virtue; and it is immeasurably greater than pleasure.⁶⁷ In his flower image, Seneca is not describing joy, but the short-lived, intermittent pleasures that follow upon the attainment of natural ends. As in his comparison of pleasures to auxiliaries, he views pleasures as spontaneous, unsought 'accessions', or ἐπιγεννήματα, that come when we 'preserve' natural endowments. But instead of singling out the serving function of pleasures, he now dwells on the metaphorical quality of pleasures as a kind of flourishing, and he hypostatizes them as flowers.⁶⁸

By objectifying pleasures as pretty little flowers growing in a field, Seneca almost subverts his doctrine. Just as flowers delight the eye, he proposes, so pleasures delight the mind of the virtuous person. Strictly speaking, however, the virtuous person does not delight in pleasures: he delights in the moderation of his pleasures. In emphasizing the delightfulness of the little flowers, Seneca almost places them where joy should be, as a permanent associate of virtue instead of a sometime companion. Pleasures attend virtue, but they do so as temporary 'accessions', and at a remove, as accompaniments of natural attainments or, metaphorically, as servants and slaves. In his flower image, Seneca gives the appearance of reducing this distance.

an inherent condition (ἐξίς), in the way that a seasonal bloom supervenes on those who have reached their peak (οἷον τοῖς ἄκμαίσις ἢ ὥρᾳ). In close agreement with Aristotle, Clemens (SVF III 405) reports that pleasure is 'neither an activity nor a disposition'.

67 This view is opposed to that of Long (1968), 80, and others, who identify the two kinds of ἐπιγεννήματα with each other.

68 At *Ep* 104 11, Seneca also uses the image of flowers to depict transitory delights: quidquid te delectat, aequae vide ut flores virides; dum virent utere; alium alio die casus excutiet. ('Regard everything that delights you in the same way as flourishing flowers; while they flourish, use them; chance will toss them out, one after another, on different days'.) In his use of the image in *de Vita Beata*, Seneca does not specify what corresponds to the crop, the *propositum* of the sower. Seneca points out that what is sought by the virtuous person is virtue itself (9 4). However, virtue corresponds only roughly to the sower's *propositum*. The virtuous person makes virtue his goal (τέλος) while pursuing a natural end, such as health. Thus, more precisely, what corresponds to the sower's *propositum*, the crop, is the virtuous attainment of a natural end; cf. Cicero's distinction between the selected end of an action and the supreme good at *de Finibus* III 22.

The Stoics differed widely among themselves in their classification of pleasures. Whereas all maintained that pleasure is not a good, some classified it among 'things in accordance with nature', or among 'preferred' things according to nature; others held that it is not according to nature. Panaetius is said to have distinguished between pleasure that is according to nature, and pleasure that is contrary to it.⁶⁹ Panaetius' position is related to a major innovation introduced by him into Stoic psychology. Instead of positing a unitary central mind (ἡγεμονικόν), Panaetius distinguished between two kinds of motions of the mind: reason, and impulse (ὁρμή).⁷⁰ Impulses must obey reason; they are subject to reason 'by a law of nature', and must be

69 According to Cicero (*de Finibus* III 17), 'most Stoics' did not admit pleasure among 'natural principles' (*principiis ... naturalibus*), that is, among 'first things according to nature'; and Stobaeus (*Ecl* II 80, = SVF III 136) reports that the pleasure of the body is 'neither preferred nor dispreferred'. But Diogenes Laertius (VII 102, = SVF III 117) lists pleasure among preferred things, and Aulus Gellius (XII 5 7-8, partly at SVF III 181) describes it as a natural principle. Sextus Empiricus (*adv Math* XI 73, partly at SVF III 155) reports that the Stoics did not classify pleasure as something preferred, then lists diverse Stoic opinions: pleasure is neither according to nature nor has any value (Cleanthes); pleasure is according to nature but has no value (Archedemus); and some pleasure is according to nature, and some contrary to it (Panaetius).

70 Cicero *de Officiis* I 101 and 132, and II 18 (= van Straaten frs. 87-9). Against the scholarly consensus, van Straaten (1946), 104-15, has argued that Panaetius, just like the early Stoics, did not distinguish an irrational from a rational part of the soul. I agree with van Straaten that Panaetius did not posit two kinds of soul, an irrational soul and a rational soul. But Cicero's wording *duplex ... vis animorum atque natura* (*de Officiis* I 101) and '*motus ... animorum duplices*' (I 132) shows that Panaetius distinguished between two kinds of powers or motions within a single central mind. I agree with the majority of scholars that this dualism is an important change from early Stoicism; it is a compromise between Platonism and early Stoicism (see Rist [1969], 182-4, and Inwood [1985], 292 n. 19). In addition, I suggest that Panaetius may well have divided the impulses (ὁρμαί) into spirit and a propensity for pleasure. In *Ep* 92, which deals with the happy life, Seneca accepts a twofold division of the mind (*principale*) into an irrational and a rational part, of which the irrational part is divided into a spirited part and a 'languid' part, 'given to pleasure' (92 1 and 8). This Platonizing account, which is regularly attributed to Posidonius, fits what we know about Panaetius. His distinction between two main character types (as I suggested earlier, n. 27) agrees with the distinction between spirit and desire; the virtue belonging to spirit is magnanimity, that of desire temperance. These virtues may be described as a single virtue belonging to the impulses in general (as at *de Officiis* II 18) or as two distinct virtues.

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'contracted and calmed' so as to be in accordance with nature.⁷¹ In particular, Panaetius believed, bodily pleasure must be despised as not fitting the dignity of a human being; and if anyone is given to it, he must be careful to set a limit to its enjoyment.⁷² Panaetius agreed with other Stoics that, instead of selecting pleasure as the natural end of the body, one should aim at bodily health and strength.⁷³ In one of his *Letters*, Seneca tells the anecdote that, when asked by a youth whether the wise man will fall in love, Panaetius said: never mind the wise man; we, who are far from wise, will take care not to fall into such a turbulent, uncontrolled emotion.⁷⁴ The point is that we must suppress an impulse which, in our case, is still excessive; the wise man will enjoy the pleasure of sex in a restrained form. As Cicero notes, Panaetius allowed that we may enjoy 'play and jesting' (*ludo ... et ioco*) after first satisfying 'weighty and serious matters' (*gravibus seriisque rebus*); when we engage in play, we must put a limit to it and not be carried away by pleasure.⁷⁵

71 Cicero *de Officiis* I 100-3 (*subiecti lege naturae* at 102, and *contrahendos sedandosque* at 103); cf. I 136 and 141. At I 100, Cicero writes that the motions of the mind are approved when 'adjusted to nature' (*ad naturam accommodati*).

72 Cicero *de Officiis* I 106. At I 105, Cicero reports that if a person is 'a little too prone to pleasures' (*paulo ad voluptates propensior*), he nevertheless hides the fact out of shame (provided he is not on a level with beasts).

73 Cicero *de Officiis* I 106

74 *Ep* 116 5 (fr. 114 van Straaten). Seneca adds that he is of the opinion that what Panaetius says about love applies to all the emotions.

75 Cicero *de Officiis* I 103. According to Aulus Gellius (XII 5 10), Panaetius abandoned Stoic ἀπάθεια. I suggest that he did so, in part, by admitting an inclination toward pleasure and aversion from pain as uneradicable, natural impulses. Just previously, in sections 7-10, Aulus Gellius attributes to the Stoics the view that human beings are by nature 'conciliated to pleasure' and 'alienated from pain' and that reason, which cannot eradicate these deep-rooted feelings, must force them into obedience and crush them as much as possible (8). This account has generally been attributed to Posidonius (see Rist [1969], 41). But it agrees closely with Panaetius' view of the relationship of the impulses to reason, and there seems to be no reason why it should not have been derived from Panaetius. Since rationality succeeds 'the first things according to nature' as the ultimate goal of nature, there is no incompatibility between the claim that we have, from birth, a natural affinity with pleasure and aversion from pain, and the claim that some pleasures – that is, those

According to Panaetius' analysis, the type of pleasure that is restrained by reason is in accordance with nature, whereas the excessive, irrational type of pleasure is contrary to nature. This distinction corresponds roughly to the orthodox Stoic distinction between sensory pleasure as an accompaniment of natural ends and the irrational emotion of pleasure. Seneca's account fits both orthodox Stoic theory and Panaetius' revision. It contains no indisputable signs of specifically Panaetian influence. But Seneca's emphasis on the suppression of pleasures, as well as on the need to follow nature, suggests a point of view very similar to that of Panaetius. Like Panaetius in Seneca's anecdote, Seneca concedes pleasures only to the wise man.⁷⁶ In close verbal agreement with Cicero's report on Panaetius, moreover, Seneca admits moderate pleasures as occasional 'play and jesting' among 'serious' concerns. It is plausible, therefore, that in his richly variegated account of pleasures Seneca draws on Panaetius as well as other Stoics.

At the same time, Seneca is leaning in another philosophical direction, that of his main philosophical opponent. Epicurus differed fundamentally from the Stoics in holding that all pleasure is good by nature. But he also distinguished between pleasures that satisfy natural desires and those that exceed the limit of nature; and he held that we must carefully observe this boundary by using our reasoning faculty. Epicurus agreed, therefore, with the general Stoic position that pleasures must be in accordance with reason; and, like Panaetius in particular, he distinguished between natural and unnatural pleasures. In accepting the Stoic distinction between moderate and excessive pleasures, especially as elaborated by Panaetius, Seneca assents at the same time to a basic Epicurean position. Epicurean pleasures, it turns out, are not wholly contemptible. So long as they are truly in accordance with nature, the wise person may welcome them with feelings of delight.

Seneca moves gradually toward a conciliation with the Epicureans while emphasizing his opposition to them. The Epicurean entered

restrained by reason – are according to nature, whereas others are not. If this is right, Panaetius was among the few Stoics (as reported by Cicero at *de Finibus* III 17, see n. 69) who admitted pleasure among 'natural principles')

76 11 1 (where *concedimus*, as supplied by Müller, is required as an emendation for *concedis*).

gently; but he is not easily dislodged. On his second appearance, he makes a personal attack: 'You too', he says, 'don't cultivate virtue for any other reason than that you expect some pleasure from it'.⁷⁷ For the first time, Seneca is personally called upon to prove, with his own behavior, the theory that he has been propounding. Seneca does not take offence, but insists that what he seeks is virtue. It is at this point that he offers the flower image: the person who seeks virtue will not reject pleasures – indeed, he will even welcome them, as an Epicurean might – , even though he will not seek them. Seneca concludes his reply by proclaiming that what 'I' seek is the good of a human being, not the stomach.

The Epicurean rises to the taunt. He comes back with another personal attack: 'you are dissimulating what is said by me'.⁷⁸ Seneca now sharpens the difference between himself and the Epicurean: 'You embrace pleasure, I restrain it'.⁷⁹ The ensuing crescendo of contrasts between 'you' and 'I' culminates in Seneca's claim: 'You do everything for the sake of pleasure, I nothing'. This contrast recalls Seneca to himself. In the heat of debate, he assumed the role of the wise person. Now he retreats: 'When I say that I do nothing for the sake of pleasure, I speak about that wise person to whom alone we concede pleasure'.⁸⁰ For the first time, Seneca splits his own person from that of the speaker. Acknowledging his personal inadequacy, he recedes momentarily behind the authority of the wise person and becomes himself a learner.

After giving further instruction, Seneca reasserts his philosophical authority; but this time a change has taken place. Instead of continuing to follow the Stoics, Seneca now embraces Epicurus as an ally. Contrary to the opinions of most Stoics, Seneca asserts, 'I am personally of the opinion that Epicurus' teaching is sacred and correct and, if you approach more closely, sad'.⁸¹ Whereas most Stoics say that Epicureanism is a teacher of vice, Seneca points out, he dissents from them on the ground that the appearance of Epicureanism belies the truth. There

77 9 1

78 10 1

79 10 3

80 11 1

81 13 1: In ea quidem ipse sententia sum – invitis hoc nostris popularibus dicam – sancta Epicurum et recta praecipere et si propius accesseris tristia.

is a rabble of dissolute people – always retching, always drunk – who claim to be Epicureans. But they are merely covering up their vices by using Epicurus' name, without realizing 'how sober and dry' Epicurean pleasure is.⁸² One cannot know this 'without being admitted inside'.⁸³ For Seneca, Epicurean doctrine is another philosophical sanctuary; and he is one of the few Stoics who has discovered it.

In introducing his account of happiness, Seneca said that he would select opinions from various Stoic predecessors, and that he might add something. He has selected from a wide range of opinions, with a leaning toward Panaetius. Seneca has not named any Stoic; and, as he said at the beginning, he does not bind himself to any particular Stoic. Panaetius' influence blends unobtrusively with that of other Stoics. But Panaetius' individualist, humanist view of happiness and the virtues, together with his account of pleasures, provides a ground that is especially hospitable to the development of Seneca's own ideas. To this blend of Stoic doctrines, Seneca adds something distinctively his own: he grafts something of Epicureanism to Stoicism. The perpetual joy of the Stoic sage is not only opposed to Epicurean pleasure, but accommodates what is noble about Epicurean pleasures.

Panaetian individualism, it turns out, has allowed Seneca to suit not only his students, but also himself. From the beginning of his exposition, Seneca has proposed a notion of happiness that allows him to pursue his own, personal inclinations. His emphasis on gentle magnanimity, his reference to humanity and care for others, and, especially, his contrast between joy and pleasure provide hints of a personal view of happiness. These hints give way to assertion when Seneca proposes to follow his own inclinations by forging an alliance with Epicureanism. The Epicurean objector now drops, appropriately, out of the discussion: if he is one of the rabble of voluptuaries, he is no true Epicurean and has been left to wallow among his kind; if he is a true Epicurean, he has become Seneca's associate in the search for happiness.

Seneca concludes his series of definitions with a resounding affirmation of the supremacy of virtue. 'True happiness', he proclaims, 'consists in virtue'.⁸⁴ In this last explicit 'face' of happiness, Seneca strips

82 12 3-4

83 13 3

84 16 1

all pleasure from happiness, as though he had conceded too much to the Epicureans. In fact, this stark new portrayal suits the real, 'sad' Epicureanism; as Seneca points out elsewhere, the Epicurean wise person is happy even on the rack.⁸⁵ Seneca now depicts the happy person as one who struggles uphill: taking his stand like a soldier, he bears his wounds willingly and, transfixed with weapons, dies for his commander. Despite all his sufferings, the virtuous person is free because he is obeying god.⁸⁶ Indeed, he emulates god. Like god, he has no need of anything outside himself: his virtue is sufficient for happiness.⁸⁷

With this extreme conclusion, Seneca's discussion reaches a turning-point. Having raised humans to the level of god, Seneca returns to the world of human endeavors. He admits that the person who has not yet reached the goal of happiness needs some external advantages. This admission brings on a new opponent, identified by Seneca as one of those who 'bark at philosophy'. Unlike Seneca's previous opponent, the Epicurean, this new opponent immediately launches a personal attack. He snarls: 'Why do you speak more bravely than you live?'⁸⁸ Then he heaps up a long list of charges: cowering before his superior, requiring money and living in luxury, being unnerved by misfortune, and so on. He is a fierce and tenacious enemy; and Seneca's entire remaining discussion is a response to him.

Initially, Seneca proposed to follow an exposition of what happiness is with a discussion of how to attain it. What the reader expects is a general account of how, according to the Stoics, one should deal with external circumstances. Instead, Seneca hastens to defend his own practice. This shift to self-defense is an abrupt turn in the structure of the essay; but it is not unprepared. The philosophical teacher must consider his own philosophical practice, and there are clear signs that Seneca has been considering his own philosophical authority all along. He now justifies his authority by narrowing the focus of attention to himself. At the same time, Seneca widens his examination to the practice of all philosophers, not just the Stoics. For the new opponent is hostile, not just to Seneca in particular, but – as Seneca presents him

85 *Ep* 66 47-8 and 67 15 (Usener 601)

86 15 5-7

87 16 1-3

88 17 1

– to all philosophers. This change, too, has been prepared. Seneca started his essay by addressing all who needed guidance. When the Epicurean opponent emerged from the audience, Seneca partly refuted, partly conciliated him, and thereby effectively eliminated his philosophical opposition. Secure in his alliance with true Epicureanism, Seneca now allies himself with all the most illustrious philosophers of the past. In this new alliance, he widens Panaetian individualism to accommodate his personal attitude toward wealth.

The accuser is especially incensed at the luxurious way of life of the would-be philosopher – the fine furniture, the old wine, the display of gold, the array of shade trees, and so on. By identifying his critic at the outset as an opponent of philosophy, Seneca deflects his charges from himself to all philosophers. But he soon shows that he feels personally attained. His immediate response to the indictment is one of total submission. Instead of denying the charges, Seneca adds further accusations, with the explanation that 'I am not wise ... nor will be'.⁸⁹ He raises himself momentarily by comparing the condition of his illness – his gout-ridden feet – to that of his accusers: 'In comparison to your feet, I am a runner'. But he immediately resumes his position of abject guilt by denying that this comparison applies to himself personally: 'I do not say this on my behalf – for I am in the depths of all vices – but for him who has achieved something'.⁹⁰

As we saw earlier, Seneca's 'I' is a slippery referent. In his present awkward shifting of roles, Seneca both claims superiority to his accusers and adopts the defensive strategy of total self-abasement. This Seneca, the target of bitter accusations, agrees in part with the Seneca of history. According to Tacitus, Seneca was accused in 58 AD by a political enemy, Suillius, of using his intimacy with the emperor Nero to accumulate vast wealth for himself: 'By what wisdom, by what philosophical precepts', Suillius asked, did Seneca acquire a huge sum of money within four years of friendship with Nero?⁹¹ It appears that

89 17 3

90 17 4

91 Tacitus *Annals* XIII 42; cf. Dio Cassius *Roman History* 61 10. In Tacitus' account, Suillius also accuses Seneca of adultery and claims that he accumulated his wealth through wills and usury. Dio adds other charges (without naming an accuser), including lust for power, flattery, love of 'youths past their prime', and the claim that Seneca served banquets on 'five hundred identical tables of citrus wood with legs of ivory'.

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from the year of Nero's accession, 54 AD, to the year 62 AD, when Seneca offered to donate all his wealth to Nero, Seneca was engaged in making a vast amount of money, while professing a philosophical disregard for wealth. It is plausible that Seneca's self-defence in *de Vita Beata* was prompted by Suillius' accusation, although it is also possible that he wrote the essay in response to similar attacks made at any time in the eight years of Nero's favor.⁹²

In *de Vita Beata*, Seneca's defence rests on the claim that he is not wise, nor even has made any progress toward wisdom, but is trying hard to be wise. There is no inconsistency between his words and his actions, Seneca argues, because he does not claim to be immune to the lure of external advantages. Sunk in the depths, he is someone 'crawling' (*reptabundus*) toward virtue from afar, in an attitude of adoration.⁹³ He asks his opponent to respect those who 'try great things'; and he puts in the mouth of a hypothetical person of this kind a long litany of virtuous resolves, introduced by a succession of emphatic 'T's'.⁹⁴ Seneca uses these anonymous 'T's to attest his own, high resolve.

In the manner of a legal defendant, Seneca gathers friends to his side by associating with himself all who have pursued philosophy in the past. His opponent's hostility, he claims, is directed not just against himself, but against all who strive for virtue – Plato, Epicurus, Zeno, and others.⁹⁵ Seneca defends himself vicariously by defending two philosophers in particular: the Cynic Demetrius, who practiced extreme poverty and, according to Seneca, was accused of not being poor enough; and an Epicurean, Diodorus, whose recent brave suicide was scorned for being inconsistent with his Epicureanism.⁹⁶ The charges against himself, Seneca implies, are just as absurd and spiteful.

Throughout his defense, Seneca is careful to display the character of a true philosopher, genuinely devoted to virtue. It would be

92 Giancotti (1957), 310-62, argues that since the charges addressed by Seneca in *de Vita Beata* might have arisen at any time between 54 and 62, it is impossible to fix a precise date of composition. Pohlenz (1941), 77, suggests 57 AD, a year in which charges against Seneca were rife, as the time of composition.

93 18 2

94 20 2-5

95 18 1

96 18 3-19 1

inappropriate for him, as a philosopher, to show hatred and spite; but it is entirely acceptable for him to counter his opponent's abuse with abuse of his own. Seneca brands his enemies as nocturnal animals that hide in the cracks, and as dogs that are likely to break their teeth on their victim.⁹⁷ Predictably, his opponent does not let go of his victim. He reiterates his initial accusation by asking: 'Why does that person (*ille*) pursue philosophy and live so wealthily?'⁹⁸ Seneca frames both the accusation and his subsequent answer by using the third person pronoun; but the reference could hardly be more pointed. Although the opponent adds other charges besides luxury, he now focuses on wealth as his primary charge; and henceforth Seneca devotes all his attention to this charge alone. Seneca continues his defence by trying another, milder approach. He first cites another example, the affluence of the Stoic Cato. Then he returns to philosophical argument, not indeed to persuade his anti-philosophical opponent, but to show any reasonable person who may be observing this acrimonious contest that he, Seneca, is worthy of being admitted to the company of philosophers.

Following Stoic orthodoxy, Seneca explains that wealth is among natural things that are 'preferred', like health and strength. The wise person seeks wealth in preference to its opposite, poverty, although he will be happy whether he is wealthy or poor. Wealth offers greater scope, or 'material', for the wise person than poverty: it allows a person to practice not just one virtue, that of bearing up, but a number of virtues – temperance, liberality, diligence, orderliness, and magnificence.⁹⁹ Proposing a new view of the philosopher, Seneca proclaims:

97 20 6

98 21 1: *Quare ille philosophiae studiosus est et tam dives vitam agit?* To the charge of wealth, the opponent adds: a concern for life, health, not being exiled, and having a long life. This list, which consists of things according to nature, anticipates Seneca's subsequent argument on the preferability of such things. Seneca trivializes the first charge by having the opponent join immediately afterward the charge of preferring life to death.

99 21 4-22 1. The virtue that belongs to poverty is *καρτερία* (SVF III 274). The virtues pertaining to wealth are: *temperantia* (σωφροσύνη), *liberalitas* (ἐλευθεριότης, SVF III 273), *diligentia* (which, I suggest, is identical with *νουνεχία*, SVF III 264, 268, cf. *de Officiis* I 103), *dispositio* (εὐταξία, SVF III 264, 272, 276, and *de Officiis* I 142), *magnificentia* (μεγαλοπρέπεια, SVF III 270). Diligence and orderliness have special importance in Panaetius' analysis of

'The philosopher will have ample wealth'. This wealth will have been acquired without injustice and can pass public scrutiny. It is both 'the gift of fortune and the fruit of virtue' (*munus fortunae fructumque virtutis*).¹⁰⁰

Although Seneca makes clear that wealth is not a good, he associates it closely with virtue. It was basic Stoic doctrine that the wise person prefers wealth to poverty, but is also indifferent to it; wealth provides greater scope for virtue, but the virtue practiced in wealth is equal to that practiced in poverty. Seneca abides rigorously by this doctrine, but by emphasizing preference above indifference, he creates a new link between wealth and wisdom. His description of wealth as the 'fruit of virtue' sums up this outlook. As Seneca said earlier about pleasure, wealth is not a reward or cause of virtue. It is the 'fruit of virtue' only in so far as it is the attainment of an end that is pursued virtuously. By conjoining 'gift of fortune' with 'fruit of virtue', Seneca gives fortune its due; but by linking wealth with virtue, he suggests that it is also virtue's due.

Seneca demonstrates with great enthusiasm how the virtues that deal with wealth, especially liberality, are to be practiced.¹⁰¹ These virtues, he explains, are used in 'easier and more pleasant' circumstances. Practiced on a downward slope, as opposed to a steep upward path, they require the rein, rather than the spur.¹⁰² Seneca has the wise man admit that he prefers these virtues, which are exercised 'more tranquilly', to the virtues practiced with 'blood and sweat'.¹⁰³ Clearly, these virtues suit Seneca. They constitute a final, implicit 'face' of happiness, and a final example of Panaetian individualism.

temperance. As Cicero reports, Panaetius held that we must arouse our powers of observation (*animadversionem*) and diligence (*diligentiam*) in restraining our impulses (*de Officiis* I 103, cf. 141), and that we must observe orderliness (*εὐταξία*, I 142). The Stoics viewed all 'indifferents' – things that are neither good nor bad – as material (*ὕλη*) for virtue (SVF III 114, 195)

100 23 3

101 23 5-24 3

102 23 5-7

103 25 8. At *Ep* 123 14, Seneca likewise differentiates between virtues practiced on a downward slope and those practiced on an upward path.

Earlier, we left the happy person as someone struggling upward: a dying soldier and a near-god. Now Seneca offers a more gentle vision: a virtuous person who prefers the easy downward slope to the arduous upward path. Seneca bases this view on orthodox Stoic doctrine: it suits every person, not just those who are temperamentally more inclined to an easygoing way of life. But it suits this latter group especially, provided that they put a tight rein on their inclinations. Although the two parts of Seneca's essay have different focuses, they complement each other. The first lays the foundation for the second by accommodating individual differences and stressing magnanimous indifference to fortune and the suppression of pleasures. In the second part, Seneca completes the process of applying to himself the definition of happiness as living 'in agreement with one's own nature'. For Seneca personally, happiness consists in living in agreement with his own inclination to be gentle and munificent, and, in general, to deal with circumstances that are easy rather than harsh.

In following his personal inclination, Seneca goes beyond Panaetius' own pragmatism. Panaetius gave much attention to the pursuit of external advantages; he also assigned special importance to liberality as one of the two chief social virtues. But Panaetius insisted on a fitting restraint in all these pursuits, and he proposed a limit to luxury.¹⁰⁴ Seneca likewise demands temperance in the use of wealth. But, significantly, he sets no limit to wealth itself, as though greater wealth implied a more vigorous virtue. Seneca differs from Panaetius in emphasis rather than in theory; but the resulting vision of the philosopher as a wealthy man is unique.

Seneca's final 'face' of happiness is attended by a special joy:

Some things, even though they are small in the sum total and can be withdrawn without the collapse of the supreme good, yet add something to the gladness (*laetitia*) that is perpetual and born from virtue: wealth affects and exhilarates [the wise person] as a favorable, speeding wind [affects] the sailor, and as a fine day and sunny place [affects a person] in the cold of winter.¹⁰⁵

104 At *De Officiis* I 140, Cicero writes that just as one should keep a limit on the cost of building a house, so one should observe a 'mean' (*mediocritas*) in the entire conduct of one's life. Panaetius is clearly influenced by Aristotle; he develops the notion of a mean within his theory of what is fitting (*πρέπον*).

105 22 3: Quaedam enim, etiam si in summam rei parva sunt et subduci sine ruina principalis boni possent, adiciunt tamen aliquid ad perpetuam laetitia et ex

Joy (or 'gladness') does not depend on wealth; for it follows necessarily upon virtue. Yet wealth 'adds something' to joy, like sunshine in winter or a favorable breeze. In one of his *Letters*, Seneca maintains that just as the power of the sun is not diminished by a cloud that passes over it, so virtue is not diminished by adverse circumstances, even though it shines less brightly and may appear less splendid to us.¹⁰⁶ In *de Vita Beata*, Seneca uses the same kind of imagery to show that favorable circumstances give a special glow, or splendor, to virtue by enhancing the joy that comes from it.

Seneca sketches only very briefly the theory illustrated by his images. The 'sum total' is the supreme good – happiness or virtue – together with its consequents, such as joy, and the material substratum, for example wealth.¹⁰⁷ In this sum total, wealth is something 'small'; its withdrawal does not cause the collapse of the 'principal' or supreme good, nor even (it must be understood) diminish it. Instead, its presence adds something to joy. Other Stoics, as we saw earlier, held that the wise person lacks joy altogether in adversity. In *de Vita Beata*, Seneca rejects this view, but makes a small concession: he holds that favorable circumstances 'add something' to joy.¹⁰⁸ Seneca does not

virtute nascentem: sic illum adficiunt divitiae et exhilarant ut navigantem secundus et ferens ventus, ut dies bonus et in bruma ac frigore apricus locus.

106 *Ep* 92 17-18. Similarly at *Ep* 27 3, Seneca writes that adverse circumstances, occurring amid the perpetual joy of virtue, resemble passing clouds that cannot overcome the light of day.

107 In contrast with other Stoics, Seneca maintains in *de Vita Beata* (15 2) that joy is not a constituent, or part, of the supreme good, happiness. He writes that joy (*gaudium*), though a good, is a consequence (*consequens*) of the supreme good, not one of the things that fill it (*consummantia*, corresponding to συμπληροῦντα). This position differs from that attested for other Stoics. According to Stobaeus (*Ecl* 2 71, = SVF III 106) and Diogenes Laertius (VII 96, = SVF III 107), goods are either productive (ποιητικά) or final (τελικά) or both, and joy is among goods that are τελικά, that is, goods that 'fill up' (συμπληροῦσι) the goal of happiness as parts of it. Seneca's view implies a division of goods that includes ἀπογεννήματα as a distinct category. At 4 5, Seneca expresses himself somewhat misleadingly by saying that the mind delights in joy, quiet, and so on, 'not as goods but as arising from its own good' (*non ut bonis sed ut ex bono suo ortis*). As Seneca has just said, each of these conditions is a 'good'; his point is that they are not the supreme good, but founded on it.

108 At *Ep* 92 5, Seneca reports that in his analysis of the supreme good Antipater 'assigns something to externals, though just a little' (*aliquid se tribuere dicit externis*

say that advantages 'increase' joy. Very likely, Seneca would deny any increase on the ground that, just like virtue, the deep joy that comes from virtue lacks nothing. But, just as virtue has greater scope among advantages, so the joy that is found in favorable circumstances may be said to be more expansive. The material addition makes no difference to the inherent quality of the experience.

In the earlier part of *de Vita Beata*, Seneca linked pleasure with virtue by comparing pleasures to flowers growing in a field. In likening wealth to a sunny place or a favorable breeze, Seneca places the virtuous person in similarly delightful surroundings. In his earlier discussion, Seneca stressed the difference of pleasures from joy, while admitting pleasures to the joyful existence of the wise person. Seneca does not abandon any part of this theory later. But his defence of wealth suggests a reason for the earlier glimpse of the delightfulness of pleasures. Pleasures that attend the achievement of natural ends spontaneously and are in accordance with nature would seem to be among the things that, though small, 'add something' to the joy of the virtuous person.

Seneca ends *de Vita Beata* by making an unlikely philosopher a spokesman for his view. Throughout the second part of his essay Seneca appears with a precarious philosophical authority. Although he asserts his authority against the slanderers who malign him along with all other philosophers, his defence rests on his assuming a position at the bottom of those who pursue philosophy. As speaker, he remains a philosophical teacher and leader. But as an ostensible sinner and learner, he is himself in need of someone to follow — a leader who can at the same time silence his opponents.

This leader comes into focus gradually. At first, Seneca identifies him merely as someone who has attained the supreme good. This sage delivers a speech that ends with the words 'I prefer to temper joys than to suppress sorrows'.¹⁰⁹ Seneca introduces his next speech by assigning the sage a name: 'that Socrates' (*ille Socrates*). Seneca has waited until now to mention Socrates, although his presence has been implicit

sed exiguum admodum). Seneca does not say that Antipater held that externals increase the supreme good; nor is there any reason to suppose that he did, any more than that Panaetius or Posidonius did (as Kidd has shown [1971]). Although Seneca does not endorse Antipater's position in this *Letter*, it is possible that Antipater assigned the same contribution to externals as Seneca does in *de Vita Beata*.

109 25 3

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since the exordium. Seneca uses the name generically at first, to designate any wise person; but he applies it to a distinctive view of the wise person. The name serves as a label for the archetypical wise person who prefers 'easier, more pleasant' circumstances to 'blood and sweat'. Seneca's Socrates asks to be placed in the chariot of Dionysus, to journey triumphantly over the world from east to west; and he asks equally to be placed in the cart of the conquered. He will cheerfully accept either condition, but he prefers 'to conquer than to be captured'.¹¹⁰ Socrates prefers to be god and Roman emperor at once; and the image of this new kind of philosopher, triumphant in splendid apotheosis, takes the place of the earlier image of the soldier dying for his god.

Finally, Socrates the individual, who suffered prison and execution at the hands of the Athenians, comes into view:

'Lo and behold, Socrates proclaims from that prison which his entry purified and made more honorable than any senate house: 'What is this madness of yours, what is that nature of yours, hostile to gods and men, that slanders virtues and profanes what is sacred with spiteful speech?'¹¹¹

In his other writings, Seneca repeatedly holds up Socrates' heroic endurance of prison and poison as an example of how one should conquer adversity;¹¹² he also commends him for his tolerance of poverty.¹¹³ In *de Vita Beata*, Seneca gives us a different view of Socrates. Socrates first assails his own enemies, who slandered him in his lifetime. Then he is raised by Seneca to heaven to survey all enemies of philosophy, together with their sniping attacks: 'Why does this philosopher (*hic philosophus*) live in a more relaxed way? Why does this philosopher dine more lavishly?' 'This' unnamed philosopher is none other than

110 25 4

111 27 1: Ecce Socrates ex illo carcere quem intrando purgavit omnique honestiorem curia reddidit proclamat: 'qui iste furor, quae ista inimica dis hominibusque natura est infamare virtutes et malignis sermonibus sancta violare?'

112 See esp. *Ep* 104 27-8 (where Seneca describes Socrates as: *perpessicium senem, per omnia aspera iactatum, invictum...et paupertate...et laboribus quos militares quoque pertulit*). See also *Ep* 24 4, 67 7, 70 9, 71 17, 98 12, *de Providentia* 3 12-13, *de Tranquillitate* 5 2-3, and *ad Helviam* 13 4.

113 *Ep* 104 27, cf. *de Beneficiis* 7 24 1.

Seneca; and the enemies of philosophy attack him together with Plato, Aristotle, Democritus, Epicurus, and Socrates himself.¹¹⁴ The essay ends with Socrates dooming these enemies of philosophy with a prophecy of imminent disaster.

The Stoics, as well as other philosophers, regularly used Socrates as an example of one who either lived virtuously or came closer than anyone else to doing so. In *de Vita Beata*, Seneca uses the example of Socrates in a way quite unlike the way anyone else ever did, or he ever did elsewhere – to make an impassioned plea on behalf of those who combine the pursuit of virtue with the pursuit of wealth, and, in particular, of ‘this’ philosopher who lives so lavishly. Unusual as this portrait is, Seneca has followed other post-Socratic philosophers in fashioning Socrates in his image.

As Seneca has refashioned Socrates, so he has reinterpreted Stoic ethics. In his other writings, Seneca regularly favors tough endurance and modest possessions. In *de Vita Beata*, he veers toward an easier way of life. He supports this preference with a philosophical doctrine that he has fashioned out of the theories of various Stoics, including Panaetius, together with some additions of his own. To call Seneca a philosophical eclectic or amateur, as he is often called, is to belittle his achievement. Seneca responds to philosophical theory as a creed by which to live, and his philosophical creativity consists in the attempt to harmonize doctrine with practice. If a label must be used, perhaps ‘individualist’ might fit. For throughout his writings, and especially clearly in *de Vita Beata*, Seneca aims to fashion a theory that is consonant with his individual inclinations and practice.¹¹⁵

114 27 4-5.

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