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QUADERNI DI LOGOS

- 12 -

**EROI ED EROISMI  
TRA FILOSOFIA E LETTERATURA  
IN ETÀ ANTICA, MODERNA E CONTEMPORANEA**



a cura di  
**Fabrizio Lomonaco e Pasquale Sabbatino**



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Salvatore Giammusso

## Heroism vs. Balance of Virtues. A Comparison between the Aristotelian and the Stoic Concept of Liberality\*

**Abstract:** In this paper, I will compare the Aristotelian and the middle-Stoic concept of liberality as stated by Cicero in the *De Officiis*. For both concepts, liberality is a principal virtue of socio-political life, but there are substantial differences between them since they start from different premises: the individual in the case of Aristotle, and social bonds in the case of middle-Stoicism. Aristotle wants to civilize and moralize the economic life of the individual and, therefore, is bound to think of liberality as an individual character virtue that prevails over the natural attachment to wealth and assets. His liberal citizen is capable of economic beneficence for a superior political end, public happiness. In comparison, the Stoics aims at consolidating social bonds and preserving public life from the corruptive power of money. They have a more unitary conception of man and consequently think that virtues mature from the balanced development of natural impulses, based on the combination of sociability and self-preservation. According to this Stoic model, liberality originates from the social dimension of moral good. Their liberal citizen can make virtuous use of money in certain cases, but he does not necessarily need it: the social sense is crucial, and it leads to personal support of others, building and strengthening social ties.

**Keywords:** Stoic Concepts, Aristotle, Liberality, Virtues, Philosophy

1. My first statement deals with Aristotle. I shall try to argue that Aristotle's high consideration of the liberality (ἐλευθεριότης) depends on its fundamental role in the ethical-political life since it connects private wealth and public happiness. Let us first remind ourselves that, in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle mentions liberality alongside courage and justice as being among «the highest kind» of virtues which are «most useful to others» (Rhet. I, 9, 1366 b 3), so that citizens should learn to be liberal and not only to be just, that is they should give with liberality, not only to each his own<sup>1</sup>. This high regard for liberality depends on the way people who are liberal act, as if they have regulated the common aspiration for and the pleasure deriving

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\* The following text is a revised and extended version of the paper which I discussed at the 29th International Conference of Philosophy on the topic: "Greek moral and political philosophy - From Pre-Socratics to Neo-Platonism" (Rhodes, 7–12 July 2017).

<sup>1</sup> Swanson (1994: 14).

from wealth. According to Aristotle, liberal people «spend freely and do not dispute the possession of wealth, which is the chief object of other men's desire» (εἶτα ἐλευθεριότης: προΐενται γὰρ καὶ οὐκ ἀνταγωνίζονται περὶ τῶν χρημάτων, ὧν μάλιστα ἐφίενται ἄλλοι, Rhet. I, 9, 1366b 6). Aristotle associates liberality and wealth, so it comes as no surprise when, in the Nicomachean Ethic, he defines liberality as «the mean with regard to wealth» (δοκεῖ δὴ εἶναι ἡ περὶ χρήματα μεσότης, Eth. Nic. IV, 1119b 22). By “wealth” Aristotle does not mean just money but also economic goods and properties that have a market value and which can be bought, sold and valued in terms of money<sup>2</sup>. As a result, liberality is the virtue of dealing with economic goods and wealth in the right way (Eth. Nic. 1119b 23; 1120a 8 – 23); while, on the contrary, illiberality (ἀνελευθεριότης) is the vice of people who accumulate wealth and do not spend money on others (Rhet. 1366b 16-17).

Aristotle's theory is deeply rooted in the ancient Greek tradition yet contains, at the same time, new elements. It is common knowledge that the aristocratic concept of liberty in the Homeric world – the exact opposite of slavery - is influenced by possession of lands and valuable assets; property and wealth are also believed to be the prerequisite for the development of moral qualities and virtues<sup>3</sup>. Aristotle refers positively to this aristocratic idea, but he transposes it into the context of the polis and civilizes it<sup>4</sup>. Property and wealth are required for liberal gifts, but there is no need to be rich. Aristotle's ideal citizen is liberal without great wealth and expensive gifts for friends; actually, «it is not easy for the liberal man to be rich, since he is not apt either at taking or at keeping, but at giving away, and does not value wealth for its own sake but as a means to giving.» (πλουτεῖν δ' οὐ ῥάδιον τὸν ἐλευθέριον, μήτε ληπτικὸν ὄντα μήτε φυλακτικόν, προετικὸν δὲ καὶ μὴ τιμῶντα δι' αὐτὰ τὰ χρήματα ἀλλ' ἔνεκα τῆς δόσεως, Eth. Nic. 1120b 15). The desire to do good and use wealth for others is crucial. This is believed to be a more recent ethical achievement in ancient Greek history, so that the combination of old and new gives the sense of economic beneficence to Aristotelian liberality. “Liberal” can be used, therefore, to describe the citizen who takes and gives wealth in the right way.

<sup>2</sup> Curzer (2012: 25).

<sup>3</sup> Austin and Vidal-Naquet (1977:16).

<sup>4</sup> Hare (1988: 19-32) has argued that Aristotle, in his concept of liberality, puts together two different and unrelated things, possession of wealth and usage for other people. On the contrary, I refer to Curzer's interpretation of liberality as the whole of taking care of and giving wealth as it seems to me to be closer to Aristotle's interpretation of economical life. (Curzer, 2012: 92).

There are many implications to this argument. As we will see, it implies that the gift of non-economic goods is not a proper act of liberality, but rather a sign of goodwill and friendship. Also, the political aspect is relevant: liberality requires an institutional order in which individual property is allowed and promoted. In Plato's virtuous Republic, the State administers liberality, so goods are shared and there is no space for individual liberality. In defense of this right, Aristotle argues against Plato in his treatise on Politics (Pol. II, 5, 1263b 1-14)<sup>5</sup>. He entrusts individual liberality with a significant role since it has to move economic goods and let them circulate in the polis<sup>6</sup>. This is the reason why the liberal citizen is said to make the best use of wealth; he does not take wealth as an end per se, instead he cares for his property and uses it, with discretion and in the right way, as a means to benefit others. By doing so, he adjusts the economic flow in and out of the polis and contributes to social and political wealth<sup>7</sup>. Public happiness depends on liberality which, in order to grow, needs wealth just like the soul needs nourishment (De An. 421b 5-11). Wealth as such is not enough since virtue is a disposition that comes about as a result of work upon a part of the soul. In the case of liberality, it is training that transforms the natural attachment to goods into a rational pleasure in giving. This explains why Aristotle does not recognize non-economic beneficence as true liberality; if economic goods are not given, the soul does not regulate the attachment to property and no superior political good is achieved.

One might wonder what the right way of receiving and giving wealth is.

<sup>5</sup> According to Judith Swanson (1994: 16), «Aristotle is the first philosopher not only to count liberality among the primary virtues, but to note that communism does not clearly or necessarily preempt the need for it, since communal ways of life tend to be Spartan, if not inhumane.» Indeed, Plato does not regard individual liberality as the main virtue needed for a virtuous life in public institutions, whereas Aristotle treats private ownership as a basis for the moral growth of the citizen, since one can take pleasure in giving to others only if he has something to give. Also, – as we shall see – he believes that private ownership indirectly represents a condition for a good public life.

<sup>6</sup> «In Aristotelian language – so writes Nancy Sherman (1997: 342) –, liberality requires that we act as a steward of our inflow and outflow – typically of wealth, but we might also add, of time.»

<sup>7</sup> Swanson (1994: 7) has found two motivations in Aristotle's liberal man. The first one is the need for bodily protection: according to this motivation, the liberal man gives away wealth for self-preservation and «his beneficence appears to be for the sake of civic peace or justice»; but Aristotle also stresses a second motivation: the desire of the rational part of the human soul to be active and to promote the development of social life. In this sense, liberal gifts «might help others not only to stop stealing and looting, but also to become self-sufficient and thus free to live reasonably or virtuously.»

Aristotle states that the liberal man, «will give for the sake of the noble, and rightly; for he will give to the right people, the right amounts, and at the right time, with all the other qualifications that accompany right giving; and that too with pleasure or without pain; for that which is virtuous is pleasant or free from pain — least of all will it be painful (αἰ δὲ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις καλαὶ καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ ἔνεκα. καὶ ὁ ἐλευθέριος οὖν δώσει τοῦ καλοῦ ἔνεκα καὶ ὀρθῶς· οἷς γὰρ δεῖ καὶ ὅσα καὶ ὅτε, καὶ τὰλλα ὅσα ἔπεται τῇ ὀρθῇ δώσει· καὶ ταῦτα ἡδέως ἢ ἀλύπως· τὸ γὰρ κατ' ἀρετὴν ἡδὺ ἢ ἄλυπον, ἥκιστα δὲ λυπηρόν, Eth. Nic. 1120a 22-27)». This relevant passage makes clear that the beautiful moral action is “convenient” in relation to a good public end and gives pleasure to the moral actor. The liberal man takes pleasure in giving economical help to others. This is the reason why he tends to exceed in giving and leaves «little for himself», does «not look at himself» (ἐλευθερίου δ' ἐστὶ σφόδρα καὶ τὸ ὑπερβάλλειν ἐν τῇ δώσει, ὥστε καταλείπειν ἑαυτῷ ἐλάττω· τὸ γὰρ μὴ βλέπειν ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν ἐλευθερίου, Eth. Nic. 1120b 5-7). His virtue has transformed the natural pleasure for goods into pleasure deriving from social bonds. This does not mean that he will dissipate his property for humanitarian purposes; rather, the liberal man acts politically, integrating *phronesis* and ethical virtues. He “sees” in each situation how he can benefit other citizens with money and economic goods, and does it with pleasure, but without putting at risk his own assets.

Also, the above-mentioned passage indicates that liberality is not universal, but particular. It is based on the selection of people, of forms, of circumstances and of quantities. Aristotle says that the liberal citizen «will not give to the wrong people nor at the wrong time, and so on» (οὐ μὴν δώσει γε οἷς οὐ δεῖ οὐδ' ὅτε μὴ δεῖ, οὐδ' ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα, Eth. Nic. 1120b 20). Now, who are the right people? The beneficiaries of liberal gifts are mainly «the perfect friends», that is the citizens that the virtuous man recognizes as «good, and alike in virtue» (τελεία δ' ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν φιλία καὶ κατ' ἀρετὴν ὁμοίω, Eth. Nic. 1156b 7)<sup>8</sup>. It takes time before one can feel

<sup>8</sup> Vegetti (1990: 194) has extensively discussed Aristotle's concept of friendship; he has rightly pointed out that Aristotelian friendship par excellence is among equals. It is founded on self-love and a desire for mirroring oneself in the virtue of the friend. «Il sentimento d'amicizia – so writes Vegetti – si esprime al suo meglio, secondo Aristotele, quando esso si scambia tra pari: la migliore amicizia è una forma di eguaglianza. E il suo fondamento non può essere – in questa morale tutta mondana – che una retta forma di egoismo. Si ha certo bisogno di amici per l'azione virtuosa cui essi collaborano; ma si ha soprattutto bisogno di riconoscere in loro, come in uno specchio, in un altro se stesso, la virtù che è in primo luogo nostra propria. Solo i buoni possono dunque propriamente dirsi amici perché il loro egoismo, fondamento di questo vincolo, è legittimato dalla virtù. Nel filosofo, l'egoismo è ulte-

«friendship and love» for another person in this specific sense and regard him as «another self» (ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός, Eth. Nic. 1166a 32). The first step towards friendship – with no significant difference between citizens and foreigners (Eth. Nic. 1166b 32, Eth. Nic. 1156a 32) – is the goodwill that arises suddenly in perceiving some excellent quality, «when one man seems to another beautiful or brave or something of the sort» (Eth. Nic. 1167a 20). Over time, the relationship can develop as familiarity grows, leading eventually to friendship. It is then concluded that liberality is not based on immediate empathy or spontaneous compassion; its condition is rather a prolonged process of selection and identification. Only true friends take pleasure in mirroring each other in virtue; for them, mutual recognition has primacy over goods. This also clarifies why Aristotle emphasizes ἔξις, the right disposition with respect to one's wealth as key to liberality (οὐ γὰρ ἐν τῷ πλήθει τῶν διδομένων τὸ ἐλευθέριον, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ τοῦ διδόντος ἔξει, αὕτη δὲ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν δίδωσιν, Eth. Nic. 1120b 10; cf. also Met. 5.1019b 5-10 and Met. 5. 1022b 4, where ἔξις has the sense of active disposition which can induce affections and change things. In this sense, it is similar to causes or principles). The liberal gives with pleasure because he gives to a friend with whom he self-identifies.

Pleasure in giving can be seen as a general condition for Aristotelian liberality, but it is not enough. The prodigal man too seems to take pleasure in giving, but this is not true. As Aristotle demonstrates, the prodigal is unable to restrain himself and acts rather on an impulse, which reveals a sense of unease. The prodigal, he writes, «is neither pleased nor pained at the right things or in the right way» (ὁ δ' ἄσωτος καὶ ἐν τούτοις διαμαρτάνει οὔτε γὰρ ἡδέται ἐφ' οἷς δεῖ οὐδὲ ὡς δεῖ οὔτε λυπεῖται, NE 1121a 8). Prodigality is based on a sort of emotional incompetence and dystonia, which is also accompanied by other vices such as intemperance<sup>9</sup>. The reason why the prodigal person does not feel real pleasure in giving depends on a deeper lack of pleasure in living. Compared with the liberal, the prodigal man is not fully responsible for his actions: he is, rather, a «fool» (ἡλίθιος, Eth. Nic. 1121a 27), who squanders his wealth by donating it more than he should<sup>10</sup>. Also, he remains bound to external things such as money and wealth and

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riormente valorizzato dal fatto che egli ama in se stesso la parte più nobile dell'io, quella pensante, e questa amicizia con sé gli rende dolcissimo il tempo trascorso nella riflessione».

<sup>9</sup> Hare (1988: 20).

<sup>10</sup> Hadreas (2002: 363-364) offers an in-depth discussion of Aristotle's concept of prodigality and he concludes that «the resolute prodigal is trapped in a topsyturvy ordering of external goods».

cannot see them as a means to superior moral ends<sup>11</sup>.

Prodigality, though, is not generally as serious as illiberality. Indeed, the case of the illiberal man is far worse since it is the opposite of liberality. The illiberal man is *philochrematos* (Eth. Nic. 1121b 15), attached to wealth (Eth. Nic. 1122a 2–3 and Eth. Eud. 1232a 11–12). These people derive pleasure from accumulating wealth and do not spend money on others (Ret. 1366b 16–17). Illiberality is a complex state and contains both “greed” (excessive desire and pleasure in taking) and “avarice” (inability to give and grief for the loss of property). Aristotle refers to the whole complex with the word «*aneleutheriotes*», which suggests an attitude of moral slavery<sup>12</sup>. In fact, pleasure from possession but without use (Eth. Nic. 1121b 17, 1122a 13) or anxiety about giving money or valuables are not “civilized” passions and lead to antisocial and even self-destructive behavior. The illiberal – says Aristotle – «benefits no one, not even himself.» (ὁ μὲν ὠφελεῖ πολλούς, ὁ δὲ οὐθέν, ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ αὐτόν, Eth. Nic. 1121a 30). Tyrants act in this way as do all those who despoil the polis of its wealth<sup>13</sup>. Like any other human being, they strive for happiness but fail in this end because of their injustice. It is interesting that Aristotle attributes this failure to a troubled relationship with oneself. He says that the bad man «does not seem to be amicably disposed even to himself, because there is nothing in him to love» (οὐ δὴ φαίνεται ὁ φαῦλος οὐδὲ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν φιλικῶς διακεῖσθαι διὰ τὸ μηδὲν ἔχειν φιλητόν, Eth. Nic. 1166b 25–26). In short: the illiberal man is not a friend to himself since he is not an integrated man and feels pleasure neither in living nor in virtue.

<sup>11</sup> In regard to this Antony Kenny (1992: 15) observes that «if in one person’s system virtue is for the sake of wealth, virtue is only a useful good, not a noble one, because wealth is something merely useful. If, in another person’s value-system, wealth is for the sake of virtue, then wealth too acquires the nobility which virtue has.» The prodigal represents the first case as he has not noble ends; rather, the liberal makes available his wealth to a noble end such as public happiness.

<sup>12</sup> The term *ἀνελευθεριότης* is sometimes translated as greed in opposition to generosity (*ἐλευθεριότης*). Both translations are not satisfactory as “generosity” is not immediately connected with liberty like the original Greek term (*ἐλευθερία*); and “greed” is on the other hand only a part of *ἀνελευθεριότης*. “Illiberal”, “illiberality” are not usual concepts, but it is preferable to use them for two reasons: they immediately give the idea of the opposite of liberality and they preserve the link between moral sense (the individual character does not incline to liberality) and political sense (the form of government tends to tyranny). This is precisely what Aristotle means when he states that tyrants are illiberal as they take with no respect for individual property.

<sup>13</sup> Cox (1987: 130).

One can summarize what has been discussed up to now by saying that Aristotelian liberality is a virtue that concerns the whole domain of economic life. It does not require those abundant riches which distinguish social elites nor does it require “taste” and high social expectations, as in the case of magnificence. Liberality is about caring of one’s wealth and property and providing social support to selected friends. As a virtue, it is necessarily imprecise, but the liberal man will choose intuitively the right conditions for social action (who to give to, when and how to give and so on). In Aristotelian terms, he can be said to be a friend to himself since the various parts of his soul are in harmony (Eth. Nic. 1166b 20); he feels a pleasure for life and his thoughts and actions correspond to this feeling so that he accomplishes his duties (Eth. Nic. 1169a 16) and has «nothing to regret» (Eth. Nic. 1166a 30). When it comes to helping friends with money and other valuable goods, the liberal man gives away wealth with no complaint and with the same pleasure for life that prevents him from being self-destructive. His friendship with himself rests upon the integration of φρόνησις and ethical impulse towards others. Liberal men can sustain others as they are integrated individuals who are capable of disciplined self-love. In other words, Aristotelian liberality requires integrity. Only the friend to himself can truly benefit other people and be a supportive friend to them. This notion of friendship with oneself or, as I would be tempted to say, true generosity, refers, then, to an “ascetic” integration between passion and reason which comes out after an arduous work upon the soul that involves discipline, imitation of good social models and personal reflection.

2. I now turn to the Stoic concept of liberality as stated by Cicero in the *De officiis*. I would, first of all, like to point out that Cicero took authors of Rhodian Stoicism as a source for his treatise, and in particular Panaetius of Rhodes. Since the Stoics speak of liberality as a *kathēkon*, a duty of solidarity between human beings, it is firstly necessary to remark upon the concept of *kathēkon*. This concept had a significant role in Stoic ethics from the beginning as it was introduced by the founder of the school, Zeno of Citium, who applied it «to that for which, when done, a reasonable defence can be adduced, e.g. harmony in the tenor of life’s process, which indeed pervades the growth of plants and animals. For even in plants and animals, they hold, you may discern fitness of behaviour» (Ἐτι δὲ καθήκον φασιν εἶναι ὃ πραχθὲν εὐλογόν [τε] ἴσχει ἀπολογισμόν, οἷον τὸ ἀκόλουθον ἐν τῇ ζωῇ, ὅπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ φυτὰ καὶ ζῶα διατείνει: ὁρᾶσθαι γὰρ κάπὶ τούτων καθήκοντα, DL 7. 107). For the human being, *kathēkon* is thus the appropriate or the

responsible and right action that may be justified from the point of view of the *logos*<sup>14</sup>. The fully virtuous action (a *teleion katbekon* or *kathortoma*, *officium perfectum*) is characteristic of the sage; on the other hand, the not fully virtuous action, the «common duty» (*meson katbekon*, *officium medium*), is shared between wise and ordinary man. The latter does not possess that pure intention and *phronesis* which distinguishes the conduct of the sage. Cicero himself let us understand the sense of the above-mentioned distinction: to repay a loan is a common duty, but to do it in the right way, i.e. with perfect intention is a perfect duty<sup>15</sup>. The content of the action in both cases is the same, but the quality of the intention is quite different: in the case of the sage it is totally adherent to the rational *logos*.

Panaetius of Rhodes, the main source for Cicero's *De officiis*, had emphasised the importance of the *mesa katbekonta* and we should keep in mind some facts about his Stoic teachings. Panaetius was a reformer of the Stoa<sup>16</sup>, who denied, for instance, the classical Stoic view of the cyclical conflagration of the universe. His conception of the eternity of the world (DL 7, 142) came rather close to the academic and the peripatetic schools. Also, in the ethical discourse he showed some affinities with the peripatetic school. Together with Posidonius of Apamea, he believed that also goods such as health, strength and some means of living have their importance for happiness (ὁ μέντοι Παναίτιος καὶ Ποσειδώνιος οὐκ αὐτάρκη λέγουσι τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἀλλὰ χρειαίαν εἶναι φασὶ καὶ ὑγείας καὶ χορηγίας καὶ ἰσχύος, DL 7, 128). This idea corresponded to another innovative concept, that of individuality. While early stoicism had stressed the common membership of humans to a single genre, Panaetius considered individuals as if they were actors who have various roles to play. According to his theory, everyone in life plays four roles: the first is that of a human being who shares with other human beings the same rational *logos*; the second is given by the individual character; the third by the social role and the circumstances of birth; finally, the fourth depends on the free will<sup>17</sup>. Panaetius gave importance to individ-

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. Pohlenz (1967, I: 410).

<sup>15</sup> Cicero, *De finibus*, III, XVIII 59.

<sup>16</sup> Panaetius was scholarch of the Stoa in Athens from 129 b. C. to 110 a. C. For a chronology of his life in the context of the Stoic School cfr. T. Dorandi (1999: 37-42); on his philosophical thought cfr. M. Pohlenz (1970) and M. Van Straaten (1946); about the relationship between Cicero and Panaetius' work cfr. also A. Dyck (1979: 408-416), who reconstructs the likely structure of the treatise, which Cicero used as a source for his own *De officiis*.

<sup>17</sup> For more extensive explanations cfr. De Lacy (1977: 163-172), and Puhle (1987), who

ual industriousness and he thought that it was possible to live in accordance with the *logos* and progress morally also by playing one's role in one's working life well<sup>18</sup>. In his treatise on proper actions (*Peri tou kathekontos*), there had to be a part dealing with perfect duties (*teleia kathekonta* or *kathortomata*), those relating to practical reasoning, the *phronesis*, of the sage. It could not be otherwise for a Greek stoic, moreover an admirer of Aristotelian *phronesis*, as Panaetius was. However, his theory of goods and his theory of individuality, which we can reconstruct from the sources, were coherently oriented towards a revaluation of individual roles and of individual profit. The testimony of Seneca stating that Panaetius had considered the actions of not fully virtuous in everyday life appears to be correct (Seneca Ep. 116.5). Panaetius wanted to stress that in everyday life there can be no real conflict between the «honourable» (*kalon*) and the «beneficial» (*sympheron*) since the moral good is also beneficial and, on the contrary, the practice of appropriate actions according to the individual circumstances can be also a factor of moral development toward virtue. Therefore, he believed that liberality is an appropriate action for both the sage and the not fully virtuous man since it derives from the rational and social nature of man.

No wonder Cicero follows Panaetius, «a most respected Stoic» (II, 51), as he calls him in his treatise *De officiis*<sup>19</sup>. Cicero wrote it in the autumn of 44 BC, after the death of Caesar, and in the midst of an extremely critical situation both for the Roman republic and for himself. By referring to Panaetius, he could offer to the late republican elites an understandable model, which reminded them of the pristine republican virtues. According to Cicero, the Panaetian theory of *kathekonta* (*media officia* in Cicero's translation) was still suitable for the Roman elites. In fact, it did not require acting as perfect sages, but rather combining the moral good and the beneficial. His ambition, though, was to bring Panaetius' arguments to a more complete form, and to include a discussion of aspects that Panaetius had not treated. For this part, Cicero used other Stoic sources such as Posidonius of Apamea (whose lessons Cicero attended in Rhodes during his stay in the year 79 BC) and Hecato of Rhodes, Panaetius' disciple. In the tradition of the Stoic treatises on *kathekonta*<sup>20</sup>, Cicero could then find solid ground for his

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reinterprets Panaetius on the basis of modern theories of social role and personality; for Cicero's reception of this theory cfr. Ch. Gill (1988: 169-199).

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. Edelstein (1966: 48) and D. Sedley (2003: 20-24).

<sup>19</sup> For the English translation of the *De officiis* I follow the edition of M. T. Griffin and E. M. Atkins, Cicero (1991: 82).

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. Sedley (1999:137).

political and philosophical goals.

According to scholars, it is almost impossible to reconstruct exactly how Cicero used Panaetius. For our purposes, suffice to say that Cicero himself admits that he did it to a considerable extent (Ad Att. XVI 11; De off. I 10). There is, however, no evidence that Cicero's work was limited to just copying Panaetius' treatise. Moreover, right from the opening of his treatise, Cicero claims autonomy. Among other things, Cicero criticizes Panaetius because he did not define the concept of duty, and because he did not even take the discussion to its conclusion. We know that Panaetius lived thirty years after the drafting of his *Peri kathekon*, but he preferred to leave the work unfinished. On the contrary, Cicero intends to offer a complete treatment of the matter, dealing also with the cases in which the honourable and the beneficial seem to conflict and suggesting how to reconcile the conflict. He takes the scheme of his arguments from Panaetius, but, at the same time, he creates a work which reinterprets and re-configures Panaetian concepts, adapting them to a different political situation<sup>21</sup>. For example, it is not hard to recognize in the Panaetian ideal of the *megalopsichia* the model for Cicero's thesis that the exercise of leadership is a service to the community itself. Based on Panaetius' concept of *megalopsichia*, Cicero can legitimize the aspirations of the Roman elites to social control and political glory, and reconcile them with a "common" moral virtue. However, Cicero had experienced firsthand in the agitated stages of late republic the harmful and destructive consequences of a magnanimous search for glory, not limited and not regulated by other virtues. This makes it easy to understand why he expresses doubts about *megalopsichia*. According to Cicero, *megalopsichia/magnanimitas* can turn into an insatiable quest for power and degenerate into tyrannical injustice. This was precisely the path followed by Caesar<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> I fully agree with Narducci, when he writes that Cicero's originality is to be found in the way he reinterprets Greek material and proposes it to republican elites. «Cicerone – he writes – sottopone a rielaborazione originale i materiali che trae dalle sue fonti: la rielaborazione non concerne tanto i contenuti concettuali e dottrinari, quanto la loro ricomposizione nel quadro di un ideale di vita adatto a essere proposto al pubblico romano e delle classi dirigenti dell'Italia». Cfr. Narducci (2009: 332).

<sup>22</sup> In a letter to Atticus dating to the February of the year 49 b. C. Cicero speaks of Caesar as an insane and miserable man who has never even seen the shadow of moral good and has acted only for his personal prestige. (*Utrum de imperatore populi Romani an de Hannibale loquimur? O hominem amentem et miserum, qui ne umbram quidem umquam τοῦ καλοῦ viderit! Atque haec ait omnia facere se dignitatis causa. Ubi est autem dignitas nisi ubi honestas?* Cicero, [1998, I: 634-635]). This last line has to be remarked upon. It means that the search for personal power and dignity cannot be separated from the moral good; this is the main theme of *De officiis*.

Cicero's perspective then could no longer be that of Panaetius, although he takes the conceptual framework from him.

Something similar can also be said about the treatment of *eleutheriotes/liberalitas*. Panaetius had treated *eleutheriotes* in the context of the social virtues, because solidarity was a Stoic value. Cicero paraphrases Panaetius when he writes that for the Stoics «everything produced on the earth is created for the use of mankind, and men are born for the sake of men, so that they may be able to assist one another» (I, 22). Cicero takes up from him the concept of the social nature of human beings and of *eleutheriotes* as the corresponding virtue, but the political emphasis that he gives to the contrast between *liberalitas* and *prodigalitas* is his original contribution<sup>23</sup>. Not even in Aristotle do we find these nuances. Aristotle had mentioned the illiberality of some prodigal tyrants, but in the hands of Cicero this matter acquires a very special form. The concept of a just *liberalitas* is constructed in opposition to the populist spirit of the *prodigi*; these are not moved by a moral purpose, but by mere political ambition and subversive designs that expose the traditional republican structure of the State to danger<sup>24</sup>. This distinction involves too the theory of goods. Can it be said that the beneficence is always good? As we shall see, Cicero's answer is that it is an appropriate act only in certain limited cases; otherwise it is neither indifferent nor desirable, but also an element of corruption in private and public life. Because of his political experience Cicero has given a particular interpretation to Panaetius' conception of social life.

Let's deal in the first place with Cicero's reformulation of the Panaetian theory of the virtues. Cicero follows Panaetius when he writes that we human beings share with every living being the impulse of self-preservation (search for food and safety, avoidance of suffering, sexual desire and care for offspring), but, as rational beings, we also have a natural disposition to regard relationships with others in the same way as we consider our relationship with ourselves. Both forms of disposition have the same relevance since they are part of a process that the Stoics call *oikeiosis* (appropriation)<sup>25</sup>. It means that we naturally tend to identify ourselves with something, to

<sup>23</sup> Lefèvre (2001: 80).

<sup>24</sup> In the oration *Pro Caelio* of the year 56 b. C. Cicero sketches a profile of Catiline, bringing to the fore his manipulative prodigality: «Who was more greedy in stealing – says of him Cicero – and more generous in donating?» (*quis in rapacitate avarior, quis in largitione effusior?*). *Pro Caelio*, § 12, in Cicero (1978, III: 552-553). Similarly, Sallust portraits Catiline as «*alieni adpetens, sui profusus*». *De Cat. con.*, § 5.

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. Radice (2000) and Lee (2002).

recognize something as our own and to evaluate it positively as belonging to us. *Oikeiosis* is, therefore, the root of self-preservation and, at the same time, of social sense; also, it represents the foundation of the natural impulses to knowledge, to independence and to *decorum* and harmony. In the interplay of these four natural impulses Cicero recognizes four distinct aspects of the «honourable» (I, 14), a concept which translates Panaetius' «*kalom*». Virtues refer to a harmonic interplay of these natural impulses.

Among the social virtues, Cicero stresses particularly justice and liberality. They are equally relevant, though their functions are different. The former protects the natural right to property and the boundaries of social space, the latter creates and reinforces social ties. Hence the statement that «nothing is more suited to human nature» (I, 42) than liberality: it is the virtue of establishing relationships based on gifts and exchanges within the limits of justice<sup>26</sup>. In fact, not every donation is a *katbekon*. «Nothing is liberal – says Cicero – if it is not also just» (*Liberal nihil est enim, quod non idem iustum*, I, 43). Therefore, “just” can be said of a gift that respects some conditions. Firstly, it should not harm the people who receive it nor others. This first criterion applies, for instance, to manipulative behaviour such as that of Silla, who donated goods that he had confiscated from his opponents to his followers. That a gift does not damage anyone is, however, a minimal condition. Secondly, a donation should be also commensurate with our possibilities. This condition traces a line of demarcation between liberality and prodigality. Cicero considers prodigality in more negative terms than Aristotle, who treated mild forms of prodigality with some benevolence as he believed that the prodigal man could easily mend his ways in some cases by, for example, depleting his wealth or just by getting older. Cicero sees a vanity in the attitude of the prodigal man; something which Aristotle did not focus on very much. In many cases the actions of the prodigal «appear to stem not from goodwill, but from ostentation. Such pretence is closer to sham than to either liberality or honourableness»<sup>27</sup> (I, 44). The downside of this vanity is that a citizen who wants to appear more liberal than he could afford – this is actually the case of *prodigus* –, commits injustice to his family from whom he indirectly takes away goods. However,

<sup>26</sup> It is remarkable that Cicero assumes “beneficentia”, “benignitas” and “liberalitas” as synonyms. Cfr. I, 20.

<sup>27</sup> In Roman society, the quest for prestige through the ostentation of socially recognized behaviors such as liberality would have to be rather widespread if Seneca – in changed political conditions – will say almost the same thing: giving for the sake of one’s own social image is an obstacle to the achievement of true liberality.

this prodigality is also accompanied by «a greediness to plunder and deprive unjustly, so that resources may be available for lavish gifts» (Ibid.). Cicero's Stoic conception is not completely new since Aristotle had already identified some traits shared by the prodigal and the illiberal man who acts as a tyrant. They are both manipulative and unjust. But Cicero is more subtle when he denounces the manipulative tendencies of a *prodigus* like Caesar. He thinks that Caesar's donations were not explicitly tyrannical, as were those of Silla, and had something reminiscent of true virtue, the act of giving and distribute goods; but they were not truly virtuous since Caesar's financed his donations with borrowed money and his real intention was to buy the people's favour and good reputation for himself<sup>28</sup>. In other words, Caesar's donations could rely neither on just means nor on just intentions. For this reason, they were rather corruptive. Thirdly, a true donation should not only be not unjust or not prodigal: it should be selective. Cicero proposes benefitting mainly just and moderate people since these men care for social bonds and promote the goal of sociability. Then, he also refers to other people who show us goodwill and who have rendered us service in the past. Finally, Cicero lists as beneficiaries of liberal gifts the diverse types of community in which everyone is included, describing gradually wider circles, from the conjugal society, to the relations of brotherhood, to friendship and up to the state (I, 54-57).

To remove any ambiguity from the concept of liberality, in the second book Cicero makes a significant move. He reduces the role of money and states that the act of giving should relate to the virtues. As well as the bestowal of money, he speaks of a different kind of liberal action, that of working in favour of others. Both «involve a liberal willingness to gratify others; but the one draws upon a money-chest, the other upon one's virtue» (*quamquam enim in utraque inest gratificandi liberalis voluntas, tamen altera ex arca, altera ex virtute depromitur, largitioque, quae fit ex re familiari, fontem ipsum benignitatis exhaurit*, II, 52). As mentioned above, Cicero does not completely reject donations of money. The point is that there should be a real liberal intention, i.e. the true intention of doing something good for other people. However, he argues that work done for others «is both more brilliantly illu-

<sup>28</sup> Caesar had little personal wealth and was heavily indebted to cover the expenses associated with his office as aedile; though, it should be remembered that contracting debts to finance one's career and ingratiating the electorate was customary practice among the aristocrats. Cicero too had done it during his aedile to finance the *Ludi Romani*, the *Megalenses* and the *Florales*. Cfr. Warde Fowler (1909: 83); also, Narducci (2009: 59).

strious, and more worthy of a brave and notable man» because it is directly derived from the social root of morality. The emphasis is here primarily on *liberalis voluntas*. In other words, Cicero appeals to an intentional element to restrict the field of liberal donations; he wants to exclude that consent can be bought by liberal donations. In his view, liberality has no other intentions than benefitting others. Under this condition, even money is allowed in some cases, but volunteering one's competences and work is preferable to *largitio* because it does not draw from a poor source such as money, but rather from the very social nature of human beings, which is inexhaustible.

Cicero brings examples of liberal actions that refer to the traditional values of solidarity of the equestrian order. According to him, economic support should be granted to those most in need (I, 49), if they are not fallen in disgrace because of their vices, and to deserving people without means (II, 62-63). Also, he considers true liberal men those who by their wealth «ransom captives from bandits, or assume their friends' debts, or help them to finance their daughters' marriages, or give them assistance in acquiring or enlarging their property» (II, 56). As beneficiaries of the economic liberality, Cicero suggests to wisely choose deserving people – with no distinction between citizens and foreigners –, who will also be grateful for the benefits received. The emphasis on the gratitude of the beneficiaries as a criterion of selection is consequent, given that Cicero's approach to the complex of “common duties” is a free variation of Panaetius attempt to demonstrate that the moral good and the beneficial are not in opposition. In this case, «anything that is granted to a man who is good and grateful bears fruit both in him, and also in others» (II, 63). But, as mentioned above, Cicero stresses engagement in personal support, especially free patronage in legal disputes (II, 65). He means a set of volunteered services ranging from consulting to heritage protection and direct representation in court, which represent the highest form of virtuous liberality as an alternative to the donations of money<sup>29</sup>. It is not hard to admit that this conception was to some extent *pro domo sua*. In fact, Cicero had, effectively, carried out work of this kind and he could, therefore, promote himself as the true liberal man in opposition to the prodigal Caesar. This does not detract,

<sup>29</sup> Gabba argues that the ideal of the liberality of the work would be a form of «paternalistic patronage by the political class in the spheres of legal competence», but this is a rather narrow view. It seems to me that it overlooks Cicero's effort in the field of ethics to assert that economic goods such as money are less relevant than those forms of action which more directly correspond to the social nature of the human being and to the *oikeiosis* towards the others. Cfr. Gabba (1979: 129).

however, from the originality of his theory which is Greek-Stoic and, at the same time, entirely Roman. It takes the treatment of liberality from the points of view, respectively, of moral good and the beneficial, from Panaetian stoicism<sup>30</sup>, but it leads to conclusions that re-contextualize the *mos maiorum*, based on solidarity, thrift and respect for property. In continuity with this tradition, Cicero argues that the liberal act par excellence needs, first of all, a *liberalis voluntas* and then action that corresponds to virtue; in delimited cases, financial support and material aid, but, above all, the gift of one's own work. This form of liberality is appropriate and convenient for those aspiring to a role in public life, but it is also beneficial to the State which is protected from the corruptive power of money.

3. Coming to the end of my comparison between the Aristotelian and the Stoic theory of liberality, I just want to finish with a couple of comments. Aristotle understood liberality as a virtue of character, something active, an excellence in the individual disposition, which makes wise use of money and wealth for the sake of a moral end, i.e. benefitting selected friends. Money and economic goods occupy a main place in this theory, and without them it is hardly possible to build up an excellent quality such as liberality. Against the Stoic model, Aristotle could have argued that Cicero's free legal patronage is also an economic good since it could be measured in money. Or, in the end, it represents an act of friendship that does not confute the main point of his theory of liberality since friendship is implied in virtue, but it is not really a virtue. On the contrary, liberality is a true virtue (and one of most important for the state) because it regulates the individual passion for money and wealth and, at same time, the economic flow of the polis. Also, Aristotle could have argued that virtue is not so easy to gain and it requires arduous work. In short: Aristotle could not have accepted some new elements which the Stoics introduced in the theory of liberality due to the individualistic, teleologic and aristocratic traits of his theory of virtue; also, Aristotle's notion of liberality is conceived in dualistic terms: it presupposes material assets and training. Furthermore, this applies in the case of magnificence, a second level of liberality, which has a much more exclusive social basis.

Compared to the Aristotelian conception, Panaetius and Cicero sketch a

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<sup>30</sup> For the treatment of liberality in the second book of the *De officiis* cfr. Dyck (1996: 436).

broader theoretical and practical model. Both Panaetius and Cicero may have kept in mind what Aristotle had said of the liberal man, namely that he gives without effort and with pleasure. Their liberal man too gives with a smile and good humour<sup>31</sup>, but, overall, the Stoic approach to liberal giving is different. Panaetius and Cicero do not enquire how an individual can free himself from attachment to money and become a good citizen; rather, they try to explain how we can develop self-preservation and sociability in harmonic way. In this line of argument, the concept of moderation (or temperance) plays a significant role. It is the fourth virtue, the virtue that prevents a man from doing, thinking or saying anything against other virtues. In short, a moderate man is “decent”. Cicero’s category of “*decorum*” (which translates the *prepon* of Panaetius) circumscribes a virtuous domain in which unjust, imprudent and cowardly actions cannot take place. These qualities delimit the field for a successful *oikeiosis*.

There is something “light” in this approach to virtue. According to it, virtues do not emerge from effort, but rather from the balance of natural impulses. The same applies to the virtue of liberality, which derives from the social dimension of moral good, not from an ascetic attitude towards wealth and assets, as the Aristotelian model claims. The liberal citizen of the Stoics can make virtuous use of money in some cases, but he does not necessarily need to. The social sense is decisive; when it is moderated by other virtues such as prudence, justice and magnanimity, it leads naturally to personal support for others and creating and restoring social ties. In modern terms, we can say that Stoic liberality matures from “moral” competence, and not from economic expertise. In fact, it is part of moral development which is based on the combination of sociability and self-preservation, according to the model offered by the concept of *oikeiosis*. This model does not underestimate goods. However, in contrast to Aristotelianism, Cicero believes that desirable objects are not in themselves goods. They really become goods only if they are achieved through virtue. Despite all the similarities, this is a quite different conception. According to Cicero, goods refer to a moral horizon which involves the cognitive dimension of intentionality. In this conception, virtue comes first, and only in the field of virtues do

<sup>31</sup> Cfr. H. Kloft (1970: 40) emphasizes a passage in the text where Cicero speaks about Lucius Cassius Longinus in these terms: «*homo non liberalitate, ut alii, sed ipsa tristitia et severitate popularis*» (Cic. *Brut.* 97). Kloft argues that Cicero’s *liberalitas* would imply a “light” and benevolent atmosphere. This is little more than a conjecture, but it seems coherent with the social function that Cicero attributes to liberality.

money and riches appear as appreciable goods. From this point of view, actions like the volunteering of one's talent for others are, then, appropriate since they require personal engagement, but they also produce more lasting effects arousing deep feelings of gratitude.

I would like to conclude with a final remark from a modern point of view. Aristotle's model is intriguing since he speaks of virtue as a "heroic" attitude which arises from work upon the irrational part of the soul. As the case of the illiberal man shows, no ethical-political good life can be conducted if attachment to wealth and assets prevails over rational conduct. As a virtue of economic life, liberality contributes to the development of rationality. It sets one free from a natural attachment to money and makes of one a citizen who is open to social and political life. Liberality integrates, while vice makes dualism between passions and reason persistent. The liberal citizen is a hero who benefits friends, while the illiberal man is a slave dominated by irrational passions and benefits no one, not even himself. As fascinating as this theory may sound, it is based on some assumptions that are not well founded. In the first place, Aristotelian liberality is a virtue of the individual economic life, i.e. it requires wealth and individual training at the same time. Surely – as Aristotle points out, there is no need to be rich to develop liberality; still, one should have some wealth. It is perfectly coherent in a dualistic approach to human nature like that of Aristotle's that there must be something material, wealth and assets, so that a different moral attitude to it can be worked out. Because of his dualism of moral attitude and material basis of life, reason and passion, Aristotle must exclude non-economic beneficence from the domain of liberality and he can think of it merely as an act of friendship. Also, the social basis of Aristotle's approach to virtue is very limited, for liberality is accessible only to the few who have undergone a strenuous moral training. This process takes a lifetime since it presupposes closeness and mutual recognition of each other's virtue among selected friends. In short: Aristotle's concept of liberality is far too reductive and selective for modern terms. As modern men, we tend towards a more extensive concept of liberality; according to a general conception, we refer to a man who benefits others in many ways as "liberal", regardless of his wealth and of his moral training; in other words, a man who lives and lets others live. It was the great merit of middle Stoicism to show that liberality is a main virtue that corresponds to the social nature of man and to the human need for balance and "decency"; as such, it is best expressed not by money, but by personal help and social engagement.

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