

УДК 37.01; 94(37).07

Zhu Yifan

Postgraduate student of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology
of Mozyr State Pedagogical University named after I. P. Shamyakin, Mozyr, Republic of Belarus
Scientific Adviser: Telepen Sergey Valer'evich, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor

SENECA'S INTERPRETATION OF THE ROLE OF THE FATHER IN SHAPING THE PERSONALITY OF THE SON

Based on the analysis of Seneca's works, the article examines the philosopher's attitude to family upbringing, its tasks and means. The paper presents the philosopher's reflections and conclusions on the methods used for influencing the child, on the one hand, and the role of the father in the development of a good citizen, on the other hand. The author infers that the philosopher's views on family education are mainly based on the search for solutions to the problems that arise when educating a worthy member of society, who is a harmonious person and has a high level of civic consciousness. In Seneca's view, the expected effect can only be achieved through the active role of the father as a consistent guardian of the traditions of strict upbringing.

Keywords: family education, personality, moral qualities, moral authority, philosophy, mentor, parenting.

Introduction

In the period of classical antiquity, the problem of raising a harmonious personality was the subject of reflection for the greatest minds. The Roman Stoics, in particular, believed that self-improvement is the most natural path to the improvement of a man and social relations. However, the opinions of ancient intellectuals were divided: some considered this path to be extremely difficult [1, p. 43], while others saw it as an unattainable goal in principle [2, p. 283]. These topics were discussed in the works on education written by the Roman thinker Lucius Annaeus Seneca the Younger, who lived in the 1st century AD. The pedagogical focus of his works has become the subject of deep academic analysis in recent decades [3, p. 52; 4, p. 32–33; 5, p. 242; 6, p. 37; 7, p. 137, 143; 8, p. 44]. Most often, scholars consider Seneca's views on continuous self-improvement as based on suppressing emotions and cultivating virtue to achieve peace of mind and a happy life [5, p. 241–262; 9, p. 76–78; 10, p. 216; 11, p. 146–147; 12, p. 51–52; 13, p. 28–31]. Much less often, the philosopher's views on family education, the relationship between children and parents are considered. At the same time, Seneca's clear awareness of the fundamental difference between raising children and pedagogical influence on adults is recognized [14, p. 73]. Scholars also note that Seneca had his own original pedagogical views [5, p. 247] and his own strategy in education [10, p. 112, 216; 13, p. 26–48; 15, p. 90–95]. The pedagogical ideas of this Roman thinker have not yet been fully studied, which determines the relevance of the topic of this article. A comprehensive examination of these ideas is needed for two main reasons. Firstly, it allows us to better understand the roots of modern pedagogical thought, and secondly, it arms us with a powerful philosophical toolkit for the further development of pedagogical thought in the direction of developing models for educating a harmonious personality.

Thus, the following article aims to shed light on Seneca's understanding of the role of the father as the educator of his son. In this study, this problem is considered in the context of Seneca's general pedagogical views, as well as his understanding of the tasks, principles and methods of family education.

Methodology and methods of research

In our study of the stated topic, we used historical and philological analysis of the text as a methodological basis, regarded as the most appropriate for analyzing theory of pedagogy. This type of analysis, mainly presented in philosophical opuses, meticulously examines the original texts for nuanced meanings and contextual understandings. It seems to us that it is the historical-philological approach that allows us to understand the ideas formulated by the philosopher in the context of the language of images and symbols of a given era. This involves careful consideration of the linguistic nuances, rhetorical strategies, and the broader intellectual currents influencing the philosopher's work. We draw heavily upon the established methods employed by scholars like Pierre Grimal, whose rigorous historical contextualization serves as a crucial model. However, our approach extends beyond simple emulation; we incorporate recent advancements in textual analysis, such as corpus linguistics, to quantitatively analyze recurring themes and patterns within the corpus of philosophical texts under investigation. This allows for a more robust and objective assessment of the

philosophers' pedagogical ideas compared to solely relying on qualitative interpretation. Furthermore, we integrate insights from cognitive history, recognizing that the very concepts of learning and teaching were understood differently across historical periods. By combining these methodologies, we aim to offer a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the evolution of pedagogical thought as reflected in the chosen philosophical works, moving beyond superficial interpretations to engage with the complexities of historical meaning-making.

Research results and discussion

Within Seneca's philosophical works, which include treatises, dialogues, and letters, the examination of familial relationships, especially interactions between parents and children, is conducted systematically using a psychological-pedagogical approach. The main focus of this analysis revolves around the relationship between parental behavior and the cognitive and emotional reactions provoked in the *educandus*, who is the object of the educational process. It is important to note that Seneca's discussion on raising children (*liber*) is specifically limited to male adolescents aged between seven and sixteen. This limitation is rooted in the Roman understanding of developmental stages, where the conclusion of the *infantia* stage at seven years old marks the beginning of formal moral and intellectual education [16, p. 153]. From this moment on, the education of the future citizen was carried out by the father and teachers, both private and school, and not the mother and other older female relatives, as was the case in early childhood.

Seneca compares the education of children and the self-education of adults. The thinker notes that the first is much easier and more effective to implement if we compare it with attempts to correct the long-standing vices of an established nature (*De ira*. II. 18. 2) [17, p. 30]. This "ease", however, is conditional, because raising children is also associated with difficulties and, most importantly, can lead to disappointment (*De ira*. II. 21. 1–2; *De benef.* I. 1. 10) [17, p. 33; 18, p. 18]. The most important task, according to Seneca, here is to promote the development of natural positive qualities of the individual and not allow negative qualities to develop, which also have a natural character, as a kind of bestial component of human nature (*De ira*. II. 21. 1) [17, p. 33]. Speaking about the inevitable moral efforts in the implementation of effective education (*De ira*. II. 18. 2, 21. 2) [17, p. 30, 33], Seneca considers it one of the greatest goods (*beneficiorum maxima*) that a responsible parent and mentor can demonstrate (*De benef.* VI. 24. 2) [18, p. 152]. Taking into account the Roman tradition of *patria potestas* [16, p. 148–149; 19, p. 297–298; 20, p. 120–121; 20, 168–170], the philosopher writes that the Romans endowed parents with authority over their children so that they could guide them with the necessary severity, like consuls or praetors (*De benef.* III. 11. 1–3) [18, p. 65–66]. However, he also interprets the emotional connection between parents and children as a necessary resource for effective education. This is why Seneca writes that not loving one's parents is contrary to nature itself and is generally immoral (*De benef.* III. 1. 5; IV. 17. 1) [18, p. 59, 96].

According to Seneca, family ties, especially relationships with children or love for one's home, are more valuable to a person than one's own life (*De benef.* I. 11. 4) [18, p. 28]. Seneca notes that parents express their feelings (*adfectus*) to their children primarily through hugs and kisses. He emphasizes that the tender embrace (*amplexus*) of a parent holding a child in his or her arms differs from other expressions of feelings that nevertheless bind people who are not related by kinship. This kind of embrace is pure, immaculate (*sanctus*) and calm, restrained (*moderatus*) (*Ep.* LXXV. 3) [21, p. 236] an expression of selfless love and care.

This idea is important for understanding Seneca's views on family education, for the manifestations of parental love and care in mothers and fathers differ significantly. According to Seneca, a mother always strives to protect her children from any difficulties, even to the detriment of the tasks of raising a future citizen (*De provid.* 2. 5) [22, p. 5]. A father, on the other hand, shows his care by not allowing children to waste time on empty things even on holidays, accustoming them to systematic studies and overcoming all kinds of difficulties (*De provid.* 2. 5) [22, p. 5]. In some cases, Seneca even recognizes corporal punishment as a means of educational influence on sons, but emphasizes the inadmissibility of anger and cruelty that could be shown in this case (*De ira*. I. 6. 1, 3, 5) [17, p. 15]. Here it should be noted that in the aforementioned era, such punishments were generally accepted practice [16, p. 160, 169; 20, p. 252, 306–307].

In the matter of raising sons, Seneca prefers a paternal approach. The thinker emphasizes that even higher powers subject worthy people to trials, difficulties, and losses so that they gain true fortitude (*De provid.* 2. 6) [22, p. 5]. In his opinion, it is the strong spirit that is capable of appreciating and preserving happiness (*felicitas*), despite the vicissitudes of fate (*fortuna*) (*De provid.* 2. 6, 4. 12) [22, p. 5, 11]. In raising children, it is unacceptable to allow anything that could lead to the cultivation of irresponsibility in the person being educated and weakness of character (*De ira*. II. 21. 6) [17, p. 49]. The philosopher believes that only strict upbringing strengthens the spirit of a future citizen (*De provid.* 4. 12) [22, p. 11]. Seneca argues that courage is the psychological result of overcoming dangers. For a thinker, courage (*fortitudo*) is a positive personality quality. In this way, it differs from anger (*ira*), which speaks of weakness, imperfection of the nature that demonstrates it.

Seneca distinguishes between an angry (*iratus*) and an angry person (*iracundus*) (De ira. I. 4. 1) [17, p. 16]. He believes that the cause of anger is the inability to see a situation from different sides, bias, and bad manners in the sense of the ability to control one's emotions (De ira. II. 22. 2) [17, p. 50].

Children become capricious not only because of excessive softness of parents and teachers, but also when they are too zealous in praising the child. Envy also plays a negative role. Finally, the material wealth of the family, when it singles out the child from the crowd of peers, also plays a negative role. All these factors together can provoke outbursts of anger and aggression in a child (De ira. II. 21. 3, 5, 7, 25. 4) [17, p. 48–49, 51].

In his work *On Anger*, Seneca sets out methods of education aimed at preventing irascibility in children. He believes that these methods will help to avoid not only the development of anger as such, but also the negative personality traits associated with it, such as inflated self-esteem and arrogance. Seneca describes specific educational methods in detail, offering practical recommendations for parents or mentors seeking to raise balanced and modest children. The text of the treatise, therefore, is a guide to preventing the development of anger and its accompanying vices in childhood, focusing on preventive educational measures.

Seneca reflects on the importance of praise, considering it a more powerful incentive for the child or young person than the fear of punishment, since it strengthens self-confidence and inspires further achievements. However, when using rewards, adults must be circumspect and objective (De ira. II. 21. 3) [17, p. 48]. It is necessary to show moderation in approval, so that the pleasure of the recipient of praise does not turn into excessive triumph (*exultatio*), which can cause arrogance and exaggerated self-confidence (*tumor*) (De ira. II. 21. 3, 5) [17, p. 48]. Seneca recognizes the benefits of emotional upsurge, believing that moral strength brings internal pleasure (*gaudere laetari*) (De ira. II. 6. 2) [17, p. 38]. In addition, it is necessary to approve, criticize or punish only in those cases when the actions of the child objectively require such a reaction (De ira. II. 21. 3, 5, 8) [17, p. 48–49].

The Roman philosopher characterized envy (*invidia*) as the most destructive feeling (De tranquill. 2. 10) [22, p. 116], placing it on a par with hatred, fear and arrogance, arguing that these feelings can push a person to unworthy actions (Ep. CV. 1) [21, p. 419]. To prevent a child from becoming envious of other children, for example those who are more successful in sports or studies, Seneca advised parents and teachers to help the child find friends and establish strong and positive relationships with them (De ira. II. 21. 5) [17, p. 48].

Seneca emphasized that in raising children it is unacceptable to humiliate them (*nihil humile, nihil servile*). It is unacceptable for them to beg for anything (*rogare suppliciter*). Ideally, parents and teachers should be sensitive enough to anticipate the needs of children and satisfy them without waiting for them to beg (De ira. II. 21. 4, 8) [17, p. 48, 49]. It is necessary to ignore the tears with which children achieve what they want, and to refuse requests, even if they are an only child or an orphan (*unicis... pupillisque*). This is necessary to prevent moral degradation (*corruptio*) and to develop in children the ability to withstand life's difficulties, and not just to avoid anger (De ira. II. 21. 6) [17, p. 49].

Another important observation of the philosopher provides insights into a negative impact of excess luxury and material well-being on the formation of a child's character: a child can be taken over by arrogance. Poverty, in his opinion, is one of those phenomena, like grief, shame, suffering, illness, exile and death, the fear of which is not justified. The philosopher instructed his contemporaries not to become attached to material goods, maintaining equanimity and even some detachment in relation to them, and also to exercise moderation in consumption [23, p. 93, 96]. In matters of raising the younger generation, Seneca recommended ensuring that the child is aware of the family's wealth, but limiting his direct access to these resources (De ira. II. 21. 8) [17, p. 49]. The son's food should be simple, his clothing modest, and his way of life similar to that of his peers, so that he feels equality between himself and those around him (De ira. II. 21. 11) [17, p. 49].

The high social status and material well-being of the family, due to the success of the parents, can provoke flattery towards even the young members of the family, cultivating in them such negative qualities as anger and arrogance (De ira. II. 21. 7) [17, p. 49]. Seneca believed that children must be protected from developing these shortcomings (De ira. II. 21. 8) [17, p. 49].

Considering the interaction of adults with children, this thinker emphasizes that irritation and, especially, anger towards children are unacceptable. After all, the origins of children's misdeeds (*peccata*) lie in their characteristic age-related imprudence (*inprudencia*) (De ira. II. 26. 6; 30. 1) [17, p. 52, 55]. It is necessary to rebuke and apply punishments for the mistakes made by children without anger and resentment, being in this case like an impartial judge (De ira. II. 21. 8) [17, p. 49].

Seneca emphasizes the importance of the influence of adults on the formation of a child's personality, pointing out to his contemporaries that children tend to copy the behavior of those around them. He notes that in youth, the habits and manners of educators and wet nurses have a significant influence (De ira. II. 21. 9) [17, p. 49]. Seneca believes that this natural tendency to imitation, characteristic of childhood, should not only be taken into account, but also actively used for the development of the child in a positive direction. To do this,

it is necessary to provide the child with calm, responsible and prepared mentors (De ira. II. 21. 9) [17, p. 49]. At the same time, Seneca recommends avoiding negative influence and protecting the young person from bad examples (Ep. CIV. 21) [21, p. 416].

Despite the natural timidity that children may experience before the authority of parents or educators (De ira. II. 21. 8; De benef. VI. 24. 1) [17, p. 49; 18, p. 152], respect for them is much more important. Seneca believed that a son should not harbor a grudge against his father, taking into account the role that the latter played in the son's life. This role gives the educator the right to make mistakes, which, ultimately, may prove to be a blessing (*meritum*) (De ira. II. 30. 1) [17, p. 55]. In adult life, the duty of children is to help their parents, protect them from difficulties, increase the glory of their father's name with their achievements, and protect his good name (De ira. I. 12. 2; De benef. III. 32. 1–2, 38. 1) [17, p. 24; 18, p. 79, 84]. A worthy son, as it were, enters into competition with his father in the performance of good deeds, trying to surpass him in this, which, according to Seneca, should bring joy to both parties. The ideal son, in the philosopher's understanding, should ultimately have the right to compare his achievements with the achievements of a worthy father (De ira. III. 38. 2) [17, p. 92].

Conclusion

Seneca's reflections on the path to moral perfection, a path that, as he believed, every adult inevitably goes through, naturally led him to a profound study of the issues related to raising children. The philosopher was convinced that skillful parental influence on the process of nurturing a child's soul can prevent the development of many vices in the future, ensuring harmonious growing up. His views, based on the established Roman traditions of the 1st century AD, included axioms about the power of the father (*patria potestas*), the importance of paternal influence, and the sacred duty of children to show respect, obedience, and meekness towards their parents. Seneca did not deny the widespread practice of corporal punishment at that time, but his concept of education significantly exceeded simple adherence to traditions, offering a much deeper and more humanistic approach. The central element of Seneca's pedagogy was the prevention of children from explosive behavior, with anger as its major trigger. Anger, in his opinion, was the root of all vices and passions, a destructive force capable of distorting the entire subsequent life of a person. Therefore, the task of parents is to curb outbursts of anger from an early age and teach children to manage their emotions. In the relationship between parents and children, Seneca believed that natural innate love should reign, combined with restrained joy, an integral attribute of true virtue. This parental love should not be blind, but should be manifested in caring guidance aimed at preparing children for the difficulties and hardships of life, at the constant strengthening of virtues in them and an continuous self-improvement. The father in this case is viewed as the main educator of the son, demanding, fair and moderate in punishments but even more restrained in praise. Seneca emphasized the importance of personal example: the father should be a role model for the child, strictly monitoring his own life and striving for moral improvement. Thus, the educational process becomes an interaction, where children do not simply obey but learn by observing the actions of their parents. According to Seneca, children's love for their parents should not be blind obedience but manifested in obedience, respect, the ability to forgive insults, and the desire to meet the expectations of their parents. It is important to note that Seneca did not offer a mechanistic system of education, but rather described the path to harmony in the relationship between parents and children. His philosophy of education is focused on the holistic approach to shape a personality capable of self-control, moral self-improvement, and adaptation to the complexities of life. This is not just a set of rules, but a philosophical teaching that requires a deep understanding of human nature and constant self-improvement for both parents and children. Seneca emphasized the need for an individual approach that takes into account the characteristics of each child. His goal was not to break the child's will, but to direct it in the right direction, help him reveal his potential and achieve moral perfection. In this context, corporal punishment is not seen as the primary method, but as an extreme measure, applied with great caution and awareness of responsibility. The main emphasis is on love, patience and constant dialogue between parents and children. Therefore, Seneca's concept remains relevant to this day, offering profound and useful principles in the educational process.

REFERENCES

1. Груздева, М. Л. Без любви, без веры, без надежды: о мужестве быть в стоической этике и правосознании / М. Л. Груздева // Гуманитарный вестник Военной академии Ракетных войск стратегического назначения. – 2016. – № 4. – С. 40–43.
2. Lavery, G. B. Sons and Rulers: Paradox in Seneca's *De ira* / G. B. Lavery // *L'Antiquité Classique*. – 1987. – T. 56. – P. 279–283.
3. Inwood, B. The Will in Seneca the Younger // *Classical Philology*. – 2000. – Vol. 95. – P. 44–60.
4. Schafer, J. Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* as Dramatized Education / J. Schafer // *Classical Philology*. – 2011. – Vol. 106. – P. 32–52.

5. Wagoner, R. Seneca on Moral Theory and Moral Improvement // *Classical Philology*. – 2014. – Vol. 109. – P. 241–262.
6. Кочеров, С. Н. Римский стоицизм как соединение этической теории и моральной практики // *Этическая мысль*. – 2016. – Т. 16. – С. 31–45.
7. Медведева, Г. П. Идеи помощи человеку в трактате Луция Аннея Сенеки «О благодеяниях» / Г. П. Медведева // *Социальная политика и социология*. – 2016. – Т. 15. – С. 136–144.
8. Marshall, C. W. The Works of Seneca the Younger and Their Dates // *Brill's Companion to Seneca* / eds. C. W. Marshall, G. Damschen, A. Heil. – Leiden-Boston : Brill, 2014. – P. 33–44.
9. Evenepoel, W. The Stoic Seneca on virtus, gaudium and voluptas / W. Evenepoel // *L'Antiquité Classique*. – 2014. – Т. 83. – P. 45–78.
10. Портнягина, И. П. Луций Анней Сенека о системе воспитания и самовоспитания (теория и практика) / И. П. Портнягина // *Мнемон: Исследования и публикации по истории античного мира*. – СПб. : Изд. СПбГУ, 2014. – Вып. 14. – С. 211–222.
11. Weber, D. Der Stoiker als Autor: Senecas De tranquillitate animi / D. Weber // *Wiener Studien*. – 2018. – Vol. 131. – S. 131–147.
12. Митсис, Ф. Сенека о разуме, правилах и нравственном развитии / Ф. Митсис // *Ценности и смыслы*. – 2019. – № 5. – С. 8–52.
13. Масо, С. Риск в образовательной стратегии Сенеки // *Ценности и смыслы*. – 2019. – № 2. – С. 26–48.
14. Нефедова, Л. К. Правовая пропедевтика отношения к ребенку (из опыта античной мысли) / Л. К. Нефедова // *Научный вестник Омской академии МВД России*. – 2018. – № 1. – С. 70–75.
15. Griffin, M. Seneca's Pedagogic Strategy: Letters and De Beneficiis / M. Griffin // *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*. – 2007. – Supplement № 94. – P. 89–113.
16. Сергеев, М. Е. Жизнь в Древнем Риме / М. Е. Сергеев. – СПб. : Летний сад, 2000. – 366 с.
17. Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. Anger, Mercy, Revenge / Lucius Annaeus Seneca ; Translated by R. A. Kaster and M. C. Nussbaum. – Chicago – London : The University of Chicago Press. – 2010. – xxvi, 247 p.
18. Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. On Benefits / Lucius Annaeus Seneca ; Translated by M. Griffin and B. Inwood. – Chicago–London : The University of Chicago Press, 2011. – xxvi, 222 p.
19. Cantarella, E. Fathers and Sons in Rome / E. Cantarella // *Classical World*. – 2003. – Vol. 96. – P. 281–298.
20. Weeber, K.-W. Vita quotidiana nell'antica Roma / K.-W. Weeber. – Roma : Newton Compton, 2010. – 461 p.
21. Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. Letters on Ethics to Lucilius / Lucius Annaeus Seneca ; Translated with an introduction and commentary by M. Graver, A. A. Long. – Chicago – London : The University of Chicago Press, 2015. – xxviii, 604 p.
22. Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. Dialogues and Esseys / Lucius Annaeus Seneca ; Translated by J. Davie with an introduction and notes by T. Reinhardt. – Oxford : University Press, 2007. – xxxiii, 263 p.
23. Rosivach, V. J. Seneca on the Fear of Poverty in the Epistulae Morales / V. J. Rosivach // *L'Antiquité Classique*. – 1995. – Т. 64. – P. 91–98.

Поступила в редакцию 24.03.2025

E-mail: telepen_serg@mail.ru

Чжу Ифань

ТРАКТОВКА СЕНЕКОЙ РОЛИ ОТЦА В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ ЛИЧНОСТИ СЫНА

В статье на основе анализа сочинений Сенеки рассматривается отношение философа к семейному воспитанию, его задачам и средствам. Представлены размышления и выводы философа о способах влияния на воспитуемого, с одной стороны, и роли отца в становлении личности гражданина, с другой. Автор приходит к выводу, что воззрения философа на семейное воспитание в основном выстраиваются в связи с поиском решения проблем, возникающих на пути воспитания достойного члена общества, являющегося гармоничной личностью и обладающего высоким уровнем гражданского самосознания. По мнению Сенеки, добиться ожидаемого эффекта в этом случае возможно лишь при активной роли отца, выполняющего функции последовательного блюстителя традиций строгого воспитания.

Ключевые слова: семейное воспитание, личность, моральные качества, моральный авторитет, философия, наставник, воспитуемый.