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**OTHERS AS MATTER OF INDIFFERENCE  
IN MARCUS AURELIUS' *MEDITATIONS*\***

EDITA WOLF

**ABSTRACT**

In *Meditations*, others are treated in a double way, as being closest to us and as matter of indifference. The present article offers an interpretation, based on chapter V, 20, where the two ways are seen in different perspectives, the perspective of the whole and the perspective of a part. The perspective of the whole allows one to see the interconnectedness of individuals by reason; it is also linked to the imagery of the view from above which enables one to understand oneself as equal to any other, whereas the perspective of a part helps one to assume the attitude of indifference towards the other and thus to act properly.

**Keywords:** Marcus Aurelius; stoicism; others; indifference

A significant part of *Meditations* is centered on interpersonal relationships and the social nature of the human being. *Meditations* are strongly marked by prevalence of ethics compared to the other two branches of the Stoic division of philosophy, logic and physics. Thus the question how to deal with others is primarily posed as an ethical one, with respect to the Stoic axiology distinguishing good, bad and indifferent. In this context, we have to deal with the paradoxical claim that we are naturally inclined to benefit others, but neither our happiness, nor our virtue, which is the only condition of a happy life, depends on them. Others do not seem to be good, but they are not bad either. Therefore, one's attitude towards them should be one of indifference, nevertheless involving the actions and affections according to nature. Moreover, according to some fragments (e.g. LS 60 G and M), there are special cases of others – sages and friends, who can be considered “not other than benefit”, therefore good.

In *Meditations*, the treatment of others is double: on the one hand, a human being is regarded as a member of the human community, which is based on shared reason. People are kin one to another and this kinship is provided by their rationality, for each and every human being has a small part of the divine reason. On the other hand, there

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are several chapters that seem to disturb this concept of humanity. In those chapters, other people are described as matters of indifference, as an obstacle to proper action, and sometimes even as a nuisance – a possible cause of anger or other passions.<sup>1</sup>

The treatment of others in *Meditations* reflects the complexity of the problem of others in Stoic ethics, especially the difficulties in combining the theoretical notions of living in accordance with nature and that of indifference and their application in praxis. In the following, we shall look into how the problem appears in particular discursive conditions and examine the delicate balance<sup>2</sup> in the attitude towards others. Since chapter V, 20 contains the concept of the other in its doubleness, it will serve as a point of reference throughout the present text.

According to another account, the human being is that which is closest to us, in relation to which one should do good to humans and put up with them. However, to the extent that some of them stand in the way of our proper actions, the human being becomes one of the things that are matters of indifference to me, no less than sun or wind or wild beast. They may obstruct one or other of my actions but they do not act as obstacles to my motivation or disposition because I have the power of reservation and adaptation. The mind adapts and converts everything that prevents its activity into something that serves its objective; an impediment to its action becomes a means of help to this action and a blockage along the way becomes a means to help it on its way.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter presents a disconcerting image of others compared to wild beasts surrounded by precise stoic terminology. To unfold the layers of the text, special attention will be paid first to the characteristic of a human being as closest to us (*oikeiōtaton*) and to the closeness or properness in general alluding to the Stoic concept of appropriation (*oikeios, oikeiosis*).<sup>4</sup> The concept of appropriation helps to develop the sense of reasonableness of a human being and gives access to the perspective of the whole. The second part of the chapter illustrates a rarer way of perceiving others, where they are compared to beasts in connection to the notion of reservation (*hupexairesis*) and the vocabulary of standing in the way (*enistantai, enstatikon*), hindrance or blockage (*empodia, koluma*). The two ways will be shown as two complementary perspectives, the perspective of the whole and the perspective of a part. As the link between the two is the one who is perceiving, who is assuming the point of view either of the whole or of a part, the position of the perceiving *I* will be examined.

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. VI, 54; IX, 42.

<sup>2</sup> Expression used by Christopher Gill (2013: 158) in his commentary to chapter V, 20.

<sup>3</sup> V, 20: Καθ' ἕτερον μὲν λόγον ἡμῖν ἐστὶν οικειότατον ἄνθρωπος, καθ' ὅσον εὖ ποιητέον αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀνεκτέον· καθ' ὅσον δὲ ἐνίστανται τινες εἰς τὰ οικεῖα ἔργα, ἔν τι τῶν ἀδιαφόρων μοι γίνεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὐχ ἡσσον ἢ ἥλιος ἢ ἄνεμος ἢ θηρίον. ὑπὸ τούτων δὲ ἐνέργεια μὲν τις ἐμποδισθεῖ ἄν, ὀρμῆς δὲ καὶ διαθέσεως οὐ γίνεται ἐμπόδια διὰ τὴν ὑπεξαίρεσιν καὶ τὴν περιτροπήν. περιτρέπει γὰρ καὶ μεθίστησι πᾶν τὸ τῆς ἐνεργείας κώλυμα ἢ διάνοια εἰς τὸ προηγούμενον καὶ πρὸ ἔργου γίνεται τὸ τοῦ ἔργου τούτου ἐφεκτικὸν καὶ πρὸ ὁδοῦ τὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ ταύτης ἐνοστατικόν. Quoted from Farquharson's edition (1968), translation by Gill (2013) with slight changes in the first and the second phrase. As Gill's translation of the books 7–12 hasn't been published yet, Haines' (1930) translation of these will be used in the following text.

<sup>4</sup> The main sources for *oikeiosis* are Diogenes Laertius, Cicero's *De finibus*, Seneca's letter 121 and fragments of Stoic philosopher Hierocles who lived in the 2nd century CE. Cf. D. L. VII, 84–89; Cic. *Fin.* III, 16–31; for Hierocles' *Elements of Ethics* and other works see Ramelli (2009).

## Others from the point of view of the whole

In the beginning of chapter V, 20, human beings are described as “closest” (*oikeiotion*). The adjective, as Gill points out,<sup>5</sup> evokes the Stoic concept of appropriation (*oikeiosis*). In Stoicism, the appropriation takes place during the development of an individual and is generally understood as consisting of two major phases.<sup>6</sup> In the first phase an individual becomes familiar to themselves, their physical functions and limits and the primary motive for any action is self-preservation; in the second phase, they realize that they form part of a bigger whole of reasonable creatures and they become capable of reasonable actions for the good of society. In chapter V, 20, we can clearly link the expression *oikeios* with the second phase, the so-called social *oikeiosis*.

To understand what is meant by *oikeiotion* in this context, it is important to stress that the social *oikeiosis* begins only with the development of reason. The existence of human society is dependent on reason, because reason is the basis of human society, the physical link that ties the whole together. Reason makes one human, for a divine share of reason is what makes the difference between an animal and a rational animal that is a human being. But it is exactly a share, a part of the whole whose individuality arises from the whole. Not only does each human being have a share of divine reason, but it is that very reason that creates the connection between all reasonable beings.

Being human thus does not consist of a discrete substantial quality of an individual, but from the appurtenance to the reasonable whole. Reasonableness is not a quality dissociable from sociability. On the contrary, reason is the permanent link between individuals that makes humanity possible.<sup>7</sup> Marcus Aurelius concentrates this argument in a short gnome in chapter X, 2:

Now the rational is indisputably also the civic.<sup>8</sup>

Detached parts of the unique reason proper to individuals form a whole in the same way as the things in the world form the whole of the world (LS 67 R).

For there is both one Universe, made up of all things, and one Substance, and one Law, one Reason common to all intelligent creatures, and one Truth: if indeed there is also one perfecting of living creatures that have the same origin and share the same reason.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Gill (2013: 158).

<sup>6</sup> The division of appropriation is to be found in Gill (2013: xxxviii) who uses terms individual-social in the commentary to Marcus Aurelius. Ramelli (2009: lix) who interprets Hierocles' account of appropriation in terms of preservative-deontological, Engberg-Pedersen (1990: 122) whose analysis is centred on Cicero (Cic. *Fin.* III, 16–21) and who uses the terms objective-subjective, and Pembroke (1971: 114–149). Annas (1993: 270–4) and Reydams-Schils (2012: 438) examine the division into personal and social appropriation and show that they go hand in hand.

<sup>7</sup> As Reydams-Schils (2012: 443) notes, the rational soul is always sociable, but not all sociability derives from reason, because certain animals are also sociable. The degrees of sociability follow the stoic *scala naturae* as we find it in chapter IX, 9 where there is a direct proportion between reasonableness and sociability. The more reasonable a creature is, the more sociable, and the bond thus created is proportionately stronger.

<sup>8</sup> X, 2: ἔστι δὲ τὸ λογικὸν εὐθύς καὶ πολιτικόν. Transl. Haines. Similarly in XI, 26.

<sup>9</sup> VII, 9: κόσμος τε γὰρ εἷς ἐξ ἀπάντων καὶ θεὸς εἷς δι' ἀπάντων καὶ οὐσία μία καὶ νόμος εἷς, λόγος κοινὸς πάντων τῶν νοερῶν ζώων, καὶ ἀλήθεια μία, εἶγε καὶ τελειότης μία τῶν ὁμογενῶν καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ λόγου μετεχόντων ζώων. Transl. Haines.

The closeness of other human beings is fully revealed only when we perceive all that it comprises, therefore only when we can see the world from the point of view of reason and take a glimpse of the workings of providence. The point of view of reason is at the same time the point of view of the whole, because reason only can pervade the whole universe and comprehend it, including the comprehension of the reason itself.<sup>10</sup> The point of view of the whole enables us to see the other as a human being, as another. It is the reason that creates the permanent link forming the whole and thus the framework for cooperation of its parts, individuals who interact with each other and create temporary links.

The interaction of individuals is expressed in the chapter V, 20 as “doing good and putting up with” (*eu poein kai anechein*). Therefore any particular action or passion according to nature can be understood as either putting up with others or doing good to them. This shows that the temporary link of interactivity is always an expression of the reasonableness and sociability, an expression of the permanent link of reason.

In “doing good and putting up with” another human being becomes a direct object of action in the grammatical sense, as it is expressed by the accusative, while an agent or patient becomes a subject. In this way, the temporary link of a particular interaction creates a subject-object relationship between two individuals. However, as Bénatouil argues, this subject-object relationship is not marked by reciprocity.<sup>11</sup> An agent is a subject of doing good as well as a patient is subject of putting up with, the object of both being another. Meanwhile, another individual is also subject of doing good and putting up with and these also have a human object. The first subject and the second object may or may not be the same.

The first part of the chapter V, 20 is to be read as understanding the human condition from the point of view of reason, which is the point of view of the whole, because it is this point of view that enables us to see the interconnectedness of individuals and to understand what is human society. It is also the point of view that we encounter most frequently in *Meditations*. This point of view was analysed especially by Pierre Hadot, who considered looking at things from the perspective of the whole as crucial to Marcus Aurelius’ philosophical exercises.

Only seeing reason means that we are able to see the human society, which is the whole that we are a part of, therefore understand what are others to us, that is that they are closest to us. The fact that it is reason that enables a human being to see another as closest does not lead to insensibleness. On the contrary, the reasonableness and sociability create the framework for feeling the right emotion – not excessive passion, but natural affection. We should like others and, according to *Meditations*, this liking has a double basis.<sup>12</sup> Firstly, one likes another as a reasonable being, because they are from the same stock.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See XI, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Bénatouil (2009: 78).

<sup>12</sup> Marcus Aurelius does not really mention the possible third basis for love, being part of a family, which plays a significant role in the first phase of appropriation according to Hierocles (*Elem. eth.* IX, XI Ramelli; selected parts LS 57 D).

<sup>13</sup> See chapters IX, 27 (φύσει γὰρ φίλοι); XI, 9. Natural affection for others is expressed in *Meditations* also by the expressions *eumeneia* (III, 4; III, 12; IV, 25; V, 5; VI, 30; VI, 47; VII, 3; VII, 26; VII, 52; VII, 63; VIII, 5; IX, 11; IX, 42; X, 4; X, 12; XI, 9; XI, 13; XI, 18), *praotes* (VII, 63; IX, 42; XI, 9; XI, 8), *philostorgia* (II, 5; VI, 30; XI, 18), *hemerotes* (III, 11; XI, 8). For a similar treatment of affection in Epictetus see Epict. *Diss.* I, 11 interpreted by Salles (2012: 95–121) with respect to appropriation.

Secondly, one likes another in the same way as one should like anything that happens in this world as a working of providence.<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note that the liking is expressed in terms of *philia*, which can be translated as friendship, affection or fondness. A special treatment of affection towards one's own family and personal friends is absent from the books II–XII of *Meditations*.<sup>15</sup> This leads Rutherford (1989: 123) to the conclusion that in the lexical group of *philia*, *philos*, *philein* as it appears in *Meditations*, any reference to friendship is missing, and there is only an imposition of “moral obligation” which replaces “personal contact and private warmth”.

However, the first book of *Meditations* may allow another explanation because it can be interpreted as a form of catalogue<sup>16</sup> presenting a certain group of *philoï* of Marcus Aurelius, his family, friends and, last but not least, gods. The first book of *Meditations* can support the argument that in some cases friends, children and spouses are not only preferred indifferents, but may be considered as good because they prove to be a help to virtue. This is the point of view of Reydam-Schils (2005: 2–7) who analyses *Meditations* “from the vantage point of [...] social embeddedness”. According to her, it is from this point of view that others may become more than matters of indifference.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the possible special value of family and friends is not directly commented upon and doesn't become a subject of *Meditations*. In chapter V, 31 friends appear along gods, family, servants and others on the list of people towards whom it is important to act correctly. The philosophical exercise is directed rather towards understanding of all human beings as *philoï*, than towards special appreciation of particular friends or family. It seems that appreciation and love for friends and family could have posed rather a different problem, such as that of excessive love for close ones and of succumbing to passions. Indeed, chapters IX, 40, X 34 and X, 35 show that the death of one's own child should be borne with moderation, because from the point of view of the whole, death is natural and therefore a matter of indifference.

### I as a matter of indifference

The point of view of the whole can be illustrated by repeated image of the view from above which has a long philosophical tradition in Antiquity. Rutherford, who reads *Meditations* primarily as a piece of literature, draws attention especially to the similarities with a passage in Plato's *Theaetetus*<sup>18</sup> and compares and contrasts *Meditations* with Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> III, 16: φιλεῖν μὲν καὶ ἀσπάξασθαι τὰ συμβαίνοντα καὶ συγκλωθόμενα αὐτῶ. Compare with X, 21.

<sup>15</sup> The word *philos* is also used in a chapter describing life at the imperial court referring to a group of people called *philoï* (VIII, 39).

<sup>16</sup> The first book of *Meditations* can be read also as a stoic catalogue of virtues, *imagines maiorum* where there are combined the Roman tradition and Stoic philosophy. Compare VI, 48, and LS 66 D, where Cicero speaks about *simulacra virtutis*. Reydam-Schils (2005: 77) interprets the first book in similar vein as “a curious reversal of a testament”. For the special combination of Roman and Stoic element in piousness in *Meditations* see Pià-Comella (2011).

<sup>17</sup> Ramelli (2009: lxxxiii) argues in a similar manner for Hierocles.

<sup>18</sup> Pl. *Th.* 173e–174a.

<sup>19</sup> Rutherford (2002: 155–161).

In his influential interpretation, Hadot identifies the view from above with looking at things from the perspective of the whole and considers it as crucial to human freedom<sup>20</sup> because the spiritual exercises consist of the work of liberation from that which does not depend on us in Epictetan sense.<sup>21</sup> To achieve the universal perspective of reason, to see and comprehend the world from the point of view of the whole means, for Hadot, to achieve human freedom.

The view from above is not a view of a static picture from a fixed point, but quite the opposite. As Hadot notes,<sup>22</sup> it is rather an imaginative overflight (“survol imaginaire”). In this overflight, neither the viewer, nor the viewed are motionless. The viewed world is, first, the world of human affairs, names and fame, ephemeral and endlessly repeated.<sup>23</sup> The viewer then, as a human being, is essentially part of this world. As pointed out in *Meditations*, the courts of Augustus,<sup>24</sup> of Vespasianus<sup>25</sup> vanished in the abyss of *aion*, and every emperor, every general disappears and is lost in time, even the one looking.

Specific topos of *Meditations* is the reflection on endless metamorphosis. This theme appears very frequently and illustrates interconnectedness of the three parts of philosophy. As Giavatto (2008: 133–140) shows, theoretical knowledge of cosmology becomes a regulative principle through rhetorical praxis of the philosophical exercises. The imagery of metamorphosis in *Meditations* is very rich and vivid. The Stoic world is shown as being essentially non-static, as a world in motion. The world and the viewer are both in motion; they are subject to constant change. Not only the human world, but everything changes, dies and is reborn, including the cosmos itself. After having gone through the human world, the flight of thought continues to embrace the whole world, to the imperceptible, to the incessant becoming, coming into existence and perishing of parts of the whole of nature, to the blending of mixtures and stellar movements that happen in the heights of the skies and the depths of the earth on the level of elements.

Watch the stars in their course as one that runneth about with them therein; and think constantly upon the reciprocal changes of the elements, for thoughts on these cleanse away the mire of our earthly life.<sup>26</sup>

The limit of becoming human is to grasp with reason the whole of nature. It is not a question of time and space, but of speed, of the velocity of thought. The flight of thought passes from a human being through the whole of the human world to the border of the cosmos to see that every individual, every element, is a part of the cosmic whole which is the unique being with unique impulse, the unique cause.<sup>27</sup> The reason reaches to the utmost confines of the cosmos, even to the endless void and gaping *aion*,<sup>28</sup> and returns

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<sup>20</sup> Hadot (1997: 192–196).

<sup>21</sup> Hadot (2002: 329).

<sup>22</sup> Hadot (2002: 54). See IX, 30; XII, 24.

<sup>23</sup> Expressed in many chapters and in many ways. See e.g. II, 14; VI, 37; IX, 35; XI, 1; XI, 2.

<sup>24</sup> See IV, 33; VIII, 5; VIII, 31.

<sup>25</sup> See IV, 32.

<sup>26</sup> VII, 47: Περισκοπεῖν ἄστρον δρόμους ὡσπερ συμπεριθέοντα καὶ τὰς τῶν στοιχείων εἰς ἄλληλα μεταβολὰς συνεχῶς ἐννοεῖν· ἀποκαθαίρουσι γὰρ αἱ τούτων φαντασίαι τὸν ῥύπον τοῦ χαμαὶ βίου. Transl. Haines.

<sup>27</sup> See IV, 40; VII, 9; XII, 30.

<sup>28</sup> See XI, 1.

back to see everything intertwined and continuously rearranged in the tonic movement, bodies interwoven by their nature and actions in the same manner as human limbs,<sup>29</sup> inseparable in the unity of matter.

Seeing the unceasing course of metamorphoses leads to grasping of human mortality and transience.<sup>30</sup> Human life is seen from the perspective of the whole of nature as insignificant, almost imperceptible as natural elements that are indiscernible, and yet they form everything people use. As one can think of imperceptible elements from the perspective of a human being that is constituted by those elements, so one can think of human life from the perspective of the whole of the reasonable soul of the world that pervades matter. As a part of the whole, a human being is born and dies, with respect to the whole, human life is but a fleeting moment. Understanding the reasonableness, becoming human thus necessarily includes awareness of one's mortality, for a human being is only one of the things, which in many ways come into existence in the course of becoming.

Not only the view from above enables one to come to terms with mortality, but it also provides an ethical framework for living in accordance with nature, to do good and put up with others, but also with oneself. For, in *Meditations*, an individual that happens to be *me* isn't treated as special with respect to others: all serve the purpose. On the contrary, paying too much attention to one's personal identity, social position, and even to one's name is something emphatically warned against.<sup>31</sup> As Gill points out: "the focus [...] lies on what should matter most to us as ethical agents, rather than psychological entities."<sup>32</sup> When doing something or putting up with it, when thinking, one should always act like a reasonable being, like a man, nothing more and nothing less.<sup>33</sup>

From the point of view of the whole, an individual is seen, on the one hand, as a part of the always-recreated link of actions and passions, a unit entering into various relationships, a subject of actions and passions, a subject of a verb. On the other hand, this point of view reveals that an individual is a mixture composed and decomposed, undergoing transformation, same as any other.

### Others from the point of view of a part

The comparison from chapter V, 20<sup>34</sup> deserves attention, because it seems to create an important gap between human beings. As shown by Bénatouïl<sup>35</sup> and Ackeren<sup>36</sup>, others are seen simply as matters of indifference without any further reference to value. By contrast to their position as viewed from the point of view of the whole, in this context they are seen from the point of view of a part, which is necessarily the point of view present in taking a particular action. The point of view of a part is thus the point of view from which one has to assume the attitude of indifference and directly deal with an indifferent thing.

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<sup>29</sup> See VII, 19.

<sup>30</sup> See III, 10.

<sup>31</sup> See VI, 30; IX, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Gill (2013: 185).

<sup>33</sup> See III, 3; III, 7; IV, 12; V, 16; VI, 14; VI, 44; VII, 9; VII, 68; VII, 72; IX, 12; IX, 16; X, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Similar treatment in VIII, 56.

<sup>35</sup> Bénatouïl (2009: 65–66).

<sup>36</sup> Ackeren (2011: 532–33).

In the rest of chapter V, 20 others are not perceived as objects of actions or passions, because it is the proper actions (*oikeia erga*) that become direct objects, in the sense of obiectum effectum – the result of acting is an action. On the contrary, others are described as “standing in the way” (*enistantai*) in the same manner as natural forces. They are not treated as logical animals, but as beasts.<sup>37</sup>

Compared to beasts, others are not introduced as bad or good, but as matters of indifference and they are perceived in the same manner as sun and wind. Therefore the difference between an acting individual and a beast encountered is not to be understood as one of quantity: it is not so that somebody, a less reasonable human being becomes a beast, while another, more reasonable remains a reasonable animal. Between reasonable and unreasonable, the difference is one of quality.<sup>38</sup>

But of what should the attitude of indifference consist? The verb *enistantai* can show us the way. This verb does not only mean to stand in the way as an obstacle but we can read it with an allusion to a standard Stoic term for “present” (*enestos*).<sup>39</sup> Beasts are not something bad that prevent our actions, but something that presents itself, happens on our way in the same manner as, for example, bad weather. In this context, “beast” doesn’t refer to a higher or lower level of reasonableness, but to the fact that others are material entities, bodies that happen to be in the world. Compared to a beast, another human being is perceived on the level where body encounters body, from the point of view of a part.

While the relation of a part to the whole is qualified as non-other, the relation of the parts of the chain of actions and passions is that of other (*heteron*).<sup>40</sup> From the point of view of a part, there is a division between them. A hand when it meets the other one to clap is other (*heteron*) to it, even though they belong to the same body to which they are non-other (*ouch heteron*).<sup>41</sup>

By contrast to the perspective of the whole, at the level of parts, the human being doesn’t look at the reasonably governed whole of the universe but becomes an entity that accepts what is coming by the virtue of reservation and adaptation. Reservation (*hupexairesis*) is a standard Stoic term for the conditioning of action,<sup>42</sup> which permits us to act according to the limits of what is in our power, and therefore to reinstate our freedom and assume our responsibility. Mostly, the results of our actions are something that does not depend on us, thus it would be wrong to let oneself be upset by the frustration of such action. The power of adaptation (*peritrope*) works as a supplement to the reservation: not only an unexpected result happened and I am not upset, but it may actually bring me some profit. Under such circumstances, it would be more Stoic to speak of unexpected results of our actions, rather than of expected results that did not happen. The power of

<sup>37</sup> The comparison of a human being to a wild beast appears in other chapters where it allows a more expectable interpretation, see III, 16; IV, 16; V, 11; VI, 16. In these chapters, the notion of beastliness denotes either a complete lack of reason or its utter distortion, therefore, for a beast, the way to virtue is closed. See Seneca’s exclusion of unreasonable beings from the possibility of attaining good in LS 60 H. For vice as a distortion of the reasonable part see LS 61 B and O.

<sup>38</sup> Compare LS 60 D on the difference in quantity and in quality.

<sup>39</sup> See e.g. LS 51 G.

<sup>40</sup> See V, 13 for the juxtaposition of every part of me (*πᾶν μέρος ἐμὸν*) and another part of the cosmos (*ἕτερον μέρος τι τοῦ κόσμου*).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. LS 28 D, LS 60 G and Barnes (1988).

<sup>42</sup> The term belongs to the area of psychology of the action, cf. LS 65 W, as to details and exact working of reservation opinions differ, see Inwood (1985: 119–126) and Brennan (2000: 149–177).

adaptation helps us to avoid frustration of the expected and to profit instead from the gain of the unexpected.<sup>43</sup>

In this context, the notion of impediment appears frequently in *Meditations*. An impediment doesn't seem to be an object of action, since it presents itself as something other than action or its result. It becomes material (*hule*)<sup>44</sup> to the fabrication of an instrument that can be used.

That as this Nature moulds to its purpose whatever interference or opposition it meets, and gives it a peace in the destined order of things, and makes it a part of itself, so also can the rational creature convert every hindrance into material for itself and utilize it for its own purposes.<sup>45</sup>

As Bénatouïl notices,<sup>46</sup> the capacity to use to our profit whatever happens is specific of human beings. Actions of others that may appear as impediments are events to us just as any other event and others thus become material that we use. In this perspective, they are not direct objects of actions and passions, but instruments, not another (human being), but (something) other.

### Others in theory and in praxis

As the text of *Meditations* is not a systematic treatise, the Stoic concepts are not exposed in a systematic way to withstand the attacks of possible adversaries, but they are presented with all their problematic points. With regards to the Stoic axiology, others are not explicitly categorized but treated in particular circumstances as matters of indifference. A finer division of preferred and absolute indifferents is lacking altogether. According to the level of systematicity assigned to the text, it is possible to interpret it in such different ways as Ramelli and Ackeren<sup>47</sup> do.

In general assertions or exhortations, Marcus Aurelius assumes the point of view of the whole where the question of value is not posed, because from this point of view even the bad is necessary, *philoï*, *phauloï*, *spoudaioï* and *kakoi* are all equally and necessarily parts of the world. Among more concrete cases, it is the situation where others act as a hindrance or an obstacle or the situation where we are moved by what happens to

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<sup>43</sup> The notion of gain (*kerdos*) or crop (*karpos*) appears in *Meditations* also with accepting the events (IV, 26), which may be turned into profit, and also with the faculties of reason which is only capable of harvesting its fruits itself, whereas other beings, plants and animals, are used to be turned into profit by reasonable beings (XI, 1).

<sup>44</sup> The Stoic term *hule* standardly refers to the passive principle of the universe that is formed by Reason, cf. LS 44 B.

<sup>45</sup> VIII, 35: ὃν τρόπον γὰρ ἐκείνη πᾶν τὸ ἐνιστάμενον καὶ ἀντιβαῖνον ἐπιπεριτρέπει καὶ κατατάσσει εἰς τὴν εἰμαρμένην καὶ μέρος ἑαυτῆς ποιεῖ, οὕτως καὶ τὸ λογικὸν ζῶον δύναται πᾶν κώλυμα ὕλην ἑαυτοῦ ποιεῖν καὶ χρῆσθαι αὐτῷ ἐφ' οἷον ἄν καὶ ὥρμησεν. Transl. Haines.

<sup>46</sup> Bénatouïl (2009: 66–67).

<sup>47</sup> Ramelli stands in all her works as a proponent of the thesis that later Stoics, including Marcus Aurelius, could understand others as something more than indifferent, while Ackeren (2011: 532) sees in *Meditations* the influence of Aristo of Chius whose opinion differed from that of Zeno in that he assumed that there isn't anything of value except for virtue. As an Aristonian, Marcus Aurelius couldn't recognize the value of preferables.

others that is treated by Marcus Aurelius. Both *philoï* and *phauloï* thus come into consideration because our relationship to them can lead us to the formation of a wrong opinion and thus to passions (being angry with stupid people, feeling fear for children). What becomes the subject of philosophical exercise is not a reflection upon an inherent value of others, whether they are certain goods or indifferents (preferred or not), but rather the way how to achieve the attitude of indifference in a situation that threatens one's life according to nature.

*I* is not excluded from the group of others, it is, on the one hand, an object of natural liking, but on the other hand, when the time comes to do a proper action, it becomes a matter of indifference. To become so, it is necessary to see one's self from the perspective of the whole, as a part. In a particular situation, e.g. when it is reasonable to make a sacrifice for the country, it is necessary to adopt the attitude of indifference even towards one's self, so that *they* and *I* become equally matters of indifference.

In chapter V, 20, Marcus Aurelius develops two ways of looking at others and shows that there are two sides to the human being, the one we are looking at from the point of view of the whole and the one we are looking at from the point of view of a part. Another human being who is from the point of view of the whole my closest kin, is at the same time to be seen from the point of view of a part as other, pure presence of matter in its becoming a body.

The two sides are inseparable for they belong to one thing. In theory, it is possible and even necessary to differentiate, as does Marcus Aurelius, because the differentiation allows for seeing the reason of things and distinguishing the whole and its parts. However, in praxis we just happen to act. We are already situated in the world as a part to a whole and the two points of view are always mixed together. Chapter V, 20 is thus the place for theory where elements of the mixture can be and are in effect separated in the two perspectives. This is also how we can understand the introduction of the argument as "another argument" (*heteros logos*) – the argument that plays out in theory where there are two perspectives, while in praxis there is just one attitude of an ethical agent.

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## **DRUZÍ JAKO PŘEDMĚT INDIFERENCE V HOVORECH K SOBĚ MARKA AURELIA**

Shrnutí

V *Hovorech k sobě* jsou druzí pojímáni dvěma způsoby, jednak jako blízké bytosti, jednak jako předmět indiference. Článek interpretuje tyto dva způsoby na příkladu kapitoly V, 20 jako pohledy ze dvou různých perspektiv, perspektivy celku a perspektivy části. Perspektiva celku umožňuje vidět propojenost jednotlivců na základě rozumu. Zároveň je spjata s obrazem pohledu z výšky, který vede k chápání sebe samého jako kohokoli jiného. Perspektiva části naopak napomáhá zaujmout postoj indiference, který umožňuje vhodné jednání.

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