

## VII.—The “Indifferents” in the Old and Middle Stoa

MARGARET E. REESOR

WELLS COLLEGE

Zeno maintained that the virtues of the wise man were all forms of the primary virtue, practical wisdom (*φρόνησις*), and that they were not affected by environment.<sup>1</sup> Courage was practical wisdom in endurance; justice was wisdom in distributing to each his due; and temperance was wisdom in choice (Zeno, 1.200 cf. 201; Aristo, 1.373, 374, 375; Cleanthes, 1.563; Chrysippus, 3.289).<sup>2</sup> Virtue was regarded as the perfection of the nature of each individual (3.257), and the natural tendency of the individual towards virtue was emphasized.<sup>3</sup> Cleanthes, for instance, wrote that all men have a natural inclination towards virtue (1.566), and Chrysippus stated that his account of good and evil apprehended the natural preconceptions (*ἐμφύτων προλήψεων* 3.69 cf. 3.214).

The self-sufficiency and independence of the wise man are mentioned in many of the fragments. The wise man was not mastered by another person, and was not tricked or deceived (Zeno, 1.216). He would remain virtuous even if he lived under a tyrant (Zeno, 1.219). He would not be disturbed if he lost his property or family (Persaeus, 1.449). Safe in the possession of a virtue which was akin to the divine, the wise man remained morally independent of the society in which he lived. Virtue alone was sufficient for happiness (Chrysippus, 3.49).

Since such things as health, wealth or reputation could not affect virtue, it made no difference to the wise man whether he had them or not, and he could not consider them good or evil (1.190). Zeno termed them all “indifferents” (*ἀδιάφορα*), but he called such things as health and wealth “according to nature” (*τὰ κατὰ φύσιν*) and the opposite of these “contrary to nature” (*τὰ παρὰ φύσιν*).

<sup>1</sup> The fragments of the philosophers of the Old Stoa are collected in H. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (Leipzig 1921). I have referred to this work by the number of the book and fragment, e.g., 2.93. For Panaetius I have used the recent collection of M. van Straaten, *Panētiūs* (Amsterdam 1946).

<sup>2</sup> For further discussion of Stoic virtue see O. Rieth, *Grundbegriffe der stoischen Ethik* (Berlin 1933) 84–91.

<sup>3</sup> See also M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa* (Göttingen 1948–9) 1.123 and 2.71.

The terms "preferred" (προηγμένα) and "rejected" (ἀποπροηγμένα) were also used.<sup>4</sup> All of the philosophers of the Old Stoa except Aristo of Chios and Herillus of Carthage accepted Zeno's account of the "indifferents." Aristo and Herillus did not distinguish between things "preferred" and "rejected" (1.361, 362, 363, 364, 367, and 415).

But even if the virtue of the wise man was not affected by the loss of property, it was necessary for him to earn his own living and to support his family. Zeno called actions of this kind "duties," "acts of which a reasonable account can be given" (1.230, cf. 3.495). A man could be virtuous in sickness or poverty but from the practical point of view he had to pay enough attention to health to be a good soldier in the defence of his country and enough attention to money to earn his own living.

The concept of duty was probably connected with nature and things according to nature. "What shall I regard as the source of duty and the matter of virtue," Plutarch asked in a passage which is probably based on Chrysippus, "if I pass over nature and things according to nature (3.491)?" This connection may have been made by Zeno, since, as we have seen, many kinds of duty presupposed such things as money and health and these were according to nature.

The two aspects of the "indifferents" as not affecting virtue and yet as necessary for the needs of everyday life account for many contradictions in the fragments of the philosophers of the Old Stoa. This can be illustrated by a few passages from Chrysippus. In one passage Chrysippus said that the wise man would not attach any more importance to the loss of property than to the loss of a penny (3.153), but in another passage he wrote that those who considered wealth, health, freedom from pain and soundness of body as of no account were insane (3.138). Although he maintained that the wise man would not stretch a finger to acquire a good reputation, he admitted that a good reputation was useful (3.159). Further in his book *Concerning Justice* he argued that if we consider health good, we destroy justice and the other virtues (3.157), but in his *Rhetoric* he did not oppose those who numbered health among things which were good (3.148). Again in the same book he wrote

<sup>4</sup> The Stoics considered that "things according to nature" had worth or value (ἀξία, 1.192). The Stoic philosopher Archdemus, however, argued that pleasure was according to nature but that it did not have any value (3.22).

that the wise man would give public addresses and would take part in public life just as if wealth, reputation and health were good (3.698). The contradictions are inherent in Stoicism itself. From the moral point of view, the wise man, self-sufficient in his own virtue, would be completely unconcerned about the "indifferents," and since the "indifferents" could not affect his virtue, he could not regard them as good or evil. On the other hand, if he was to be a good citizen, he must pay some attention to his health, property, and reputation.

The importance of a right choice among the "indifferents" for the man who wished to acquire a good habit-pattern and to become virtuous was probably emphasized by Chrysippus. He introduced a whole swarm of virtues such as pleasantness (*χαριεντότης*), goodness (*ἐσθλότης*) and greatness (*μεγαλότης*, 3.255). These virtues were habit-patterns (*ἔξις*, 3.384). By developing a good habit-pattern a man who was not virtuous could become virtuous. Chrysippus wrote that the life of the man who was making progress to the highest point was not yet happy, but that happiness followed when the mean actions received a strong habit-pattern and acquired some solidity.<sup>5</sup> In the same way he argued that a bad habit-pattern might cause virtue to be lost. Virtue could be lost through drunkenness and melancholy (3.237). How was a good habit-pattern developed? Since the habit-pattern followed reason exercising choice (3.384), we can assume that a man acquired a good habit-pattern by choosing things according to nature and by performing his duty towards other human beings.

Was Chrysippus the first Stoic philosopher to believe that virtue was affected by the habit-pattern? This question is not answered in the fragments. Plutarch, in a passage in which he seems to be following the philosophers of the Old Stoa, states that the emotions arose when the rational faculties were altered by changes in the habit-pattern or disposition (1.202 = 3.459). This passage might seem to suggest that the philosophers of the Old Stoa in general, and not Chrysippus and his successors alone, used the concept of the habit-pattern. There is, however, one further consideration. Cleanthes had argued that virtue could not be lost; Chrysippus that it could be lost through drunkenness and melancholy (1.568 = 3.237). If Chrysippus departed from

<sup>5</sup> 3.510: ἐπιγίγνεσθαι αὐτῷ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ὅταν αἱ μέσαι πράξεις αὐταὶ προσλάβωσι τὸ βέβαιον καὶ ἐκτικὸν καὶ ἰδίαν πῆξιν τινὰ λάβωσι.

earlier Stoic doctrine when he asserted that such things as melancholy and drunkenness, which were, in fact, habit-patterns, could cause virtue to be lost, he may have deviated from earlier Stoicism when he argued that by forming a good habit-pattern a man who was not virtuous could become virtuous.

The development of a good habit-pattern by a right choice among the "indifferents" was emphasized in the definitions of the end of life given by Diogenes of Babylon and Antipater of Tarsus. Diogenes defined the end of life as acting rationally in the choice and rejection of things according to nature.<sup>6</sup> Antipater argued that the end of life was to live choosing things according to nature, and rejecting things contrary to nature, or to do everything in one's power continually and unceasingly with a view to obtaining things preferred by nature.<sup>7</sup> The end of life according to these philosophers was the constant exercise of choice by the individual to obtain those things which were preferred. We can assume that a man who was not yet virtuous could acquire a virtuous habit-pattern by a correct exercise of choice, and the man who was already virtuous would use his virtue in choosing correctly.

The definitions of the end of life used by Diogenes and Antipater were not very different from Aristotle's concept of practical virtue. Aristotle defined practical virtue as a disposition of choice (*ἔξις προαιρετική*). The choice was determined by the character of the individual who exercised it, and the individual's character, in turn, was formed by previous decisions of the same kind (*E.N.* 1106b.36). It is probable, however, that Diogenes and Antipater were influenced by the criticisms which were made against Stoic philosophy by the Academic philosopher Carneades. He argued that the end of life must be connected with the nature of man and must be of such a kind that it would lead the individual to direct his impulse (*δρμή*) towards acquiring it (*Cic. Fin.* 5.17). He de-

<sup>6</sup> Diogenes, 3.44: *εὐλογιστεῖν ἐν τῇ τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ἐκλογῇ καὶ ἀπεκλογῇ*. Cf. 45 and 46.

<sup>7</sup> Antipater, 3.57: *ῥῆν ἐκλεγόμενους μὲν τὰ κατὰ φύσιν, ἀπεκλεγόμενους δὲ τὰ παρὰ φύσιν and πᾶν τὸ καθ' αὐτὸν ποιεῖν διηλεκῶς καὶ ἀπαραβάτως πρὸς τὸ τυγχάνειν τῶν προηγουμένων κατὰ φύσιν*. Cf. 3.58. For a discussion of the Stoic ideal of the end of life, see A. Bonhöffer, "Die Telosformel des Stoikers Diogenes," *Philologus* 67 (1908) 582-605; G. Bohnenblust, "Die Entstehung des stoischen Naturprinzips," *Arch. Gesch. Phil.* 27 (1914) 171-187; E. Grumach, *Physis und Agathon in der alten Stoa* (Berlin 1932) 33; O. Rieth, "Über das Telos der Stoiker," *Hermes* 69 (1934) 13-45; G. Nebel, "Der Begriff des καθήκον in der alten Stoa," *Hermes* 70 (1935) 439-60; M. Pohlenz, *op. cit.* (see above, note 3) 1.116-118, and 186-189.

finer the end of life as the enjoyment of the first things according to nature (Cic. *Fin.* 5.20).<sup>8</sup> Diogenes and Antipater, however, differed from Carneades in so far as they defined the end as choosing rather than obtaining things according to nature. The act of choosing and the kind of character which resulted from repeated acts of choosing correctly were important, not the objects themselves.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of choosing things according to nature is emphasized in the third book of the *De Finibus* also (*Fin.* 3.20, cf. 33 and 61). Cicero argued that according to the Stoics man had a natural instinct for self-preservation (τὰ πρῶτα κατὰ φύσιν) and for choosing things according to nature (τὰ κατὰ φύσιν). By the repeated exercise of choice he acquired the habit of choosing correctly. When this habit-pattern was firmly established and in harmony with nature, the act itself might be regarded as good. Cicero's source in this passage cannot be determined.

The choice of things according to nature may be suggested in Panaetius' definition of the end of life also. He defined the end of life as "living according to the impulses given to us by nature."<sup>10</sup> Van Straaten argued from this definition that man had a natural impulse to choose things according to nature.<sup>11</sup>

Panaetius was the first of the Stoic philosophers to state that the "indifferents" were necessary. Virtue, he maintained, was not sufficient for happiness (D.L. 7.128). A man needed health, a means of livelihood and physical strength. Panaetius seems to have shown little interest in the wise man.<sup>12</sup>

Some very important evidence for Panaetius' treatment of the "indifferents" can be found in the first and second books of the *De Officiis*. In a long passage in the first book of the *De Officiis*

<sup>8</sup> On the philosophy of Carneades, see J. Croissant, "La morale de Carneade," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 2 (1939) 545-570; and D. Amand, *Fatalisme et liberté dans l'antiquité grecque* (Louvain 1945) 41-68.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Cic. *Fin.* 3.22 and Stob. *Ec.* 2, p. 47.7-11 W where a distinction is made between the goal and the end.

<sup>10</sup> Panaetius fr. 96 = Clem. *Strom.* 129.4: πρὸς τοῦτοις, ἔτι Παναίτιος τὸ ξῆν κατὰ τὰς δεδομένας ἡμῖν ἐκ φύσεως ἀφορμὰς τέλος ἀπεφῆνατο.

<sup>11</sup> M. van Straaten, *Panētiūs* (Amsterdam 1946) 154-156.

<sup>12</sup> The little that we know about Panaetius' attitude towards the wise man is found in fr. 114 = Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 19.7.5. In this Panaetius is asked whether the wise man will fall in love. He answered, "So far as the wise man is concerned, we shall see; but as for you and me who are still a long way from being a wise man. . . ."

Cicero discussed the concept of *decorum* (τὸ πρέπον).<sup>13</sup> The word means "that which is fitting or appropriate." *Decorum* is identical with moral virtue (*honestum*), but it is the impression made by moral virtue rather than the action which constitutes moral virtue. It is determined by the nature of the individual, his position, wealth, and age.<sup>14</sup> These factors must be considered if we are to decide whether a particular action is "fitting" or not. There is a great deal of emphasis on the appearance of the individual. He should give the impression of being severe and serious (*Off.* 1.103); he should speak on appropriate topics and in a good style (*Off.* 1.134-5). He should live in a house which will be suited to his circumstances, and which will be neither too much above or below his income (*Off.* 1.138). Further the individual was expected to follow the established customs of society in fulfilling the duties of his position (*Off.* 1.148-149). Exceptional individuals such as Aristippus or Socrates might act contrary to established custom but the ordinary man was required to live according to the pattern of social usage.

In this passage position, wealth and age, which were regarded as a matter of indifference by the earlier Stoics, are used to determine what actions should be considered fitting or appropriate. The virtue of the individual is not obedience to divine reason, regardless of the society in which he happened to be living, but is determined by his position in society and by the regulations and laws of the community.

The second book of the *De Officiis* opens with the statement that statesmen need helpers and must win honor (*gloria*), and receive the confidence (*fides*) of the people. The statesman can do so, if he uses justice and practical wisdom (*prudentia*), if he shows exceptional virtue, or indifference to pleasure and pain (*Off.* 2.37). According to the philosophers of the Old Stoa, a good reputation was a matter of indifference. In the second book of the *De Officiis*, it is the goal towards which the virtues are directed.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of *decorum* in the *De Officiis*, see R. Philippson, "Das Sittlich-schöne bei Panaitios," *Philologus* 85 (1930) 382-413; M. Pohlenz, "τὸ πρέπον Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des griechischen Geistes," *GöttNachr.* (1933) 276 ff.; M. Pohlenz, *Antikes Führertum* (Leipzig 1934).

<sup>14</sup> Compare Arist. *Pol.* 1260a.19 ff. Aristotle also believed that the virtue of the individual was determined by his function in society. For this reason he argued that the virtue of a woman was different from that of a man and that the virtue of a slave was different from that of his master.

Panaetius' treatment of the "indifferents" may perhaps be explained by his modification of the Stoic concept of virtue. Van Straaten pointed out that the four virtues, wisdom, justice, courage and temperance in the first book of the *De Officiis*, which probably has Panaetius as its source,<sup>15</sup> were connected with natural instincts.<sup>16</sup> Wisdom, he argued, was connected with a natural desire to learn (*Off.* 1.13), justice with the instinct for self-preservation (*Off.* 1.11), courage with the natural independence of a human being (*Off.* 1.13). Moderation was a desire to create beauty (*Off.* 1.95). The concept of the "indifferents" was based on the assumption that the virtue of the wise man was divine reason, and that his virtue was not affected by the acquisition or loss of such things as health and wealth. The association of virtue with instinct rather than with reason was necessarily followed by a modification of Zeno's concept of the "indifferents."

Hecaton of Rhodes, the pupil of Panaetius, was more conservative than his teacher. Since he believed that virtue was sufficient for happiness (D.L. 7.128), we can assume that his treatment of the "indifferents" was similar to that adopted by the philosophers of the Old Stoa. He kept the concept of the wise man (D.L. 7.124).<sup>17</sup>

As Dr. Edelstein pointed out in an article on Posidonius, the Stoic philosopher Posidonius of Rhodes seems to have argued that the "indifferents" had a positive effect upon the emotions and that they should be regarded as good or evil but not as a matter of

<sup>15</sup> In a letter to Atticus (*Att.* 16.11.4) Cicero said that he used Panaetius for the first two books of the *De Officiis*.

<sup>16</sup> Van Straaten (see above, note 11) 174-191; and Philippson (see above, note 13) 382-3.

<sup>17</sup> According to a passage in Diogenes Laertius (D.L. 7.90-91), the Stoic philosopher Hecaton distinguished between theoretic and non-theoretic virtues. The first included practical wisdom and justice; the latter, health, strength, and courage. The non-theoretic virtues followed upon and were an extension of the theoretic virtues. Health, for instance, followed moderation. Philippson (above, note 13) 365-386 connected the fragment with a passage in Stobaeus (*Ec.* 2, p. 62.15-20 W) which he believed to be based on Hecaton. This passage refers to virtues which follow upon the theoretic virtues, such as the health of the soul, the soundness and strength of the soul and beauty. If Philippson was right in assuming that this passage had Hecaton as its source, the terms health and strength in the paragraph from Diogenes should refer to the soul rather than to the corporeal "indifferents." The words strength and health had been used to describe the condition of the soul by Aristo (1.375), Cleanthes (1.563), and Chrysippus (3.473). See also H. Gomoll, *Der stoische Philosoph Hecaton* (Leipzig 1933).

indifference.<sup>18</sup> In addition to reason Posidonius recognized two irrational faculties of the soul, passion (τὸ θυμοειδές) and desire (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν). He stressed the importance of the emotions which he believed to be connected with the irrational faculties of the soul,<sup>19</sup> and influenced by the disposition of the body (διάθεσις).<sup>20</sup> Since the “indifferents” affected the emotions and hence the irrational faculties of the soul they must be good or evil. In two passages Posidonius stated that wealth and health were good.<sup>21</sup> In other passages, however, he seems to have argued that wealth and health were not good since they did not give moral magnanimity, confidence or security,<sup>22</sup> and again that wealth is an antecedent cause of evil.<sup>23</sup> In either case, the “indifferents” exerted a positive influence. When reason ceased to be the single faculty of the soul the concept of the “indifferents” no longer had any meaning. At the same time Posidonius asserted that virtue was not self-sufficient, and that the individual needed such things as health and wealth (D.L. 7.128).

We may state our conclusions as follows. The “indifferents” in Stoic philosophy included such things as health, sickness, wealth and poverty, and received their name from the fact that they had no effect on the virtue of the wise man. Zeno divided them into “things according to and contrary to nature.” The concept of the “indifferents” was modified by the later Stoics. The importance which Chrysippus attached to a good habit-pattern (ἔξις) may have influenced his interpretation of the “indifferents.” We can assume that a man acquired a good habit-pattern by choosing “things according to nature.” A right choice among the “indifferents” was emphasized in the definitions of the end of life used by Diogenes of Babylon and Antipater of Tarsus.

<sup>18</sup> This interpretation was made by L. Edelstein, “The Philosophical System of Posidonius,” *AJP* 57 (1936) 308-9.

<sup>19</sup> Galen, *De Placitis* 348.12-16 (Müller).

<sup>20</sup> Galen, *De Placitis* 442.14-15 (Müller).

<sup>21</sup> D.L. 7.103: Ποσειδώνιος μέντοι καὶ ταῦτά φησι (πλοῦτον καὶ ὑγίειαν) τῶν ἀγαθῶν εἶναι. See also Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* (Berlin 1897) 593.9: Ποσειδώνιος Ἀπαμεινός εἶλεν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀγαθὸν εἶναι πλοῦτον καὶ ὑγίειαν.

<sup>22</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 87.35: Posidonius sic interrogandum ait: quae neque magnitudinem animo dant nec fiduciam nec securitatem, non sunt bona. Divitiae autem et bona valetudo et similia his nihil horum faciunt; ergo non sunt bona.

<sup>23</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 87.31: Posidonius, ut ego existimo, melius qui ait divitias esse causam malorum, non quia ipsae faciunt aliquid, sed quia facturos irritant. Alia est enim causa efficiens, quae protinus necesse est noceat, alia praecedens. Hanc praecedentem causam divitiae habent.



Panaetius was the first of the Stoic philosophers to argue that virtue alone was not sufficient for happiness. Evidence concerning his treatment of the "indifferents" can be found in the first and second books of the *De Officiis*. In the first book, position, wealth and age, which were regarded as "indifferents" by the Old Stoa, are used to determine what actions should be considered fitting or appropriate (*decorum*). In the second, the statesman is urged to exercise his virtue that he may win honor (*gloria*) and receive the confidence (*fides*) of the people. These "indifferents" are the goal towards which the virtues are directed. Posidonius believed that the "indifferents" had a positive effect upon the emotions, and seems to have argued that they should be regarded as good or evil but not as a matter of indifference.