

POSIDONIUS ON VIRTUE AND THE GOOD*

ABSTRACT

*This paper argues that despite recent tendencies to minimize the differences between Posidonius and the Early Stoics, there are some important aspects of Stoic ethics in which Posidonius deviated from the orthodox doctrine. According to two passages in Diogenes Laertius, Posidonius counted health and wealth among the goods and held that virtue alone is insufficient for happiness. While Kidd in his commentary dismissed this report as spurious, there are good reasons to take Diogenes' remarks seriously. Through a careful analysis of the sources, in particular of Galen's *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, this article offers a new interpretation of Posidonius' ethics. It sheds light on Posidonius' theory of virtues and shows that Posidonius must have granted a special status to things like health and wealth even if he did not regard them as genuine goods.*

Keywords: Middle Stoicism; ethics; psychological monism; happiness; Stoic indifferents; Galen; Diogenes Laertius

Scholarship of the last decades paints a mixed picture of the orthodoxy of the Stoic Posidonius. While some interpreters have emphasized Posidonius' role as a reformer of Stoic ethics and psychology,¹ others have stressed the continuities within the Stoic school and the compatibility of many of Posidonius' teachings with the orthodox Stoic doctrine.² In this paper, I focus on two central and interrelated topics of Stoic ethics: the self-sufficiency of virtue and the question of what should be counted among the goods. Two passages in Diogenes Laertius suggest that Posidonius in these matters departed from the orthodox Stoic view. I offer a new interpretation of these passages and contextualize them within the framework of Posidonian ethics. In doing so, I argue that Posidonius did indeed deviate from the orthodox Stoic doctrine on several points, which resulted in an idiosyncratic theory of virtue, indifferents and the good.

* I am indebted to Simon Shogry, George Karamanolis and Stefan Büttner for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this paper; to Tobias Riedl for many helpful comments and discussions; and to the participants of the Third Central European Graduate Conference in Ancient Philosophy, especially Stefan Röttig, for constructive criticism. Finally, I am grateful for the remarks of *CQ*'s reader.

¹ R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind* (Oxford, 2000), 93–132; E. Vimercati, *Posidonio: testimonianze e frammenti* (Milano, 2004), 5 and *passim*; H. Lorenz, 'Posidonius on the nature and treatment of the emotions', *OSAPh* 40 (2011), 189–211; M. Krewet, *Die stoische Theorie der Gefühle* (Heidelberg, 2013), 102–33.

² J. Fillion-Lahille, *Le De ira de Sénèque et la philosophie stoïcienne des passions* (Paris, 1984), 121–62; J.M. Cooper, 'Posidonius on emotions', in J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen (edd.), *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 1998), 71–111; C. Gill, 'Did Galen understand Platonic and Stoic thinking on emotions?', in J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen (edd.), *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 1998), 113–48; T. Tieleman, *Chrysippus' On Affections: Reconstruction and Interpretation* (Leiden, 2003), 198–287; G. Ranocchia, 'The Stoic concept of proneness to emotion and vice', *AGPh* 94 (2012), 74–92.

© The Author(s), 2024. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Classical Association. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

I

The Stoics commonly maintained that only virtue (ἀρετή) and what participates in it is a genuine good (ἀγαθόν), and that, therefore, virtue is the necessary and sufficient condition for happiness (εὐδαιμονία). According to Diogenes Laertius, Posidonius took a different stance. First, Diogenes tells us that Posidonius also counted wealth and health among the goods (7.103 [F 171]):³

ἔτι τέ φασιν [*sc.* Hecato, Apollodorus, Chrysippus], ᾧ ἔστιν εὖ καὶ κακῶς χρῆσθαι, τοῦτ' οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγαθόν· πλοῦτω δὲ καὶ ὑγιείᾳ ἔστιν εὖ καὶ κακῶς χρῆσθαι· οὐκ ἄρ' ἀγαθὸν πλοῦτος καὶ ὑγίεια. Ποσειδώνιος μέντοι καὶ ταῦτά φησι τῶν ἀγαθῶν εἶναι.

In addition they say that whatever you can make good use of is not good. But both good and bad use can be made of wealth and health. Therefore wealth and health are not 'good'. But Posidonius says that these too are in the category of 'goods'.

Later Diogenes states that Posidonius as well as his teacher Panaetius maintained that virtue alone is not enough to achieve happiness (7.127–8 [F 173]):

αὐτάρκη τ' εἶναι αὐτὴν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν, καθά φησι Ζήνων καὶ Χρυσίππος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ ἀρετῶν καὶ Ἐκάτων ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ Περὶ ἀγαθῶν ... ὁ μὲντοι Παναίτιος καὶ Ποσειδώνιος οὐκ αὐτάρκη λέγουσι τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἀλλὰ χρειᾶν εἶναι φασὶ καὶ ὑγείας καὶ χορηγίας καὶ ἰσχύος.

Virtue is self-sufficient for happiness as Zeno says, and Chrysippus in *On Virtues*, Book 1, and Hecaton in *On Virtues*, Book 2 ... But Panaetius and Posidonius say that virtue is not self-sufficient, but they say that there is need of health, resources and strength.

Kidd rightly remarks that these two passages are complementary: 'If virtue is self-sufficient for happiness it must be the only "good"; if there is need of other factors such as wealth and health, then virtue cannot be self-sufficient'.⁴ However, Kidd dismisses both passages as spurious because they seem to be contradicted by Seneca, who in one of his letters reports an argument by Posidonius that shows why wealth and health should not be counted as goods.⁵ According to this argument, health and wealth might also have negative effects, whereas a true good should only benefit and be completely free of harm. Therefore, health and wealth can only be 'advantages' (*commoda*), that is, a special sort of 'preferred indifferents' (προηγμένα), but no genuine goods.⁶ Judging from Seneca's account, Posidonius in this context followed the orthodox Stoic doctrine, while the passages in Diogenes suggest that Posidonius abandoned the traditional Stoic view. In the following, I argue that we should not take the apparent contradiction between these two testimonies as a reason to dismiss Diogenes' report.

To begin with, let us consider what could have induced Diogenes to make the above-mentioned claims about Posidonius. If his account should indeed be incorrect, the reason for that may be, as Kidd suggests, some sort of confusion or misunderstanding

³ If not otherwise specified, fragment numbers refer to L. Edelstein and I.G. Kidd, *Posidonius, Volume I: The Fragments* (Cambridge, 1972). Translations are (with slight modifications) taken from I.G. Kidd, *Posidonius, Volume III: The Translation of the Fragments* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁴ I.G. Kidd, *Posidonius, Volume II: The Commentary* (Cambridge, 1988), 642.

⁵ Sen. *Ep.* 87.31–40 (F 170); Kidd (n. 4), 639–41. Cooper (n. 2), 100 agrees with Kidd's assessment. Earlier scholars have often taken Diogenes' statements to be true, on which see Kidd (n. 4), 639.

⁶ Kidd (n. 4), 634.

over a Stoic technical term, over a philosophical argument or over some genuine Posidonian innovation.⁷ That being so, even if one or both of Diogenes' statements are strictly speaking false, they might still reflect in some form a doctrinal innovation of Posidonius. We do not need to assume that Posidonius explicitly spoke of wealth and health as 'goods'. It suffices to suppose that he attributed to wealth and health some specific sort of value that was not in line with the orthodox Stoic view. This could have then induced Diogenes to report that he regarded them as goods.⁸ Similarly, we should leave room for the possibility that Diogenes' statement about Posidonius' and Panaetius' heterodox opinion on virtue is indicative of some innovation that took place in the Middle Stoic period—even if the statement might not be true in its literal sense.

To explore this possibility, it will be necessary to first discuss the broader philosophical context of the passages in question. The most important source for Posidonius' ethics and psychology is Galen's *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*. As several passages in *De placitis* testify, Posidonius considered a correct understanding of the soul's powers and of the emotions as the key to all ethical doctrines.⁹ The studies by Fillion-Lahille, Cooper and Gill have shown that Posidonius' theory of emotions is in fact not, as Galen insinuates, a complete return to Platonic psychology, but is still based on the traditional Stoic tenet that emotions (πάθη) are effectively judgements—or the results of judgements—of the soul's rational faculty.¹⁰ However, while Chrysippus held that the adult human soul is fully rational, Posidonius maintained that the soul also comprises certain non-rational faculties. According to Galen, he conceived of them not as different forms (εἶδη) or parts (μέρη) of the soul, but only as different faculties of a single substance (δυνάμεις μιᾶς οὐσίας).¹¹ As Cooper has shown, Posidonius must have held that the energy involved in an emotional impulse comes not solely from the rational faculty but also from the affective movements (παθητικὰ κινήσεις) that originate from the non-rational faculties. Although Posidonius does not claim emotions to be identical with these affective movements, he maintains that the affective movements contribute to the energy of the emotional impulse and *may influence* our judgements which then result in an emotion.¹² Thus Posidonius occupies a middle ground between the Chrysippean

⁷ Kidd (n. 4), 639–41.

⁸ Kidd (n. 4), 641 hints at this possibility but does not fully explore the ramifications. See also I.G. Kidd, 'Posidonius on emotions', in A.A. Long (ed.), *Problems in Stoicism* (Exeter, 1971), 200–15, at 207–8. Vimercati (n. 1), 652–4, on the other hand, seems to accept that Posidonius attributed specific value to wealth and health, and that he considered them, together with virtue, as conducive to happiness.

⁹ Gal. *PHP* 4.7.24 (F 150a); 5.6.1–2 (F 30); 5.6.3–15 (F 187, part).

¹⁰ Fillion-Lahille (n. 2), 156–9; Cooper (n. 2), 72–3; Gill (n. 2), 124–30. Galen claims that while Zeno regarded the emotions to be the *results* of certain judgements, Chrysippus identified them with the judgements themselves (*PHP* 4.3.1–3). This possible point of disagreement is not germane to the present discussion. It suffices to assume that on the orthodox Stoic view, emotions are strictly dependent on our rationality.

¹¹ Gal. *PHP* 6.2.5 (F 146). I follow Kidd, Cooper, Gill and others in assuming that Posidonius did indeed distinguish between such different 'faculties'. Tieleman is certainly right to stress that this does not necessarily entail an ontological division of the soul. In this sense, Posidonius may still be regarded as a monist. Yet in contrast to Tieleman, I am not convinced that Galen unfoundedly foisted the term 'faculties' (δυνάμεις) onto Posidonius (cf. Tieleman [n. 2], 202–6 and 223–4). I deal with Tieleman's interpretation in more detail below.

¹² See especially Gal. *PHP* 5.5.21 (F 169, part). A conclusive interpretation of the passage and the textual problems involved is provided by Fillion-Lahille (n. 2), 156–9; Cooper (n. 2), 81–90 and Gill (n. 2), 124–30. I follow them in not positing a lacuna after ἐν μὲν τῷ θεωρητικῷ (*pace* Kidd). For the expression παθητικὰ κινήσεις, see *PHP* 5.5.26–7 (F 153).

and the Platonic position. He apparently thought that with his model, several phenomena can be explained much better than with Chrysippus' model, for example the excessive nature of the emotional impulse or the fact that an emotion subsides over time even if the underlying evaluative judgement remains the same.¹³

This is of relevance to us because Posidonius' theory of virtues is closely connected to his account of the soul and of its functions. The following passage in Galen illustrates this point, starting with a direct quotation from Posidonius (*PHP* 5.5.33–8 [F 31, part]):

(1) 'αὕτη γὰρ ἀρίστη παίδων παιδεία, παρασκευὴ τοῦ παθητικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς ἂν ἐπιτηδαιοτάτη ἢ πρὸς τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ λογιστικοῦ'. (2) μικρὸν μὲν γὰρ τὰ πρῶτα καὶ ἀσθενὲς ὑπάρχειν τοῦτο, μέγα δὲ καὶ ἰσχυρὸν ἀποτελεῖσθαι περὶ τὴν τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτην ἡλικίαν, (3) ἠνίκα ἤδη κρατεῖν τε καὶ ἄρχειν αὐτῷ προσήκει καθάπερ ἠνίοχῳ τινὶ τοῦ ζεύγους τῶν συμφύτων ἵππων ἐπιθυμίας τε καὶ θυμοῦ (4) μήτ' ἰσχυρῶν ὑπαρχόντων ἄγαν μίτη ἀσθενῶν μίτη ὀκνηρῶν μίτη ἐκφόρων μίτη δυσπειθῶν ὅλως ἢ ἀκόσμων ἢ ὑβριστῶν, ἀλλ' εἰς ἅπαν ἐτοιμῶν ἐπεσθῆαι τε καὶ πείθεσθαι τῷ λογισμῷ. (5) τούτου δ' αὐτοῦ τὴν παιδείαν γε καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐπιστήμην εἶναι τῆς τῶν ὄντων φύσεως, ὡσπερ τοῦ ἠνίοχου τῶν ἠνιοχικῶν θεωρημάτων. (6) ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ἀλόγοις τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεισιν ἐπιστήμας οὐκ ἐγγίγνεσθαι, καθάπερ οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἵπποις, ἀλλὰ τούτοις μὲν τὴν οἰκειᾶν ἀρετὴν ἐξ ἐθισμοῦ τινος ἀλόγου παραγίγνεσθαι, τοῖς δ' ἠνίοχοις ἐκ διδασκαλίας λογικῆς.

(1) 'This is the best education for children, a preparation of the emotional faculty of soul so that it be most conformable to the rule of the rational faculty'. (2) For at first, this rational faculty is small and weak, but achieves strength and fitness about the age of fourteen, (3) when now it is appropriate for it to control and rule, as a kind of charioteer of a team of kindred horses, desire and anger, (4) so long as they are not too strong nor too weak, neither too backward nor too forward, nor disobedient completely, nor unruly nor beyond themselves, but in everything ready to follow and obey the rational faculty. (5) The training and virtue of that rational faculty is knowledge of the nature of reality, just as that of the charioteer is the knowledge of the rules of chariot-driving. (6) For powers of knowledge do not occur in the non-rational faculties of soul any more than they do in horses; no, the horses' proper virtue arises from a kind of non-rational habituation, the charioteer's from rational instruction.

According to Galen, Posidonius thought that reason becomes fully operational at the age of fourteen (2), which tallies with the orthodox Stoic account.¹⁴ Until then, one should seek to prepare the children's non-rational faculties (here collectively called παθητικόν) for the future rule of the rational faculty (λογιστικόν) (1). In Posidonius' simile, which is clearly inspired by Plato's *Phaedrus*, the non-rational faculties are likened to the horses of a chariot (3). They must not become either too strong or too weak and need to be made obedient to reason (4). The training/education (παιδεία) and virtue (ἀρετή) of the rational faculty, which is represented by the charioteer, differs from that of the non-rational faculties in that it consists in knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) (5). The non-rational faculties, just like the horses of the chariot, instead of knowledge have their own proper virtue (οἰκειᾶ ἀρετή) which can only be achieved through non-rational habituation (ἐξ ἐθισμοῦ τινος ἀλόγου), whereas the charioteer, symbolizing the soul's rational faculty, can be educated through rational instruction (ἐκ διδασκαλίας λογικῆς) (6).

That Galen here paraphrases a Posidonian text is, as Kidd observes, strongly suggested by the usage of indirect speech right after the direct quotation in (1).¹⁵

¹³ Gal. *PHP* 4.3.4 (F 34, part); 4.7.24–5 (F 165, part). For further points, see Sorabji (n. 1), 98.

¹⁴ Cf. Aët. *SVF* 2.83 and 764.

¹⁵ Kidd (n. 4), 158–9. Theiler and Vimercati remain vague in their comments on the passage as far

In conjunction with some further remarks in *De placitis*, the passage can thus be taken to attest Posidonius' distinction between rational and non-rational faculties of the soul.¹⁶ We may want to be cautious about assuming that the total number of those faculties was necessarily three and that Posidonius applied Platonic names to them.¹⁷ Obviously, Galen has an interest in making it seem as if Posidonius fell back onto a (pseudo-)Platonic model of the soul. Yet even if we grant that Galen, where he uses indirect speech, may have employed his own rather than Posidonius' terminology, I do not see sufficient grounds for doubting the general authenticity of his report.

If we follow Kidd in accepting the passage as authentic, how does this further our understanding of the two passages in Diogenes Laertius? From Galen's account we learn that Posidonius not only distinguished between rational and non-rational faculties but also between two different types of virtue: virtue of the rational faculty, which consists in knowledge and can be acquired through rational instruction, and virtue of the non-rational faculties, which can only be acquired through non-rational habituation. Unfortunately, Galen does not explain this division of virtue in much detail, and he provides no concrete examples of either of the two types. Since the virtue of the non-rational faculties does not consist in knowledge, we may speculate that it involves some non-propositional content that cannot be fully expressed in language and therefore cannot be acquired through rational instruction. But since we have no explicit evidence for that, this remains a matter of conjecture. As we shall see below, more can be said about the process of non-rational habituation and the role of the virtue of the non-rational faculties. Nevertheless, due to the scarcity of our sources, many details of Posidonius' theory have to remain unclear.

However, it is evident that this division of virtue marks a difference to the traditional Stoic doctrine. Earlier Stoics like Zeno or Chrysippus considered virtue as essentially rational and posited that it always consists in knowledge or prudence (*ἐπιστήμη/φρόνησις*).¹⁸ In addition, Cicero and Seneca later regarded the view that virtue is

as the authenticity of Galen's report is concerned, see W. Theiler, *Poseidonios, Die Fragmente: II. Erläuterungen* (Berlin and New York, 1982), 351–2; Vimercati (n. 1), 643. Cooper and Lorenz, on the other hand, do not seem to have any qualms about taking Galen's report at face value (Cooper [n. 2], 110; Lorenz [n. 1], 209). Explicit doubts about Galen's report were expressed only by Tieleman (n. 2), 223–4, who does not treat the passage in much depth. Since Kidd gives compelling arguments for accepting the passage as authentic, I see no reason not to follow him. The only reservation I have concerns the terminology Galen uses, and connected with that, the question of whether the Posidonian *παθητικόν* should be taken to comprise exactly two faculties (see also n. 17).

¹⁶ See also *PHP* 5.7.9–12 (F 144); 8.1.14 (F 32).

¹⁷ It is hard to say whether Posidonius himself used the terms *ἐπιθυμία* and *θυμός*, and the respective adjectives *ἐπιθυμητικόν* and *θυμοειδές*, to refer to the non-rational faculties or whether this is just Galen's Platonizing report. As can be seen from the direct quotation in (1), Posidonius at least used the term *λογιστικόν* to signify the soul's rational faculty. From this, Cooper (n. 2), 106 infers that he most likely also used the Platonic terms *ἐπιθυμητικόν* and *θυμοειδές*. The nouns *ἐπιθυμία* and *θυμός*, however, seem problematic because the Stoics commonly used them in a different way, namely to refer to specific types of emotion. *ἐπιθυμία* usually designates the genus of emotion that is directed at an apparent future good, and *θυμός* signifies a subspecies of *ἐπιθυμία* (cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.88.12–18 and 2.90.19–91.4 Wachsmuth). The question of how precisely Posidonius used these terms seems unanswerable. I therefore speak only of 'non-rational faculties' or use Posidonius' expressions *λογιστικόν* and *παθητικόν*, the latter of which may be seen as a collective term for the soul's non-rational faculties.

¹⁸ For Zeno, see *SVF* 1.199–202. For Chrysippus, see Gal. *PHP* 7.2, where Galen reports a dispute between Chrysippus and Aristo about the plurality of virtues. Chrysippus and Zeno both maintained that there is more than one virtue, but that knowledge (or prudence) is the common feature of all virtues, whereas Aristo argued that virtue is one, but has several names according to its relative

perfected reason as standard Stoic doctrine.¹⁹ Therefore, if Posidonius should have thought that also virtue that does not consist in knowledge, namely virtue of the non-rational faculties, is required for happiness, this would indeed mean that he regarded virtue in the traditional Stoic sense as insufficient for happiness.

Against this background, we should be careful to outright dismiss the passage in which Diogenes reports that Posidonius did not consider virtue as self-sufficient for happiness (7.127–8). It is possible that the Posidonian division of virtue found its way into Diogenes' doxographic account in a somewhat convoluted form. Thus, the actual meaning of Diogenes' statement might be that Posidonius—in contrast to earlier Stoics—did not consider virtue of the rational faculty as self-sufficient for happiness. This would fit in well with the fact that, as the passage in Galen attests, Posidonius demanded that all faculties of the soul, including the non-rational ones which were not acknowledged by earlier Stoics, need to be trained and be led to virtue.

Diogenes attributes the heterodox opinion on virtue not only to Posidonius but also to Panaetius. This makes it less likely that his account is merely based on a misunderstanding and does not reflect some actual doctrinal innovation. There are further remarks by Diogenes which in this context need to be taken into consideration. While Zeno and Chrysippus considered virtue to be the perfection of human rationality and therefore identified it with knowledge or prudence, Panaetius is reported by Diogenes to have distinguished between theoretical (θεωρητική) and practical (πρακτική) virtue (7.92).²⁰ Diogenes also tells us that Hecato, another Middle Stoic and disciple of Panaetius, divided virtue into intellectual (θεωρηματική) and non-intellectual (ἀθεωρητος) virtue (7.90).²¹ It remains unclear whether these classifications are in any way comparable or equivalent to the Posidonian division of virtue reported by Galen. It may well be, as is often supposed, that Panaetius' distinction between theoretical and practical virtue was intended to be applied to the four cardinal virtues in the sense in which Cicero presents it in *Off.* 1.15–7.²² Nevertheless, the evidence cited at least suggests that in Middle Stoicism, a more differentiated concept of virtue was developed which, in the case of Posidonius, led to the inclusion of virtues belonging to the non-rational faculties. This need not have been a deliberate break with the school's founders, but was likely intended as an expansion or improvement of the orthodox doctrine. Still, the philosophical consequences of this change for Posidonius' ethics will require further elucidation.

disposition. It is usually assumed that the Stoic identification of virtue with ἐπιστήμη/φρόνησις was a Socratic inheritance, with Plato's *Protagoras* being an important reference point; cf. A.M. Ioppolo, *Aristone di Chio e lo stoicismo antico* (Naples, 1980), 208–12; A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge, 1987), 1.383–4.

¹⁹ Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.34 (*SVF* 3.198) *ipsa uirtus breuissime recta ratio dici potest*; Sen. *Ep.* 76.10 (*SVF* 3.200a) *haec ratio perfecta uirtus uocatur*.

²⁰ In the same passage, Diogenes also attributes to Posidonius a fourfold division of virtue. Since Diogenes does not provide any further information concerning the details of this division, there is not much we can draw from his remark. In any case, the passage should not be taken to constitute a contradiction to Galen's account according to which Posidonius distinguished between virtue of the rational and virtue of the non-rational faculties. As Kidd comments: 'It is highly probable that the same Stoic might employ different classifications [*sc.* of virtue] according to his argument or context' (Kidd [n. 4], 658).

²¹ Non-intellectual virtues are also attested in Stob. *Ecl.* 58.10–14 Wachsmuth and Cic. *Tusc.* 4.30. These accounts are most likely based on Hecato's subdivision.

²² Cf. F. Alesse, *Panezio di Rodi e la tradizione Stoica* (Naples, 1994), 50–4; F. Alesse, *Panezio di Rodi, Testimonianze. Edizione, traduzione e commento* (Naples, 1997), 202–6.

II

I have suggested that the basis for Diogenes' report in 7.127–8 is that Posidonius did not consider virtue of the rational faculty as self-sufficient for happiness. This does not yet answer the question of why Diogenes also tells us that Posidonius regarded health and wealth as necessary for happiness and allegedly even classified them as goods. Before I turn to this question, I want to address a possible objection. In contrast to the interpretation outlined above, Tieleman has argued that Posidonius' distinction between rational and non-rational faculties is not an innovation of the Middle Stoic period, but in fact goes back to Chrysippus and the Early Stoa. The underlying dichotomy, Tieleman claims, consists in the difference between the soul's mental and physical aspect. On Tieleman's interpretation, Posidonius' introduction of non-rational faculties and his corresponding division of virtue only explicates further what was already present in the early Stoic model.

For the Stoics, the soul is of course a body, namely *pneuma* in a particular tension.²³ Tieleman refers to *PHP* 4.6.2–3 to claim that according to Chrysippus, some wrong actions are due to false judgements while others are due to the soul's lack of tension.²⁴ From there, it might seem like a small step to distinguishing between one type of virtue which ensures the soul's physical tension, and another type of virtue which consists in knowledge and belongs to the mental or intentional aspect of the soul. Thus Tieleman thinks that the distinction between theoretical and practical, and intellectual and non-intellectual virtue attested for Panaetius and Hecato, as well as Posidonius' division of virtue and his distinction between a λογιστικόν and a παθητικόν of the soul, are essentially just reformulations or small expansions of the orthodox Stoic doctrine.²⁵

This interpretation supposes that Chrysippus distinguished between a physical and a mental (or intentional) aspect of the soul, and that this distinction forms the basis for certain developments in the Middle Stoic period. We should be careful, however, not to blur all the differences between Posidonius and Chrysippus. In Posidonius' model, the movements of the non-rational faculties exert an affective pull (παθητική ὄλκη) that may influence the rational faculty in its judgements.²⁶ As a result, Posidonius sees the non-rational faculties as potential sources of evil—due to their ability to cause our rational faculty to err. Allegedly, he even censured Chrysippus in this context, because he thought the latter was unable to provide a convincing explanation of how evil or vice (κακία) arises (*PHP* 5.5.9–11 [F 169, part]).

The potential of the non-rational faculties to cause evil also shines through in Posidonius' definition of the end in life (τέλος). Traditionally, the Stoics defined the end as 'living in accordance with nature', although different generations of Stoics produced different variations of this formula.²⁷ Posidonius, however, defined the τέλος slightly differently to other Stoics. Clement of Alexandria reports the following definition by Posidonius (*Strom.* 2.21.129.4 [F 186, part]):

²³ The doctrine of the 'tension' (τόνος) of the soul can be traced back to Cleanthes (see *SVF* 1.563), but it is best attested for Chrysippus.

²⁴ Tieleman (n. 2), 237–9.

²⁵ Tieleman (n. 2), 231–5.

²⁶ See n. 12 above.

²⁷ Cf. *SVF* 1.179–81 and 3.4–9.

ἐπὶ πᾶσι τε ὁ Ποσειδώνιος (1) τὸ ζῆν θεωροῦντα τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἀλήθειαν καὶ τάξιν καὶ συγκατασκευάζοντα αὐτὴν κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν, (2) κατὰ μηδὲν ἀγόμενον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀλόγου μέρους τῆς ψυχῆς.

On top of all of them, Posidonius said it was (1) ‘to live contemplating the truth and order of all things together and helping in promoting it as far as possible, (2) in no way being led by the non-rational part of the soul’.

Apart from the small inconsistency concerning the expression ‘part’ (μέρος) of the soul where ‘faculty’ or ‘power’ would be more appropriate,²⁸ this formula illustrates very well that according to Posidonius the soul’s non-rational faculties have their own causal efficacy. The two parts of the Posidonian formula correspond (1) to the λογιστικόν and (2) to the παθητικόν (or ἄλογον) of the soul.²⁹ We may assume that to achieve both the goals presented in the Posidonian definition of the end, one must acquire both types of virtue: in order to contemplate and promote the truth and order of all things, one needs the virtues associated with reason. However, one will only be able to act reasonably and live a harmonious life if one also possesses the virtues belonging to the non-rational faculties, otherwise those faculties may influence reason in a negative way and lead it astray.

It should thus be obvious that for Posidonius, the παθητικόν or ἄλογον has its own causal efficacy and needs to be controlled through certain virtues. In contrast to that, Chrysippus’ doctrine is commonly understood in a completely different way. The proper tension of the soul, which is equated with the soul’s physical health (ὕγιεια) or strength (ἰσχὺς), is not construed by Chrysippus as a separate faculty, able to exert its own influence over reason. Rather, the soul’s strength or proper tension can be identified with one’s adherence to a harmonious and consistent set of beliefs. Conversely, the soul’s weakness or lack of tension can be identified with one’s adherence to a conflicting and inconsistent set of beliefs. To say that someone is liable to falter in their judgements due to the weak τόνος of their soul would be to say that they are liable to do so due to the inconsistency of the belief system they entertain. In Chrysippus’ model, the soul’s lack of tension can only be seen as responsible for errors and emotions in so far as it is itself the physical manifestation of certain mental states and processes, not in so far as it constitutes a separate non-rational faculty.³⁰

This is not to say that Posidonius rejected the doctrine of the soul’s physical tension. Since there is no evidence to the contrary, he must have granted, as all Stoics did, that the soul is a body and that our impressions, judgements and virtues can in principle all be explained in physical terms. This is a direct consequence of Stoic corporealism, according to which the soul, just as all other things that exist, has to be a body. However, the differences between the Chrysippean and the Posidonian model remain. Posidonius’ non-rational faculties have the potential to misguide reason and to cause evil; they cannot be compared to the physical aspect or tension of the soul.

²⁸ Kidd (n. 4), 674 nevertheless thinks that ‘the whole phrase is undoubtedly Posidonian’.

²⁹ A similar version of (2) is also quoted by Galen in *PHP* 5.6.5 (F 187.12-13): κατὰ μηδὲν ἄγεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀλόγου τε καὶ κακοδαίμονος καὶ ἀθέου τῆς ψυχῆς.

³⁰ Cf. Stob. *Ecl.* 2.62.15–63.5 and 2.93.6–13 Wachsmuth; Diog. Laert. 7.115; Gal. *PHP* 5.2.20–3.11. For interpretation, see B. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford, 1985), 162–5; D. Sedley, ‘Chrysippus on psychophysical causality’, in J. Brunschwig and M.C. Nussbaum (edd.), *Passions and Perceptions: Studies in Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, 1993), 313–31, at 328–9; J. Trompeter, ‘Die gespannte Seele: *Tonos* bei Galen’, *Phronesis* 61 (2016), 82–109, at 96–9.

In addition, it seems questionable whether we should even attribute to Chrysippus a clear distinction between the soul's mental and physical aspect. In fact, the Stoics in their terminology did not clearly distinguish between the two and often used ambiguous terms to describe the functions of the soul.³¹ This further corroborates the impression that for the Stoics, the mental and the physical aspect coincide, which makes it futile to compare them to Posidonius' λογιστικόν and παθητικόν. With this in mind, we should not try too hard to harmonize the Chrysippean and the Posidonian position. We have to acknowledge that in attributing causal efficacy to separate non-rational faculties, Posidonius did not follow the orthodox Stoic doctrine.

III

Once we acknowledge the decisive role the παθητικόν plays in Posidonius' ethics, the rest of Diogenes Laertius' remarks in 7.103 and 7.127–8 should become easier to understand. As I have pointed out in Section I, Posidonius believed that the non-rational faculties cannot be trained or educated in a rational way. Rather, these faculties need to be moulded through some sort of non-rational habituation (*PHP* 5.5.33–8). According to a passage in Galen, Posidonius recommended to 'dwell in advance' (προενδημεῖν) upon things that might happen in the future so as to get used to them and to not get emotionally overwhelmed if they happen (*PHP* 4.7.7–9 [F 165, part]). It seems plausible that this 'dwelling in advance' is supposed to play a role in moulding the non-rational faculties and developing the virtues that are necessary to control them. But there is more to be found in Galen's report. Apparently, Posidonius also argued that certain musical modes and rhythms are appropriate for moulding the children's παθητικόν.³² And more generally, Posidonius thought that one's whole environment and bodily condition has an influence on the affective movements of the soul; he maintained that certain bodily features correspond to certain traits of character. For instance, someone who is broad-breasted (εὐρύστερνα) and warmer (θερμότερα) is also more given to anger (θυμικότερα). In addition, a person's character differs depending on the area they live in (κατὰ τὰς χώρας); and in general, the affective movements of the soul always follow the condition of the body (τῶν παθητικῶν κινήσεων τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπομένων αἰεὶ τῇ διαθέσει τοῦ σώματος).³³

If Posidonius advocated such a doctrine, it is easy to see why he may have been committed to attributing special value to external things like health and wealth. Evidently, health is a bodily condition and as such, according to the above argument, influences the soul's affective movements. We may surmise that it can have a positive effect on the non-rational faculties, making them easier to control. In the case of wealth, the influence may be less direct than in the case of health. However, if a person is wealthy, they should in principle be able to adjust their environment so that it has a positive effect on their physical well-being and consequently on their affective movements. In this sense, also wealth can be regarded as potentially influencing the non-rational faculties of the soul. This might be the reason why according to Diogenes, Posidonius valued health and wealth more

³¹ Cf. Sedley (n. 30), 328–9; Trompeter (n. 30), 96–9. Tieleman (n. 2), 238 himself admits that 'the mental and the physical are two sides of the same coin. This is the traditional Stoic schema'.

³² Gal. *PHP* 5.6.19–22 (F 168). On the authenticity of Galen's report in that passage, see Kidd (n. 4), 612–13.

³³ Gal. *PHP* 5.5.22–4 (F 169, part). See also Cooper (n. 2), 93, 95.

highly than other Stoics did. But should we go so far as to say that Posidonius considered health and wealth as necessary for happiness and as genuine goods?

Kidd firmly rejects this possibility.³⁴ He refers to *PHP* 5.6.17–19 (F 161), where Galen talks about what Posidonius took to be akin or proper (οἰκεῖος) to the rational and the non-rational faculties respectively. According to that passage, Posidonius thought that emotions arise when people mistake things that are proper to the non-rational faculties (οἰκεῖα ταῖς ἀλόγοις δυνάμεσι) for things that are proper without qualification (ἀπλῶς οἰκεῖα). In fact, only things belonging to our rational and divine aspect (τοῦ λογικοῦ τε καὶ θείου), such as wisdom (σοφία), are proper without qualification, whereas things like pleasure or power over one's neighbour, which belong to the animal-like aspect of the soul (τοῦ ζώου τῆς ψυχῆς), are only proper to the non-rational faculties. Kidd argues that for Posidonius, things like health and wealth must fall into the second category. They may be regarded as οἰκεῖα to the non-rational faculties but not as ἀπλῶς οἰκεῖα—and only things that are ἀπλῶς οἰκεῖα can be genuine goods.³⁵

The same argument can be applied to Posidonius' division of virtue and his definition of the end. Given Posidonius' distinction between οἰκεῖα and ἀπλῶς οἰκεῖα, also the virtues of the non-rational faculties cannot be regarded as absolute goods. They seem to be responsible only for making the soul's affective movements controllable by reason and in that sense are subordinate to the virtues of the rational faculty.³⁶ If we follow this line of reasoning, it becomes clear that for Posidonius, absolute goods can only be affiliated with one's rationality.

However, even if Posidonius did not regard things like health and wealth as goods in an absolute sense, it should be obvious that the habituation that is required to make the non-rational faculties obedient to reason must in some way be affected by or even dependent on one's environment and bodily condition. Regardless of how exactly Posidonius envisioned the process of non-rational habituation, it would be inconsistent for him to maintain that environment and bodily condition exert an influence over the non-rational faculties, while at the same time maintaining that we can mould those faculties independently of our environment and bodily condition. If a person is healthy and wealthy, this must influence the affective movements of their non-rational faculties. As a possible result, those movements may become less frequent or less intense and hence easier to control. Thus, even if health and wealth are not ἀπλῶς οἰκεῖα and therefore cannot be unconditionally beneficial, they may still be seen as conducive to happiness in so far as they have the potential to make it easier for the λογιστικόν to operate undisturbed by the affective movements of the παθητικόν. I hence conclude that based on Posidonius' tenets, health and wealth must at least have some instrumental value for achieving happiness.

Such an interpretation is not only well compatible with our sources, it also has the advantage that we do not have to completely dismiss Diogenes' report. Diogenes tells us that Posidonius regarded health and wealth as necessary for happiness and as goods. I suggest not taking this report too literally, while still assuming that there has to be some basis for Diogenes' claims. And indeed, if Posidonius regarded health and wealth as potentially conducive to happiness and therefore had to assign some instrumental value to them, this could have induced Diogenes to report in a simplified

³⁴ Kidd (n. 8 [1971]), 208.

³⁵ Kidd (n. 8 [1971]), 207–8.

³⁶ Cf. Kidd (n. 8 [1971]), 209.

way that Posidonius regarded health and wealth as goods. In other words, if we grant that Diogenes was somewhat imprecise in his report, his remarks can be reconciled with the rest of our evidence and need not be completely rejected.

If this reconstruction of Posidonius' doctrine is correct, things like health and wealth that potentially enhance our control over the non-rational faculties gain a status that cannot be compared to the usual status of Stoic indifferents (ἀδιάφορα).³⁷ In Stoic texts, health and wealth are usually given as prime examples of promoted indifferents (προηγμένα). Thus, the Stoics would claim that, if circumstances allow, one should choose health and wealth over sickness and poverty. Yet they would also maintain that we achieve happiness through virtue alone, regardless of whether we actually attain specific indifferents such as health and wealth. This orthodox Stoic concept of indifferents does not seem compatible with Posidonius' approach. Posidonius in this context seems to be closer to the Peripatetics than to the Early Stoics. We know from Cicero's account in *De finibus* of the lively debate between Stoics and Peripatetics on the use and value of external goods. While the Stoics argued that virtue alone is sufficient for a happy life and that it is impossible to further increase one's happiness, the Peripatetics claimed that the possession of external and bodily goods does make life happier (Cic. *Fin.* 3.43). We do not know to what extent Posidonius participated in that debate and exactly which position he took. Even if he, in contrast to orthodox Stoics, thought that health and wealth can help us to achieve happiness, he may still have defended the traditional Stoic doctrine that happiness does not admit of degrees, and that a person, once happy, cannot become happier by amassing further goods. I consider this a likely option, although there can be no certainty in these matters. In any case, if Posidonius was willing to attribute instrumental value to things like health and wealth, he was in a sense closer to the Peripatetic than to the orthodox Stoic position.

There remains the question of whether Posidonius also considered health and wealth as necessary for happiness. In principle, if health and wealth are of instrumental value for achieving happiness, this does not yet entail that they are necessary for it. But Diogenes suggests exactly that by stating that according to Posidonius and Panaetius, there is 'need' (χρεία) of health, wealth and strength (7.127–8). Since I do not see in Diogenes' claim a direct contradiction to other sources, I believe that we should accept his testimony. The orthodox Stoic definition of goods, evils and indifferents does not seem fully compatible with Posidonius' idiosyncratic approach. Posidonius may have regarded health and wealth as necessary for happiness even if he did not classify them as genuine or absolute goods. The passage in Seneca can be reconciled with such an interpretation—despite the fact that Kidd adduces it as the main reason why we should doubt the correctness of Diogenes' report.³⁸

Let us take a closer look. As Seneca tells us (*Ep.* 87.31–40 [F 170]), Posidonius argued that wealth (*diuitiae*) can potentially be a cause of evil (*causa malorum*)—not in the sense of a necessary, self-sufficient cause (*causa efficiens*) but in the sense of an antecedent cause (*causa praecedens*).³⁹ Although wealth in itself does not harm, it

³⁷ Although a minority of scholars in the past has interpreted Stoic indifferents as having instrumental value, more recently, J. Klein, 'Making sense of Stoic indifferents', *OSAPh* 49 (2015), 227–81, has pointed out the shortcomings of such an approach and has provided a conclusive new interpretation of the topic.

³⁸ Kidd (n. 4), 639.

³⁹ The terms *causa efficiens* and *causa praecedens* seem to be roughly equivalent to the Chrysippean terms αἰτία αὐτοτελής and αἰτία προκαταρκτική (cf. Kidd [n. 4], 628–9).

may still incite us to evil by provoking false beliefs in us. Health (*bona ualetudo*) can be classified in a similar way. According to Seneca, Posidonius reasoned that both health and wealth can also have negative effects and therefore must not be confused with genuine goods. In contrast to things like health and wealth, goods are necessarily free of all harm and cannot influence us in a negative way.

Prima facie, Seneca's account might seem to contradict Diogenes' report, in which we read that Posidonius counted health and wealth among the goods. However, as pointed out above, we should always consider the option of interpreting Diogenes' statements in a less literal sense. The passage from Seneca highlights that Posidonius did not regard things like health and wealth as absolute goods. But Seneca also reports that according to Posidonius, health and wealth are 'advantages' (*commoda*) because their positive potential outweighs their negative potential.⁴⁰ Thus Posidonius may still have thought that health and wealth—notwithstanding their negative potential—can in principle be conducive to happiness. There is no inherent contradiction in assuming that something has instrumental value and can help us to achieve happiness while holding that the same thing may also have negative effects. If we interpret the evidence in that way, the passages from Diogenes can be reconciled with Seneca's account and need not be completely rejected.

Also the other reasons Kidd gives for his dismissal of Diogenes' report do not seem compelling to me.⁴¹ The fact that according to Cicero, Posidonius maintained that virtue was the only good (*Tusc.* 2.61 [T 38]) does not preclude the possibility that Posidonius attributed instrumental value to things like health and wealth while not regarding them as goods in an absolute sense. And finally, Kidd's argument *ex silentio* seems the least convincing. After all, we have Diogenes' report itself, and since it is possible to interpret Diogenes' statements in such a way that they are compatible with the rest of our evidence, this solution is preferable to the outright dismissal of his report.

CONCLUSION

Posidonius deviated from the orthodox Stoic doctrine on several points. He introduced non-rational faculties into the Stoic model of the soul and argued that virtue in the orthodox Stoic sense, that is, virtue of the rational faculty, is in itself insufficient for happiness. According to Posidonius, in addition to the traditional Stoic virtues consisting in knowledge, also virtues of the non-rational faculties are required. Besides, things like health and wealth—which the Stoics usually classified as indifferents—had to be reassessed by Posidonius due to their potential to influence the non-rational faculties. Even if Posidonius did not regard health and wealth as absolute goods, it is still plausible to assume that he considered them as, in some sense, necessary for happiness. The exact status Posidonius assigned to things like health and wealth remains unclear, but he at least had to attribute some instrumental value to them, which marks a clear difference from the orthodox Stoic doctrine.

University of Vienna

SEVERIN GOTZ
severin.gotz@univie.ac.at

⁴⁰ Sen. *Ep.* 87.37 *commodum dicitur a maiore sui parte aestimatum.*

⁴¹ Cf. Kidd (n. 4), 639.