Not as a Deserter, But as a Spy: Seneca's Reception of Epicureanism

Within the history of Epicurus' reception at Rome the figure of Seneca the Younger occupies a position of particular interest. Though not himself an Epicurean, Seneca is deeply engaged with Epicurean thought and Epicurean texts; in fact, he refers to Epicurus or to his doctrines and members of his community more than eighty times, in eight of his works, including over forty direct quotations from Epicurean writings.[1] Yet his reactions are initially hard to fathom. At times painstakingly accurate, he is also capable of what seems like willful misrepresentation of Epicurus' views; often antagonistic, he is also on occasion strikingly appreciative of what Epicurus has to offer. On some points he does not hesitate to express as his own view ideas which he knows to be Epicurean in origin. More than that, he will sometimes modify and develop those ideas in ways that make him a fascinating and yet puzzling case of Epicurean influence outside the Garden.

The complexity of Seneca's response at one time made him the case in point for that older view of Roman philosophy that spoke of "eclecticism." Indeed the very notion of eclecticism as formulated by Eduard Zeller and Karl Praechter was devised in part as a way of accounting for Seneca's extraordinary attitude toward the rival school.[2] Even Pierluigi Donini, who in 1988 effectively demolished the wider picture of philosophy under the Roman empire as predominantly eclectic, finds Seneca to be "a completely isolated and peculiar instance."[3] More recently, numerous careful studies of the particulars of Seneca's thought have established across the board that Seneca is indeed what he claims to be, a committed though not subservient adherent of Stoicism in all its essentials.[4] For that reason it is all the

[1] A full list of references is provided in Ferguson (1990), 2280-2; most can also be found grouped by topic in Motto (1970) . Lana (1991, 263-8) compares the citations from Epicurus with those from other authors.
[2] Donini (1988) provides an astute overview of this development.
[3] Donini (1988, 25). However Donini does not mean to say that Seneca is eclectic; quite the opposite (33).
[4] See for example Rist (1989); Cooper (2004); Inwood (2005) 23-64, 132-57; Graver (2007), 125-32.

more pressing that we should seek out some way of understanding his overall approach to the teachings of Epicurus. A comprehensive review of the evidence is in order.

In what follows, I collect and study most of the relevant passages, not taking them chronologically but rather grouping them loosely by topic. In so doing I hope to bring out the thinking behind Seneca's approach, which is more consistent and principled than has usually been recognized.[5] Toward the core commitments of Epicurean philosophy—Epicurus' anti-teleological physics and cosmology, his hedonist ethics, and his seemingly utilitarian approach to other-concern and friendship—Seneca is consistently hostile, as befits one whose instincts are those of a Stoic. He is careful, though, to identify some *de facto* common ground between the two schools on the question of whether philosophers should participate in politics or withdraw into a life of study and contemplation. Meanwhile he willingly endorses a number of points made by Epicurus concerning the psychology of the individual and the therapeutic strategies that are most likely to assist moral progress. However, this agreement does not ever carry with it any general approval of the *a priori* commitments of Epicureanism. It is rather a practical appreciation for Epicurus' sensitivity to the nuances of human behavior. When Epicurus and Metrodorus stray outside the bounds of sound empirical observation— as they do, for example, in seeking satisfactory answers to the problems of extreme pain and grief—Seneca will again abandon their views as implausible and wrong. In the main, though, he finds that in the realm of human behavior, Epicureanism delivers sound insights that can be as useful within a Stoic system as in their original setting.

EXTENT AND PROVENANCE OF SENECA'S KNOWLEDGE

Seneca's familiarity with the Epicurean school and its doctrine was extensive and detailed. Concerning Epicurus himself he knows that he lived in Athens and that his personal habits were abstemious (*VB* 12.4; *Ep*. 18.9). He is able to quote from Epicurus' letters concerning the character of his friends Metrodorus,

[5] Earlier comprehensive treatments include André (1970), Schottländer (1955), Mutschmann (1915).

Polyaenus, Idomeneus, Pythocles, and Hermarchus, and can give a date for at least one of these letters.[6] He knows, too, that these friends were philosophers in their own right, but he believes that their views were so close to those of Epicurus as to justify some casualness in attribution.[7] On the basis of a letter exchange with Metrodorus, he infers that Epicurus was little known in his lifetime (*Ep*. 79.15-16). He knows of Epicurus' deathbed suffering from urinary blockage and dysentery and can quote his dying words (*Ep*. 66.47, 92.25).

In matters of doctrine he shows a broad understanding of Epicurean ethics in particular and refers often to such key elements as freedom from pain and anxiety, the classification of desires, the basis of friendship, the preference for a retired life, and the interentailment of virtue and pleasure. He can also state accurately many points from throughout the Epicurean system, among them the intermingling of atoms and void, the downward movement of atoms, arguments against the fear of death, the elimination of logic from the curriculum, the effort to eliminate ambiguous terms, and the use of the term "rule" (*kanōn)* for philosophical methodology.[8]

It is possible that some of this information came to him by oral transmission, for he has some Epicurean friends, among them his kinsman Annaeus Serenus and the elderly Aufidius Bassus of *Moral Epistle* 30.[9] But he also speaks of reading Epicurean books, and although he does not mention the titles of these books, we can be confident that most of his knowledge has a textual basis. Determining what specific works he had on hand is more difficult, since many points of doctrine were stated in exactly the same words in more than one Epicurean text or were quoted or paraphrased in handbooks and in works by opponents of the school. In some cases the best we can do is to identify the works with which Seneca *appears* to be familiar when the doctrines he reports are compared with Epicurus extant writings. On this

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[6] *Ep.* 18.9, 21.3-5, 21.7, 22.5, 52.3-4, 79.15-16). The date given in *Ep.* 18.9 to "the magistracy *[i.e. archonship]* of Charinus" was probably copied from the superscription in his source.
[7] *Ep*. 14.17, 33.4, 81.11-12, 98.9.
[8] On downward movement see *Ep.* 72.9 (as a satiric comparison); on logic, ambiguity, and the *kanōn, Ep*. 89.11 and see Atherton (2009.212). The other points are all treated below.
[9] Serenus' allegiance seems clear in *Const. Sap.* 3.2 and 15.4, but in *Tranq. An.*1.10 he has abandoned the school in favor of Stoicism (Griffin (1992, 316)).

basis we can say that he appears to know the *Letter to Menoeceus,* because he quotes a phrase from *Ep. Men.* 130 in one of his letters and in another states Epicurus' formula for the highest good in exactly the form that appears in *Ep. Men.* 131.[10] He also quotes the exact words that we know as the first, fourth, and fifth of the *Key Doctrines*—although again, the *Key Doctrines* may themselves have been excerpted from other Epicurean works, in which case Seneca may be quoting the originals.[11]

Sometimes, too, Seneca quotes from Epicurean texts with which we are not otherwise familiar. In the *Moral Epistles,* especially, he is fond of quoting brief maxims from Epicurus' correspondence with friends, and many of these are from letters otherwise unknown to us. Five of Epicurus' letters are described at some length: the letter summarized in *Moral Epistle* 9, criticizing Stilpo's view on friendship; the dated letter to Polyaenus cited in *Moral Epistle* 18.9; the letter to Idomeneus on political participation quoted in *Moral Epistles* 21 and 22; the one on moral progress quoted in *Moral Epistle* 52.3-4, and the one described in *Moral Epistle* 79.15 concerning his friendship with Metrodorus.[12] Seneca also knows at least three letters by Metrodorus, one of which he quotes at some length in Greek.[13] Since he also describes what it is like to select Epicurean maxims out of their original contexts (*Ep.* 33), it is likely that he possesses complete texts for other letters as well, and that at least some of the other short sayings quoted in the *Moral Epistles* derive from this source. But he also must have access to some sort of *gnomologion* or maxim collection, for at one point he indicates that he is quoting from "the less well-known, uncirculated sayings of Epicurus" (*secretior nec inter vulgata Epicuri dicta, Ep.* 13.17).

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[10] *Ep.* 14.17, 66.45. Note, however, that in *Ep.* 14.17 he claims not to know whether the words he quotes are by Epicurus or by another of his school, evidence perhaps that his knowledge of the *Letter to Menoeceus* comes only through a *gnomologion* (Setaioli (1988, 184-8)).

[11] What look like exact quotations from the *Key Doctrines* are found at *Apoc.* 8 (*KD* 1), *Ep.* 30.14 (*KD* 4), *VB* 7.1 (*KD* 5).

[12] See especially Setaioli (1988, 171-82), which effectively counters Usener's assumption (1887, liv-vii) that Seneca knew only a *gnomologion*.

[13] *Ep*. 79.16, 81.11-12, 98.9, 99.25-6. In *Ep.* 81 Seneca does not say that the remarks of Metrodorus he refers to were made in a letter, but it seems likely in view of the other passages. The material in Epistles 98 and 99 is likely to be all from the same letter of Metrodorus. For the format of the citation in *Ep.* 99.25 compare the citation of Cicero in 97.3-4, and see, for all these matters, Setaioli (1988, 249-56).

Could the wealthy Seneca have possessed a large collection of Epicurean writings? His description of a work authored by his friend Lucilius seems relevant in this regard, where he says "it seemed light to me, though its bulk would seem at first glance to be that of Livy or Epicurus, not of your writings or mine" (*Ep.* 46.1). This remark suggests that he at least knows Epicurus' corpus to be of substantial length, comparable to Livy's multi-volume histories and certainly more extensive than Seneca's own writings. If he did have access to some substantial work—a long epitome or perhaps even *On Nature* itself, then we have an explanation for an unexpected citation of Epicurus in his meteorological treatise, the *Natural Questions.* Explaining various theories for the causes of earthquakes, Seneca quotes a long series of explanations in what he says are Epicurus' own words, explanations similar but by no means identical to the ones we find in *Letter to Pythocles* 105.[14] In addition, we might ask ourselves how he knows that the Epicurean gods inhabit the spaces between the worlds, a view not to be found in Epicurus' writings as we know them, although Cicero, too, associates it with the school.[15] Such information could perhaps have come from *On Nature* (if the view was indeed Epicurus' own), but alternative explanations are certainly available, including that Seneca sometimes repeats Epicurean doctrines or even entire quotations that he found in intervening works. For the citation in *Natural Questions,* for instance, he may have drawn on criticism of Epicurus contained in the meteorological compendium by Posidonius.[16] We should perhaps be content to conclude that Seneca's sources are at any rate more extensive than our own, and reliable enough to yield the basis for a sophisticated response.

Well informed as Seneca may be on some points, there are also some aspects of Epicureanism which he gives no indication of having studied. We find no mention in his works of the conservation of

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[14] *NQ.* 6.20.5-7 (the passage is given in Usener as fragment 151). In this context it is worth noting that Seneca in the *Natural Questions* sometimes follows the principle of multiple explanations, which we know as Epicurean (examples in Inwood 2005, 183). I am not sure, however, that this principle must have been derived from Epicurus. The meteorological tradition has its own conventions, and Seneca's use of it is rather different from what we find in Epicurus; see for instance *NQ* 5.5.1.

[15] Seneca mentions the point a number of times: *Ben*. 4.4, 4.19, *Ep*. 90.35, 97.15. For Cicero see *De Natura Deorum* 1.18, but that passage is too oblique to have been Seneca's source.

[16] Inwood (2005, 163-4).

matter, atomic shapes, or the atomic "swerve"; no specifics on the composition of the soul (although he knows it is made of atoms); nothing on *eidola,* sense-perception, or the validity of the senses; nothing on the origin of species, the development of civilization, or social contracts. Yet his failure to mention these points does not necessarily indicate ignorance. All of them are treated by Lucretius, whom he seems to know well, since he quotes him eight or nine times from widely scattered contexts. Perhaps Seneca simply considered these more abstract and theoretical dimensions of Epicureanism too far distant from his own concerns to be worth explaining to his readers.

PHYSICS AND THEOLOGY

Although there is no systematic treatment of Epicurean physics in Seneca's works, he does state a definitive position on atomism in *Natural Questions* 2.6-7, as part of his study of the physical properties of air. Before giving his own explanation of the causes of lightning and thunder, he finds it necessary to establish that air is a unitary body, and in order to do that, he must first dismiss the rival claim that air is composed "from discrete little bodies" or "particles" mingled with void. Those who defend this claim believe that it is proven by the ease with which motion occurs in air. But this is incorrect: motion in air, like motion in water, is enabled by *antiperistasis,* the retrograde flow that closes in behind a moving object.[17] In fact observation tells us that air must be a unified substance, since without unity and coherence it could not exhibit the "tension" *(intentio)* that is manifested in the various phenomena of air pressure: inflated balls, windstorms, trumpets and the hydraulic organ. The operation of "breath in tension" (*intenti spiritus*) explains a vast range of phenomena, from stone walls broken up by roots to the cohesion and movement of the human body and even the movements of the mind. Without it, Seneca insists, there could be nothing strong, and its own strength surpasses everything else.

Whether or not Seneca means this discussion to respond specifically to Epicurus, the attitude he takes toward particulate air is significant for his reception of Epicurean thought. His own understanding

[17] Compare Lucr., *DRN* 1.370-97, but the debate is older than Epicurus; see *Timaeus* 795a-80c. Seneca does not name Epicurus specifically in the passage.

of the world depends on there being a unified nexus of causality effected through the medium of *pneuma*—for his "breath in tension" is manifestly the same as the all-pervasive *pneumatikē tonos* that effects all causation in standard Stoic physics. A view which dissolves physical nature into particles interspersed with void is irreconcilably at odds with his and must be resisted at every turn. In a similar vein, he consistently expresses strong objections to the Epicurean theology that denies god or the gods any causal involvement with the world. For him as for other Stoics, god or Zeus is identical with the causal principle: he is "the intelligence of the universe … all that you see and all that you do not see," who "controls his creation both from within and from without."[18] To place god in the "spaces between the worlds" makes the gods lazy rather than blessed (*Ben*. 7.31.3, cf. 4.4), and leaves the world without a controlling intelligence: it will be "carried along without any plan by some haphazard process or by a nature that does not know what it is doing" *(NQ* 1 *pref.* 15).

Seneca recognizes that Epicurean theology is meant to remove the fear of divinities; in fact he agrees with Epicurus that an important function of natural science is to rid oneself of superstition (*NQ* 6.3). But he feels that freedom of anxiety comes at too high a price when god's beneficence is eliminated along the way. As far as he is concerned, one ought to be supremely grateful to god, who freely gives us everything that we have and everything that we are (*Ben.* 4.3). Epicurean theology makes this impossible.

> As for you, Epicurus, you remove god's weapons and leave him totally without arms or power and, in order that he should not inspire fear in anyone, you have cast him out beyond the limits of fear. You have no reason to fear this being, confined as he is by a huge insurmountable wall and separated from the reach and sight of mortals. He has no means to help or harm. Isolated from the company of animals, men, and things, in the space between our cosmos and another, he avoids the collapse of the worlds that crash above and around him, deaf to our prayers and indifferent to us. Yet you want to look as if you are venerating this being just like a parent with, I suppose, the same grateful heart; or, if you do not wish to look grateful, why do you worship him, given that

[18] *NQ* 1 *pref.* 13, trans. Hine (2010).

> you receive no benefit from him but are yourselves formed of atoms and those motes of yours combining through blind chance?[19]

Epicureans will respond that they worship god from sheer awe ("because of his surpassing majesty and his unique nature"), but such a non-utilitarian attitude makes little sense coming from them. "Suppose I grant that you really do this without any reward or hope to induce you. That shows that there is something to be chosen for its own sake, something that induces you by its own worth—that is, the honorable. But what is more honorable than gratitude?"[20]

ETHICS

Seneca's response to the core positions of Epicurean ethics is of a piece with the cosmological and theological postulates just described. In Book 4 of *On Benefits* and also in the essay *On Happiness (VB),* he distinguishes sharply between his own views and those of Epicurus, stating as usual his adherence to the Stoic position that virtue alone is the human good. To the hedonist's essential postulate that pleasure is the goal of all rational behavior he is unremittingly hostile: it is "putting the highest good in the belly," "coupling things that are opposites," i.e. virtue and pleasure, and "making virtue the handmaid of pleasure" (*VB* 7.1, 7.3, 13.5). On this point his tone tends to be sharply polemical:

> We are in conflict with the Epicureans, that effete and sheltered crowd who philosophize while partying, and for whom virtue is the servant of the pleasures, obeying them, serving them, and looking up to them. *(Ben.* 4.2.1)

Likewise he complains, playing on the gender stereotypes of the Roman elite, that the Epicurean good is "effeminate" and Epicurean sayings typically unmanly (*Ben*. 4.2.4, *Const. Sap.* 14.5). All the same, he

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[19] *Ben.* 4.19, trans. Griffin and Inwood (2011).
[20] *Ben.* 4.19.

understands quite well that Epicurus is not a mere devotee of pleasure as commonly understood. Although his criticisms are sometimes aggressively phrased, he credits Epicurus with a serious position in ethics, and his objections are properly philosophical ones. He grants that the "pleasure of Epicurus" *(voluptas Epicuri)* is in reality "sober and austere" (*VB* 12.4). This refers in part to the personal habits of Epicurus himself, which he cites with approval elsewhere (*Ep.* 18.9, 33.2). But it also applies more generally to the practices within the school and to the life recommended by Epicurean teaching, which is "chaste, upright, and if you look closely, severe" (*VB* 13.1).

The problem he sees is that even if serious adherents of Epicurus' teachings do maintain an austere style of life, there are many who will be led astray by their talk of pleasure to believe that philosophy sometimes gives license to indiscriminate pleasure-seeking. Concern over this perception motivates him to polemicize with little regard for what he knows of the actual style of living within the Garden. His real target is the licentiousness that results from a mistaken impression of Epicurean ethics—an impression which he faults the Epicureans themselves for creating.

> The reason why your praise of pleasure is pernicious is that what is honorable in your teaching lies hid within, what corrupts is plainly visible. … Its mere outside gives ground for scandal and incites to evil hopes. The case is like that of a strong man dressed up in a woman's garb; you maintain your chastity, your virility is unimpaired, your body is free from base submission—but in your hand is a tambourine! Therefore you should choose some honorable superscription and a motto that in itself appeals to the mind; the one that stands has attracted only the vices.[21]

Elsewhere he imagines the discomfiture of one who enters the Garden after being attracted by the sign above the door, "Here, Guest, will you be well entertained; here pleasure is the highest good"—only to be received with "a plate of porridge and a generous goblet of water" (*Ep.* 21.10). The situation is comical; nonetheless the sign ought to be changed.

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[21] *VB* 12.5, 13.3, trans. Basore (1932).

At the theoretical level, Seneca is familiar with the basis of Epicurean asceticism in the hedonic calculus and in *Key Doctrine* 5, of which he gives a Latin version: "It is not possible for pleasure to be separated from virtue … no one lives honorably without living pleasurably, nor pleasurably without also living honorably" (*VB* 7.1). He recognizes that this doctrine makes virtue a necessary condition for pleasure and can cite at least two Epicurean arguments in support of this claim: that intelligent management (i.e. the virtue of prudence) is needed if one is to maximize one's pleasure over time, and that those who devote themselves unreservedly to the pleasures of the flesh necessarily suffer mental turmoil (*VB* 10.2, 12.1). Elsewhere he admits, again apparently on the basis of *Key Doctrine* 5, that for Epicurus anyone who is virtuous will also have pleasure (*Ep.* 85.18).[22] He knows, too, that Epicureans emphasize mental pleasures, specifically those of memory and expectation (*VB* 6.1, 10.2).

But from a Stoic perspective none of this is enough. Virtue cannot play an instrumental role, for the meaning of virtuous conduct changes if one behaves prudently or temperately in order to gain some further reward. Nor is it satisfactory to say that virtue is both necessary and sufficient for a pleasurable life. For the Stoic, virtue, not pleasure, must be the very thing that makes life good. This is not to say that a life of virtue needs to be disagreeable. Seneca in fact agrees with his Epicurean interlocutor that engaging in virtuous conduct brings pleasure to oneself. For him, however, as for the early Stoics, such pleasure is not what motivates the virtuous person; instead, it is a by-product *(accessio),* like the poppies that grow around the edges of a cultivated field.[23] The true reward for virtuous conduct is the fact that one is behaving virtuously. "The highest good is in excellence of mind itself and in the judgments of such a mind" (*VB* 9.3). As for the Epicurean emphasis on mental pleasures, it is not specific enough to identify the form of pleasure that a virtuous person can legitimately experience. For mental pleasures can also

[22] From what Seneca says in *Ep.* 85.18, it seems that Epicurus (who may use a different criterion for sufficiency; see Inwood (2007, 229-30)) holds that virtue always yields a pleasurable life and yet denies that it is *sufficient* for a pleasurable life. But Seneca himself thinks Epicurus is committed to the sufficiency thesis.

[23] *VB* 9; compare Diogenes Laertius 7.86.

consist in such discreditable feelings as "a too high opinion of one's self" or "extravagant joy springing up from very small and childish causes."[24]

Seneca takes a similarly strong position on Epicurus' general approach to justice and other-concern. The notion that the justice of nature might be nothing other than the pledge of reciprocal utility (*KD* 31) is not one he can accept: as he understands it, Epicurus merely denies there is any such thing as what is just by nature (*Ep.* 97.15). Although Epicurus can offer consequentialist arguments in favor of some forms of service to others, these arguments do not accurately describe the motivations of people who are genuinely virtuous (*Ben.* 4.3). On this point, too, Seneca offers a theological argument, saying that divine beneficence is explicable only on an account which makes beneficence choiceworthy in itself. Naturally the Epicurean will deny that the gods are beneficent, but the argument from common conceptions will refute him, for people of all nations feel gratitude toward the gods (*Ben.* 4.4).[25]

Similar in kind, but more specific, are his complaints against the Epicurean position on friendship. Unlike Cicero, Seneca does not recognize any basis in Epicureanism for disinterested friendship. In his most extensive treatment of the subject in *Moral Epistle* 9, he speaks only of amicable behavior which promotes the agent's material interests via reciprocity. His own view is that friendship, like beneficence in social relations generally, loses its value unless understood as arising from disinterested motives. Thus while he and other Stoics are in agreement with Epicurus that the wise person has need of friends, the basis of friendship is different: the Epicurean cherishes his friends as a matter of enlightened self-interest, "to have someone to sit beside him in illness, or to assist him in prison or in need" (*Ep*. 9.8); the Stoic does so as a means of exercising the virtues.

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[24] *VB* 10.2. Except in *Moral Epistle* 66 (for which see note 26 below), Seneca does not seem to recognize the Epicurean distinction emphasized by Cicero in Books 1 and 2 of *De Finibus* between pleasures of activity (kinetic or "in movement") and pleasures of state (katastematic). *VB* 7.4 treats *all* pleasures as kinetic. [Here we may want to add an internal ref. to J. Purinton's chapter on Epicurean hedonism.]

[25] Arguments from common conceptions (*communis sensus)* and from the agreement of all (*consensus omnium*) play an important role in Epicurean theology: see Obbink (1989, 190-94); Konstan (2011, 61-69).

> "Why make a friend?" To have someone I can die for, someone I can accompany into exile, someone whose life I can save, even by laying down my own. What you describe is a business deal, not a friendship, for it looks to its own advantage; it thinks in terms of results (*Ep*. 9.10).

Seneca would be "talking like an Epicurean" if he were to say that the interests of two friends could ever be fundamentally at odds (*Ep.* 48.2). His own view is exactly the opposite: friendship requires each of the friends to live for the other in everything, in a commonalty (*consortium rerum omnium*) that is grounded in the bond shared among all human beings. "For he who has much in common with a fellow-human will have everything in common with his friend" (*Ep.* 48.3).

On all these doctrinal points Seneca expresses sharp disagreement with Epicurean views, and with good reason, for the theoretical commitments he adopts in calling himself a Stoic are indeed fundamentally opposed to the main assumptions of Epicurean hedonism. On those few occasions when Seneca does find a point of agreement with Epicurus on a philosophical doctrine with this kind of centrality, he draws attention to it as an *a fortiori* argument for the rightness of the Stoic view. If even Epicurus, who "indulged the body the most," believes that pain cannot impair the blessedness of the wise, then the Stoics' claim to that effect cannot be thought incredible or outside the realm of human nature (*Const. Sap.* 16.1, *Ep.* 66.47-8). In a more intricate example, Epicurus is invoked in one of the longer *Moral Epistles* (= *Ep*. 66) to support Seneca's argument that all goods are of equal magnitude: someone who is rejoicing in the safety of his homeland is not experiencing a greater good than one who is enduring illness or torment in a courageous manner. The Stoic argument is that virtue, being a kind of integrity and harmony, is the sort of psychic condition which cannot alter in degree, and so all the activities of virtue must be equally virtuous and equally good. Remarkably, a homologous claim can be found within Epicureanism, for Epicurus' "highest and happiest good" consists in freedom from pain in the body and freedom from disturbance in the mind, and these conditions, once fulfilled, cannot be increased in degree any more than the Stoic goods can (*Ep.* 66.45). Furthermore, Epicurus' own deathbed letter provides evidence that his blessedness was not diminished by the compresence of bodily pain. Seneca thus takes

him to be committed to the view that there are some goods which a person might not choose to experience, but that when they do occur are equal in magnitude to the highest good.[26] Triumphantly, he concludes that since Epicurus, too, maintains the formal thesis concerning equality of goods, the claim must be all the more defensible for Stoics (*Ep.* 66.47-48-8)

LEISURE AND CONTEMPLATION

The value the Stoic finds in service to others can also be expressed as an admonition to political involvement, in opposition to the Epicurean maxim "live unknown." Seneca regards quietism as a hallmark of the school ("to rest with Epicurus," *Brev.* 14.2) and in some contexts indicates clearly that he finds it morally objectionable. In his view, Epicureans' idea of pleasure is "to give the body to sloth" and "hide out in the shade" (Ben. 4.13.1); a typical Epicurean "praises civic repose and lives amid songs and parties" (*Ep.* 88.5); to live in retirement is "to lower yourself to Epicurean maxims" (*Ep.* 68.10). The issue of leisure is not straightforward, however, for Stoic philosophers, too, abandon the rigors of political action in order to pursue the activities they like best, namely study, discussion, and writing. Indeed it is not easy to see how one can be a philosopher at all without secluding oneself to some extent from the demands of public service, and Seneca, being a veteran of the imperial administration, fully appreciates what the *bios theoretikos* has to offer him.

In his essay *On Leisure,* he does what he can to resolve the tension in his own position. He remarks at first that to speak in favor of a life of study seems like "preaching the doctrines of Epicureanism" (*Ot.* 1.4). But while Stoics favor a life of action, they can also supply various justifications for a philosophical retreat. For instance, one may have some chronic illness, or one may live in a state that

[26] The argument is interesting not only for its opportunism but because it suggests an awareness on Seneca's part of a difference in structure between kinetic and katastematic pleasure. Epicurus does not maintain the equality of *all* goods; i.e. of all pleasures: kinetic pleasures differ in magnitude. Seneca's point, however, is that some Epicurean pleasures are defined by privation (*kata sterēsin*; cf. *Ep.* 87.39), and that privation is a non-scalar property in the same way as consistency is.

is too corrupt to benefit from one's endeavors. Essentially, the Stoic is obligated to serve the public "unless there is some obstacle" (*nisi si quid impedierit)* while the Epicurean is encouraged to refrain "unless some need arises" *(nisi si quid intervenerit, Ot.* 3.2-3). The kinds of needs that would impel an Epicurean into the public sphere would presumably be utilitarian ones, for Seneca comments later that Epicurus' hedonic calculus commits him to action in some instances (*Ot*. 7.2-4). He thus claims to find some common ground between the schools. But this is without minimizing the differences between them. Epicureanism is still "the voluptuary sect" and the object of "the implacable hatred we have decreed toward those whose ends differ from ours" (*Ot.* 7.4, 7.1). If the positions overlap it is only because both allow for exceptions to their principal biases.

We find a deeper exploration of the tensions concerning leisure and contemplation in the *Moral Epistles.* From the very beginning of the collection Seneca repeatedly urges his friend to retire from his career in public service, withdraw from all society, and devote himself to a life of study and reflection. In brief, Lucilius should imitate Seneca himself and "spend life in obscurity" *(vitam per obscurum transmittere, Ep*. 19.3). Such advice is admittedly at odds with the Stoic injunction to remain active throughout life (*Ep.* 8.1, 68.2), and Seneca actually draws attention to the parallel with the Epicurean λάθε βιῶσας (*Ep.* 7.10, 22.5). Yet he also insists that a philosophical retirement is in accordance with Stoic ethics as a whole—provided one's leisure is put to good use. In justification he invokes an argument mentioned only briefly in *On Leisure:* that writing and study may itself be a form of public service if it enables others to improve themselves. In such cases, one is denying one's services to the local community in order to provide them to the greater community of humankind. It is no coincidence that the *Moral Epistles*, which are the most vehement of all Seneca's works in advocating a philosophical retreat, also supply Seneca's most extensive reflections on the use of written texts in philosophical therapy.

MAXIMS AND MEDITATION

These same reflections provide a motivation for a remarkable form of interaction with Epicurus and his school that takes place throughout the first three books of the *Moral Epistles.* Very near the beginning of the collection, Seneca instructs his addressee in the manner of reading that will best promote his progress toward wisdom: he should not range widely through large numbers of books but concentrate on a few, extracting from them every day some useful precept to memorize and ponder at length. To illustrate, he offers an extract from his own reading in an unspecified text by Epicurus:

> Mine for today is this which I got out of Epicurus (for it is my custom to cross even into the other camp, not as a deserter but as a spy): "Happy poverty," he says, "is an honorable thing." Indeed, it is not poverty, if it is happy … (*Ep.* 2.5-6)

Several sentences of reflection follow, as Seneca ponders the implications of the phrase "happy poverty" and the advantages of restricting one's desires.

Thus begins a regular practice of closing each of the *Moral Epistles* with an excerpt "from today's reading" (4.10), taken usually from the works of Epicurus, although Metrodorus is also mentioned as a source (14.17, 15.9), and other philosophers and poets occasionally play that role. There is a bit of humor in the procedure, as Lucilius is represented looking ahead eagerly for his "little gift" or "day's wage" at the end of each letter, or demanding "Tell the author!" (*Ep.* 14.17). Seneca seems to savor the irony of a Stoic author's finding something of value in this unlikely source, "crossing into the enemy camp."[27] At no time does he declare allegiance to Epicurus: he is always "borrowing from another," and repeatedly declares that he has the right to use material that is "communal property" (*Ep.* 21.9; cf. 12.11,

[27] The humor is too often missed; Motto and Clark 1968 is a welcome exception. Contra Griffin (1992, 351) and Schottländer (1955, 136-7), Lucilius' proprietary interest in Epicurus (*Ep.* 20.9, 23.9) is not a matter of philosophical allegiance on the part of the addressee but rather a depiction of his supposed enthusiasm for the daily maxim.

14.18).[28] And indeed the extracts he chooses are never very distinctive in terms of their philosophical content. Like the example above, they represent the blandest sort of admonition to restrict desire, avoid the crowd, and overcome the fear of death. Each is accompanied by a few sentences of interpretation aimed not so much at divining the author's original intent as at finding some worthwhile application to ordinary lives.[29]

The prominence of Epicurus in the early books of epistles probably has something to do with Seneca's literary ambitions for his work, for the collected letters of Epicurus were by this time a classic of philosophical writing which he might well wish to emulate.[30] In Epistle 21, he draws a striking parallel between his own admonitions to Lucilius and those of Epicurus to Idomeneus: in both cases, the addressee is to be made famous not by his achievements in politics but by his role as addressee of a work of philosophical literature. Comparisons are also made to the letters of Cicero and to Vergil's *Aeneid*—names that speak volumes about Seneca's perception of Epicurus' status as a writer. As Brad Inwood has noted, it is imperative for modern readers to remember at this point that the letters Seneca appears to have read may have been quite different in character from the three summaries of doctrine we find preserved in Diogenes Laertius.[31]

For the specific association between Epicurus and philosophical maxims there is a further explanation that can be offered. This was adumbrated already by Miriam Griffin, who refers Seneca's use and occasional misuse of Epicurus to the Epicureans' own practice of memorizing and reflecting on brief summaries of doctrine.[32] Seneca recognizes in Epicurus a skillful handler of written texts as a vehicle for philosophical training and seeks to appropriate some of those techniques for his own program of written

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[28] Although many of the early letters are only general exhortations to practice philosophy, *Moral Epistles* 8, 9, 23, 24, and 29 all clearly adopt a Stoic perspective.

[29] An especially telling example is treated in Schmid (1955). Seneca in *Ep.* 22.15-16 quotes what we know as *Vatican Sentence* 60, but misapplies it, even though he is aware of the correct interpretation, which he gives in *Ep.* 102.24.

[30] See Inwood (2007b, 141-6), developing in more detail the suggestions of Lana (1991, 268-74) and Rosati (1981).

[31] Inwood (2007b, 143).

[32] Griffin (1992, 352); see also Schmid (1984, 130). The suggestion is developed at length in Graver (1996).

therapy. Epicurus' interest in providing short, easily memorized texts is explained in *Letter to Herodotus* 83 and evidenced especially in the *Key Doctrines,* which whether or not they were compiled by Epicurus himself were certainly circulated as his from an early date.[33] The *Letter to Menoeceus,* in addition to its summary of ethical doctrines, offers explicit instruction on how one is to assimilate the material. One is to memorize, but also to "reason out" and "accustom oneself to believing" each point; then at the end, to "Practice these and the related precepts day and night, by yourself and with a like-minded friend" (*Men.* 135). To Seneca, who spent much of his life as a teacher of oratory, the instruction to "practice" (μελετᾶν) would suggest the process of rehearsing before delivering a speech—not memorization as we think of it, but mulling over one point at a time so as to be ready to deliver them when the time comes. Seneca's frequent quotations from Epicurus may be meant to recall this characteristically Epicurean way of reforming a person's character through meditation on brief ethical *sententiae.* Their significance is procedural, not doctrinal. What works in an Epicurean context can be adapted to work also for Stoics.

But although Seneca initially embraces the Epicurean use of maxims as a vehicle for instruction, he also sets limits on that procedure. As the letters proceed he expresses increasing reluctance to deliver Lucilius' daily installment. "I trained you badly," he says, half-seriously (*Ep.* 17.11), and "If you had any shame, you would excuse me the final payment" (*Ep.*29.11). Then at the end of Book 3 the maxims cease altogether. *Moral Epistle* 33 explains Seneca's reasons for giving over the procedure. Lucilius has asked him to continue, using Stoic maxims in place of Epicurean ones, but this is by no means easy to do: such fine "manly" sayings are more difficult to identify in Stoic authors, just because their writing is virile from beginning to end, with a tight logical structure that makes excerption difficult (*Ep.* 33.2). Besides, he has reservations about what could become a slavish attitude toward authors and texts. Epicureans attribute everything said by Hermarchus or Metrodorus or any of the school's leaders to Epicurus himself: "for in that camp everything anyone says is said under the guidance and auspices of one man" (33.4). And their habit of memorizing short texts—"flowerets" *(flosculi),* he calls them with some contempt—is suitable

[33] It is worth noting that Philodemus, writing over a century before Seneca, treats the *Key Doctrines* as a work of Epicurus' own (*De ira* col. 43,20–1).

only for novices. One must "read books as wholes, come to grips with them as wholes," if one is ever to develop the independence of mind that Stoics consider necessary for moral progress.[34] "It is shameful when a grown man, one who is making real progress in philosophy, is found snatching at flowerets or propping himself up with a handful of commonplaces he has memorized. Let him stand on his own feet!" (33.7). Seneca does not definitively reject the model of therapeutic reading he has built up in relation to Epicurean texts; he does promise to send "in heaping handfuls" the extracts Lucilius requests (33.5), and he wants these to be read with the kind of thoughtful intensity these early letters have demonstrated. But he seeks now to dissociate that procedure from Epicureanism, and at the same to add a new dimension to it of critical assessment and reasoning. After this epistle, the earlier practice of excerption is not mentioned again, although Epicurus is still quoted occasionally for his philosophical views.

HUMAN NATURE AND THE TACTICS OF THE THERAPIST

Seneca's appreciation for the brief, memorable maxims he finds in Epicurean texts can be seen as part of a larger pattern in his reception of the school. While he remains hostile to the main principles of Epicurean thought, he also expresses considerable respect for those elements of Epicureanism which have to do with the emotional adjustment of the individual. On matters concerning the management of desire and the various kinds of fear, anxiety, and grief, he can respect Epicurus' psychological insight and accord practical efficacy to some of his arguments. Indeed he is willing at some points to take the Epicurean claims on board for his own project, as part of his wide-ranging study of human nature and its prospects for advancement toward Stoic wisdom. He can do this without conflict, since the points in question are not core philosophical commitments so much as empirically developed observations of how minds operate. He can treat them as phenomena. Only in this respect would it be appropriate to speak of Seneca as an opportunistic adapter of Epicurean ideas.

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[34] On the importance of independent reasoning in Stoic therapy as opposed to Epicurean see Cooper (2004, 60).

A particularly clear-cut example is his treatment of the fear of penalties in *Moral Epistle* 97. Commenting that it is "elegantly phrased," Seneca reports Epicurus' view that although wrongdoers may escape punishment, they gain nothing by that, since they cannot escape their anxiety about the possibility of punishment. For a Stoic, he says, the principal penalty for a misdeed must be the fact of having done wrong: *sceleris in scelere supplicium est* (*Ep.* 97.14). Once this is understood, though, there is no conflict with Stoicism in what Epicurus says. The criminal's anxiety is a "secondary penalty," and the Stoic need not liberate him from that. Indeed, the persistence of this anxiety tells in favor of the Stoic view that justice exists in nature.

> We should disagree with Epicurus in that he says there is nothing that is just by nature and that the reason one should refrain from misdeeds is that one cannot avoid anxiety from them; we should agree with him, though, that the wrongdoer is tormented by conscience and that his worst penalty is to bear the hounding and the lash of constant worry because he cannot trust those who guarantee him security. This is proof in itself, Epicurus, that we have a natural horror of misdeeds: every criminal is afraid, even in a place of safety. Fortune exempts many from punishment, but none from anxiety. Why, if not because we have an innate aversion to what nature has condemned?[35]

Confident that the point is adaptable to a Stoic ethical framework, Seneca proceeds a few letters further on to repeat Epicurus' claim about criminal anxiety as his own assertion.

> Anyone expecting punishment undergoes punishment, and anyone who deserves it expects it. Safety is compatible with a bad conscience, but security is not. The wrongdoer sometimes has the chance of concealment, but never the confidence. *(Ep.* 105.7-8)

[35] *Ep*. 97.16. It should perhaps be pointed out that the Latin word *conscientia* refers only to one's awareness of what has been done; it is not equivalent to "moral sense."

There can be no doubt of Epicurus' influence in the latter passage, for the wording is strikingly similar: in particular, the last words of Epistle 105, "the wrongdoer sometimes has the chance of concealment, but never the confidence," (*nocens habuit aliquando latendi fortunam, numquam fiduciam*) strongly recall the words quoted from Epicurus in 97.13: "it can happen that the wrongdoer is concealed, but never that he has confidence of concealment." (*potest nocenti contingere ut lateat, latendi fides non potest*). For Seneca, though, this is only a subsidiary reason why one should avoid wrongdoing.

A similar progression can be observed in some of his remarks on the fear of death and pain. For the most part, he argues for the Stoic position that neither death nor pain makes any difference to the human good, which has to be conceived of solely in terms of human excellence. But he is impressed nonetheless with the efficacy of Epicurean arguments in ridding the mind of anxieties about the future. Not the "singsong" Epicurean arguments that are supposed to address fears of eternal torment in Tartarus—Seneca doubts his fellow Romans are very worried about that prospect (*Ep.* 24.18). His concern is with the more elemental fear of death. In *Ep*. 30, he recounts a conversation with one Aufidius Bassus. Frail and elderly, Bassus is facing the approach of death with enviable tranquility thanks to his acceptance of Epicurean philosophy. Giving his own version of Bassus' words, Seneca reports a series of arguments that run parallel to those in the *Letter to Menoeceus* and in Book 3 of Lucretius: that it is foolish to fear what you will not be present to experience, that nature reshuffles and reuses our components, though without any continued consciousness on our part, that the sated diner is content to leave the banquet.[36] Bassus refers also to Epicurus' principal defense against the fear of pain in *Key Doctrine* 4:

[36] *Ep.* 30.5-6, 9-12; cf. *KD* 2; *Ep. Men.* 124-6; Lucr. *DRN* 3.830-42. Compare also the suicide of Diodorus, in *VB* 19.1 "an Epicurean philosopher," who offers a version of the satiety argument, although Seneca notes that some question whether his suicide is consistent with Epicurean doctrine. Of course the questioners are correct; see *Ep. Men.* 126-7 and the fragments quoted by Seneca in *Ep.* 24.22-3, together with Warren (2004), 205-212.

> In fact he used to say, in conformity with Epicurus' teachings, "First of all I hope there will be no pain in that last breath, but if there is, it will be short, and that itself is some comfort. For 'severe pain is never of long duration.' But if there is torment in the moment when mind separates from body, I will console myself thus: after that pain I can no longer experience pain" (*Ep.* 30.14).

All this Seneca says he has read in books, but it is much more convincing to hear the views explained in person by one who is able to take comfort in them. Here, too, he goes as far as to state the Epicurean arguments as his own opinion in other epistles. Shortly after the Bassus letter we find him giving in his own voice the argument from *Letter to Menoeceus* 125: "Death holds no disadvantage, for a disadvantage must be that of some existing person."[37] Not long afterward, in *Moral Epistle* 54.5, he supplies a fairly exact version of Lucretius' symmetry argument, applying it to his own situation. These are relatively simple adaptations for him to make, because he does not himself hold any strong views on what happens to any given person's soul at the time of death. He is not committed to the Epicurean position on the extinction of consciousness, but he is open to it as one alternative. "Death either consumes us or sets us free. If we are released, then better things await us once our burden is removed; if we are consumed, then nothing is waiting for us at all: both goods and evils are gone."[38]

Concerning pain his response to Epicurus has an additional component. He is more than willing to make use of *Key Doctrine* 4, which he finds easily compatible with Stoic thought (*Ep.* 24.14, 78.17, 94.7). But he is also familiar with a second Epicurean claim: that in times of pain, one can maintain one's state of blessedness by directing one's attention away from one's present sufferings toward good things one has experienced in the past. Although this approach to pain is not directly attested in the extant

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[37] *Ep.* 36.9; similarly 4.3.

[38] *Ep.* 24.18. In some contexts (e.g. at *Ep.* 79.12 and 92.30-4), Seneca takes the Stoic view that the souls of the wise ascend to a dwelling-place in the upper air. But none of us can be certain whether this inspiring prospect is what is in store for *us*. For those who fail to achieve wisdom in life, death brings "release into the All"; that is, dissolution (*Ep.* 71.16, 76.26).

writings of Epicurus, Seneca's version of it closely resembles a report by Cicero in *Tusculan Disputations* 3.32-3.[39] We find Seneca's version in *Moral Epistle* 78, immediately following a paraphrase of *Key Doctrine* 4, where he says, "It will also be beneficial to depart mentally from the pain and turn your mind toward other thoughts." This should be compared with Cicero's report, where the Epicurean recommendation has the same two components: "distracting the mind from the thought of suffering, and redirecting it to the contemplation of pleasures." At the same time, though, the specific ways Seneca suggests manipulating one's attention are distinctly different from what we know or can infer for Epicurus. Epicurus, naturally, has in mind directing one's thoughts toward remembered pleasures, which might be mental pleasures such as the memory of philosophical discussions with friends.[40] Seneca's suggestion is different:

> Think of honorable deeds, brave deeds you have performed; reflect on what is good in your character. Let your memory range over everything you have most admired. Then bring to mind some great example of courage and victory over pain (*Ep.* 78.18).

Moreover, Epicurus specifically denies that one should try to anticipate future pain or distress, and this is the position we should expect him to take, since doing so would increase our psychological distress over time.[41] Seneca, however, frequently recommends such "pre-rehearsal of future ills" as a way of preparing oneself to face trials with fortitude. "Fix your mind on whatever it is that you are afraid might happen as a thing that definitely will happen. Whatever that evil is, take the measure of it mentally and so assess your fear" (*Ep.* 24.2).

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[39] For the Epicurean material in Cicero see Tsouna (2009, 261) and in more detail Graver (2002).
[40] This is stated in Cicero's account and is also present by implication in the deathbed letter to Idomeneus. The emphasis on pleasures derived from past experience is found also in *Ben.* 3.4.1-2, where Epicurus is named. See also *Ep.* 81.11-12 on the gratitude of the wise in Metrodorus.
[41] Cic., *Tusc.* 3.32.

Other examples can be given. Seneca agrees with Epicurus that it is beneficial to remind the one making progress in philosophy that there is a natural limit to the pleasure that can be derived from eating and drinking, and repeats the point many times to Lucilius (*Ep.* 4.10, 16.7, 25.4, 39.5, 78.27, etc.). He recommends several of Epicurus' practical expedients for improving one's moral character, such as restricting one's diet on specified days (*Ep.* 18.9) or visualizing some good person as a constant spectator for one's actions (*Ep.* 11.8-9, 25.4-5). He also cites with approval Epicurus' classification of students into those who make good progress in philosophy without aid, those like Metrodorus who easily follow where another leads, and those like Hermarchus who need a "mule driver" to send them in the right direction (*Ep.* 52.3-4). In all these cases, he follows Epicurus out of respect for his sensitivity to the ins and outs of human nature. He is, of course, well aware that the aims and theoretical bases of Stoic therapy are quite different from anything in a hedonist system. But he is nonetheless willing to believe that Epicurus' claims come from observation of real phenomena of human experience which a Stoic therapist does well to consider.

Seneca will reject an Epicurean claim when it seems to him to strain the bounds of psychological plausibility. In his treatment of extreme pain, he understands Epicurus to have said that a wise person is able not only to maintain a state of blessedness under torture but actually to derive pleasure from that experience (*Ep.* 66.18, 67.15, 92.25-6). For the purposes of his own argument, he finds it advantageous that Epicurus should take this view: after all, he argues, how could anyone deny plausibility to the Stoic view that courageous endurance is valuable, when there is someone who is ready to believe it is even pleasurable? But that does not mean that he finds the Epicurean position anything but bizarre. He says three times that it is not believable*,* and when speaking for his own school is careful to state that the wise person feels pain just as ordinary people do.

He is even more dissatisfied with a claim made by Metrodorus concerning the experience of grief. This time he takes the trouble to quote his source in the original Greek, demonstrating that the language he finds objectionable really is present in the Epicurean text.

> I do not by any means approve what is said by Metrodorus: that there is a pleasure which is akin to sorrow and that in this kind of situation one should try to catch that pleasure. Metrodorus' exact words are as follows: *[in Greek]* "From Metrodorus' letters to his sister. 'For there is a pleasure akin to grief which one ought to go hunting for in this situation.'" I am not in any doubt as to what view you will take of these words. For what could be more shameful than to try to catch pleasure in the very midst of grief –indeed *through* grief – and to go looking for something delightful even amid one's tears? And these are the people who reproach us for excessive rigor and charge our teachings with harshness on grounds that we say one should either not admit grief into the mind or cast it out quickly. Which, pray tell, is harder to believe, and which is less human: not to feel grief when one loses a friend, or to go bird-catching for pleasure right in the midst of grief?[42]

What Seneca understands Metrodorus to have said is rather different from the usual Epicurean recommendations for neutralizing mental pain by diverting one's attention or by finding compensatory sources of pleasure. Metrodorus in this text identifies a pleasure that actually arises from the circumstances of bereavement, a pleasure akin to grief (λύπη συγγενής) or, as Seneca has it, "in the midst of grief, indeed *through* grief" (*in ipso luctu voluptatem, immo per luctum*).[43] It is not at all easy to imagine what Metrodorus has in mind here. To be sure, some people do indulge in maudlin sentimentality over deceased acquaintances to a degree that suggests pleasure, and it is imaginable that even the recently bereaved might experience some corporeal pleasure in the moment of giving way to tears. But these would be strange pleasures to recommend; instead, we should perhaps think that some parts of the customary mourning rituals were enjoyable for the women who performed them, as some wakes and

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[42] *Ep.* 99.25-6. The Greek of the fragment is partially corrupt in the MSS and is not otherwise attested; it has been restored by editors to match Seneca's Latin rendering. I treat the passage and its context in more detail in Graver (2009).

[43] Clay (1998, 66) connects it with the "peculiar form of pleasure" (ἰδιοτρόπῳ ἡδονῇ) mentioned in Plut., *Non Posse* 16.1097e.

funerals are today.[44] Given the wording of the sentence Seneca quotes, however, the Roman author can hardly be blamed for assuming that the intended claim is some psychologically strange one, positing some novel form of pleasure that has to be hunted for and urging the bereaved to take up the hunt. On that basis he finds it far less satisfactory than the Stoic position on *apatheia* or the impassivity of the wise. For as Seneca understands it, *apatheia* neither alters nor abridges the capacity for affective response which the wise person has by virtue of his humanity.[45]

From what Seneca says elsewhere, though, one might think that his own approach to consolation skates rather close to the Metrodoran expedient. In this same letter, consoling Marullus, he speaks of a form of weeping "to which we give egress when we revisit the memory of those we have lost and find an element of sweetness in our sorrow–when their enjoyable conversation comes to mind, their cheerful presence, their loving services" (*Ep.* 99.19). Unlike the involuntary tears that assail even the wise at the moment of burial, these sweeter tears are a voluntary movement: "the eyes let themselves flow just as in joy," and even the wise may "indulge" in them. Similarly in the consolation to Lucilius, he remarks that although there is necessarily a twinge or "biting" (*morsus*) in remembering loved ones who are lost, "even this brings a kind of pleasure" (*Ep.* 63.4). But the similarity is only superficial. Such remarks were undoubtedly conventional in consolatory writing, but philosophers could interpret them according to their own lights, and in Seneca's case the interpretation given is firmly along Stoic lines. Friendship allows one to value the good qualities of the friend as if they were one's own, so that in perceiving them one may experience "joy," one of the three voluntary affective responses (*eupatheiai*) of the wise person. This is quite different from what Seneca finds in Metrodorus—a pleasure that comes *through* grief—and even from the more comprehensible Epicurean schema that uses the pleasures of memory to blot out the pain of loss. For the Epicurean, the pain of grief is legitimate enough, but intelligent management can ensure that pleasure always predominates in the mix.[46] For the Stoic, the mental pleasure the wise person

[44] I thank the volume editors for this suggestion.
[45] See Graver (2007, 93-101).
[46] See Plut., *Non Posse* 1101ab; Warren (2004), 39-41; Graver (2002) 157.

experiences in considering the friend's virtues is the only legitimate affective response one can have. The sensations of the wise are not mingled, for since bereavement is not in itself an evil, real grief is entirely without warrant. In this instance, then, the resemblance between the positions merely provides Seneca with an opportunity to make his own position that much more precise.

Epicureanism is itself a complex body of doctrines, techniques, and practices, and Seneca's response to it over more than a decade of philosophical study and writing necessarily takes many forms. Yet when we consider his reactions across the board, a definite pattern does emerge. Seneca has thoroughly internalized the principles of Stoicism, and wherever he deals with the main elements of Epicurus' philosophy, he finds himself in disagreement with them for reasons he can explain. At times, he takes a strongly polemical tone, seeking to dissuade his contemporaries from the libertinism and nihilism for which members of the Roman elite sometimes used Epicureanism as a pretext. In so doing he speaks out of conviction, not out of partisanship, for just as he will sometimes reject views offered by Stoic authors that he deems inconsistent with Stoic foundations, so also he adopts certain elements of Epicurean thought as his own when he thinks there is no inconsistency. That these adopted elements are invariably matters of psychological insight and suggestive of specific therapeutic practice can serve as our indication of the level at which he was impressed and inspired by Epicurus' achievement.

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