

Panaetius and Posidonius: The Birth of Humanism

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Abstract— Both Panaetius and his student, Posidonius, contributed in the birth of humanism during Stoicism. Panaetius influenced the Romans, since he referred to their principles of behavior according to a humanistic ideal. He introduced encyklios paideia, which is the general education in levels, but he remained quite faithful to the Stoic doctrine. Panaetius supported that man's primary aim was to act as a rational moral agent. He stressed the distinctions between the physical components of man and his soul, introducing the human side of Stoicism and the criteria of moral acts. Posidonius followed his teacher, but he made some significant modifications. He was both a philosopher and a scientist. Posidonius eventually left the Stoic school entirely, since he desired to explore fields such as geography and astronomy with the same attention to detail that Stoicism afforded philosophy. Moving forward, he began to study both Plato and Aristotle in depth, rejecting the rigidity of his educational background. Posidonius' multifarious aspects of thought focused on the cosmic sympathy, claiming that the irrational side of human nature was the root of our passions. Posidonius was a polymath, developing a panhuman code of ethics and contributing positively not only to the Stoic philosophy but also to history. In the present paper, I am going to stress the two philosophers' contribution into the development of humanism, as an integral part of Stoic Ethics. The method I used is the analysis of each philosopher's beliefs related to the humanistic ideal and their influence on general education. The conclusion is that their main ideas are shaped by practical philosophy for Panaetius and theoretical approaches for Posidonius. The aim of this paper is to show that the Stoic idea that the human being is a microcosm of the universe is a part of general education.

Keywords— Rational, Irrational, Humanism, Stoicism, Panaetius, Posidonius.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the Stoic ethics, there has appeared an awareness of common humanity, the fundamental nature of all men, and the belief that this awareness should lead to a sympathetic understanding of men's actions and

passions. The humanistic ideal implies a human attitude to political and public problems. Panaetius' views seem to have influenced the ideal of humanism, which was established in Scipio's circle. [2]

Humanism was used for actions more than theory and applied the generalized Greek theory on practice. Humanism was used as a term in every sphere of life. It implied beneficence, magnanimity, kindness, courtesy, literary taste and education and generally every property that could derive from the desire for dignity. [23]

Panaetius was based on the Socratic stream of philosophy. Socrates was the symbol and the main figure that discovered the humanistic ideal. The questions of Socrates about human behavior, human values and justice are interpreted as the acknowledgement of truth. Beyond the conflicts, there is a relationship among people, which bridges all gaps. It is the field of human essence and our ability to recognize the other speaker as our equal. It is a kind of civilization that reconciles, since the civilization of humanism introduces a distinction among people. On the one hand, there are those who own this civilization consciously and believe that nothing humane is foreign. On the other hand, there are those who play the role of an actor in the theatre of our universe, without knowing their real nature. [21]

In Hellenistic period, encyklios paideia is formed, involving the knowledge of concepts and beliefs that regard all kinds of sciences. Stoicism supported the liberation of the person, through his involvement in the logic order of cosmos. The stoic theory demanded a circle of studies which was far complicated. General education (geniki paideia) was considered by Stoics as a terminal on the way that leads to philosophy and wisdom. Stoics introduced the method of allegoric interpretation of poems and traditional myths. They looked at a more profound meaning in the texts they read, which could be of ethical or cosmologic nature. It was a criterion, a guide for general studies and it made possible the connection of Stoicism with the cultural tradition. Panaetius rejected the view that the virtuous life is possible only for the wise man. He thought that the intermediate levels had their own value. The

educated citizen, who obeyed to his social duties, is a positive figure, although he is not a truly wise man.[21]

II. PANAETIUS' HUMANISTIC IDEAL

Panaetius was born in Rhodes around 185 BC. He studied in Pergamum and Athens, close to the Stoics Diogenes of Babylon and Antipater of Tarsus. He moved to Rome, close to the circle of people surrounding the Roman general Scipio Africanus. He became head of the Stoa in 128 BC, succeeding Antipater.[18] Panaetius admired both Plato and Aristotle. Much of the information we have regarding Socrates and the work of Plato is also attributed to Panaetius. Although he remained faithful to much of Stoic doctrine (enough to remain the head of the Stoa), he made some modifications in Stoic ethics. He rejected the Stoic belief of the periodic destruction of the world, denying that virtue is sufficient on its own for happiness. However, following the Stoic orthodoxy, he denied the Platonic doctrine about the immortality of the soul (see Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.79). [18]

Panaetius described the positive obligations that refer to the well being of a society. He classified duties under four kinds of roles (personae). These duties are imposed by our human nature, our individual capacities and our own choice. Propriety is achieved through the balance of the obligations by the four roles. He rejects the asceticism of early Stoics, giving to Stoicism a more political orientation. He fostered peace, posterity and political stability.[5]

Panaetius supported that man should take into account the requirements of the rational nature. Nature is supposed to orientate, without leading men to goodness and virtue. Stoics claim that education is necessary, because natural tendencies are distorted from infancy.[8] He followed a natural process, called familiarization or affiliation, to base his proposals on moral development. He thought that the four virtues had some infant roots. Wisdom has its roots to the innate desire for knowledge, justice to the social impulses of rationality, courage to an impetus to success and temperance to self- preservation. He defined human good as living virtuously and in agreement with nature.[5]

Panaetius also stressed the distinctions between the physical components of man (physis) and his soul (psyche). He found two powers opposed to each other, the irrational and the rational. On the contrary to Plato and Aristotle's belief about the immortality of soul, Panaetius claimed that the soul is born and later it dies.[17] He considered the procreative power of man as a principle of lower order, the φύσις (physis), in which

nutrition and growth are involved. Panaetius discarded Stoic monism and did not limit all functions of living beings in one principle. [20]

Panaetius' philosophy belongs to the humanistic phase of Stoicism. It is mainly evident in his corrections of morality. In juxtaposition to the Early Stoics, who wanted to live according to nature, he supported to live according to the dispositions given by nature. The moral task has a bigger humanistic value, because it permits anyone to fulfill himself according to natural dispositions. Panaetius introduced the more human side of Stoicism and the concept of duties.[17]

The Stoic philosopher formulated guidelines to help morally imperfect people to practice (Kathekonta), concerning the proegmena, the naturally preferable objects. Panaetius supported the appropriate way to pursue material and social benefits (utilia), such as wealth and public reputation.[7] Panaetius focused on human motives, moral choices and decisions. In cases the katekonta collide between the beneficial and the moral right, he had determined four criteria of moral acts; the calculation of human nature, the aggregation of personal skills and specific features, the consideration of social order and the focus on free will.[11]

Following the basic doctrine of Stoicism about a rationally directed universe, he focused on human nature. He thought that the world is arranged for the benefit of mankind, placing astrology beyond human knowledge. Both Panaetius and Posidonius were eclectic in new ideas. Posidonius was a Stoic and a Platonist, a rationalist and a mystic philosopher. Posidonius' principle was that theories must fit the facts. He placed the root of evil within the soul, while he had a natural affinity to virtue and knowledge. Posidonius' multifarious activities could be described as a cosmic sympathy, since he thought that the irrational side of human nature was the root of our passions.[14]

III. POSIDONIUS' POLYMATHY

Posidonius was born in Apamea, Syria, around 135 BC. He first studied in Athens, having Panaetius as his teacher, and then he moved to Rhodes to teach philosophy. This may have happened because the headship at the Stoic school in Athens had passed to Mnesarchus and Dardanus, after Panaetius' death, although Posidonius was the spiritual successor of Middle Stoicism.[12] His most famous pupil was Cicero. Posidonius was a polymath, contributing not only to Stoic philosophy but also to history, geography, astronomy, meteorology, biology and anthropology.[15] He developed a panhuman code of ethics, in which justice had both positive and negative function.

Posidonius believed that geography, history and the sciences in general were useful as the tools of philosophy, though they were subordinate to it.[12]

The Stoic philosopher divided philosophy in logics, ethics and physics and he found an interrelationship and an organic functionality among them. He treated other sciences as the medium that philosophy uses to reinforce its arguments and points. For Posidonius, philosophy was a cure to mental disturbances, which appeared due to the irrational part of human nature under the influence of external factors. He abandoned the principle of natural equality among humans, that's why he accepted the dualistic model of human nature.[11]

His geographical observations accompany observations of ethnologic character that outline a theory of civilization and its historic evolution. For Posidonius, the cultural aspect of humanity faces an ethical deterioration. He believed that the first society was close to logos and had an internal balance, which old poetry and legislation had been influenced from. He also discovered the signs of a culture's evolution. At first, people invented arts to cover the needs of their survival and the improvement of their life. That way of life took man far from logos, causing moral degradation. The philosophers searched for truth, contributing to the moral improvement of a society through its practical and political activity. They constitute a live example of devotion to logos. They exist between the world of material, where most people live, and the divine world, whose source is pure ethics. For Posidonius, political virtue led to the purification of the civilization and the return of humanity to its previous innocence.[4]

Posidonius' most famous deviation from Stoicism was in psychology. According to Galen, while earlier Stoics adopted a monistic psychology, in which reason and emotion were not separated, Posidonius followed Plato in suggesting a tripartite psychology, dividing the soul into reason, emotion and desire.[18] In *De Affectibus* I, Posidonius presented an epitome of Plato's views on the role of the irrational in their education. He conceived the tripartition as a dichotomy between a ruling power of reason and ruled powers of emotion. For Posidonius, the *pathetikon* is subdivided into the (*epithimitikon*) and (*thimikon*). Posidonius' later influence on moral psychology is very important. His doctrine on soul division was crucial to moral psychology.[22]

Panaetius adopted the Platonic view that the irrational emotions can become moral through reason, while Posidonius declines any ethical role in passions.[11] Posidonius carried out crucial reforms to differ from his predecessors. The difference between Panaetius and Posidonius is presented in the following example. Panaetius refused that "an sapiens amaturus esset" and

brought the discussion into everyday life (Sen. Epist. 116,5). Posidonius, on the other hand, argued that the question "an sapiens ebrius futures esset" deserved his full attention.[13]

Posidonius followed the views of his teacher, but he had both eastern and western influences, as he travelled a lot in East and West. He was a tireless student of empirical studies.[17]

Adopting Pythagoreanism, Posidonius taught Stoicism, in a different way from Panaetius. Both Panaetius and Posidonius used Peripatetic and Platonist writings, manifesting Aristotelianism in an encyclopedic polymathy. Their philosophical resources could be seen as three branches of the Platonist tradition: early Platonism, Aristotelianism and Stoicism, known as syncretism.[9]

Posidonius was also a scientist. Studying astrology, he contributed into making universe approachable to humans. He had encyclopedic width in his work and made the universe approachable to everyone. Posidonius' encyclopedia is based on structuring different levels, according to which the most significant levels contain the inferior. The first causal level is the cosmologic that demonstrates the levels in which the causality of meteorologic and terrene phenomena is presented. Posidonius found connections between celestial and human events as evidence for universal 'sympathy'. [12] He claimed a causal connection between celestial or other natural events and particular human fortunes. He believed that valid predictions could be made from 'signs in nature' (Div. 1.130).[14]

The common denominator of causality among all levels is sympathy that one feels to another. Any object within the limits of its own powers maintains and reproduces the universe, in which it is a part. Dividing the soul into the rational and the irrational part, he differs from the first Stoics who supported a single soul. The polarization of soul is linked to the polarization of universe. One part of cosmos, the divine, has symmetry and order, while the other, in which there is asymmetry, is the one where humans live, and is governed by the first part.[21]

IV. GENERAL EDUCATION

Panaetius introduced his doctrine about general education, presenting his idea that there are degrees of gradual progress related to logos. He supported a more practical theory. [24] His whole philosophy was based on the attempt to make each person be like a microcosm of universe and able to solve problems of everyday life. For Panaetius education was not a part of abstract thought, but something applicable in daily routine. For Posidonius, the human being is a world citizen. He

combined natural science, mathematics, historical and anthropological science to form his theory. He supported that sympatheia is used to make people live together in harmony, as well as he connected all members of the cosmos, either being close or far.

Besides world citizenship, they introduced natural law; that is a variety of universal principles which are applicable to all humans. Cosmopolis influenced the image of citizenship, since natural law influenced both law and educational system.[3] Posidonius also introduced an irrational faculty, denying the unity of soul and attempting a unification of all science under the spectrum of general education. [24]

V. CONCLUSION

Panaetius of Rhodes had made Stoic ethics more Aristotelian than it was, whereas Posidonius of Apamea added some modifications into Stoic philosophy.[15] Panaetius was more concerned about practical philosophy, while Posidonius was mainly a theorist. The latter tried to combine science and Stoicism in one unity. He had the curiosity of an old natural philosopher, who made observations on natural sciences through his trips. He paralleled the world with an animated organism, supporting that logos was the working force of the whole universe. This was a continuation of the Stoic idea of cosmic sympathy. His theory supported that vitalism, the life force theory, was a key concept. [9]

Posidonius unites many scientific fields, saving a plethora of knowledge and ideas, which were about to disappear in a philosophical system that was based on Stoicism.[3] Posidonius and Panaetius were the first philosophers who introduced the idea of humanism, widening their teaching into a number of sciences and making man a part of the logic order of universe. By this way, he brought the universe closer to humans.

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