"Sparkes Of Holy Things": Neostoicism And The English Protestant Conscience

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Various commentators have noticed a linkage of the Stoic revival in England with the rise of Protestantism. In the words of Philip A. Smith, "The great web of English Protestantism had been woven partly of Stoic threads. Hooker and Taylor, Milton, the Cambridge Platonists, Barrow, Tillotson, and many other Christian humanists adopted and exploited fully the basic Stoic concept of 'right reason,' the *recta ratio* which had long since been incorporated into Christian thought by early Fathers of the Church like Lactantius, Jerome and Tertullian."¹ And Rudolph Kirk has pointed out how the translation of Stoic works "seemed to accompany and follow the Reformation." Most of the English translators of the classical Stoic and continental Neostoic texts were Protestants, and virtually all translations of these texts were made either before or after the reign of Mary. "Apparently," Kirk suggests, "the mind of the Reformation found Stoic thought more congenial than did the Catholic mind of Mary's reign."²

While there have been some stimulating conjectures regarding the reasons why the mind of the Reformation found Stoicism congenial, the questions needs to be discussed more fully with reference to the works of English writers who have not received much attention in this connection, as well as some works by continental Neostoics that were well known in England. In the process of discussing these works, I hope to illuminate some of the less commonly recognized ideological bases of the linkage of the Stoic revival with the progress of the Reformation in England. A clearer grasp of this connection may, I believe, contribute significantly to our understanding of not only the intellectual and religious movements themselves but the ways in which they influenced English political history.

It is a curious fact that in England, as on the continent, Stoicism seems to have been most attractive to Protestants with strong Calvinist leanings, to the extent that some later commentators have even seen Calvinism itself as

“baptized Stoicism.”³ This is curious because Stoicism is commonly associated with an ideal of self-sufficiency, while Calvinist Christianity, in harmony with the Pauline-Augustinian tradition, stresses man’s insufficiency without grace. At first glance, there would seem to be little common ground other than a shared faith in a rationally ordered universe. Additional shared concerns and beliefs emerge as we examine such Calvinistic Neostoic works as La Primaudaye’s *The French Academie*, the works of Philippe de Mornay, and Joseph Hall’s *Heaven Upon Earth*. These common concerns emerged much earlier, however, in the works of Calvin himself.

Calvin’s first published book was his commentary on Seneca’s *De Clementia*, a treatise addressed to the Emperor Nero which attempts to persuade him that mercy is the most becoming virtue a ruler can manifest in his dealings with his subjects. In it Nero is also made to see that his role ideally is that of a servant of humanity. A ruler who understands this is not resentful when he must restrain himself: “‘That,’ you say, ‘is servitude, not sovereignty.’ What? are you not aware that the sovereignty is ours, the servitude yours?”⁴ Since man is “a social creature, begotten for the common good,” no virtue is more becoming than mercy. The necessity of practicing it is all the more manifest when one considers the corrupt and depraved condition of most of humanity and the sinfulness of even those who appear to be saintly:

We have all sinned—some in serious, some in trivial things; some from deliberate intention, some by chance impulse, or because we were led away by the wickedness of others; some of us have not stood strongly enough by good resolutions, and have lost our innocence against our will and though still clinging to it; and not only have we done wrong, but we shall go on doing wrong to the very end of life. Even if there is any one who has so thoroughly cleansed his mind that nothing can any more confound him and betray him, yet it is by sinning that he has reached the sinless state.⁵

One who has “cleansed his mind” and “reached the sinless state” is one who has attained the level of the *sapiens*, or sage, the ideal wise man of the Stoics. Such individuals are extremely rare, and even they have experienced the corruption that affects all mankind. Commenting on this passage, Calvin calls attention to a related passage in *De Ira* in which Seneca enjoins us to “be more gentle one to another: we live as bad men, among bad men: there is only one thing which can afford us peace, and that is to agree to forgive one another.”⁶ Such passages enable us to see readily why it was believed during the middle ages that Seneca had carried on a correspondence with St.

Paul.⁷ While the term “fallen” is not used to describe the human condition, the myth of Eden being unknown to Seneca except perhaps in its Hesiodic analogue, his Stoic view of man is essentially the same as that of Paul. And while there is nothing resembling grace in the Stoic scheme of things, man’s corrupted state is presented as, in the words of a recent translator, “the basis of a plea for mercy and kindness.”⁸ Calvin’s citation of the passage from *De Ira* is perfectly relevant, emphasizing the necessity of forgiveness among men. All that is needed to baptize both passages as Christian utterances are some references to God’s forgiveness through the Redemption.

Calvin did not, of course, agree with everything in *De Clementia*. Seneca’s condemnation of pity (*miser cordia*), which was attacked by many Christian divines, was not acceptable to him. He explains the reasons why Seneca regards pity as a vice or sickness of the mind: “Although it conforms, in appearance, to clemency, yet because it carries with it perturbation of mind, it fails to qualify as a virtue (according to the Stoics).”⁹ In Calvin’s own view, “Obviously we ought to be persuaded of the fact that pity is a virtue, and that he who feels no pity cannot be a good man — whatever these idle sages may discuss in their shady nooks. To use Pliny’s words: *I know not whether they are sages, but they certainly are not men. For it is man’s nature to be affected by sorrow, to feel, yet to resist, and to accept comforting, not to go without it*.”¹⁰

Whether or not this particular work had much influence on Calvin’s followers in England is difficult to say. Certainly his frequent references to Seneca and other pagan writers were noticed. One of his English followers, Thomas James, in the introduction to his translation of Guillaume du Vair’s *Traité de la philosophie morale des Stoïques*, defends the use of “words and sentences of the Heathen” with an appeal to his unimpeachable authority: “This libertie Master Calvin in his Commentarie vpon those places liberally granteth vs, and I suppose it cannot lawfully bee denied: for gold and siluer and pretious iewels were ever used as ornaments in the old law to decke and garnish the Temple withall.”¹¹

Most of the English translators of the continental Neostoics were, like James, Calvinist Protestants.¹² The importance of the works they translated in influencing English thought has not been widely recognized, perhaps because they have not been available in modern editions. One can only hope that an editor or editors will undertake the completion of the very worthwhile scholarly task begun by Rudolph Kirk with his editions of Neostoic texts and make these works available to students of the English Renaissance and Reformation.

An editor might well begin with some of the works of Philippe de Mornay, Seigneur du Plessis (1549-1623), a very prolific French Neostoic moralist, theologian, political leader, and diplomat. Mornay was a friend of Sir Philip Sidney, who shared his zeal for the Protestant cause. Sidney stood godfather to Mornay's infant daughter, born during a visit to England in June 1578. He also translated into English part of Mornay's *De la verite de la religion chrestienne* (Antwerp, 1581) and at his request the translation was completed by Arthur Golding and was published in 1587.¹³ Most of his other moral and theological writings were also translated into English within a few years of their original publication in French or Latin.¹⁴ The works that are most clearly informed by a Neostoic viewpoint are the *Discourse of Life and Death*, *The True Knowledge of a Mans owne Selfe*, *The Trewnesse of the Christian Religion* and *Lord of Plessis his Teares. For the Death of his Sonne*.

The Trewnesse of the Christian Religion consists largely of arguments from scriptural and classical authorities for the immortality of the soul. Among the latter, Mornay finds Plato, Socrates and the Stoics to be the most helpful in supporting Christian belief. Aristotle's observations on the soul he sees as contradicting each other. He approves of most of Epictetus's "goodly sayings" concerning man as the "offspring" or "braunch of the Godhead," though he considers the description of man as "a diuine ympe or a spark of God" to be "somewhat unproper" (for what wordes can a man finde to fit the matter:) (*TCR*, p.2). But his principal Stoic authority is Seneca, whom he clearly regards as the wisest of the Stoics. He finds the ring of truth concerning the soul's immortality "in almost all of Seneca's writings" and quotes approvingly Seneca's statements that our souls "are a part of God's Spirit, and sparkes of holy things shining vpon the earth." In his view Seneca's beliefs concerning the soul were nearly Christian: "This may suffice to giue us knowledge of the opinion of that great personage, in whom wee see that the more he grewe in age, the nerer he came still to the true birth. For in his latest bookes he treateth alwaies both more assuredly and more evidently thereof" (*TCR*, p.268).

After the works of Mornay and the early pro-Stoic essays of Montaigne, perhaps the most influential continental Neostoic work translated into English was *The French Academie* of Pierre La Primaudaye. Like Mornay, La Primaudaye was a Huguenot, and there is in his great book the same curious fusion of Augustinian Protestant and Senecan sensibility. At times it is not a fusion but a division, a conflict in which Calvinist Christianity is pitted against Stoicism, but as with Mornay, the Calvinist element is always victorious. The "presumptuous" Stoic opinion that man can master all passion and achieve

an understanding of God and nature through an exercise of natural virtue is vigorously attacked, even as Mornay attacks the "heathen" view of Fortune in his *Discourse of Life and Death*.

In a number of ways, however, *The French Academie* reveals why, with these reservations, Stoic philosophy was especially attractive to Protestants during the Reformation. Of particular interest in this connection is La Primaudaye's discussion of "what conscience is properly." In his discussion of conscience, La Primaudaye introduces the term *Synteresis*, and T. B.'s translation of 1594 contains the first occurrence of the word in English.¹⁵

He tells us that although the mind is troubled and darkened by error and ignorance, the effects of sin, "yet it coulde not so wholly blind it, but still there remayned in it some sparkes of that light of the knowledge of God, and of good and evil, which is naturally in men, and which is borne with them."¹⁶ This "remnant" of light is called *Synteresis* is a Greek word signifying that which preserves the "remnant of the light and law of nature that remaineth in vs." It is innate and indestructible, "yea in the most wicked that can bee, an aduertisement or instruction which telleth him what is right and iust, and that there is a judgement of God." While some distinguish *Synteresis* from the conscience itself, others identify it with conscience. Philosophers who spoke of "Anticipations" had a sense of this faculty, to the extent that they were distinguishing the means whereby we apprehend rules not through instruction or experience but "haue drawen and received them from nature, whom God hath appoynted in this respect to be our mistres" (*FA*, pt.II, p.576).¹⁷

La Primaudaye's description of it as being "some sparkes of that light" which is innate in men indicates that he, like Mornay, Pierre Charron and other Renaissance Neostoics, accepts the doctrine of the divine spark, a doctrine which has a classical Stoic basis. For the ancient Stoics generally, God is identified with seminal reason, the *Logos spermatikos* out of which all things emanate and by which all things are formed. Sparks of divinity, *logoi spermatikoi*, continue to function within men as divine reason, and at death they will be reunited with the divine seminal reason or fire.¹⁸ A closely analogous concept of a divine spark evolved in the writings of the Christian mystics during the middle ages. They used Jerome's term *synteresis* for the divine spark, which they described as the "apex of the soul," the "natural will toward God," or "the remnant of the sinless state before the fall."¹⁹

During the Reformation, the concept of *synteresis* appears prominently in the writings of the Protestant casuists, and their use of it suggests that they incorporated the Stoic concept of the divine spark along with the similar concept they inherited from the Christian mystics. William Ames, among

many others, discusses it at length in his *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*. According to Ames and other casuists, *Synteresis* in effect dictates the major premise or proposition of the "practical syllogism." It is a natural habit "Whereby the understanding of man is fitted to giue assent unto Naturall principles." The minor premise, or assumption, is called "*Syneidesis*", and the conclusion is the "*Krisis*," or "*Iudgement*."²⁰

Like La Primaudaye, Ames asserts that *Synteresis* is innate and indestructible: "This *Synteresis* may for a time be hindered from acting, but cannot be utterly extinguished or lost. Hence it is that no man is so desperately wicked as to be void of all Conscience." Through God's goodness, *Synteresis* continued to preserve or conserve, as its name indicates, an awareness of the principles of moral actions in the mind of man "even after his fall."²¹

The appeal to the Protestant mind of the Stoic concept of the divine spark is readily understandable, and not surprisingly there was a tendency among Protestant Neostoics to identify *Synteresis* with the divine spark. John Marston, a Neostoic satirist and dramatist who eventually became an Anglican divine, does this in his early satires. In one satire, he invokes *Synteresis*, which he spells in the Scholastic fashion, as a force which can raise man from the disgusting, sinful state into which he has fallen:

Returne, returne, sacred *Synderesis*,
Inspire our truncks, let not such mud as this
Pollute vs still. Awake our lethargie,
Raise vs from out our brain-sicke foolerie.
(*The Scourge of Villainy*, VIII, 11. 211-214)²²

Marston's satires generally are notorious for their bitterness and cynicism, and his implication that *Synteresis* has departed suggests that human behavior provides no evidence to the observer that there is such a thing within man. When we consider that the indestructibility of *Synteresis* was a commonplace notion, the suggestion is bitter indeed, as is another reference to *Synteresis* elsewhere in *The Scourge of Villainy*:

The poore soules better part so feeble is,
So cold and dead is his *Synderesis*,
That shadowes by odde chaunce sometimes are got,
But o the substance is respected not.
(*The Scourge of Villainy*, XI, II. 235-238)²³

In his plays, especially *Antonio and Mellida I & II*, *Sophonisba*, and *The Malcontent*, Marston juxtaposes classical Stoic, Neostoic, and Machiavellian

views of the world. Significantly, conscience plays a major role in all of these plays, especially *The Malcontent* wherein the activity of conscience turns an impending revenge tragedy into a comedy of forgiveness.²⁴ In contrast to his bitter satires, these plays in effect assert the indestructibility of conscience. It is perhaps interesting to reflect that Marston's development from a "sharp-fanged satirist" into a playwright and finally an Anglican preacher has several elements in common with the career of his great rival satirist and fellow Neostoic, Joseph Hall.

The importance of the role of conscience in the thinking of Protestants in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries can hardly be overstressed. Prior to this time, works of casuistry belonging to the encyclopaedic genre *Summa confessorum* or *Summa de casibus conscientiae* were written mainly for the use of Roman Catholic confessors, providing ready answers to virtually every conceivable problem of conscience.²⁵ Having discarded the institution of sacramental confession, along with the authoritarian, conscience-keeping role of the Roman Church, the Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century did not initially acknowledge a need for such encyclopaedic reference guides with their copious references to non-scriptural authorities. By the end of the century, however, there seems to have been a growing recognition of the need for guides other than the Bible itself to assist in the informing of the conscience.

In Protestant England, casuistry begins with William Perkins (1560-1603). Perkins asserted that Christians must have faith in the ability of the individual conscience to guide men aright, and he insisted that it must be heeded before any other authority. His teachings were grounded on St. Paul, especially the *Epistle to the Romans*. According to Paul, conscience operates in all men, even the Gentiles, for whom it will bear witness either for or against them (Rom. 2:13-16). It must be obeyed even if it is in error. *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* by Perkins is prefaced with a verse from *Romans* that virtually contains the whole Protestant concept of duty to conscience: "Whatsoever is not of Faith, is sinne" (Rom. 14:23). Discussing this particular verse in *The Whole Treatise*, Perkins glosses it as follows: "Whatsoever man doth, whereof he is not certainly perswaded in iudgement and conscience out of God words, that the thing may be done, it is sin."²⁶ In *A Discourse of Conscience*, Perkins emphasizes the role of conscience as God's representative within man: "... because conscience is of a diuine nature, and is a thing placed by God in the midst betweene him and man, as an arbitratour to give sentence & to pronounce either with man or against man vnto God."²⁷ In a

later edition of the *Discourse*, he goes even further in emphasizing the divine nature of conscience, which

... is (as it were) a litle God setting in the middle of mens hearts, arrainging them in this life as they shall be arraigned for their offences at the Tribunal seat of the euerliuing God in the day of iudgement. Wherefore the temporarie iudgement that is given by the conscience is nothing els but a beginning, or a fore-runner of the last iudgement.²⁸

The implications of this teaching were destined to have a profound effect on the whole course of English political history in the seventeenth century. Among the many issues over which the Puritans and the Stuart monarchs confronted each other was this very matter of the sovereignty of the individual conscience. It is now generally recognized that the conflicts which led to the outbreak of civil war in 1642 had their origins in movements and events of the late sixteenth century. Reading *A Discourse of Conscience* when it first appeared in 1596, one might have prophesied an eventual confrontation between those who shared the beliefs of the writer and supporters of absolutism. Because conscience is God's representative within man, a little God within men's hearts, "God is the onely Lord of conscience."²⁹ Only his laws "binde conscience properly." With regard to any conflict between a commandment issued by a magistrate and the word of God speaking through the conscience, there is nothing to ponder: "God comandes one thing, & the magistrate commaunds the flat contrarie: in this case which of these two commaundements must be obeyed, Honour God, or Honour the Magistrate? the answer is, that the latter must giue place to the former, & the former alone in this case must be obeyed."³⁰ While it is true that St. Paul tells us that obedience is due to a magistrate for conscience sake (*Rom. 13:15*) "that subiection is indeede to be performed to ciuill authoritie ordained by God, and obedience also to the Lawes of the Magistrate for fear of wrath, and for auoiding of punishment, but not for conscience of the saide authoritie or lawes properly or directly, but for conscience of Gods commandment, which appointeth both Magistracie, and the authoritie thereof."³¹ This Pauline insistence on the sovereignty of conscience, coupled with a Pauline emphasis on the equality of men in their sinfulness before God, was to have no small influence on those responsible for the rise of democracy in the seventeenth century.³²

Especially relevant to the present discussion is the fact that Paul's emphasis on the sovereignty of the individual conscience encouraged as well the growing emphasis upon introspection that characterizes sixteenth- and sev-

teenth-century Protestantism.³³ While there may be room for disagreement about whether or not Paul himself provides a model of the introspective conscience in his epistles, there is no denying that he encouraged the turning inward of the Christian conscience.³⁴ One of the ways in which he did this was by adapting, with some qualification, the classical Stoic ideal of self-sufficiency. He speaks of an inmost self (Rom. 7:22), an inner man strengthened by the Spirit (Eph. 3:16) that is capable of "contentment" (Phil. 4:11, 1 Tim. 6:6).³⁵ He was obviously familiar with the commonplace Stoic conception of a self apart from and impervious to external direction, but he seems to question, especially in Rom. 7:22, the Stoic belief that this self can remain unmoved by a lower self, i.e. passions and appetites. There is endless strife between the law of sin dwelling in his members and the law of his mind which delights in the law of God.

Protestant introspection was also strongly encouraged by contemporary Neostoic writings in which there is the recurrent classical Stoic theme that self-knowledge is an avenue to knowledge of the divine. Mornay's *The True Knowledge of a Mans owne Selfe* was written, as the translator explains, "for the reformation of a mightie Atheist," and La Primaudaye announces at the beginning of *The French Academie* that one of its informing themes is "that the perfect knowledge of ones selfe, which consisteth in the soule, is in such sort ioined with the knowledge of God, that the one without the other cannot be sincere and perfect." (FA, Pt.I, p.11) This is inseparable from the other main theme, "that the dutie of a wise man is to seeke out the reasons of things, that in the ende he may find that diuine reason whereby they were made and having found it, may worship and serue it." These were the teachings of Socrates, and "Plato his discipule" added to these the concept of duty to one's fellow men as derivative from the other two imperatives: "That the perfect dutie of man is, first to knowe his owne nature: then to contemplate the diuine nature: and last of all to bestow his labour in those things, which may be most beneficiall to all men." (FA, Pt.I, P.11)

La Primaudaye's linkage of self-knowledge, knowledge of the divine, and duty to one's fellows is typical of Protestant Neostoic writings.³⁶ Obviously one of the attractions of Stoicism for Protestants was its emphasis on active commitment on the part of the individual to the moral betterment of the community. The concept of moral stewardship, generally regarded as a Calvinist notion with Scriptural roots, could find a great deal of support in the writings of the ancient Stoics, who generally shared the belief that while one should be primarily concerned with preserving one's own moral purpose through self-discipline, one should also strive to restore one's less disciplined

fellows to a correct moral purpose as well and thus bring about an improvement of the community as a whole. The emphasis on discipline and a sense of responsibility for the moral welfare of the community that gave Stoicism virtually the status of a state religion in ancient Rome also recommended it to Calvin and his followers, and we can see this clearly in Joseph Hall's discussion of that most responsible of individuals in a community, the magistrate.

"Of the Good Magistrate" is one of the pieces in Hall's *Characters of Vertues and Vices*, a work which, as Kirk points out, delineates the four cardinal virtues of the ancient Stoics — Prudence, Fortitude, Justice, and Temperance — along with various Christian virtues, such as humility and fidelity, and their opposites. The essay is concerned mainly with the role of the good judge, but its injunctions may be readily extended to include the functions of a good prince as well. In delineating the character of this "faithfull Deputy of his Maker," Hall imparts concrete vital form to the abstract Stoic virtue of justice. We are made to visualize the good magistrate in action, hearing case after case, resting seldom, eating in haste, "all which he beares well, because he knowes himselfe made for a publike servant of Peace and Justice."³⁷

Like Seneca, and unlike Calvin, Hall regards pity as a weakness, but only in a magistrate. Calvin, it should be pointed out, recognized that Seneca was talking about pity as it manifested itself in an excess of clemency, but his indignation at Seneca's description of it as a vice *per se* seems to have provoked him to refute what he regarded as an instance of simplistic Stoic moral psychology. Hall, who was certainly familiar with *De Clementia* and probably with Calvin's commentary on it, does not follow Seneca in asserting that pity itself is a weakness of the mind or "mental defect" (*vitium animi*). Rather he is saying that what is a virtue in private individuals is a vice in a magistrate, who should dispense justice as dispassionately as a god: "He is the Guard of good laws, the Refuge of innocency, the Comet of the guilty, the Pay-master of good deserts, the Champion of justice, the Patron of peace, the Tutor of the Church, the Father of his Country, &, as it were, another God vpon earth."³⁸

Little wonder that Hall was drawn to Seneca, whose *De Tranquillitate* he, in a sense, completes in *Heaven Upon Earth* by providing the vital components known only to Christians. Chief among these is grace, which would have made Seneca unrivalled as a moral philosopher had he been capable of receiving it: "If *Seneca* could have had grace to his wit, what wonders would he have done in this kinde? what Divine might not have yeilded him the chaire

for precepts of Tranquillity without any disparagement?" As it was, he "wrote more divinely" on the subject than any other heathen philosopher, and if "Nature" were sufficient to guide men to tranquillity, Seneca would be his master. But in fact neither Seneca nor any other heathen, for all their wisdom and their efforts, actually attained tranquillity, and no wonder for "Not *Athens* must teach this lesson, but *Ierusalem*."³⁹

Thus in typical Christian Neostoic fashion, Hall makes his orthodox position clear at the outset. But for all his orthodox insistence on the necessity of grace, one perceives, as in Charron's *De la sagesse*, a nearly existentialist Stoic emphasis on the necessity of human striving against natural human weakness.⁴⁰ Sartre himself might have approved of some of Hall's injunctions against what he was to call *la mauvaise foi*, in spite of what he would also have regarded as a fatally contaminating admixture of Calvinist orthodoxy:

The power of nature is a good plea for those that acknowledge nothing above nature. But for a Christian to excuse his intemperatenesse, by his naturall inclination, and to say, I am borne cholericke, sullen amorous, is an Apologie worse than the fault. Wherefore serves Religion, but to subdue or governe nature: We are so much Christians, as wee can rule our selves, the rest is but forme and speculation.⁴¹

Indeed, tranquility itself is not, like grace, a free gift, but something that must be striven for. Hall emphasizes this in the concluding section of *Heaven Upon Earth*, a passage which reveals that dynamic fusion of Stoic activism, Calvinist piety and tough-minded worldliness that went into the shaping of the English Puritan sensibility:

Saiest thou then, this peace is good to have, but hard to get? It were a shameful neglect that hath no pretence. Is difficulty sufficient excuse to hinder thee from the pursuit of riches, of preferment, of learning, of bodily pleasures? Art thou content to sit shrugging in a base cottage, ragged, famished, because house, clothes, and food will neither bee had without money, nor money without labour, nor labour without trouble and painfulness? Who is so mercifull, as not to say that a whip is the best almes for so lazy and wilfull need? Peace should not be good if it were not hard: Goe, and by this excuse shut thy selfe out of heaven at thy death, and live miserably till thy death, because the good of both worlds is hard to compasse. There is nothing but misery on earth and hell below, that thou canst come to without labour⁴²

The works of Hall, like those of Mornay and La Primaudaye, reveal how much common ground a Calvinist Protestant could find with an ancient Stoic

and why some commentators have seen Calvinism as "baptized Stoicism." The Stoic tradition shared with the Pauline-Augustinian that issued in Calvinism a belief in the universal corruption of man, a view of the moral faculty as a divine agency within man, and a belief in self-knowledge as one of the essential avenues to knowledge of the divine. These common beliefs concerning the nature of man and, with some qualification, the human potential inform Renaissance Neostoic writings and a closely related, largely Protestant body of moral literature devoted to faculty psychology.⁴³ In addition, there were concerns and beliefs shared by the two traditions regarding the role of man in society, his duties as citizen, ruler, or magistrate. To a large extent, this latter body of beliefs is informed by the former.

As I suggested earlier, the Protestant view of conscience as God within man, which found classical support in the Stoic doctrine of the spark, was an important doctrinal basis for resistance to absolutism and indeed tyranny in any form. One of the reasons why Renaissance Neostoic writers consistently favored Plato and Socrates over Aristotle is that the latter, largely because of his dogmatic followers, was perceived as representing intellectual tyranny and resistance to the free inquiry after truth. Charron's attitude in this regard is typical. He characterizes as "barbarous" those "of the schoole and jurisdiction of Aristotle, affirmers, positive men, dogmatists, who respect more vtilitie than veritie, according to the vse and custome of the world, than that which is good and true in it selfe." These he contrasts with those rare individuals of "quick and cleare spirit, a strong, firme, and solid judgement," who will not be contented with commonly received notions and opinions. Such men are acutely aware of the deceptiveness of appearances and are willing to seek dispassionately the true causes of things, louing better to doubt, and to hold in suspence their beleefe, than by a loose and idle facilitie or lightnesse, or precipitation of judgement to feede themselves with lies, and affirme or secure themselues of that thing whereof they can haue no certaine reason. "Among these very rare individuals are those "of the Schoole of *Socrates* and *Plato*, modest, sober, staied, considering more the veritie and realitie of things than the vtilitie."⁴⁴

In this passage, Charron is defending his application of the sceptical or pyrrhonist approach to the problem of self-knowledge that he had learned from Montaigne. But one can see in it as well the idea that submission to the tyranny of received notions and opinions is associated with idleness, a vice abhorred by Stoics and Protestants alike and one which the Reformers tended to associate with Roman Catholicism, especially as it appeared to be sanc-

tioned by the monastic ideal, as well as by an over-reliance on Aristotle and the Schoolmen.

The necessity of resisting tyranny in all forms is a ubiquitous theme in seventeenth-century English Protestant writings, as it is in the works of the classical Stoics. In the latter works, the resistance most frequently enjoined is the cultivation of *apatheia*, a willed extinguishing of destructive passion that enables one to maintain indifference to any supposed injury a tyrant can manage to inflict.⁴⁵ The Stoic paradox "Tyrants can kill but never hurt a man" expresses the sage's belief that the only true injury a man can suffer is the willful abandonment of his moral purpose. But beyond the injunctions to resist passively through indifference, there are implicit and explicit injunctions to take action against tyrants. One of the most celebrated of Stoic heroes is Cato the Younger who chose suicide rather than the endurance of tyranny. The Stoic idealization of Hercules implies action, and, as Epictetus argues, one who follows his example may be assured that any necessary action, such as the slaying of a monster or a tyrant, can be reconciled with a correct moral purpose.⁴⁶ This same idealized Hercules is the hero of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, a play which includes a tyrannicide. As Hercules emerges onstage after slaying Lycus, he utters these lines:

— — There can be slaine
No sacrifice to God more acceptable
Then an unjust and wicked King — —⁴⁷

Milton quotes these lines in his ringing defense of tyrannicide, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649). This passage is one of the very few references to pagan authority in *The Tenure*. Among the others is a reference to Aristotle's definition of a king as "him who governs to the good and profit of his People, and not for his own ends," which is also a central theme of *De Clementia*. As Milton explains, he cites no more ancient authorities, "lest it bee objected they were Heathen." But he quotes this speech, put in the mouth of "*Hercules* the grand suppressor of Tyrants," as an expression of an attitude generally held by the "prime Authors" Greek and Roman.⁴⁸

"No man who knows ought, can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were borne free, being the image and resemblance of God himself . . ." Thus begins the main argument of *The Tenure*. Milton had made the same statement eight years earlier in *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* (1641).⁴⁹ His hatred of tyranny in any form, whether it be censorship or "the censorious and supercilious lording over conscience" of meddling divines, called forth his most eloquent

prose polemics and is abundantly reflected in his poetry as well. In *The Tenure* he is primarily concerned with establishing the point that the trial and execution of Charles I were in agreement with the principles of Protestantism. In addition to Scripture, his authorities include Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer and the English divines who sought refuge in Geneva during the reign of Mary, and he demonstrates that the Scottish Presbyterians, who had hoped to gain power through the secret treaty of Newport, are betrayers of these principles.

That these principles are wholly in harmony with classical Stoic views concerning the nature of the relationship between ruler and subjects can be readily seen if one compares *The Tenure* with *De Clementia*. For Milton, as for Seneca, rulers are the servants of the people. Since Seneca was addressing his treatise to Nero, one would hardly expect him to develop a corollary justifying regicide, but the argument that sovereignty belongs to the people and servitude to the ruler is obviously a basis for such a corollary. Milton's arguments were grounded primarily on the ideas of sixteenth century Calvinists, but his reference to Seneca suggests that he was probably fully aware of Stoic analogues.

By 1649, the anti-Stoic reaction was well underway, but the Stoic revival had made an indelible impression upon English Protestant thought. The classical Stoic ideas that were most objectionable to the anti-Stoics, such as their view of passions, had already been refuted by Christian Neostoics, who demonstrated in the process that rejecting a few ideas did not prevent the incorporation of the main body of Stoic beliefs regarding the duty of a wise man to seek out the reason of things and the divinity informing them, to acquire the knowledge of self that is joined with the knowledge of God, and having acquired this knowledge, to labor actively for the welfare of his fellow men.

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Notes

- 1 Philip A. Smith, "Bishop Hall, 'Our English Seneca'," *PMLA* *dLXIII* (1948) pp.1191-1204.
- 2 Justus Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie*, Englished by Sir John Stradling, edited by Rudolph Kirk (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1939) p.21.
- 3 According to Ford Lewis Battles and Andre Malan Hugo (*Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969, p.41) this expression was first used by Dr. Fairbairn in his *The Place of Christianity in Modern Theology* (1893). There is the contrary view of E. Doumergue, among others, that Calvin shows himself to be "anti-Stoicien philosophiquement et moralement."
- 4 Seneca, *Moral Essays*, trans. John W. Basore (London, Heinemann, 1963) I, p. 377.

- 5 *Ibid.* 375.
- 6 Battles and Hugo, *Calvin's Commentary*, 129.
- 7 See L. D. Reynolds, *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters* (Oxford, 1965) Chapt. 6.
- 8 Basore, *Moral Essays* I, 374, note.
- 9 Battles and Hugo, *Calvin's Commentary*, 359.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 361.
- 11 Guillaume du Vair, *The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks*, trans. Thomas James, ed. Rudolph Kirk (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1951) 45.
- 12 Anthony Munday (1553-1633), translator of Mornay's *The True Knowledge of a Mans owne Selfe*, began his literary career with "The English Romaine Life," an expose based on his experience spying on the English seminary in Rome. After Edmund Campion and his associates were captured in 1581, he wrote five tracts exposing "the horrible and unnatural treasons of the catholics," and his savage indictment "A Discoverie of Edmund Campion and his Confederates" was read aloud on the scaffold to the martyred victims on May 30, 1582. He was also employed by Richard Topcliffe, Elizabeth's leading priest-hunter, to whom he dedicated his *A Banquet of Daintie Conceits* (1588). (See Celeste Turner, *Anthony Munday, An Elizabethan Man of Letters*, Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1928, and *D.N.B.*)

Sir Philip Sidney's ardent Calvinist Protestantism is generally recognized. Arthur Golding (1536?-1605?), who completed Sidney's translation of Mornay's *The Trewnesse of the Christian Religion*, was known for his strong puritan predilections. In addition to translating Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Seneca's *De Beneficiis*, he also translated works by Calvin and Beza. (*D.N.B.*)

Samson Lennard (d.1633) accompanied Sidney to the Netherlands and was with him when he received his fatal wound at the battle of Zutphen in 1586. In addition to Mornay's *Mystery of Iniquitie* and Charron's *Of Wisdome*, Lennard translated Perrin's *Luther's Fore-runners*, or a *Cloud of Witnesses deposing for the Protestant Faith*. (*D.N.B.*)

Another English translator of Mornay was John Healey (d.1610). In addition to *Lord of Plessis, his Teares*, Healey translated Joseph Hall's satire on the Roman Church, *Mundus Alter et Idem* (1609) and *Epictetus his Manuall* (1610) as well as the first translation into English of St. Augustine's *The Citie of God* (1610). He dedicated the translation of Epictetus to John Florio (1553?-1625), translator of Montaigne and son of a Florentine Protestant whose family fled to England shortly before Edward VI's reign to avoid religious persecution. The older Florio was a preacher to a congregation of Italian Protestants in London until he fell into disgrace. (*D.N.B.*)

A significant exception to the rule that translating the Stoics and Neostoics went hand in hand with Protestantism in England was Thomas Lodge (1558?-1625), translator of Seneca's *Workes both Morrall and Naturall* (1614). In middle life, well before he completed this great translation, he became a Catholic. (*D.N.B.*)

And Lodge is certainly not the only Catholic who found Stoicism congenial, either in England or on the continent. On the continent, in fact, most of the Neostoic writers were Catholics, but it is interesting to consider that the works of two of the most influential,

Pierre Charron and Montaigne, were placed on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. One gathers that this was because of the element of scepticism that is so prominent in their works.

- 13 *A Woorke Concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion*, written in French: Against Atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Iewes, Mahumetists, and other Infidels by Philip of Mornay Lord of Plessis Marlie. Begunne to be translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney Knight, and at his request finished by Arthur Golding. (London: Thomas Cadman, 1587) BM. C. 122.d.17. All quotations are from this edition and references will be given in the text in parentheses.
- 14 Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke, translated Mornay's *Discourse of Life and Death*, along with Robert Garnier's tragedy *Antonious*, and the two translations appeared in a single volume in 1592. An earlier translation, *The Defence of Death. Containing a moste excellent discourse of life and death* by "E.A." (Edward Aggas) had been published in 1577, only a year after it appeared in France (Lausanne, 1576). The Countess of Pembroke's translation was reprinted in 1600, 1606, and 1607. A translation into Latin by A. Freitagius (1585) was translated into English in 1699. In 1602, Anthony Munday's translation *The True Knowledge of Mans owne Selfe* was published. Another work very much in the Stoic vein, *P. Mornai Lachrimae* Paris, 1606) was translated by John Healey as *Lord of Plessis his Teares* (1609). Among his various theological works translated rapidly into English is a 700 page volume entitled *The Mystery of Iniquity, that is to say, the history of the Papacy* (1611) which was rendered into English by Samson Lennard just a year after it appeared in French.
- 15 *O.E.D.*
- 16 *The French Academie* by Peter de la Primaudaye The third Edition and newly translated into English by T.B. (London: Geor. Bishop, 1594) Part I, p.11. British Museum 8406 ccc 17. All quotations are from this edition and references will be given in the text in parentheses.
- 17 The term *Synteresis* first occurs, according to W. R. Inge, in Jerome's commentary on *Ezechiel*. After that it occurs in Aquinas and in the Christian mystics. (*Christian Mysticism*, London, 1899, pp. 359-60). Among the Schoolmen generally, it was spelt "*Synderesis*." These writers present various views of its nature and functions as a moral agency within man. Cf. Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences*, 2, dist.39, art.1, q.1; Albert the Great, *Summa de Creaturis* q.71, art. 1.2; Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, dist.24, q.2, art.3. For discussion of these passages, see Eric D'Arcy, *Conscience and its Right to Freedom* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1961) pp.20-71.
- 18 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* VII, pp.148-49.
- 19 See note 17. Also Anthony Caputi, *John Marston, Satirist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press) pp.59-60.
- 20 William Ames, *Of Conscience and the Cases Thereof* (London, 1643) Bk.1, pp.3-4.
- 21 Ames, *Of Conscience* Bk.1, p.5.
- 22 John Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie*, in *The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press) pp.208-320.
- 23 *Ibid.*

- 24 See my article "Stoicism and Revenge in Marston," *English Studies*, LI (1970), pp.507-517.
- 25 For discussion of this genre, see Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) Chapt. II.
- 26 William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* (London, 1614), p.27. British Museum copy.
- 27 Perkins, *Discourse*, p.27.
- 28 Perkins, *A Discourse of Conscience* (London, 1632) p.517.
- 29 *Discourse*, p. 27.
- 30 *Discourse*, p. 12.
- 31 *Whole Treatise*, p. 27.
- 32 See G. Gooch, *English Democratic Ideas in the 17th Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).
- 33 This turning inward is also a tendency of contemporary Catholicism, as evidenced in Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. See Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1986) Chapt. 2.
- 34 See Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review* LVI (1963) 199-215; Rudolf Bultmann, "Paul's Demythologizing and Ours," *The Writings of St. Paul*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (New York: Norton, 1972) 409-422.
- 35 "Autápkela" in these verses means literally "sufficiency in oneself" or "independence," but Paul clearly intends to convey Stoic overtones and the ideal of contentment based upon a complete detachment from the world which enables one to achieve true freedom. See Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) p. 70.
- 36 This linkage is not of course exclusively Protestant. See St. Teresa of Avila, *Moradas del castillo interior* and *Camino de perfección*.
- 37 Rudolph Kirk, ed. *Heaven vpon Earth and Characters of Vertues and Vices* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1948) p. 160.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- 40 According to Charron, the nature of the soul itself is determined by its choices between the injunctions of the divine spark and those of the flesh, "for according vnto that part towards which it applieth it selfe, it is either spirituall and good, or carnall and euill." *Of Wisdome three bookes . . .* trans. Samson Lennard (London: Blount, 1608) p. 11. British Museum copy.
- 41 Hall, *Heaven vpon Earth*, p. 85.
- 42 *Ibid.*, pp.38-9.
- 43 E.g. such works as Edward Reynolds. *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soul*; Fulke Greville, *A Treatie of Humane Learning*; John Davies of Hereford, *Microcosmos*.

- 44 Charron, *Of Wisdome*, p. 168. Such attacks on the Scholastic tradition probably did little to prevent *De la sagesse* from being placed on the Index but probably increased its popularity in Protestant England, where Samson Lennard's translation went through many editions: 1608, 1612, 1630, 1640, 1656, 1658, 1670.
- 45 Epictetus, *Discourses* I. xix.
- 46 *Ibid.* IV. x. 10-13.
- 47 Seneca, *Hercules Furens* II. 922-24 trans. John Milton, *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*.
- 48 John Milton, *Works*. Vol. V (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932) 19.
- 49 Noted by Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1977), 168.