

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

Interim temeritas est damnare, quod nescias. At illud scis, quam multis utilis sit, quam multos liberet tormentis, egestate, querellis, suppliciis, taedio. Non sumus in ullius potestate, cum mors in nostra potestate sit. VALE.

XCII

SENECA LVCILIO SVO SALVTEM

1 Puto, inter me teque conveniet externa corpori adquiri, corpus in honorem animi coli, in animo esse partes ministras, per quas movemur alimurque, propter ipsum principale nobis datas. In hoc principali est aliquid irrationale, est et rationale. Illud huic servit, hoc unum est, quod alio non refertur, sed omnia ad se refert.¹ Nam illa quoque divina ratio omnibus praeposita est, ipsa sub nullo est; et haec autem nostra eadem est, quia² ex illa
2 est. Si de hoc inter nos convenit, sequitur ut de illo quoque conveniat, in hoc uno positam esse beatam vitam, ut in nobis ratio perfecta sit. Haec enim sola non submittit animum, stat contra fortunam; in quolibet rerum habitu securos³ servat. Id autem unum bonum est, quod numquam defringitur. Is est, inquam, beatus quem nulla res minorem facit;

¹ *refert* a later MS. and Madvig; *perfert* BA.

² *quia* later MSS.; *quae* BA.

³ *securos* later MSS.; *servitus* BA.

^a The reader will find this topic treated at greater length in Seneca's *De Vita Beata*.

^b *i.e.*, the soul. See Aristotle, *Eth.* i. 13: "It is stated that the soul has two parts, one irrational and the other possessing reason." Aristotle further subdivides the irrational part into (1) that which makes for growth and increase, and (2) desire (which will, however, obey reason). In this passage Seneca uses "soul" in its widest sense,

EPISTLES XCI., XCII.

Meanwhile it is foolhardy to condemn that of which you are ignorant. This one thing, however, you do know—that death is helpful to many, that it sets many free from tortures, want, ailments, sufferings, and weariness. We are in the power of nothing when once we have death in our own power! Farewell.

XCII. ON THE HAPPY LIFE ^a

You and I will agree, I think, that outward things are sought for the satisfaction of the body, that the body is cherished out of regard for the soul, and that in the soul there are certain parts which minister to us, enabling us to move and to sustain life, bestowed upon us just for the sake of the primary part of us.^b In this primary part there is something irrational, and something rational. The former obeys the latter, while the latter is the only thing that is not referred back to another, but rather refers all things to itself. For the divine reason also is set in supreme command over all things, and is itself subject to none; and even this reason which we possess is the same, because it is derived from the divine reason. Now if we are agreed on this point, it is natural that we shall be agreed on the following also—namely, that the happy life depends upon this and this alone: our attainment of perfect reason. For it is naught but this that keeps the soul from being bowed down, that stands its ground against Fortune; whatever the condition of their affairs may be, it keeps men untroubled. And that alone is a good which is never subject to impairment. That man, I declare, is happy whom nothing makes

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

tenet summa, et ne ulli quidem nisi sibi innixus. Nam qui aliquo auxilio sustinetur, potest cadere. Si aliter est, incipient multum in nobis valere non nostra. Quis autem vult constare fortunam¹ aut quis se prudens ob aliena miratur?

- 3 Quid est beata vita? Securitas et perpetua tranquillitas. Hanc dabit animi magnitudo, dabit constantia bene iudicati tenax. Ad haec quomodo pervenitur? Si veritas tota perspecta est; si servatus est in rebus agendis ordo, modus, decor, innoxia voluntas ac benigna, intenta rationi nec umquam ab illa recedens, amabilis simul mirabilisque. Denique ut breviter tibi formulam scribam, talis animus esse sapientis viri debet, qualis deum deceat.
- 4 Quid potest desiderare is, cui omnia honesta contingunt? Nam si possunt aliquid non honesta conferre ad optimum statum, in his erit beata vita, sine quibus honesta.² Et quid turpius stultiusve quam bonum rationalis animi ex irrationalibus
- 5 nectere? Quidam tamen augeri summum bonum iudicant, quia parum plenum sit fortuitis repugnantibus. Antipater quoque inter magnos sectae huius auctores aliquid se tribuere dicit externis, sed exiguum admodum. Vides autem quale sit die non³ esse contentum, nisi aliquis igniculus adluserit. Quod potest in hac claritate solis habere scintilla

¹ *fortunam* Buecheler; *fortuna* BA.

² *honesta* Hense; *non est* BA.

³ *die non* Erasmus; *zemon* BA.

^a Certain of the Peripatetic and Academic school.

^b Probably due to the criticism of the Stoics by Carneades, who said that everything which is according to nature should be classed among the goods.

EPISTLE XCII.

less strong than he is; he keeps to the heights, leaning upon none but himself; for one who sustains himself by any prop may fall. If the case is otherwise, then things which do not pertain to us will begin to have great influence over us. But who desires Fortune to have the upper hand, or what sensible man prides himself upon that which is not his own?

What is the happy life? It is peace of mind, and lasting tranquillity. This will be yours if you possess greatness of soul; it will be yours if you possess the steadfastness that resolutely clings to a good judgment just reached. How does a man reach this condition? By gaining a complete view of truth, by maintaining, in all that he does, order, measure, fitness, and a will that is inoffensive and kindly, that is intent upon reason and never departs therefrom, that commands at the same time love and admiration. In short, to give you the principle in brief compass, the wise man's soul ought to be such as would be proper for a god. What more can one desire who possesses all honourable things? For if dishonourable things can contribute to the best estate, then there will be the possibility of a happy life under conditions which do not include an honourable life. And what is more base or foolish than to connect the good of a rational soul with things irrational? Yet there are certain philosophers who hold that the Supreme Good admits of increase because it is hardly complete when the gifts of fortune are adverse.^a Even Antipater,^b one of the great leaders of this school, admits that he ascribes some influence to externals, though only a very slight influence. You see, however, what absurdity lies in not being content with the daylight unless it is increased by a tiny fire. What importance can

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

- 6 momentum? Si non es sola honestate¹ contentus, necesse est aut quietem adici velis, quam ἀοχλησίαν vocant Graeci, aut voluptatem. Horum alterum utcumque recipi potest. Vacat enim animus molestia liber ad inspectum universi, nihilque illum avocatur a contemplatione naturae. Alterum illud, voluptas, bonum pecoris est. Adicimus rationali inrationale, honesto inhonestum. Ad hanc vitam² facit titillatio corporis; quid ergo dubitatis dicere bene esse homini, si palato bene est? Et hunc tu, non dico inter viros numeras, sed inter homines, cuius summum bonum saporibus et coloribus³ sonisque⁴ constat? Excedat ex hoc animalium numero pulcherrimo ac dis secundo: mutis adgregetur animal pabulo laetum.
- 8 Inrationalis pars animi duas habet partes, alteram animosam, ambitiosam, inpotentem, positam in adfectionibus, alteram humilem, languidam, voluptatibus deditam; illam effrenatam, meliorem tamen, certe fortiolem ac digniorem viro reliquerunt, hanc necessariam beatae vitae putaverunt, et enervem⁵ et abiectam. Huic rationem servire iusserunt et fecerunt animalis generosissimi summum⁶ bonum demissum et ignobile, praeterea mixtum portentosumque et ex diversis ac male⁷ con-

¹ *honestate* later MSS.; *honestata* B¹A.

² *ad hanc vitam* Buecheler; *magna vitam* B; *magnam vitam* A.

³ *coloribus* later MSS.; *caloribus* BA.

⁴ *sonisque* Windhaus; *sonis* or *solis* MSS.

⁵ *et enervem* Rossbach; *inervem* BA.

⁶ *generosissimi summum* Buecheler; *generosissimum* (or -i) MSS.

⁷ *ac male* Schweighaeuser; *animalis* BA.

^a If we call pleasure a good.

^b Cf. § 1 of this letter. Plato gives three divisions—the

EPISTLE XCII.

a spark have in the midst of this clear sunlight? If you are not contented with only that which is honourable, it must follow that you desire in addition either the kind of quiet which the Greeks call "undisturbedness," or else pleasure. But the former may be attained in any case. For the mind is free from disturbance when it is fully free to contemplate the universe, and nothing distracts it from the contemplation of nature. The second, pleasure, is simply the good of cattle. We are but adding^a the irrational to the rational, the dishonourable to the honourable. A pleasant physical sensation affects this life of ours; why, therefore, do you hesitate to say that all is well with a man just because all is well with his appetite? And do you rate, I will not say among heroes, but among men, the person whose Supreme Good is a matter of flavours and colours and sounds? Nay, let him withdraw from the ranks of this, the noblest class of living beings, second only to the gods; let him herd with the dumb brutes—an animal whose delight is in fodder!

The irrational part of the soul is twofold^b: the one part is spirited, ambitious, uncontrolled; its seat is in the passions; the other is lowly, sluggish, and devoted to pleasure. Philosophers have neglected the former, which, though unbridled, is yet better, and is certainly more courageous and more worthy of a man, and have regarded the latter, which is nerveless and ignoble, as indispensable to the happy life. They have ordered reason to serve this latter; they have made the Supreme Good of the noblest living being an abject and mean affair, and a monstrous hybrid, too, composed of various members λογιστικόν, the ἐπιθυμητικόν, and the θυμοειδές which obeys either the first or the second. See his *Republic*, 440.

THE EPISTLES OF SENECA

gruentibus membris. Nam ut ait Vergilius noster
in Scylla

Prima hominis facies et pulchro pectore virgo
Pube tenus, postrema inmani corpore pistrix
Delphinum caudas utero commissa luporum.

Huic tamen Scyllae fera animalia adiuncta sunt,
horrenda, velocia; at isti sapientiam ex quibus
10 composuere portentis! Prima ars hominis est ipsa
virtus; huic committitur inutilis caro et fluida,
receptandis tantum cibus habilis, ut ait Posidonius.
Virtus illa divina in lubricum desinit et superioribus
eius partibus venerandis atque caelestibus animal
iners ac marcidum adtextitur. Illa utcumque altera
quies nihil quidem ipsa praestabat animo, sed
impedimenta removebat; voluptas ultro dissolvit et
omne robur emollit. Quae invenietur tam discors
inter se iunctura corporum? Fortissimae rei inertis-
sima adstruitur, severissimae parum seria, sanctissimae
11 intemperans usque ad incesta.¹ “Quid ergo?”
inquit, “si virtutem nihil inpeditura sit bona valitudo
et quies et dolorum vacatio,² non petes illas?”
Quidni petam? Non quia bona sunt, sed quia
secundum naturam sunt, et quia bono a me iudicio
sumentur. Quid erit tunc in illis bonum? Hoc
unum, bene eligi. Nam cum³ vestem qualem decet,

¹ *incesta* Gruter; *ingesta* BA.

² *vacatio* later MSS.; *vagatio* BA.

³ *cum* omitted in A and supplied by a late hand in B.
Buecheler suggests *nam vestem qualem decet cum sumo*.

* *Aeneid*, iii. 426 ff.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:
Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature
which can be purchased on our Website :
www.Brainfly.net

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :
Brainfly Inc.
5100 Garfield Ave. #46
Sacramento CA 95841-3839

TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website (www.Brainfly.net) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

webcomments@brainfly.net