CURRENTS OF STOIC MORAL THEORY
IN REPRESENTATIVE WORKS OF CORNEILLE, PASCAL,
MOLIERE, AND LA BRUYERE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
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* * * * *

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Hugh M. Davidson
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This volume is lovingly dedicated to

William
Kenneth
Elizabeth
and
Nike

in the fond hope that literature, philosophy, and languages will be sources of enjoyment and enlightenment throughout their lives.
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My husband has encouraged me to complete this study by word and by deed, and my children have been patient and cheerful throughout the long process.
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FOREWORD

Stoicism is one of the "mores de grand siècle"; considerable work has been done on the revival of this ethical theory in France in the 16th century, on its influence on Christian apologists during the 17th century, and on the French moralists from Du Vair to Descartes, but relatively little work has been done on Stoicism and major literary figures. This study of Stoic themes and variations found in the works of four writers who represent a variety of literary genres is intended to shed light on the extent to which Stoicism affected their attitudes, and furnished points of departure for them.

Stoic moral theory is set forth in Arrian's Discourses of Epictetus and in Diogenes Laertius' Lives of Eminent Philosophers;

1 Paul Bénichou, Morales du grand siècle (Paris: Gallimard, 1948) distinguishes three major categories: la morale héroïque, la morale chrétienne rigoureuse, et la morale mondaine. To these may be added many sub-categories such as Platonism, préciosité, Jansenism, scepticism, etc.


for the literary transmission of this theory, we must turn to Cicero and Seneca who, along with Epictetus, give us that version of the philosophy most readily available to 17th century French writers. It was popularly thought to be an austere philosophy which taught that suffering was to be endured without complaint, that desires were to be suppressed, and that pleasures and possessions were vain and unprofitable. Since society might corrupt his simple and virtuous way of life, the Stoic Wise Man shunned human company.

The question arises as to how much of what the 17th century accepted or rejected as Stoic is classical Stoicism, as available in Renaissance and later printings of original texts. In an attempt to answer this question, I shall begin my study with a dispassionate summary of Stoic moral theory as contained in Epictetus and Diogenes Laertius. On the one hand, there is this objectively recoverable Stoicism, and on the other, there is the exploitation made during the 17th century of themes taken from Stoicism. Some themes were adapted and developed, and others were criticized. It is my aim to see how much of the common data from ancient Stoicism was selected and elaborated on, and what characteristic ensembles were made by each of four authors from a different age.

I shall trace the adaptation of Stoicism by Christianity, and its transmission to 17th century France. It is generally agreed that Stoic influence on the early Christian Church was significant.5

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The Church Fathers looked to Stoicism in much the same way that later Christian apologists would look to Plato and Aristotle; by the fourth century they had Christianized Seneca and Epictetus. Cicero's and Seneca's works, and Epictetus' *Encheiridion*, were often ranked with Church Fathers' in monastery libraries throughout the middle ages. We should investigate how Christian Stoicism differs from classical Stoicism, and to what extent each worked upon the 17th century.

It will be necessary to devote attention to the 16th century, the influence of humanism, and the Reformation. Distinguishing the Neostoicism of the 16th and 17th centuries from classical Stoicism will provide insights into the moral preoccupations of the century. Special mention will be made of Justus Lipsius (*De Constantia*, 1583; *Manuductio ad Stoicam Philosophiam*, 1604) and of Guillaume Du Vair (*Philosophie morale des stoïques avec le manuel d'Epictète*, 1585) who are largely responsible for the emergence of Neostoicism as a secular ethic distinct from Christian morality.

The person who has done the most work on direct borrowings from Stoics and Neostoics in the 17th century is the late Father Julien-Eymard d'Angers, whose book, *Pascal et ses précurseurs*, deals primarily with Christian apologetics in France for the period 1580–1670. In this book he presents, in a thematic schema, much of the work he had previously published in religious journals in which he cites parallel passages between the apologist he is treating, and Seneca, Cicero, and the Church Fathers. The only major, or literary, figures he touches on, and then only briefly, are La Mothe le Vayer,
Guez de Balzac, Descartes, and Corneille.

Anthony Levi, in his excellent book, *French Moralists*, deals with the period from Du Vair to Descartes (1585-1649), and amply documents his claim that the moral treatises of the Neostoic group are important for an understanding of the vocabulary and presuppositions of the later, anti-Stoic moralists. It was not Levi's intention to relate his findings to the literature of the period, although he does discuss Corneille, and makes a good case for maintaining that the cult of glory developed both out of Neostoic theory and as a reaction to it, largely through an evolution in the meaning of the term *gloire*. Levi, although a Jesuit, succeeded in discussing the rise of secular ethics with considerably less religious bias than did Father d'Angers.

Both d'Angers and Levi show clearly that the ancient Stoics continued to serve as a source of ideas and quotations, that 17th century writers had a firm grounding in the moralists of the 16th century who, in turn, were strongly influenced themselves by Stoicism, and that Neostoicism continued to be a recognizable intellectual force during the 17th century even though the number of people who considered themselves Stoics in any strict sense of the word was exceedingly small.

I have chosen as my sample representative works of Corneille, Pascal, Molière, and La Bruyère because each of these authors either discusses Stoicism directly or makes clear use of ideas and vocabulary derived from it. The sphere of influence of Stoicism is thought to extend primarily to philosophers and moralists, but I am inter-
ested in discovering what implicit, as well as explicit, Stoic influence can be found in these representative literary figures spanning the century.

Father d'Angers claimed that Stoicism did not cease to be an accepted moral philosophy until around 1640, so we can expect to find more obvious borrowings in works of the first part of the century. Accordingly, there are numerous Stoic-sounding pronouncements in Corneille's plays; vocabulary common to Stoicism is frequent, and the heroes represent self-denial and thirst for an ideal of behavior which recalls Stoic goals. I am interested in discovering if a stronger case for Stoic ethics can be made than the body of Cornelian criticism allows.

Pascal comments specifically on Epictetus in the Entretien avec M. de Sacy; his praises are qualified, but we expect him to condemn a Stoic because the moral theory of Port-Royal was anti-Stoic. I would like to see what Pascal's attraction to Stoicism was, and to what extent his arguments vary from, or reiterate, the standard criticisms and commendations of Stoicism.

At first consideration, it is hard to imagine how one could attach Molière to any Stoic tradition, either as proponent or opponent. If Stoicism was no longer a vital issue by 1660, it might play no part in his approach to moral problems, but, on the other hand, he was keenly interested in philosophy, so some acquaintance with Stoicism might be expected. Many of his plays include a raisonneur who advocates le juste milieu, and who points out the abuses of common sense and propriety committed by the protagonist. Perhaps
we shall find some Stoic themes in the wisdom of his raisonneurs.

La Bruyère is a representative of the end of the century who still finds Stoic themes of enough currency, and continued attraction, to comment on them. We should note whether the understanding of Stoicism has improved or deteriorated over the century, whether the topics which attracted writers at the beginning of the century are still popular, and whether the arguments of support and of criticism have varied.

In conclusion, I will seek to define the role that Stoicism continued to play in the thought of the 17th century. As it moved away from a scholastic view of man and a dogmatic ethic, to what degree was it interested in Stoicism per se, and to what degree was Stoicism used, as it had been used since the time of the Church Fathers, as a storehouse of ideas which could be pressed into service of a new, and independent, moral code?
CHAPTER I

CLASSICAL STOIC MORAL THEORY AS AVAILABLE TO
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FRENCH WRITERS

Sources of knowledge about Stoicism

Stoicism developed in the third century B.C. in the eastern part of the Greek world. The name is derived from the Greek word "stoa," or open market place, where the early philosophers gathered to talk; the French word "portique" reflects this origin. Although Stoicism is today thought of as a moral philosophy, it originally was a unified view of life including metaphysics, physics, cosmology, theology, epistemology, logic, rhetoric, and psychology as well as ethics.

The extant sources of Stoic ethics are both philosophical and literary. Of the Stoic philosophers, only the Discourses of Epictetus as reported by Arrian, and the Encheiridion, or Manual, a compendium made from the Discourses, remain, along with Marcus Aurelius' Meditations, and fragments by other authors. Epictetus is the last major Stoic philosopher; he lived during the first century A.D., and of the above works, only his Encheiridion enjoyed continuous popularity. A large number of manuscripts of it exist, including two Christian paraphrases and a commentary by Simplicius (sixth century) ten
times the length of the original. Unfavorable criticism is more likely to arise from the inadequate impressions one may receive from a compendium such as the Manual, and this may help to explain reaction against Stoicism.

Diogenes Laertius, a third century historian of philosophy, gives a biography and comprehensive outline of the philosophy of the important early Stoics (Zeno, Chrysippus, Cleanthes) in his Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers, the only ancient history of philosophy to have survived. A Latin translation of it was made in the 15th century by Ambrosius; it was edited and interpreted by Casaubon, Henri Estienne, and Gassendi, and was a favorite text of Montaigne.

Cicero and Seneca are exceedingly valuable sources for the literary transmission of Stoicism, and were more widely read than the philosophic sources. Cicero, who denied being a Stoic, is nevertheless our main source of knowledge of the middle Stoic philosopher Panaeitus; he claims to draw upon Panaeitus for the first two books of his De Officiis. The De Finibus and the Disputations Tusculanae contain the Stoic theory of the passions, and the De Natura Deorum includes an exposition of Stoic theology. Seneca was the leader of Roman Stoicism; his life and death prove the sincerity of his teachings. The De Clementia and De Beneficiis became especially popular works on standard topics, and his Letters to Lucilius, written in the dark days at the end of his life, are full of the Stoic precepts which were his guides. Cicero and Seneca are the main classical sources of Stoicism for the 17th century, but to them we may add
Plutarch, the Church Fathers, and numerous 16th century writers such as Montaigne, Charron, Erasmus, and Du Vair.

Stoicism may be divided into three periods: early, middle, and late. Zeno, of Phoenician origin born in the Greek city of Citium on Cyprus in about 300 B.C., is the recognized father of Stoicism, but none of his works (fifteen titles are listed by Diogenes Laertius) is extant. Only fragments of some 500 works by his successor, Chrysippus, remain, and a fragment of a hymn by Cleanthes. Hence the philosophy of the early Stoics is best known through Diogenes Laertius, through fragments not available to the 17th century, and through Epictetus, who is believed to have been making a conscious effort to recapture early Stoicism.

Posidonius, a friend and teacher of Cicero, reflected the tendency to coalesce Greek philosophies; most notably, he introduced elements of Platonism into Stoicism. Panaetius, also of the first century B.C., and, like Posidonius, a friend of eminent Romans of his times, undertook a thorough revision of Stoicism which included introducing into it both Platonic and Aristotelian ideas. It was these middle Stoic philosophers who saw political activity as a virtue and duty of a Wise Man, and who believed that moral excellence could, and should, be taught. Their works have not survived, and it is difficult to distinguish Panaetius from Cicero with certainty.

The later period of the Roman Empire includes Epictetus, the pupil of Musonius Rufus, the greatest Stoic teacher of the age, Plutarch, who wrote against the Stoics, and the emperor Marcus Aurelius. The life and death of Cato became the symbol of the Stoic Wise Man,
and an inspiration to a degenerate age. This period also includes the sceptic Sextus Empiricus, the physician Galen, and the Church Fathers, all of whom provide us with important information about Stoicism.

Our present purposes will best be served if I first attempt to outline Stoic moral philosophy on the basis of the texts most readily available to 17th century authors, so that we can proceed to evaluate the popularized notions of Stoicism in light of the recoverable theory.

The cardinal virtues

In an attempt to avoid dualism, the early Stoics propounded a rational monism in their cosmology, and unity of the soul in their moral and epistemic theory. They placed fundamental trust in reason and in nature. The rational part of the soul was the ruling part, but it was not set off against either the physical or the emotional part; sensations, feelings, and judgments were all part of the one unified soul.

The Stoic philosophers disagreed with the assertion that pleasure is the object of life, and taught that virtue alone was worthy of pursuit. "Virtue...is a harmonious disposition, choice-worthy for its own sake and not from hope or fear or any external motive. Moreover, it is in virtue that happiness consists."¹

¹. Diogenes Laertius Lives of Eminent Philosophers, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1966) VII. 89. (Hereafter to be referred to as D.L.)
The four primary virtues are wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage. Diogenes Laertius defines wisdom as "the knowledge of things good and evil and of what is neither good nor evil." (D.L. VII. 92.) At this point the text is defective so we will turn to Cicero for his definitions of the first three kinds of virtue.

Wisdom, the ability to perceive what in any given instance is true and real, what its relations are, its consequences, and it causes.

Temperance, the ability to restrain the passions and make the impulses obedient to reason.

Justice, the skill to treat with consideration and wisdom those with whom we are associated, in order that we may through their co-operation have our natural wants supplied in full and overflowing measure, that we may ward off any impending trouble, avenge ourselves upon those who have attempted to injure us, and visit them with such retribution as justice and humanity will permit.²

The inclusion of justice as one of the basic properties of virtue reflects the practical interests of the Stoics in politics and political reform. Present-day popular notions of the Stoic as an austere, imperturbable person who scorns all pleasures, and who delights in suffering, derive from that aspect of Stoicism here called temperance where the emphasis is on control of the emotions and restraint. Both justice and temperance are dependant on wisdom, which is the source of the ability to distinguish true good from apparent good, right from wrong behavior. The Wise Man who has learned to make

² Cicero De Officiis, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1968) II. 18. (Hereafter to be referred to as De Off.)
such distinctions, and who acts with courage according to his judgments, is a man who is pursuing Virtue, and recognizes it as the ultimate good. Thus Virtue for the Stoics was a composite of the four classical virtues; they were aspects of Virtue, or modes of viewing it. They recognized as well particular virtues such as magnanimity, continence, endurance, presence of mind, and good counsel. (D.L. VII. 92.)

The second major teaching of the Stoics is that happiness or virtue lies within the power of each man. If any man is not happy, the fault lies not with Fortune, nor with his fellow men, nor with the political system, but with himself alone. "The gods have put under our control only the most excellent faculty of all and that which dominates the rest, namely, the power to make correct use of external impressions." Man is first and foremost a rational being, and it is on human reason that the Stoics based their ethical system, in keeping with the Greek philosophical tradition of Aristotle and Plato.

All objects of desire fall into three categories: those which are worthy, those which are unworthy, and those which are indifferent. Virtue, wisdom, justice, and courage are worthy of pursuit, and their opposites, folly, cowardice, injustice, and profligacy, are unworthy. (D.L. VII. 94.)

Of things that are, some, they say, are good, some are evil, and some neither.

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3 Epictetus The Discourses as reported by Arrian, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1967) I. 1. 7. (Hereafter to be referred to as Epictetus.)
good nor evil (that is, morally indifferent). ... Neutral (neither good nor evil, that is) are all those things which neither benefit nor harm a man: such as life, health, pleasure, beauty, strength, wealth, fair fame and noble birth, and their opposites, death, disease, pain, ugliness, weakness, poverty, ignominy, low birth.


Among other indifferent but 'preferred' objects, Diogenes Laertius lists natural ability, skill, moral improvement, strength, good condition, soundness of organs, and fame, and lists their opposites as 'rejected.' As long as none of these indifferent, but preferred, goals is in conflict with, or takes precedence over, the primary goal of virtue, they may be pursued. This simple formula places in the category of indifferent objects all those items which are dependent upon other people, or external circumstances, to be acquired and retained, whereas the pursuit of virtue or wisdom is dependent upon the individual alone. Our judgments will have direct bearing on our behavior. A man feels unhappy because he has failed to obtain some object he (incorrectly) deemed worthy of possessing. "For the origin of sorrow is this—to wish for something that does not come to pass." (Epictetus, I. 27. 10.) The ideal, then, is that of a man whose desires can be satisfied by himself alone, and whose rational faculties are independent of his environment.

In spite of its firm basis in reason, Stoicism was a practical, rather than a speculative, philosophy; the end of Stoic doctrine was "to act with good reason in the selection of what is natural" (D.L. VII. 88), and "to discover and to put into practice what he ought to
do" (D.L. VII. 126). Epictetus put into the mouth of Zeus the following explanation:

We have given thee a certain portion of ourself, this faculty of choice and refusal, of desire and aversion, or, in a word, the faculty which makes use of external impressions.

Epictetus, I. 1. 12.

The pursuit of virtue presupposes two related activities, both of which are divine or natural gifts to man: intelligence (the faculty of choice and refusal) and what we now call the will (the faculty which makes use of external impressions). The Stoics attributed both these activities to the same faculty, and did not in fact speak of the will as independent of the intellect. Action was intimately related to judgment, which contributed to Stoic preeminence as a practical moral philosophy.

Training in moral excellence

If man possesses all that is required to be virtuous, and if virtue produces happiness, why is there suffering and evil?

The Stoic answer is that while man is naturally endowed with the power of judgment and the impulse to act, he is not automatically virtuous; each individual must train himself for moral excellence in much the same way as an aspiring athlete must develop his muscles and natural capacities.

The Stoics believed in the efficacy of education (cf. D.L. VII. 91), and progress toward virtue was part of Stoic doctrine from the middle Stoics on, if not part of early Stoicism.
What, then, does it mean to be getting an education? It means to be learning how to apply the natural preconceptions to particular cases, each to the other in conformity with nature, and, further, to make the distinction, that some things are under our control while others are not under our control.

Epictetus, I. 22. 9-10.

The first of four roughly distinguishable steps in education is (1) the non-moral instinctive impulse for self-preservation in the infant. This is followed by (2) the formation of character in which a growth of firmness and a constancy in actions of choice become apparent. Simultaneously the reason is developing, and the notion of being in harmony with nature is beginning to be understood. Through experience, (3) a vague concept of moral good emerges which will become a clear and precise concept (4) in the well-educated, or Wise, Man. It is evident that one cannot emerge virtuous overnight; few men, if indeed any, become Wise Men, although this is the goal. But the Stoic cannot wait until he is 'trained' to start living; the judgments which he is called upon to make daily form the substance of his education. "The soul should accordingly be guided at the very moment when it is becoming able to guide itself."4

The importance of practice and habit in moral training was well established by Aristotle. "Virtue depends partly upon training and partly upon practice; you must learn first, and then strengthen your learning by action." (Ep. mor. XCIV. 47.) Pure judgment is not a

4 Seneca Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1961) XCIV, 51. (Hereafter to be referred to Ep. mor.)
sufficient guide to action. The impulse to act, if untrained, may be weak, and not give sufficient impetus for behavior in keeping with the mind's judgments. "You should not allow the impulse of your spirit to weaken and grow cold. Hold fast to it and establish it firmly, or order that what is now impulse may become a habit of the mind." (Ep. mor. XVI. 6.). Each time the will conducts us to avoid those things which the reason has judged undesirable, it is strengthened in its ability to avoid such a thing the next time. With regular practice, this becomes habit, and eventually such a part of our nature (character) that we naturally (without strong efforts on the part of the will) avoid the undesirable. This doctrine was interpreted to mean that it was desirable to seek out arduous and dangerous tasks in order to test the will.

The accomplished Stoic, Seneca tells us, is "not only sound in his judgment but trained by habit to such an extent that he not only can act rightly, but cannot help acting rightly." (Ep. mor. CXX. 10.) It is for this reason that Stoic writings are full of admonitions to self-control and restraint; they form an important part of the training program which leads to improved behavior. If the frequent appeals seem only negative, it is because man is more inclined to luxury and self-indulgence than to simplicity and sobriety. Furthermore, the Stoic teacher advises his trainee to practice more self-control than may be strictly necessary, on the analogy of straightening a bent board by bending it the opposite way.

I am inclined to pleasure; I will betake myself to the opposite side of the rolling ship, and that beyond measure, so as to
train myself. I am inclined to avoid hard work; I will strain and exercise my sense-impressions to this end so that my aversion from everything of this kind shall cease.

Epictetus, III. 12. 7.

The trainee is advised greater restraint for all emotions and desires because his judgment is not as sure as that of the Wise Man, and emotions are a greater threat to it. Therefore, the practical advice is not to let the emotions get a strong foothold, for it is more difficult to turn back from unworthy pursuits than it is to avoid them altogether. "The wise man can safely control himself without becoming over-anxious; he can halt his tears and his pleasures at will; but in our case, because it is not easy to retrace our steps, it is best not to push ahead at all." (Ep. mor. CXVI, 5.). "There is no vice that at the start is not modest and easily entreated . . . if you allow it to begin, you cannot make sure of its ceasing . . . it is more easy to forestall it than to forego it." (Ep. mor. CXVI, 3.). "In so far as we are able, let us step back from slippery places; even on dry ground it is hard enough to take a sturdy stand." (Ep. mor. CXVI, 6.).

Another pull in the wrong direction, against which man must fortify himself, comes from society.

Therefore, man's highest good is attained, if he has fulfilled the good for which nature designed him at birth . . . to live in accordance with his own nature. But his is turned into a hard task by the general madness of mankind; we push one another into vice.

Ep. mor. XLI. 9-10.
The Stoics were reacting against moral degredation, and attempting
to resolve the conflicts in society's goals. But essentially, for
the Stoics, moral improvement is a private and individual undertak-
ing.

We human beings are fettered and weak-
ened by many vices; we have wallowed
in them ... we are dyed by them ... 
what hinders us most of all is that we
are too readily satisfied with ourselves
... we are unwilling to be reformed,
just because we believe ourselves to be
the best of men.

_Ep. mor._ LIX. 9 & 11.

It is human weakness, and lack of education in moral excellence,
which produces the vices in society.

Diogenes Laertius claimed that Zeno wrote a treatise on Duty,
but Cicero is the person responsible for popularizing the doctrine.

_For no phase of life, whether public or
private, whether in business or in the
home, whether one is working on what con-
cerns oneself alone or dealing with anoth-
er, can be without its moral duty; on
the discharge of such duties depends all
that is morally right, and on their ne-
glect all that is morally wrong in life._

_De Off. I. 4._

Since there are moral values attached to all actions, the person seek-
ing to live a virtuous life will make decisions which will affect his
behavior on the basis of what is morally right to do.

The term Duty is applied to that for which,
when done, a reasonable defence can be ad-
duced, e.g. harmony in the tenor of life's
process ... it is an action in itself
adapted to nature's arrangements ... be-
fitting acts are all those which reason
prevails with us to do . . . unbefitting, or contrary to duty, are all acts that reason deprecates.

D.L. VII. 107-108.

Duty did not have the negative connotations of an external compulsion to do something against one's will or desire, of a distasteful task, which it has since acquired. Lewis and Short define *officium* as

that which one does for another, a service whether of free will or of (external or moral) necessity. A voluntary service, a kindness, favor, courtesy, rendered to one whose claim to it is recognized; while *beneficium* is a service rendered where there is no claim. An obligatory service, an obligation, duty, function; office (this latter being the most frequent use in prose and poetry of all periods). 5

The sense of function gives the term duty a quality more in keeping with the activities natural to man, as opposed to constrained or enforced activities which seem contrary to human nature.

The irrational impulses

Besides the intellect and the impulse to act, the Stoics distinguished the emotions which can interfere with judgment. "Passion, or emotion, is defined by Zeno as an irrational and unnatural movement in the soul, or again as impulse in excess." (D.L. VII. 110).

Emotions are suspect because they are potentially powerful enough to supersede reason even though they arise in the one unified soul; they are irrational judgments which result from misjudging im-

pressions.

A strong emotion does not arise except a desire fails to attain its object, or an aversion falls into what it would avoid. This is the field of study which introduces to us confusions, tumults, misfortunes and calamities; and sorrows, lamentations, envies; and makes us envious and jealous—passions which make it impossible for us even to listen to reason.

Epictetus, III. 2. 3.

The emotions are dangerous only if they are permitted to make judgments in place of reason because, while they are not per se evil, they cannot be educated as can the intellect, and for this reason they are inferior to it.

As an analogy can be made between the training of the will and the training of the body, so the Stoic made an analogy between bodily infirmities and infirmities of the soul.

By infirmity is meant disease accompanied by weakness; and by disease is meant a fond imagining of something that seems desirable. And as in the body there are tendencies to certain maladies such as colds and diarrhoea, so it is with the soul, there are tendencies like enviousness, pitifulness, quarrelsome-ness, and the like.

D.L. VII. 115.

It is important to note that the Stoics did not regard the emotions as evil, and that they were not in favor of suppressing all emotions. They sought to eliminate those emotions which they regarded as diseases in the same way that a physician tries to heal a sick body. Diogenes Laertius reports that in Stoic doctrine there are three emotional states which are good, namely, joy, caution, and wishing.
Joy, the counterpart of pleasure, is rational elation; caution, the counterpart of fear, rational avoidance; for though the wise man will never feel fear, he will yet use caution. And they make wishing the counterpart of desire (or craving), inasmuch as it is rational appetency. And accordingly, as under the primary passions are classed certain others subordinate to them, so too is it with the primary eupathies or good emotional states. Thus under wishing they bring well-wishing or benevolence, friendliness, respect, affection; under caution, reverence and modesty; under joy, delight, mirth, cheerfulness.

D.L. VII. 116.

Eupatheia are right passions, innocent passions, or emotional states that are good. That the Stoics actually approved of certain emotions is a point which is rarely made.

**Moderation and virtue**

The theory of moderation was a well-entrenched Greek notion; it is not original with, nor unique to, Stoicism, nor could the early Stoics be said to have developed Aristotle's concept since texts of Aristotle were lost during the period in which Stoicism was developing. C.W. Mendell attributes to Panaetius the incorporation of the theory of the mean into Stoicism. "Stoicism had first of all combined with sturdy Roman conservatism and in the modified form in which Panaetius presented it, with the Aristotelian mean as a cardinal doctrine, had become the Orthodox creed of Rome."6

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The adaptation of the doctrine of the mean seems to have been completed by the time Cicero was writing, for he uses the term mediocritas as though it were easily understood. "We must follow the same principle in regard to dress. In this, as in most things, the best rule is the golden mean" (mediocritas optima est De Off. I. 130.) "For if anyone proceeds in a passion to inflict punishment, he will never observe that happy mean which lies between excess and defect" (mediocritatem . . . quae est inter nimium et parum. De Off. I. 89.) It is used here to mean an amount proper to the circumstances.

Instead of mediocritas, however, Cicero more frequently uses modus to give a sense similar to that of moderation. "Man is the only animal that has a feeling for order, for propriety, for moderation in word and deed." (Unum hoc animal sentit, quid sit ordo, quid sit, quod deceat, in factis doctisque qui modus. De Off. I. 14.) He uses the concept of moderation again when he speaks of temperance: "All that is morally right rises from one of four sources . . . or (4) the orderliness and moderation of everything that is said and done, wherein consist temperance and self-control." (aut in omnium . . . ordine et modo, in quo inest modestia et temperantia. De Off. I. 15.) Is Cicero here equating moderation, orderliness, propriety, and self-control with temperance? After discussing wisdom, justice, and courage, he comes at last to a more complete discussion of temperance. He begins as follows:

We have next to discuss the one remaining division of moral rectitude. That is the one in which we find considerate-
ness and self-control [modestia], which give, as it were, a sort of polish to life; it embraces also temperance [temperantia], complete subjection of all the passions, and moderation [modus] in all things.

De Off. I. 93.

Once again we find the terms 'modestia,' 'modus,' and 'temperantia' used. On first reading it appears that Cicero is enumerating those qualities which fall under the heading of temperance, and that he intends to make distinctions among them, but instead he goes on to introduce a new term (probably following Panaetius) as a different, and rather unexpected, aspect of what he seems to regard as the same virtue: decorum (propriety). He is expanding the concept of this virtue:

Under this head is further included what, in Latin, may be called decorum (propriety); for in Greek it is called ἡμινώς. Such is its essential nature, that it is inseparable from moral goodness; for what is proper is morally right, and what is morally right is proper . . . whatever propriety may be, it is manifested only when there is pre-existing moral rectitude.

De Off. I. 93-94.

Something is morally right in exactly those circumstances in which it has propriety. Propriety is equivalent to moral goodness in the sense that it occurs in all the same cases. Since he equates temperance with propriety, we can also say that when temperance is present, propriety is also.

Elsewhere Cicero says, "It is also probable that the temperate man—the Greeks call him αὐθεντικός and they apply the term ἁρμοσοῦνῃ
to the virtue which I usually call sometimes temperantiam, sometimes moderationem, and occasionally also modestiam... must be firm... calm. 7 Instead of making distinctions, he seems to be attempting to indicate the range of meanings of the Greek term by using overlapping synonyms. As a group these terms also indicate a much more expanded concept than the Aristotelian theory of the mean as avoidance of excesses.

Cicero further complicates matters by translating yet another Greek term as modestia.

Next, then, we must discuss orderliness of conduct and seasonableness of occasions. These two qualities are embraced in that science which the Greeks call ἡγεσία — not that ἐνεργεία which we translate with moderation [modestia], derived from moderate; but this is the ἡγεσία by which we understand orderly conduct. And so, if we may call it also moderation [modestiam], it is defined by the Stoics as follows: 'Moderation [modestia] is the science of disposing aright everything that is done or said.'... So it comes about that in this sense moderation [modestia], which we explain as I have indicated, is the science of doing the right thing at the right time.

De Off. I. 142.

Although the Greek words may all have different meanings, Cicero seems to be attracted to them all by a common sense such as disposing aright of words and deeds, in a fitting, proper, and seemly manner, commensurate with moral rectitude. Cicero is perhaps trying to clarify the breadth of this concept of moderation, or temperance, in the

rhetorician's manner of using several synonymous expressions. Lewis
and Short give the following meanings for these words:

\textit{temperantia}: moderatedness, moderation, discreetness, temperateness, temperance

\textit{modestia}: moderatedness, moderation, especially in one's behavior, unassuming conduct, modesty, discretion, sobriety of behavior.

\textit{modus}: a measure with which anything is measured; a proper measure, due measure, a measure which is not to be exceeded; way, manner, mode, method.

\textit{decorum}: in Cicero for Greek \textit{πρέπειν} that which is seemly, suitable; seemliness, fitness, propriety, decorum.\textsuperscript{8}

The Greek word \textit{σωφροσύνη} which Cicero translates as \textit{temperantia} or \textit{modestia} means soundness of mind, prudence, discretion, moderation in sensual desires, self-control, temperance, and \textit{πρέπειν} which he translates as \textit{decorum} means to be conspicuously fitting, to be seem.\textsuperscript{9}

Even though Cicero is translating different Greek words, he uses his translations interchangeably, as though he were amalgamating them to create a new concept.

A major step which Cicero takes to show the significance he attaches to this term is to claim that propriety belongs to each of the four divisions of virtue:

This propriety, therefore, of which I am speaking belongs to each division of moral rectitude; and its relation to the

\textsuperscript{8} A Latin Dictionary, 1879.

\textsuperscript{9} Liddell and Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, 9th edition, 1940.
cardinal virtues is so close, that it is perfectly self-evident . . . there is a certain element of propriety perceptible in every act of moral rectitude; and this can be separated from virtue theoretically better than it can be practically . . . this propriety of which we are speaking, while in fact completely blended with virtue, is mentally and theoretically distinguishable from it.

De Off. I. 95.

Perhaps Cicero means that by regarding propriety from the viewpoint of each of the virtues, by regarding it functionally we might say, we get a clearer idea of its whole range, in the particular man and in human society. For instance, when one has examined wisdom or justice as one might aspire to attain them, the process does not exhaust the qualities we find not only attractive but desirable. One can be just without being kindly, considerate or sympathetic. 10 Cicero may well have been attempting to expand our idea of the primary virtues, and in particular our concept of temperance; that is perhaps why he went to such lengths to explain his understanding of propriety, or moderation, which seems to me a more apt and inclusive term.

There are numerous instances of his admonitions for this sort of moderation which he made the most outstanding single guide, after reason, to action: "But the propriety to which I refer shows itself also in every deed, in every word, even in every movement and attitude of the body." (De Off. I. 126.) "So, in standing or walking, in sitting or reclining, in our expression, our eyes, or the movements

10 I am indebted to Professor Kenneth M. Abbott, Department of Classics, The Ohio State University, for helpful suggestions in understanding Cicero's use of these various terms.
of our hands, let us preserve what we have called 'propriety'."
(De Off. I. 128.) "And even when they wish to relax their minds
and give themselves up to enjoyment they should beware of excesses
(caveant intemperantiam) and bear in mind the rules of modesty."
(De Off. I. 122.) "It is much more important that we succeed in
keeping our mental operations in harmony with Nature's laws. And
we shall not fail in this if we guard against violent excitement or
depression, and if we keep our minds intent on the observance of
propriety." (De Off. I. 131.) "By the same standard of moderation
(mediocritas) the comforts and wants of life generally should be
regulated." (De Off. I. 140.)

Where there is no moral issue in question, the Stoic encour-
gages behavior which is proper to the times and circumstances. He
would accept social customs in different countries on matters of
etiquette, for example, and would cultivate behavior which reflected
the norms for that society. To follow such standards would be to
act with moderation or propriety, for the Stoic would be neither
ostentatious by his eccentricities, nor would he be singled out for
his crude behavior. When a moral issue enters the picture, the
social norms no longer are a sufficient guide. If it is a question
of honesty in a society in which flattering people in positions of
power is accepted, honesty would be the proper course to follow.
However, one can still be honest in a gentlemanly fashion; honesty
need not be harshly expressed. One is not being less honest but is
observing a form of moderation by avoiding unwarranted flattery and
cruel frankness.
Cultivation of gentlemanly behavior can extend to the display of emotions.

There is a comeliness even in grief. This should be cultivated by the wise man; even in tears, just as in other matters also, there is a certain sufficiency; it is with the unwise that sorrows, like joys, gush over.


Seneca, as Cicero, propounds moderation as a guide to all actions. The emphasis is on regulating, by training the will or by developing certain habits, the social manifestations of one's emotions, and not on the eradication of those emotions.

What one ought to do and what is natural have been linked together. Epictetus says:

The second field of study deals with duty; for I ought not to be unfeeling (ἀθυμία) like a statue, but should maintain my relations, both natural and acquired, as a religious man, as a son, a brother, a father, a citizen.

Epictetus, III. 2. 4.

Emotions are not to be suppressed, only controlled, subjugated to the reason, so that they cannot overthrow reason and turn us from virtue.

There is another interesting dimension to the notion of what is proper behavior for a given set of circumstances, which is the notion of adaptability without compromise of principles.

If circumstances bring you to spend your life alone or in the company of a few, call it peace, and utilize the condition for its proper end;
converse with yourself, exercise your
sense-impressions, develop your pre-
conceptions. If, however, you fall in
with a crowd, call it games, a festi-
val, a holiday, try to keep holiday
with the people.


That is a man who knows how to adjust his life to events, and the
futility of railing against Fortune; he also knows how to shape
events to suit his desires and temperament—he has some control
over Fortune. This is an eminently moderate and reasonable approach
to life.

Seneca gives a similarly measured and human portrait of the
Stoic:

We have marked another man who is
kind to his friends, and restrained
towards his enemies, who carries on
his political and his personal busi-
ness with scrupulous devotion, not
lacking in longsuffering where there
is anything that must be endured, and
not lacking in prudence when action
is to be taken. We have marked him
giving with lavish hand when it was
his duty to make a payment, and, when
he had to toil, striving resolutely
and lightening his bodily weariness
by his resolution. Besides, he has
always been the same, consistent in
all his actions, not only sound in
his judgment but trained by habit to
such an extent that he not only can
act rightly, but cannot help acting
rightly. We have formed the conception
that in such a man perfect virtue
exists.

Ep. mor. CXX. 10.

Words such as 'restrained' and 'prudence' underline the moderation
of behavior which characterizes Seneca's man of perfect virtue. The
only occasions on which he is resigned to 'longsuffering' are those cases in which his judgment has shown him he has no power to alter the situation. His judgment is sound, and he has been so thoroughly trained that habits of right action come naturally to him.

The later Stoics, at least, believed that the appropriate guide to accomplishing that which is morally worthwhile was moderation, variously called due measure, fitness, propriety, or temperance. This concept was not completely lacking in the early Stoics, for Diogenes Laertius reports as a common epithet, "more temperate than Zeno the philosopher." (D.L. VII. 27.)

Living in harmony with Nature

The motto of Stoicism was to live according to Nature. "The end may be defined as life in accordance with nature, or, in other words, in accordance with our own human nature as well as that of the universe." (D.L. VII. 88.) But this is not a licence to do just anything, for man's essential nature is his rationality, so to live according to nature is to live according to right reason. "When reason by way of a more perfect leadership has been bestowed on the beings we call rational, for them life according to reason rightly becomes the natural life." (D.L. VII. 86.) Since reason guides man toward virtue, living according to nature means living a virtuous life.

Zeno was the first (in his treatise On the Nature of Man) to designate as the end "life in agreement with nature" . . . which is the same as
a virtuous life, virtue being the
goal towards which nature guides us.

D.L. VII. 87.

The Stoics seem also to have meant that one's actions should be in
agreement, not only with reason, but with one's psychological nature.
There are, for example, natural emotions which are allowable; feigned
withholding of emotions is contrary to nature.

There is, then, no reason why, just
because a group of persons is stand-
ing in your presence or sitting at
your side, you should either check or
pour forth your tears; whether re-
strained or outpoured, they are
never so disgraceful as when feigned.
Let them flow naturally [saut sua
sponte]. But it is possible for
tears to flow from the eyes of
those who are quiet and at peace.
They often flow without impairing
the influence of the wise man--
with such restraint that they show
no want either of feeling or of
self-respect. We may, I assure you,
obey Nature and yet maintain our
dignity.

Ep. mor. XCIX. 20.

They also seemed to recognize natural differences among men as to
psychological makeup, a nuance infrequently attributed to them.

"It is each man's duty to weigh well what are his own peculiar
traits of character, to regulate these properly, and not to wish to
try how another man's would suit him." (De Off. I. 113.)

Natural emotions need not interfere with reason. Indeed, one
has the impression from the above Seneca passage that somewhere be-
tween checking emotions and pouring them forth there lies a natural
expression of them, a proper or fitting display of them, a moderate
expression of them.

Even in Seneca's time there were people who, following what they took to be Stoic precepts, changed their life style from luxury to excessive simplicity; Seneca spoke against that as being unnatural.

Our motto, as you know, is "live according to Nature"; but it is quite contrary to nature to torture the body, to hate unlaboured elegance, to be dirty on purpose, to eat food that is not only plain, but disgusting and forbidding. Just as it is a sign of luxury to seek out dainties, so it is madness to avoid that which is customary and can be purchased at no great price. Philosophy calls for plain living, but not for penance; and we may perfectly well be plain and neat at the same time. This is the mean [modus] of which I approve; our life should observe a happy medium [temperatur vita] between the ways of a sage and the ways of the world at large; all men should admire it, but they should understand it also.

Ep. mor. V. 5.

Further evidence for the equation of the term propriety with that which is natural can be found in the following quotation from Cicero:

Propriety . . . conducts us . . . to harmony with Nature and the faithful observance of her laws . . . for it is only when they agree with Nature's laws that we should give our approval to the movements not only of the body, but still more of the spirit.

De Off. I. 100.

This equation of moderation with living in harmony with Nature and
with virtue makes it imperative to correct the view that the Stoic notion of self-control (temperantia) was simply a negative attitude of suppression of human emotions; it is a positive guide to happiness.

Apathy and anxiety

"To distinguish between things in our power and things not in our power" has two meanings, one at the theoretical level, and one in the practical realm. On the theoretical level, it means learning to distinguish those things which depend on each man to obtain, like particular virtues such as magnanimity and continence, from those things which are dependent on external circumstances, like health and wealth. In the practical realm, it involves the ability to recognize a situation which cannot immediately, and by one man alone, be altered, such as political or social institutions. Such situations are assigned to the category of things over which one has no control; the Stoic ceases to be anxious about them.

Anxiety is the opposite of happiness for the Stoic, but anxiety about material possessions, death, and the like, vanishes when he realizes that they are not evils to be shunned. Since the only goods worthy of possession are ones over which the individual alone has control ("moral purpose and all the acts of moral purpose" Epictetus, I. 22. 10.), he need not fear the loss of them. This by-product of Stoic happiness, i.e., freedom from anxiety, provided great personal comfort in periods of political tyranny or uncertainty, but it provoked the criticism that Stoics were primarily concerned with their personal tranquility. "Whatever happens, assume that it was
bound to happen, and do not be willing to rail at Nature. That which you cannot reform, it is best to endure." (Ep. mor. CVII. 9.) Aristotle anticipated such criticism and commented: "Some people define the Virtues as certain states of impassibility and utter quietude, but they are wrong because they speak without modification, instead of adding 'as they ought,' ' as they ought not,' and 'when,' and so on." 11 This anticipates the view that what is intended is not indifference, or apathy in the modern sense, but what Cicero called propriety, or adjusting deed and word to circumstance.

Diogenes Laertius also deals with attacks on Stoic apathy by pointing out that such passionlessness can apply to bad men as well as to good, in the sense that a bad man is callous, he is indifferent to the opinion men hold of him.

Am I advising you to be hard-hearted, desiring you to keep your countenance unmoved at the very funeral ceremony, and not allowing your soul even to feel the pinch of pain? By no means. That would mean lack of feeling rather than virtue.

Ep. mor. XCIX. 15.

Hence indifference is not desirable, and not promoted by the Stoics.

The term used by Diogenes Laertius is αγορά, etymologically derived from pathos, which means undergoing suffering, having something done to you. Apathy is a negative form meaning not allowing things to affect you. A person who is apathetic is a person who is

11 Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics II. 3. 1104b
in control of his responses, which is good Stoic doctrine, and not a person who is indifferent to others or to events. The loss of the sense of the negative has affected our understanding of the word, and that of the 17th century writers before us.

Conclusion

I have cited Cicero and Seneca because the 16th and 17th century French writers got most of their direct understanding of Stoicism from them. The repeated appeals for moderation failed to inspire them, or even to attract their attention. Critics were not sufficiently careful to note the precise sense of a term like 'indifference', meaning a rational judgment; they condemned Stoicism without noting the combination of moral goodness and moderation which are essential to it.

The soul that is altogether courageous and great is marked above all by two characteristics: one of these is indifference to outward circumstances; for such a person cherishes the conviction that nothing but moral goodness and propriety deserves to be either admired or wished for or striven after, and that he ought not be subject to any man or any passion or any accident of fortune.

De Off. I. 66.

Seneca, as well, included moderation with reason and will as fundamental to the happy and virtuous life.

By gaining a complete view of truth, by maintaining, in all that he does, order, measure, fitness, and a will that is inoffensive and kindly, that is intent upon reason and never de-
parts thencefrom, that commands at the same time love and admiration.

Ep. mor. XCII. 3.

Stoicism offers the general outlines of an ethical theory, but it does not entirely omit particular remarks. Cicero summarized the theoretical and the practical aspects:

In entering upon any course of action, then, we must hold fast to three principles:

first, that impulse shall obey reason; for there is no better way than this to secure the observance of duties:

second, that we estimate carefully the importance of the object that we wish to accomplish, so that neither more nor less care and attention may be expended upon it than the case requires:

the third principle is that we be careful to observe moderation [moderata] in all that is essential to the outward appearance and dignity of a gentleman. Moreover, the best rule for securing this is strictly to observe that propriety [modus] which we have discussed above, and not to overstep it. Yet of these three principles, the one of prime importance is to keep impulse subservient to reason.

De Off. I. 141.

Of these three principles, the most important is that impulse obey reason, for which we need a well trained will which can be had through regular exercise afforded by the establishment of habits and the practice of duties. Reason gives us the guide for maintaining our habits and fulfilling our duties.

Secondly, we must estimate the importance of our object.
This will not only enable us to know what things are in our power and what are not, but has the further practical aspect of enabling us to establish an order of relative importance where several secondary objectives are in view.

Thirdly, we must observe moderation. Although Cicero seems to be using the term here much more as we understand 'decorum' in English (observing socially acceptable patterns of behavior), and although this seems to have much less bearing on moral character than is suggested by his passages on temperance, nonetheless I think he means to apply the same criteria to all actions. His treatment of temperance as a way of looking at each of the virtues, the number of terms which he draws together around the concept of propriety, and the importance which he attaches to this concept, lead me to believe that in its enlarged meaning, which I have called moderation rather than propriety, it is intended to be, along with reason, the guide to conduct, and the key to his ethical system. In view of the importance of Cicero for the transmission of Stoic doctrine to the 17th century, we will look for echoes of this concept in major writings of the period.
CHAPTER II

THE TRANSMISSION OF STOIC MORAL THEORY TO

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

Stoicism incorporated into Christian ethics

Stoicism as an independent philosophy ceased to attract adherents by the third century, but during the early years of Christianity it was the most widespread and generally accepted moral theory among both the Romans and the Greeks. Greek philosophy was held in high esteem; it was not then regarded as pagan or inferior to Christian revelation, but rather as a part of the preparation for Christianity. Since many of the Church Fathers were philosophers turned theologians, it was natural that they should have incorporated into Christian ethics their Greek inheritance. Christians were attracted by Stoicism's moral earnestness, by its high standard of virtue independent of earthly rewards, by its belief that passions could be controlled, by its theory of freedom of the individual, and its ideal of the Sage. From the third century on ethics was tied to Christianity, and it was not until the 16th cen-
tury that an attempt to separate them once again was made. ¹

The Church Fathers looked to Stoicism in much the same way that later Christian apologists would look to Plato and Aristotle; by the fourth century they had Christianized Seneca and Epictetus. Not all Church Fathers adopted Stoicism, or praised it with equal enthusiasm. Some criticized it, or aspects of it, but most made some use of it. Even Augustine, who rejected the fundamental Stoic position that man can, by himself, learn to exercise virtue, adopted Stoic terminology, and gave it Christian garb.

Among those who made more substantial borrowings were Ambrose of Milan (4th century) whose treatise De Officiis Ministrorum contains an exposition of Christian duty systematized on a plan borrowed from Cicero’s De Officiis. Minucius Felix incorporated details from Cicero’s De Natura Deorum into his Octavius. Tatian, in the Orations, gives a portrait of a Sage who is scarcely Christianized. Lactantius, a Christian Latin writer who hoped to win intellectuals to Christianity by using Ciceronian rhetoric, not only found Seneca a useful source of moral advice and elegantly expressed precept, but went so far as to refer to him as a chrétien manqué. Tertullian called him ‘Seneca saepe noster,’ and adopted the term ‘affectus’ for passions, as Seneca had used it, in place of ‘pathos.’

The tradition that he knew, and corresponded with, St. Paul seems,

however, not to have been current until the 14th century, although it was probably in the fourth century that some Christian thought highly enough of Seneca to forge letters between him and St. Paul. These letters are cautiously referred to by Jerome in *De Viris Illustribus*, 12, written about 392, and this reference was known widely in the middle ages. Jerome noted that 'perturbatio,' the term used by Cicero for 'pathos,' was a more accurate translation than 'passio' which was used by many Church Fathers, and which he found more aptly described the Passion of Christ than human emotions.²

In general, Christianity held a higher view of the divine character than the Greek common people did through their myths, and as the Church Fathers succeeded in attracting people to this more noble view, they demanded a correspondingly higher standard of human conduct. Stoic doctrine and training lent themselves admirably to this enterprise, and so were incorporated into Christian ethics.

Spanneut concludes that Stoicism had a profound influence on the early Christian Church, both on its theory and in practical matters. In theoretical matters, the Church Fathers drew upon classical Stoicism through the procedures of adoption, adaptation, and use of Stoic terminology and definitions.

pathie, le théorie de la liberté, de la loi naturelle, du cosmopolitisme ... Toutes semblent partir d'une même confiance dans les forces naturelles de l'homme. Souvent elles s'apparentent au stoïcisme essentiel et antique.³

In practical matters, however, the influence of contemporary Stoics such as Musonius, who retranscribed Epictetus, and Clement of Alexandria, seems to have been greater. Tatian, Theophile of Antioch, Minucius Felix, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Novatian are others concerned with moral questions who shaped Christian ethics and were themselves molded by Stoicism.

Le stoïcisme contemporain lui [au christianisme] a dicté—et jusque dans les mots—sa morale pratique. Ces données sont parfois adaptées ou transposées, mais le stoïcisme est partout reconnaissable et sa place, au total, est bien grande aux premiers siècles de l'Église dans toutes les questions qui concernent l'homme.⁴

Stoicism has not, since that period, had as profound an influence on ethics, but clearly much Stoicism became a permanent part of Christian ethics, and remained so into 17th century France.

Editions of classical Stoic authors

It is difficult to trace the fate of Stoicism from the period after Augustine until the ninth century, but much of classical learning is shrouded in mystery during that period, and Stoicism is no

³ Ibid., p. 257.
⁴ Ibid., p. 266.
exception. I will examine first the fate of Stoic texts from the
ninth century to the 17th century, and, secondly, the transmission
and adaptation of the major elements of Stoic ethics to 17th century
morale.

Manuscripts for the De Officiis are abundant, ranging from
the ninth century on, so there can be no doubt about the continuous
popularity of this work. "Probably no ancient treatise . . . has
done more than [Cicero's] De Officiis to communicate a knowledge of
ancient morality to medieval and modern Europe."5 Bréhier spoke of
its importance to humanism, calling it "un des ouvrages de Cicéron
qui a été le plus lu dans les temps modernes et qui a inspiré nombre
de philosophes, de moralistes, de politiques du XVe au XVIIIe siècle."6

The De Officiis was probably the first classical text to be printed
after the invention of printing. Two editions of it date from 1465,
which is only about ten years after the Gutenberg Bible, and five
years before the first printing press was established in Paris. In
that same year, editions of Cicero's De Oratore and of Lactantius
were printed. De Finibus is believed to have been first published
in 1467 in Cologne. Sixteenth century editions of De Officiis in-
clude one by Erasmus (Paris, 1533), one by Victorius (Venice, 1532-34),
and one by Aldus Manutius (Venice, 1541). Four editions of De Natura
Deorum were published from 1508 to 1534. Cicero was not only popular,

5 Henry Sidgwick, History of Ethics (London: Macmillan and

6 Emile Bréhier, Études de philosophie antique (Paris: Presses
but, as far as we can ascertain, he was also a reliable source of Stoic philosophy.

In the transmission of stoic teaching to the post-Renaissance vernacular moralists, Cicero plays an exceptionally important part. Not only does he give a clear account of stoical ethical teaching, but, contrary to the general usage in the Roman tradition of ethical writing, he keeps close to the Greek terminology and, for instance, seldom speaks of the will, preferring to preserve the stoic opposition between reason or right reason and passion. 7

Seneca ranked second only to Cicero in popularity among classical prose writers after the 12th century, although his fate between the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the ninth is also unknown. The first editions of his Letters date from 1475 when they were published simultaneously in four cities including Rome and Paris. Literally hundreds of manuscripts of Seneca's Letters, or parts of them, exist, from which twenty-one manuscripts dating between the ninth and the 15th centuries serve as the basis for the construction of the text, so his popularity is uncontestable. His Letters 1-88 appeared regularly on shelves of monastery libraries along with the Church Fathers.

By the early 16th century, humanists were busy editing texts of classical authors. Foremost among these editors, and the first to merit the name as far as Seneca is concerned, was Erasmus, whose edition of Seneca's Letters appeared in 1515. His second edi-

tion appeared in 1527, and had at least five reprints within the century; it was one of the three great editions of Seneca to be done during the century, the other two being by Muretus (1585) and by the Stoic Justus Lipsius (1605). Calvin did a commentary on De Clementia in 1532.

Seneca was the primary model for drama at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the 17th century.

Le théâtre de Sénèque était le seul à donner les leçons de vertu, proches du cœur et de l'esprit des humanistes, au moyen d'une forme et d'une technique dramatique, chères à leurs goûts ou à leurs préjugés esthétiques. Nous sommes aujourd'hui sensibles à l'emphase de son style, à l'hystérie de certains de ses héros, à la confusion de ses pièces. Ces défauts ne doivent pas faire oublier son effort pour ordonner le drame grec selon les idées stoïciennes.

Stoicism is not presented in Seneca's tragedies as a complete morale, but rather as an initiation to the essential precepts of Stoicism by means of aphorisms and proverbial phrases. Seneca admired Hercules for his great energy and his victories over the terrors of the world; as a benefactor to man, he gave him certain traits of the Sage. "C'est avec les stoïciens qu'il devient l'incarnation de la vertu, le type du héros soumis à la volonté de Dieu." Corneille clearly felt an affinity for Seneca's heroes, and transposed their 'force de l'âme' into French models.


9 Ibid., p. 60.
The first edition of Plutarch appeared in Florence in 1517, but was made from an inferior text; the Aldine edition of 1519 is a more accurate text. The Paris edition of 1624, which copied Etienne's much improved 1572 edition, became the current Latin text. The first work in French to be recognized as a classic by the French Academy was the translation Jacques Amyot published in 1559 of the *Vies des hommes illustres*. He studied many manuscripts in making his translation, which has great literary merit as well as independent philological value. Amyot's translation served, rather than the Greek text, for the English version made by Thomas North in 1579, the Elizabethan *Lives* from which Shakespeare drew. In 1572, Amyot published a translation of the *Moralia*. Bilinguères pronounced Plutarch the Greek author the most frequently published, translated, abridged, and imitated.

On ne dira jamais assez leur contribution (les œuvres de Plutarque) essentielle à la formation de la sensibilité morale en France au XVIe siècle. Elles ont donné aux hommes de la Renaissance le goût et presque le besoin d'une grandeur et d'une intransigeance morales qui les tournaient irrésistiblement vers le stoïcisme.¹⁰

The knowledge of Stoicism gained by the 17th century through Plutarch is suspect because he was intent on refuting that philosophy, and to this end probably distorted doctrines to make contradictions stand out more clearly.

The first edition of Epictetus's *Arrian Discourses* dates from 1535, and was edited in Venice by Victor Trincavelli from a faulty

manuscript. The first critical edition appeared in 1554, in Basel, edited by Jacob Schegk; he used a Latin version to help correct the Greek text. The translation and commentary of Hieronymous Wolff, Basel, 1560, was better yet; apparently Wolff's text failed to influence the publishing tradition which continued to produce the Schegk-Trincavelli Greek text. Levi notes that it contained, in addition to the Manual and the Arrian Discourses, the commentary on the Manual by Simplicius, which was very influential, and that it had five editions by 1600.\textsuperscript{11} The Encheiridion was frequently reproduced. It was adopted by at least two different Christian ascetics as a rule and guide of monastic life; as late as 1632, Matthias Wittmer took from it thirty-five of his fifty precepts in Ad conservandum animi pacem, as a guide for the Carthusians. "The number of editions and new printings of his works, or of portions or translations of the same, averages considerably more than one for each year since the invention of printing.\textsuperscript{12} Jean Coras translated the Entretiens in 1558, and the Protestant Rivaudeau made a translation of the Manual in 1567. Goulub translated both the Discourses and the Manual in 1607, and that is the edition Pascal used.

From the 12th century on florilegia were popular; d'Alciat's Emblèmes, for example, had thirty-nine editions between 1531 and 1550. Seneca in particular was given even more widespread currency through

\textsuperscript{11} Levi, French Moralists, p. 85, footnote 1.

\textsuperscript{12} Epictetus The Discourses as reported by Arrian, the Manual, and fragments, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1967), I. xxviii.
these books of anonymous quotations, the most popular of which was Erasmus's *Adages*. Increased interest in practical wisdom paved the way for the Neostoic revival.

Protestantism also helped prepare the way for Neostoicism; we have already mentioned Calvin's commentary on *De Clementia*.

Il ne semble pas que Calvin, Luther, Mélanchton aient pris au stoïcisme ses solutions, même "à leur insu" ... c'est le stoïcisme plutôt qui profitera de l'oeuvre du protestantisme ... la "demythification" protestante aura préparé la voie au personnalisme stoïcien, qui dresse l'homme seul avec ses propres forces sous la garantie du déterminisme universel.¹³

Humanism, the Renaissance, and the Reformation all helped form the climate necessary for a revival of interest in Stoicism which, however, had never disappeared completely because it formed part of the substance of Christian ethics.

Education played its part as well. Under Henri IV there were educational reforms which brought more classical literature into the classrooms.

Depuis longtemps déjà les Jésuits avaient aperçu les affinités entre leur doctrine et celle des Stoïciens; dans Sénèque, Plutarque et Épicure, ils avaient découvert des leçons d'héroïsme et de volonté, un art de se gouverner et de dompter les passions, proches de leur enseignement.¹⁴


D'Arvert has argued that the Jesuits remained more faithful to humanism than did the Reformers; they continued to study more classical texts, primarily Latin ones, since Greek studies were neither popular nor widespread, and the language was not learned thoroughly.\textsuperscript{15} There was probably no study of texts for their philosophic content aside from Aristotle; Cicero was studied as a standard for rhetoric, and for his excellent moral guides, but not as a representative of Stoic philosophy. In the 16th century, students had a "cahier de lieux communs de morale" in which they wrote proverbs, maxims, and definitions under headings such as Virtue, Vice, Life, and Death. Hence they were familiar with a wide range of precepts, many of which would have been drawn from Stoic writers. They would have been trained to develop their own commentary on a given maxim without undue concern for the original intention of the author.

I will now examine those Stoic doctrines which particularly attracted the attention of educated men in the second half of the sixteenth century and the early part of the 17th century, saving special consideration of Justus Lipsius and Guillaume Du Vair for the end.

\textbf{Moral idealism and Sagesse}

The Stoic ideal of virtue was attractive to Christianity because it set a high standard of human behavior, and was regarded as

a good in itself. The truly happy man was a Sage, but the Stoics did not recognize any man as having attained that state of perfection. This contrasts with the early Christians for whom the notion of virtue involved the imitation of Christ; for the desert fathers, martyrdom was the perfection of this imitation, and life in the desert was the next best thing. Thus began a dual standard of Christian virtue, a greater amount of virtue belonging to those who retired from this life into a world of meditation and contemplation, including the monastic orders, and a lesser degree being attainable by those people who continued their normal daily routines. It must have been the latter standard that 17th century writers had in mind when they criticized Stoicism for its moral idealism. The Reformation, by abolishing the monastic life and its aura of saintliness, brought Christian virtue more within human reach which, in turn, made the Stoic ideal appear further removed.

It is interesting to note the evolution in the understanding of the Latin *sapientia* because of the key role of knowledge in both Stoicism and Christianity. 'Sagesse' was the more common translation, and it acquired religious connotations in the Augustinian distinction between divine wisdom and human knowledge. It was also the term which corresponded to 'sapientia' as used by Seneca, so 'sage' became the term used for the antique ideal of the virtuous man; 'sagesse' was distinct from the 'science' of the pedant. To avoid the moral overtones of the word 'sagesse,' Montaigne use the term 'sapience' to signify purely intellectual knowledge; Charron used it to denote specifically the knowledge which precedes religious acti-
vity. 'Sapience' thus acquired a divine quality in order that Christian concepts of wisdom might avoid the overtones of the moral virtues of the pagan Wise Man; Du Vair and Charron both used 'sapience' to distinguish the wisdom of the Christian from that of the ancient Sage.16

Virtue expanded to include faith and honor

St. Augustine developed the notion of virtue into the art of living according to Christian charity. He adapted the four cardinal virtues, which came from Plato through Stoicism, to a Christian scheme.

Si l'amour est la volonté même, la vertu suprême est aussi le supreme amour. Quant aux vertus qui s'y subordonnent, elles s'y réduisent aisément. La tempérence, c'est l'amour qui se donne tout entier à ce qu'il aime; la force, c'est l'amour qui support tout facilement pour ce qu'il aime; la justice, c'est l'amour qui ne sert que l'objet aimé et domine par conséquent tout le reste; la prudence, c'est l'amour dans son discernement sage entre ce qui le favorise et ce qui le gêne.17

Here is another case of the way in which Christianity borrowed from Stoicism by adopting the terminology, and giving it Christian interpretations. Virtue here equals love, Christian charity, or love of

16 Levi, French Moralists, pp. 77-79.

God, with no mention of the wisdom or rationalism which Stoic, or Greek, virtues presupposed. Of the four virtues of temperance, courage, justice, and prudence, courage more nearly retains its original meaning, and becomes the ability to suffer all things for love. Justice is modified to mean serving only the object of love (God), and to that end subordinating all other passions; temperance, instead of being moderation, becomes self-giving in love. Prudence is stretched to mean a sort of self-regarding judgment, and it is only here that we have any hint that the rational faculty plays a role in this scheme.

Virtue became an act of faith for St. Augustine who believed man was incapable of obeying God's laws by his own unaided moral energy. This is incompatible with the Stoic belief in the combined efforts of the reason and the will to make judgments and to direct men in moral actions. Thus St. Augustine disregarded natural virtues, and replaced them with the theological virtues of hope, faith, and charity, which in turn moved the emphasis away from both practical ethics and from authentic Stoicism.

By the 12th century, and with the rediscovery of Aristotle, there was a stabilizing of the synthesis of philosophy and Christian thought, and a distinction was made between theological and moral virtues which made it possible once again to recognize natural virtues. Virtues and vices were classified by the scholastic philosophers and theologians. Belief became a virtue; knowledge alone was not sufficient to attain virtue. Professor Barbé suggests that there were two different attitudes concerning virtue. One school held that
virtue was the fruit of the imitation of Christ, it was a sign of
certainty; the other, more closely related to Stoicism, held that vir-
tue was to be pursued as a means to the imitation of Christ which was
the highest good.18 Virtue was clearly no longer an end in itself.

St. Thomas, deriving from Aristotle’s Magnanimous Man, taught
that seeking honor was a good thing, and that the failure to seek it
was a sin. Honor had become a necessary adjunct of virtue in 16th
century tragedies, and was even at times the goal of virtue.

Honour, if not glory, is in 1601 almost completely assimilated to that virtue
which is its own reward and, like du Vair’s
virtue, it is practically inseparable
from happiness. From this position it
is not very far to the view which attributes
to the personal quality of glory the pri-
macy given by the Neo-Stoics to virtue
and which will make ‘gloire’ the supreme
ethical value.19

Thus there is ample foundation for Corneille to use honor and virtue
as interchangeable terms, and the groundwork is laid for the "éthique
de la gloire."

Nature replaced by a personal deity

The rule to live according to Nature was basic to Stoicism, but
the concept does not play an important part in Christian ethics after
the Church Fathers. This is probably because the Stoic notion of Na-
ture as being ordered, reasonable, and the expression of divine wis-

18 Louis Barbé, "Les Vertus chrétiennes dans l’histoire de la
spiritualité des origines au XVIe siècle," Les Vertues Chrétien
selon Saint Jean Eudes et ses disciples (Paris: Cahiers eudistes de
Notre Vie, 1960)

19 Levi, French Moralists, p. 182. Cf. also Maurens, La tragé-
die sans tragique, p. 77.
dom, was replaced, in Christianity, by the notion of a personal deity who intervened more directly in the affairs of men. Living according to Nature meant both directing reason to govern, and indicating how that government was to be practically exercised; Clement of Alexandria used the phrase as the definition for the moral life in which living according to Nature was equivalent to living according to the logos. By logos the Stoics had meant universal reason, the fixed law or formula which governs existence; the Church Fathers added to this the meaning, the Word of the Father. The term 'nature' was then no longer used by the Christians; criticism of Stoicism on this point centered on events and actions being controlled by destiny, a fatalism which the Christians denied apertained to their corresponding notion of providence. But interest in Nature was revived in the 17th century, and we shall look for similarities between this revival and Stoicism.

*Human reason subordinated to divine wisdom*

Virtue and Wisdom were different aspects of the same goal, which was to live according to Nature; wisdom included both human knowledge and divine understanding. Christianity subordinated natural virtues and human knowledge to charity and to divine wisdom, or to God. Stoicism maintained the importance of virtue because it was a practical ethic. This is contrary to the Christian mystic who aspired primarily to union with God, relegating this terrestrial life and its moral problems to an inferior order of things. Reason is the link between Nature and Virtue, and as such is indis-
pensable to the Stoic. Once belief had replaced virtue, reason was regarded by some as superfluous, and even dangerous.

Will as independent of reason

The 17th century retained the association of rationality and moral good even though reason, unified in Stoicism, was then envisaged as two independent faculties, the discursive faculty, or reason proper, and the executive faculty, or will. This dichotomy arose from an attempt to explain evil actions. The Stoics did not recognize a faculty of the will independent of the intellect, but they did distinguish between right reason (moral good) and acting irrationally (producing evil). Thomas Aquinas is largely responsible for the introduction of the will into scholastic ethics which complicated the restatement of the Stoic theory of the passions in the late 16th century.

St. Thomas evolved a system in which he recognized two types of reason, the speculative reason and the practical reason. This latter was subdivided into the 'speculative-practical,' which was the action of choice, the same as the conscience or right reason, the ability to judge whether or not an object is in harmony with man's final end, and the 'ultimo-practical' reason which was the act of the will. He made two separate faculties so that he could better explain sin and man's responsibility for his own actions. The intellect and the will are mutually dependent for St. Thomas, but his system paved the way for an antithesis between reason and passions because both faculties solicite
the will. The 17th century was so eager to preserve the integrity of reason that it removed the impetus for immoral actions to the passions, and made them a warring faction against reason. False judgments were equated with opinions, and were thought to derive from the imagination, and not from the intellect.

From the Jansenist point of view, the passions, which were evil, were too strong to be controlled by either reason or will; only divine grace could assist man in coping with them. To believe that the will is capable of controlling the passions was the primary example of man's chief sin, pride. One of the major ways in which Christianity saw itself as correcting the errors of this pagan philosophy was to point out 'la bassesse de l'homme' in order to counteract the attribution by Stoicism of disproportionately great powers to man.

**Passions as the antithesis of reason**

The Christians did not exclude all emotions, but they purified them in the fire of Christian love. Passions came to be looked on as the evil side of man, as the antithesis of reason, and as such they were constantly a test of virtue; St. Francis of Sales claimed that they were evil, but the rationale for their existence was to exercise virtue.

One of the ways in which Stoicism sought to control passions was to train people to recognize what things were in their power and what were not; the latter were labeled 'indifferent.' Christianity, however, made a positive virtue of indifference. For example, wealth
was preferred, but indifferent, for the Stoic, but the for Christian,
poverty was a positive good. For the Stoic, affliction was to be
born without complaint, for the Christian, suffering was desirable,
and death as a martyr the ultimate good. Some critics of Stoicism
were attacking a doctrine which derived more from Pyrrhonism, and
taught indifference and imperturbability in the face of the events
of the unknowable external world.

Through Cicero and Seneca the 17th century knew the Chrysip-
pan doctrine of the four passions: pleasure, the imagining of pre-
sent good; pain, the imagining of present evil; desire, the imagin-
ing of future good; and fear, the imagining of future evil. This
means that reason can function irrationally, and lead to the criticism
that, for the Stoics, all sins were equal, because anything that went
against reason was completely irrational, there being no such thing
as degrees of irrationality, hence no degrees of evil. This makes
more understandable the Christian removal of passions from the in-
tellect, and the development of the intermediate faculty of the will
which is dependent on both reason and passions. The source of pas-
sion, for Cicero, is 'intemperantia,' a state in which the passions
are not controlled by reason; 'temperantia,' or controlling the pas-
sions by reason, clearly becomes a moral virtue.
Misunderstanding of the Stoic term 'apathy'

If the passions are false judgments, it could be rightly argued that they ought to be eradicated, not merely modified or controlled, but that proposition must not be confused with the interpretation of apathy as insensitivity. Apathy, for the Stoics, meant freedom from passions which resulted from the application of right reason, but this meaning had been lost long before the 17th century. Pyrrho, and later Musonius, used the term to mean freedom of the spiritual soul from bodily modifications of the passions (sins), and hence the complete insensitivity which was attacked so vigorously by the critics of the Neostoic revival was due to a confusion of Stoic and sceptic views. Cicero used the term 'tranquillitas (animi)' for apathy, and from this resulted the attacks on Stoicism as being primarily concerned with private mental repose, and freedom from active involvement in the difficult practical moral considerations which admitted of no ideal solution.

Stoicism was the major ethical rival to Christianity; at first it borrowed extensively from Stoicism, and then proceeded to modify its borrowings almost beyond recognition; Christianity certainly gave them coloring and meanings quite removed from their origins. It was Christian Stoicism which was most widely known in the Neostoic revival of the 16th century, but several attempts to recapture the philosophy of Stoicism date from that century, and I shall briefly examine the two most important ones.
Justus Lipsius and Guillaume Du Vair

The Neostoic revival was sparked during the Renaissance with scholarly editions of Seneca, Cicero, Epictetus, Plutarch, and Diogenes Laertius. In addition to classical sources, Neostoicism drew on the Essais of Montaigne which first appeared in 1575, and on Charron's La Sagesse, 1601, which Stowski calls "le résumé, la condensation, la systématisation de tout l'effort stoïcien des quarante dernières années."20 Charron was himself indebted to Montaigne as well as to Du Vair, who, along with Justus Lipsius, made a conscientious effort to revive Stoicism.

Prior to Lipsius, who was a professor of history at Louvain, and a philologist who edited both Seneca and Tacitus, no systematic adaptations of Stoicism had been made. In 1583 he published the two books of De Constantia in which he made a genuine attempt to give a Christian interpretation to a Stoic ethic. He drew upon Seneca for his terminology, and in particular took advantage of the ambiguity in the term 'sagesse,' in order to unite Christian doctrine and Stoic ethics. Lipsius posits a Platonic dualism, which would have passions arise in the body from sense perception leading to false opinions, by contrast with the intellect, which is concerned with speculative matters only and not with practical matters. By using Seneca's moral norm of following nature or the values contained in reason, he united these two faculties as they had been in classical Stoicism, thereby challenging the dichotomy which was believed, incorrectly, to exist.

in Stoicism, and cited as the constant war between reason and the passions.

He also advocated that passions be moderated, not that they be banished, which is more in keeping with Stoicism than with the later representations of it.

He placed less than customary emphasis on the discussions of fate, on whether or not God is subject to destiny, and on the distinctions between Destiny and Providence. He did discuss the term voluntas by which he meant that God foresees the choices that man will make, but does not force him to make them. In this he is perhaps seizing upon the terminology used by H. Wolff in his translation of the Arrian Discourses. Wolff used the word voluntas for the Greek prohairesis, which means choosing one thing before another; purpose, resolution. This helps explain why it was that the doctrine of will as a faculty independent of the reason was understood by the Neo-Stoics to be part of authentic Stoicism.

In 1604 Lipsius published two works which included the adjective 'stoic' in their titles: Manuductio ad stoicam philosophiam and Physiologia stoicorum; these were intended to preface his edition of Seneca. In the Manuductio he explicitly equates right reason and nature; virtue, which is the highest good, follows nature, which follows reason, which follows God. This is a Neo-Stoic synthesis in that it adds the notion of a Christian deity and Christian teleology to the Stoic notions of Nature, Reason, and Virtue. It is more Stoic than Christian to claim, as Lipsius does, that rational activity is the same as virtue.
Once again the question of the passions is raised and this time he offers arguments in favor of the position that the passions should be eradicated. However, he resolves this problem by making the Stoic claim that the passions are false judgments, and hence could be corrected or controlled by reason.

Lipsius lead the way back to several authentic Stoic doctrines, but, in spite of a fairly wide appeal of his works, they did not correct popular views of Stoicism. One of the most significant results of his work, and of the Neostoic revival, is that the terms 'nature' and 'reason' regained non-Christian connotations; secular ethics was not yet divorced from dogmatic morality, but the ground was prepared for the period of greatest Stoic systematizing and vogue, the period from 1590 to 1640.21

Guillaume Du Vair, Garde des Sceaux and Bishop of Lisieux, also studied Stoic authors, and published a translation of Epictetus' Encheiridion in 1585 under the title of Philosophie morale des stol-ques avec le Manuel d'Epictète.

Du Vair, like Lipsius, was interested in using Stoic doctrines to shame Christians by pagan example. Since his interests were largely practical, he developed more fully a theory of the will. De la constance et consolation en calamités publiques, probably written in 1590 during the siege of Paris, was likely influenced by Lipsius. His works were very popular; there were fifteen editions of his Oeuvres from 1610 to 1641, and Strowski indicates that he influenced Corneille,

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Racine, La Fontaine, Montaigne, Francis of Sales, Bossuet, and Pascal.

When Du Vair defined virtue, he first made a distinction between natural and supernatural virtue: the later was a separate and detachable order of virtue which he posited in addition to natural virtues; the pagans were capable of sustained acts of natural virtue, but they lacked the element of grace which would have given them access to supernatural virtues.

Virtue, for Du Vair, as for the Stoics, consisted in following right reason, and, like Cicero, he considered temperance as the foundation for the other virtues. The regular practice of temperance results in its becoming a sort of by-product of the intellect, dependent on reason for guides to action, i.e., judgments, but autonomous in that it controls and directs actions and emotions. This is much closer to the notion of the will which is, by the 17th century, clearly associated with Stoicism. Its function is not to eradicate emotions, but to control and to moderate them, and perhaps even to differentiate among them as to good (encourage), bad (eradicate), and indifferent ones (control, moderate); hence the close relationship between temperance or will (also related to training in that it requires practice) and moderation. From there it is a short step to a 17th century doctrine, of Stoic derivation, that virtue is a disposition of the will. Another way to handle the problem of the passions is to remove them entirely from the intellect, and make them originate in the senses. Once passions are controlled by the will, which is superior to them, they no longer hinder the reason, and Du
Vair can consider the 'offices' which are in keeping with reason, and which follow the order of nature. Here he embarks on the spiritual consideration of piety and religion.

Against this background of ancient Stoicism and Neostoicism, I shall move on to consider four 17th century authors, each of whom makes some specific references to Stoic philosophy, with a view to discovering to what extent, and in what form, this ethical theory was carried through the 17th century.
CHAPTER III

CORNEILLE

Stoic themes and vocabulary

There is an affinity between Stoicism and that strength of purpose and firmness of will which Corneille's heroes embody. They act from principle, making sacrifices for what they believe to be right, and fulfilling obligations which they conceive of as having greater value than their own immediate happiness. They dominate those emotions which they believe to be contrary to their duty, and they undertake feats which may entail their death. Heroes welcome hardships because these provide opportunities to exercise their virtue.

By 1640, the revival of interest in Stoicism had run its course, but it was still a respected philosophy of ethics when Corneille was being educated by the Jesuits. He would have known its classical sources—Seneca, Cicero, and Plutarch at least—as well as its modern commentators—Montaigne, Du Vair, Lipsius, and Charron. Corneille was interested in Seneca primarily as a writer of tragedies rather than as a moralist. Medea, his first venture into tragedy, was modeled after Seneca's play by the same name, and from the De Clementia, I, 9, he derived the plot for Cinna. When Greek philosophy came to Rome in the second century B.C., Stoicism found ready soil in the
native "Roman virtue"; this Roman virtue, as exemplified in Horace, was right at home in the French revival of Stoicism. The plots of Sertorius and Agésilas are from Plutarch, so we know that Corneille returned to, and studied, two of the foremost sources of knowledge about Stoic philosophy and ethics.

Corneille also used themes and vocabulary in his plays which were associated with Stoicism.

Fortune, quelques maux que ta rigueur m'envoie,
J'ai trouvé les moyens d'en tirer de la joie.

Horace, l. 735-736.  

Even though Sabine did not find happiness amidst the rigors which fortune sent her, the Stoic evocation is clear. One must snuff out emotions—"étouffez cette lâche tristesse"—because they are, and ought to be, inferior to reason, and because they are signs of a weakness of moral character which are to be avoided just as virtuous qualities are to be displayed.

La solide vertu dont je fais vanité
N'admet point de faiblesse avec sa fermeté.

Horace, l. 485-486.

To avoid the temptation of cowardice, and of succumbing to passions, characters keep before themselves the reminder of constancy and duty:

armez-vous de constance    Horace, l. 417.

Cette mâle vigueur de constance héroïque    Surénè, l. 1097

Cependant mon devoir est toujours le plus fort. Cid, l. 1167

Virtues pitted against destiny measure the true worth of a man:

Le sort que de l'honneur nous ouvre la barrière
Offre à notre constance une illustre matière
Il épouse sa force à former un malheur
Pour mieux se mesurer avec notre valeur.

Horace, l. 431-434.

The joy with which they undertake onerous tasks is reminiscent of
the Thomistic and Neostoic view that there is merit in successfully
triumphing over challenges to virtue: "Plus l'effort est grand,
plus la gloire est grande." (Polyeucte, l. 1356) These themes and
this vocabulary recur so frequently in Corneille that an attempt to
establish Corneille's morale as basically Stoic suggests itself.

Stoicism in Corneille and the critical tradition

In 1966, Jacques Maurens published his book, La Tragédie sans
tragique: le néo-stoïcisme dans l'oeuvre de Pierre Corneille, which
was the first major critical piece devoted entirely to the influence
of Stoicism in the ethics of Corneille. Prior to that, Stoicism was
mentioned, in passing, as a contributing element in Corneille's back-
ground. Maurens's book is an attempt to show how Stoic virtue evolved
into générosité, and how it emerged in Corneille's plays. He con-
cludes that Corneille's effort, "du Cid à Polyeucte, ne va qu'à figu-
rer dramatiquement l'idée néo-stoïcienne de la générosité."²

How does Maurens attribute the notion of générosité to Neo-
stoicism? He states that the Stoic notion of virtue conflicted with
the traditional ideal of honor as promoted by Aristotle and St. Thomas;
it also conflicted with Christianity. The synthesis of the conflicts

is to be found in the Neostoicism of Du Vair, and it is this synthesis which Corneille adapts into drama. According to Maurens, Neostoicism united Stoic reason with Christian faith, thereby creating a new idea of man in which honneur and gloire were spurs to virtue, and making possible "un héros exemplaire, agissant en étroite collaboration avec Dieu." According to Maurens, Du Vair sensed the danger of the individual as sole judge of his virtue, and while he was tolerant of ambition, he condemned any cult of honor because it results in the sacrifice of reason, virtue, and happiness.

Not only had Du Vair provided the basis for uniting honor and glory with virtue, but Maurens found in his writings the germs of the principles of générosité which are love, clemency, and public service. Love originates with, and is nurtured by, reason rather than being a natural and spontaneous emotion: "[il exige] que l'amour ne se naîsse pas de l'humeur, du hasard ou d'une complicité occasionnelle, mais s'établisssse au niveau d'un jugement de l'esprit et vive d'une estime réciproque." The step from reason to faith, and from love to charity is presumed.

The theme of Seneca's De Clementia is also Christianized by Du Vair, and therefore Maurens finds that it is "animé d'une ferveur généreuse qu'ignore manifestement Sénèque." Since there is little opportunity to use this theme in connection with Corneille, Maurens does not dwell on it. It is questionable whether it is a sufficiently prominent characteristic of the généreux to be singled out over

3 Ibid., p. 132. 4 Ibid., p. 120. 5 Ibid., p. 121.
constancy, courage, or wisdom.

Neostoicism encourages man "de pouser dans sa foi chré-
tienne un réconfort et un encouragement au service généreux de son
pays. L'acceptation stoïcienne fait place à l'allégresse."\(^6\) The
synthesis of Stoicism and Christianity is seen most clearly in this
principle of public service, and contrasts, in Maurens's view, with
Stoicism: "L'héroïsme stoïcien correspond à une revendication ab-
strait de dignité humaine."\(^7\) Maurens regards that sort of heroism
as inferior to the Neostoic view because the latter "unit besoin
stoïcien de sécurité et désir chrétien de responsabilité,"\(^8\) but he
has overlooked the fact that an appeal to human dignity excludes
the possibilities of patronizing attitudes and pursuit of selfish
ends.

In his treatment of Corneille's tragedies, Maurens undertakes
to show how this generosity is made manifest by a reconciliation of
Stoic and Christian concepts. In the Cid, love (pagan) and honor
(Christian) are reconciled, i.e., a pagan impulse is reconciled with
the Christian idea of accepted responsibility. In Horace, we find
the Neostoic (by which he means Christian) idea that the world order
does not suppress human freedom (by implication, Stoicism did). In
Cinna, we have an example of a man who, through clemency, triumphs
within God's plan, i.e., he rejects the pagan notion of retribution.
Finally, in Polyeucte, the welfare of the state, interpreted as a

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 130.
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 121.
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 129.
pagan and less worthy good, is subordinated to the establishment of God's reign.

Maurens' notion of générosité is a desire for recognized personal merit coupled with Christian charity. He sees a progression in Corneille's work brought about by the tempering influence of the Christian Neo-Stoic moralists on the pagan Stoic view of the universe and their abstract notion of virtue, and culminating in a Christian view of God and virtue. This is how Neo-Stoicism was Christianized, Maurens claims, and Corneille based his plays on this Neo-Stoic ethic. The Neo-Stoic moralists did often attempt to reconcile Stoicism with Christianity, but I find in Corneille a more mondain ethic, one more susceptible to comparison with classical Stoicism, than with Maurens's interpretation of Neo-Stoicism. To say that Corneille's plays move progressively toward Christian charity, relying on honor and glory as spurs to virtue, is a misinterpretation of them; Cornelian characters are devoted to their gloire, even at the expense of other considerations.

A further weakness of Maurens's book is that it fails to discuss other Stoic concepts such as the will, passions, reason, and constancy, and it also fails to discuss the variety of ways in which Corneille uses the terms vertu, volonté, and raison.

In spite of his claim that this new heroic nobility "consiste à surmonter l'angoisse, à manifester le triomphe d'une lucidité détachée de l'intérêt personnel," he cannot escape the charge that

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9 Ibid., p. 132.
it is self-seeking when it pursues virtue with the primary hope of winning honor. Maurens cites as authentic Neostoicism Balsac’s remark that God "promet aux Gens de bien, de l’honneur, de la Renommée, et de la Gloire: ce que sans doute il ne ferait pas, si ce n’estoient de tres-bonnes choses." Maurens has done a disservice to both Stoic virtue and Christian charity in his attempts to reconcile them under the concept of générosité. His theory stands precariously close to making the reward for meritorious actions the goal rather than the incentive, and this, in turn, leads to a failure to recognize the more intellectual and spiritual aims of both Stoicism and Christianity.

Critics other than Maurens discuss Neostoicism as a part of the intellectual and moral climat which was Corneille’s background, but do not see it as the major component of his moral theory. Nadal, for example, suggests that Corneille’s heroes derive from the Stoic sage and go beyond him: “Corneille a marqué ce passage du Sage au Héros, du Magnanime au Généreux; du Brave au Glorieux.” He recognized the influence in Jesuit education of Stoicism, but concluded that, in his earlier plays at least, Corneille was influenced by neither Stoicism nor religious faith. The major contribution of Neostoicism, he claims, was to forge a separation between Christian


and secular morality. Picard speaks of Corneille's heroes as being "fortified by their energy and stoicism" and applies to them such attributes as will power, self control, and courage. 12 Gillot says that Corneille's heroes are "des descendants directs des prud'hommes stoiciens," but then qualifies this by adding that the Christian Stoics emphasized repos, and are, therefore, not the forerunners of Cornelian characters who derive rather from the combattant, active doctrine of the "humaniste dévot." 13

Descartes posited a moral theory in the Traité des Passions (1649) which is much indebted to Stoicism, and in his correspondance with Princess Elizabeth during the years 1645 to 1648 he elaborated on many Stoic themes. It is not the aim of this thesis to trace parallels between Descartes and Stoicism, but the similarity between Corneille's voluntarism and Descartes' rationalism is striking, and has played an important role in Cornelian criticism, sparked by Lanson's article, "Le héros cornélien et le 'généreux' selon Descartes."

That article, which was influential for many years, opened with a statement which could substantiate a view that Corneille's morale derives from Stoicism:

Le principe de la psychologie cornélienne, c'est la force, la toute-puissance de la volonté. Tous les héros de Corneille sont des héros de la volonté. 14

For Corneille, the will can, must, and does subjugate the passions; in holding this view, claims Lanson, Corneille is giving literary expression to Descartes's moral theory of the Traité des Passions. Since both men, according to Lanson, are engaged in descriptive ethics based on their observations of contemporary society, it is not surprising that Descartes's "généreux" were the same sort of men as Corneille's heroes. Lanson cites major portions of Articles 41-49 to show how, in Descartes, the will succeeds in manipulating the passions by means of evoking ideas which are contrary to the passions one wishes to conquer, or, conversely, by not stirring up unwanted emotions unnecessarily. The will comes to the aid of reason, and it is the role of reason to convert passions into will. Lanson holds that there are no purely passionate or impulsive characters among Corneille's heroes, but that they rely on reason does not mean they are devoid of emotion.

Il se peut que ces âmes fortes soient passionnées aussi, mais elles raison- nent leur passion, elles en détermi- nent l'objet comme absolument bon et désirable; et ainsi à l'impulsion elles substituent des jugements, des maximes nettes et réfléchies, qui ser- ont désormais les vrais principes de leur action. C'est une des originali- tés de Corneille que cette résolution de la passion en volonté.15

Love is the passion most likely to subjugate reason and will; it, likewise, most frequently seems to be in conflict with virtue or duty, i.e., with what one ought to do as determined by reason rather

15 Ibid., p. 402.
than by emotional impulse. Hence tragedy may center around the sacrifice of love to duty. But love in Corneille, Lanson claims, is basically a high degree of esteem, and to corroborate this, he cites Descartes's use of the terms 'love' and 'esteem' interchangeably in Article 83. The will, rather than destroying love, converts it into "will to do one's duty." By claiming that the execution of one's duty makes him more estimable, and hence more worthy of love, a passion is converted into will, and not allowed either to rule the will or even to remain in conflict with it.

E. Cassirer claims that "ce que Descartes expose sous l'aspect théorique moral, Corneille le représente sous l'aspect poétique."\textsuperscript{16} A. Stegmann, after examining Descartes's morale, which he finds too easily accessible to all men to be peculiar to the hero, claims that the "héros cornélien ... va en définitive bien au-delà du généreux cartesien."\textsuperscript{17} It will be interesting to see what similarities exist between the Cornelian hero, the Stoic Sage, and the Cartesian généreux.

The possible Stoic influence on Corneille's morale is diffuse enough to give rise to interpretations which exclude it as well as allow it.

Father d'Angers, who specialized in Stoicism in the 17th century, and did so many studies on the writings of various Christian


moralists, ascertaining the extent to which traces of Stoicism are found in each, claimed that Descartes did not hold a moral position similar to the Stoics.\(^{18}\) The weaknesses of Father d'Angers's article derive from his conviction that a fundamental difference exists, by definition, between pagan Stoicism and Christian Cartesian views; Descartes could not really have established a morality independent of his Christian faith. Thus Father d'Angers's interpretations of both Stoicism and Descartes must be viewed in the light of his own convictions. The position he attributed to Descartes is closer to Ciceronian and Epictetan Stoicism than it is to the one he outlined as Stoic, and contrasted with it.

Lanson's article has been attacked as giving undue weight to the role of the will and reason, i.e., to a position compatible with Stoicism, and failing to take into account the motivating force of the passions. Champigny asks, "le héros cornélien est sans nul doute un raisonneur, mais est-il rationnel, ou même raisonnable?" and claims that Rodrigue's stances are only a theatrical device; after reciting them he blindly follows the dictates of his passion for honor and glory. "Rodrigue accepte, les yeux fermés, l'autorité de la tradition, les préjugés de sa caste."\(^{19}\) In his view, Cornelien heroes are fanatics who rationalize, who do not call into question the prin-

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ciples of their actions, and, hence, cannot be said to be acting on
the basis of reason.

In Tanquerey's view, Corneille is presenting characters who
are dominated by their passions and unhappy because of them. 20
Rodrigue and Chimène are dominated by two passions, their love, and
a sense of honor, and the former is sacrificed to the latter. He
denies that Horace's killing of his sister was an act of cold and
reasoned will; he claims it was committed by a patriotic fanatic.

Octave Nadal has presented most thoroughly the thesis against
reason: passion, and not always of the noblest kind, rather than
reason, causes the Cornelian hero to act.

C'est une passion véritable chez tous
les cornéliens que cette soif de con-
quête et de possession. Elle meut la
volonté, la raison et en général toutes
les facultés de l'âme. Contrairement
t à ce qu'on a pu croire, c'est cette
force toute passionnelle qui infléchit
l'esprit et ses plus hautes fonctions,
vouloir et jugement, vers ses buts dévo-
rorants et finalement les somme d'être
alliés ou complices. L'inverse ne se
produit pas, les passions conquérantes,
ambition, vengeance ou générosité,
n'obéissant jamais à la raison. 21

Whereas Descartes held that the exercise of reason and the
will are natural to man, Starobinski claims that reason and will
must fight to suppress "natural," i.e., emotional, man. 22 Le lutte
intime que nous peint Corneille, c'est celle qui se livre entre

20 F.J. Tanquerey, "Le Héros cornélien," Revue des Cours et

21 Le Sentiment de l'Amour dans l'oeuvre de Pierre Corneille,
p. 139.
l'être idéal, l'être modèle et l'être naturel que le héros s'efforce de renier."

These latter interpretations make it less plausible to talk about Corneille's morale as essentially Stoic. But we still must admit a superficial similarity with Stoicism, we must explain Corneille's use of Stoic vocabulary, and note the similarities and differences in the use of these terms in order to be able to establish the degree of Stoic influence which Corneille's major works reflect.

The various meanings of vertu

The aim of the Stoic is to pursue Virtue. Is that the aim of the Cornelian hero? In an attempt to answer a question set by l'Académie de Corse in 1751, "Quelle est la vertu la plus nécessaire au Héros?" Rousseau rejected such commonplaces as bravery, resolution, and zeal, and he most particularly rejected the cardinal virtues deriving from Plato and Stoicism, justice, prudence, and moderation. For him, a form of courage, la force d'âme, is the greatest virtue of a hero; it is the ability to act with determination and self-mastery. A virtuous man is just, prudent, and moderate, but he may not be a hero, and a hero is often none of these; the virtu-

ous man and the hero are quite distinct and different entities. 23

The meaning of the Latin word *virtus* is manly and moral excellence, with courage as a secondary meaning. Corneille uses the word in a wide variety of ways.

(1) As total merit or worth. Félix, when he hears that Polyeucte, the Roman suitor whose heart he had rejected for his daughter, is arriving resplendent with the fortune and political power he formerly lacked, exclaims,

Regret qui me tue
De n'avoir pas aimé la vertu toute nue!

Polyeucte, I. 229-230.

(2) As general abilities without moral implications. Suréna perceives that the king's jealousy and mistrust of a loyal subject's accomplishments are a liability to him.

Mon crime véritable est d'avoir aujourd'hui
Plus de nom que mon roi, plus de vertu que lui.

Suréna, I. 1511-1512.

(3) As control of passions. L'Infante discloses her love for Rodrigue to Léonor:

écoute, écoute enfin comme j'ai combattu
Et plaignant ma faiblesse, admire ma vertu.

Cid, I. 79-80.

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23 "Il ne faut donc pas se représenter l'Héroïsme sous l'idée d'une perfection morale qui ne lui convient nullement, mais comme un composé de bonnes et mauvaises qualités salutaires ou nuisibles selon les circonstances, et combinées dans une telle proportion qu'il en résulte souvent plus de fortune et de gloire pour celui qui les possède, et quelquefois même plus de bonheur pour les Peuples, que d'une vertu plus parfaite." J.J. Rousseau, Oeuvres, Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), vol. II, p. 1265.
Léonor replies, "Votre vertu combat et son charme et sa force,"
(1. 130) and points out that heaven will intervene on her behalf:

Espérez tout du ciel; il a trop de justice
Pour laisser la vertu dans un si long supplice.

Cid, l. 132-133.

Pauline is hesitant, but Félix expresses his confidence in her ability to encounter Sévère without allowing her former love for him to be rekindled.

Je n'ose m'assurer de toute ma vertu.
Je ne le verrai point.
Ta vertu m'est connue.

Polyeucte, l. 348-349; 353

(4) As courage and bravery, both simple and heroic. Horace speaks to Curiae:

Combatte un ennemi pour le salut de tous,
Et contre un inconnu s'exposer seul aux coups,
D'une simple vertu c'est l'effet ordinaire,

Mais vouloir au public immoler ce qu'on aime
S'attacher au combat contre un autre soi-même,

Et, rompant tous ces noeuds, s'armer pour la patrie
Contre un sang qu'on voudrait racheter de sa vie;
Une telle vertu n'appartenait qu'à nous.

Horace, l. 437-439; 443-444; 447-449.

(5) As resoluteness, constancy, firmness. Emotions are sometimes so strong that it takes the most steadfast in conviction to remain unchanged by their attack, as Sabine testifies in the opening lines from Horace:

Et l'esprit le plus mâle et le moins abattu
Ne saurait sans désordre exercer sa vertu.

l. 5-6.
(6) As political expediency; ambition. Photin advises
Ptolomée to kill César to assure his throne because a king should
seek above all to rule, to guard jealously intact his power.

La justice n'est pas une vertu d'Etat.

Et qui veut tout pouvoir doit oser tout enfreindre;
Fuir comme un deshonmeur la vertu qui le perd,
Et voler sans scrupule au crime qui le sert.

La Mort de Pompée, l. 104; 110-112.

(7) As a sense of duty, of hierarchy of priorities.

Et toujours ma vertu retrace dans mon coeur
Ce qu'il doit au vaincu, brulant pour le vainqueur.

Cléopatre in La Mort de Pompée, l. 359-360.

(8) As humility, selflessness; clemency. Maxime advises
Auguste to relinquish the throne:

Le bonheur peut conduire à la grandeur suprême,
Mais pour y renoncer il faut la vertu même.

Cinna, l. 477-478.

Cléopatre uses it as the opposite of self-interest:

Et vous saurez aussi
Que la seule vertu me fait parler ainsi
Et que, si l'intérêt m'avait préoccupée,
J'agirais pour César, et non pour Pompée.

La Mort de Pompée, l. 283-286.

Auguste has just pardoned Cinna for plotting his assassination:

O vertu sans exemple! ô clémence, qui rend
Votre pouvoir plus juste, et mon crime plus grand!

Cinna, l. 1731-1732.

Corneille uses the term vertu in three general ways: (a) to
mean worth, goodness or moral vigor (1, 8), (b) to designate speci-
fic virtues including fulfillment of duty (3, 4, 5, 7), and (c) to refer to general abilities, but with no moral reference (2, 6). The object of Corneille's vertu may be unjust, criminal, or immoral as well as good, noble, and honest, and this marks an immediate, essential difference from Stoicism. Hence, the first deviation from the Stoic concept of virtue that we note is a relaxation in the requirement of a moral basis for virtue; virtue is becoming disassociated from that which is morally good.

The Stoic pursues virtue because it is the highest good, it is intrinsically valuable. For the Stoic to receive acclaim for being virtuous is desirable, but secondary. Cornelian characters do not pursue an ever elusive virtue; vertu is a characteristic of their heroic nature which enables them to pursue honor and glory. In this sense it is a power, a force d'âme, whereas Stoic virtue is a goal, a state. Nadal says that

en général sous le nom de vertu, Corneille entend la "grandeur du courage", la ferme disposition et résolution de l'âme à rester maîtresse d'elle-même ... la force d'âme, le serment à soi de ne jamais manquer de courage. 24

The emphasis is on the ability to act, on courage, on strength of character rather than on the goal toward which the action is directed; it is the action, and not the object of the action, which brings honor to the hero, and clothes him in glory. "La vertu est cette énergie et cette fermeté d'âme bandées pour les actions glorieuses." 25 This

24 Le Sentiment de l'amour, pp. 296-297.
25 Ibid., p. 312.
replacement of an action for a state marks the second basic deviation from the Stoic concept of virtue.

The third major departure from Stoicism to note is the use of gloire and honneur as though they were synonymous with vertu:

Embrasse ma vertu pour vaincre ta faiblesse,
Participe à ma gloire au lieu de la souiller,
Tâcher à t'en revêtir, non à m'en dépouiller.
Es-tu de mon honneur si mortelle ennemie,
Que je te plaise mieux couvert d'une infamie?

Horace, l. 1356-1360.

Their opposites are faiblesse, failure to act with resolve, which entails infamie, loss of honor.

Maurens claims that the association of honor with virtue was clear in 16th century French drama, and is, hence, of Stoic derivation.

Même dans celles de nos tragédies qui proposent avec le plus de netteté la forme et la rigueur stoiciennes du devoir, l'honneur est constamment célébré comme l'adjuvant nécessaire et parfois le but de la vertu.\textsuperscript{26}

Nadal's thesis is that, in Corneille, we are presented with an "éthique de la gloire" in which honor and glory have superceded virtue in importance.

La gloire est la valeur la plus haute,
le principe ... le sentiment de la gloire ... ressemble plus à une exigence intime qu'à ce qu'on doit aux règles de l'honneur, toujours un peu extérieures

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{La tragédie sans tragique,} p. 77.
et de société. La gloire cornélien est la loi suprême d'un modus vivendi personnel. 27

If gloire is a sort of inner compulsion or conscience, a drive to meet a set of high standards or goals, it could be attached to Stoicism as a kind of ideal, but it is not because seeking virtue is not always doing that which is morally good or right. Virtue, as used by Corneille, often seems to derive from the secondary meaning of virtus, courage or bravery, and, as such, can be outside the sphere of moral considerations. In this sense, self-mastery is the primary virtue, and saint heartedness is the opposite vice. But the difference from Stoicism is basic, for the Stoic ideal, while relying heavily on personal conscience as its guide, is directed toward that which is morally good, rather than toward a personal conception of honor.

Levi traces the development of the "éthique de la gloire" to show how it evolved smoothly out of Neostoicism even when authors like Balzac were intending to repudiate Stoicism. He attributes the establishment of the "éthique de la gloire" to three causes: (1) a more relaxed attitude toward the passions which Neostoicism fostered, (2) failure to condemn the ambition for glory because of its social utility by the Neostoic authors such as Charron, and (3) an evolution in the meaning of the term gloire. Cicero translated the Greek eudoxia as bona fama, and explained why he believed that was preferable, and more accurate, than gloria, but Montaigne translated bona

27 Le Sentiment de l'amour, pp. 299-300.
fame as gloire, and it subsequently developed the sense of a personal, interior quality inseparable from the achievement of virtue. Even though Montaigne and Charron both held that virtue requires no reward, honor was a great source of satisfaction, and tended to encourage one not only to do good deeds but to seek glory.\textsuperscript{28}

Cornelian characters have an almost existential jealousy about their gloire; what is essential about them is their glory, i.e., how others see them. The moi exists as reflected in the opinions of les autr-es which can lead to giving first consideration, not to the moral qualities of an action, but to how it will be viewed by others, and whether or not it will increase the agent's glory. They do not share the existential concern for authenticity, they are not interested in how their moi differs from others, but rather in how well they fit into the categories by which honor and glory are judged.

Thus we must conclude that frequently the goal of the Cornelian hero is gloire, and that his concept of glory is not a particular form of Stoic virtue, but an entirely different ideal. It is amoral, it is action rather than a state towards which actions lead, and it places primary emphasis on personal excellence within a framework of standards established by and for a specific social milieu with the aim of assuring the hero the maximum of recognition. In these senses the Cornelian hero, or généreux, differs markedly from the Stoic Sage.

Reason as impotent in controlling the passions

Unlike the Stoics, Descartes distinguished between the two activities of reason and will. Because Corneille talks so frequently of reason ruling the passions, and because his heroes exhibit an enthusiasm for action where the conflicts of emotions would stunt into inactivity less determined men, this distinction is blurred, and reason and will often seem to act so in concert as to be one faculty. I propose, however, that a distinction is maintained, but that reason is impotent when pitted against either will or passions. I suggest four reasons for this, and shall examine them in turn.

(1) A character may claim recourse to reason to overcome a passion, but upon closer scrutiny, it is recourse to a counterbalancing passion and not to reason at all.

Cinna has been called before Auguste, and Aemilie is suddenly worried about his safety in the event that their plot to assassinate Auguste is discovered. In a moment of passion she advises him to flee, but his refusal, on the grounds of fidelity to his cause, calms her.

ma raison revient
Pardonne à mon amour cette indigne faiblesse.

Cinna, l. 324-325.

What she calls her raison here is really her determination not to be distracted from their plan; rational considerations have nothing to do with this situation. Aemilie has been nursing a hatred of Auguste, and it is this hatred, temporarily jolted from her foremost thoughts by imminent danger to Cinna, which she recalls. No rational faculty
has even been called into action, let alone determining the course of action of this person who is motivated now, not by reason, but by an old hatred. Their will is that resolution to execute a pre-arranged plan which was arrived at by calculation, which form of reason is to be distinguished from wisdom and judgment.

Horace, hearing his sister call down a curse on all of Rome and every last Roman for honoring the murderer of her beloved Curiace, takes sword in hand and pursues her, exclaiming:

C'est trop, ma patience à la raison fait place;  
Va dedans les enfers plaindre ton Curiace.

Horace, l. 1319-1320.

Horace is not responding to reason, he is responding to anger. He is furious that his own sister should not only fail in the respect due him as the savior of the city, but should, in fact, insult him. It is clear that he is acting, not from rational judgment, but rashly, from intolerance of Camille’s feelings; he is punishing her for transgressing a code of behavior to which he has adhered, and which he, therefore, accepts as reasonable.

(2) Reason may be appealed to, but in the face of conflicting passions, it abdicates.

Cinna offers one of the best examples of a person who calls himself généreux, but is ready to commit treason and crime—he uses both those words—to satisfy his love for Aemilia.

Les douceurs de l’amour, celles de la vengeance,  
La gloire d’affranchir le lieu de ma naissance

Cinna, l. 877-878.

These are his goals, and, at first, he does not want them to dictate
an immoral course of action. He notes that his goals

N'ont point assez d'appâts pour flatter ma raison,
S'il les faut acquérir par une trahison,
S'il faut percer le flanc d'un prince magnanime
Qui de peu que je suis fait une telle estime

O coup! ô trahison trop indigne d'un homme.

Cinna, l. 879-882; 885.

He recognizes that what he is on the verge of doing is immoral and he shrinks from it. True, it could be argued that Cinna is blind to Auguste's flattery, rather than that he has been persuaded of Auguste's virtue. If this is the case, we can still claim that Cinna is not swayed by reason, but is duped by the appeal to his self-esteem, and that moves him to reconsider his commitment to Aemilie. It could also be argued that Auguste is a magnanimous prince only when it serves his self-interest, so Cinna is justified to continue his treasonous plot. But clearly, Cinna now believes that Auguste is reformed; Auguste has promised him Aemilie, and has taken him on as chief counsel, so, of his goals, only vengeance remains unfulfilled. But he is bound to Aemilie, who will not hear his appeals, and who, he becomes convinced, is giving more weight to passion than to reason: "Vous faites des vertus au gré de votre haine." (l. 977) Thus he knowingly commits himself to a course of criminal action to appease her desire for vengeance, which passion he has espoused, and which passion now outweighs the other two (fulfilled) goals combined. He is spurred on, of course, by his attachment to Aemilie, which he now calls, not his love, but his commitment. Reason abdicates completely when it confronts her hatred coupled with his
love for her: "J'obéis sans réserve à tous vos sentiments." (l. 947)
He obeys her, even when confronted with a changed set of circumstances, and he regards such intransigency as the virtue of constancy.

In a famous monologue at the beginning of Act III of Horace, Sabine tries to find comfort by conjuring up reasons for not despairing of the outcome of a battle between her husband and her brothers. Just when she thinks she has found a way to view her situation with equanimity, she sees the ineffectiveness, and, indeed, the deceptiveness of reason.

Flatteuse illusion, erreur douce et grossière,
Vain effort de mon âme, impuissante lumière,
De qui le faux brillant prend droit de m'éblouir,
Que tu sais peu durer, et tôt t'évanouir!

1. 739-742.

Reason must abdicate, having clarified only the fact that Sabine will not extricate herself from this dilemma with any happiness.

The disgrace of reason has yet another step down to take.

Some heroes refuse to make any use whatsoever of the rational faculty, e.g., Horace, "Rome a choisi mon bras, je n'examine rien," (l. 498) and others, like Rodrigue, who have tried reason, are ashamed to have stooped so low:

Courons à la vengeance;
Et, tout honteux d'avoir tant balancé,
Ne soyons plus en peine.

Cid, l. 346-348.

To reason is a sign of weakness, while unquestioning obedience is a sign of strength, of constancy.

(3) What is called reason may not involve any rational pro-
cesses, but may rather be a kind of compulsion to counteract a passion with duty. I distinguish this use of the term reason from the first use in which a strong counter passion was operative, and aggressive action was taken by the hero. In this case, abstinence is more frequently the case, the determination not to succumb to passion x, although the hero often finds some other passion later which will serve as a sort of escape valve.

Ma raison, il est vrai, dompte mes sentiments,
Mais, quelque autorité que sur eux elle ait prise,
Elle n'y règne pas, elle les tyrannisait.

Polyeucte, l. 500-502.

Pauline is not simply trying to console Sévère; she still loves him, but duty commands her sentiments elsewhere. They are to be coerced, not by reason, but buy her concept of duty which she believes to be a rationally discovered convention.

Eurydice expresses the same sentiment, and uses the word duty: "Le devoir vient à bout de l'amour le plus ferme." (l. 1418) She must overcome her love for Suréna, and, for the time being she, like Pauline, must restrain her emotions. Each can only do so by an appeal to duty, which requires the kind of force d'âme they must exert as a counterweight in order to conquer their passions. Reason does not require this type of energy, and, hence, is not a sufficient force to offset the passions.

(4) The Cornelian character may use as a rationale for an action the increase of personal gloire.

Monsieur, pour conserver ma gloire et mon estime,
Désobéir un peu n'est pas un si grand crime.

Cid, l. 365-366.
Don Arias has been sent to Chimène's father to reason with him
("Souffrez que la raison remette vos esprits," 1. 383), to tell him
that his services to the king are fully recognized, and to point
out to him that he should not take as an insult the appointment of
another man as tutor to the prince. But the Count feels insulted,
and transforms this slight into a question of honor.

Et l'on peut me réduire à vivre sans bonheur,
Mais non pas me résoudre à vivre sans honneur.

*Cid*, l. 395-396.

Since we are assured that the Count is held in high esteem by the
king, we can only assume that he is concerned more with his popular
reputation than with the moral quality of his actions or with the
reasons behind the choice of the king to whom he owes obeissance.

A glorious death is compensation for loss of life:

Mais quoique ce combat me promette un cercueil,
La gloire de ce choix m'enflle d'un juste orgueil.

*Horace*, l. 377-378.

When the Cornelian hero accomplishes great deeds, he often seems
to perform them, not solely for the sake of being just or virtuous,
but also for the sake of increasing his gloire. If he is motivated
primarily to increase his gloire, and secondarily to perform noble,
just, and virtuous actions, the next step is that the moral nature of
his actions becomes secondary to his desire for glory. This is dan-
gerously close to seeking a good reputation and honor without recourse
to judgment. Du Vair cautioned against this, and Maurens summarized
his position as follows:
If Du Vair is Maurens' model of Neostoicism, we must admit that Corneille does not always adhere to the requirement of disinterested honor, nor to that of honor in the company of reason.

When it is unrelated to virtue, seeking glory becomes the negative quality of misplaced pride. The opposite, for Descartes, of true générosité is orgueil; it is always vicieux (Article 157), and it arises when people esteem themselves généreux without cause. Corneille decries pride:

Quand la gloire nous enfle, il (le jugement céleste) sait bien comme il faut Confondre notre orgueil qui s'élève trop haut.

Horace, 1. 1405-1406.

It is appropriate here to recall Descartes' contrast between using reason for good or using it for ill. The latter is ambition which is a vice. Its opposite virtue is humility—"les plus généreux ont coutume d'être les plus humbles" (Article 155)—but humility is rarely a quality of Corneille's généreux. Julie accused both Horace and Curiace of the vice of ambition:

La gloire de ce choix leur est si précieuse, Et charme tellement leur âme ambitieuse

Horace, 1. 799-800.

that the combattants are unwilling to avoid slaughtering their

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29 La tragédie sans tragique, p. 122.
friends and kinsmen. Each combattant has previously admitted that his pride will not permit him to forego the honor of the assign-
ment (cf. Horace, l. 377-378 cited on p. 88). Curiae, who seems the more reasonable and humane of the two, refused Cemille's pleas not to fight by exclaiming:

Que je souffre à mes yeux qu'on ceigne une autre tête
Des lauriers immortels que la gloire m'apprête,
Ou que tout mon pays reproche à ma vertu
Qu'il aurait triomphé si j'avais combattu
Et que sous mon amour sa valeur endormie
Couronne tant d'exploits d'une telle infamie!

Horace, l. 551-556.

Love is here held as a base and unworthy passion beside the honor bestowed on the hero by his country.

Descartes condemns both pride and ambition; the Cornelian hero, however, must have the ambition to be great, but ambition is only moral or immoral as regards its object. To realize ambitions may make one a hero, but will not insure that the objects of ambitions are morally good. Bénichou's description of heroic virtue is similarly lacking in moral criteria:

Il suffit en effet que l'orgueil ren-
contre sur son chemin le danger, l'op-
pression, l'infortune, pour qu'il se
change, s'il persévère, en vertu rare
et héroïque. Le 'non' stoïque sur le-
quel repose si souvent le sublime cor-
nélien résulte d'une semblable méta-
morphose.30

It is perhaps this Stoic refusal to give in to passions which Cléo-
patre calls ambition, a princely and noble trait:

Les princes ont cela de leur haute naissance;
Leur âme dans leur sang prend des impressions
Qui dessous leur vertu rangent leurs passions;
Leur générosité soumet tout à leur gloire.

La Mort de Pompée, l. 370-373.

But how far from Stoicism, or even from Maurens's interpretation of a Christianized Neostoicism, is the amoral statement of Cléopatre:

J'ai de l'ambition, et soit vice ou vertu,
Mon coeur sous son fardeau veut bien être abattu;
J'en aime la chaleur, et la nomme sans cesse
La seule passion digne d'une princesse.

La Mort de Pompée, l. 431-434.

Gloire as personal ambition is not Stoic even though Cornelian characters attach to it the terms vertu and honneur, even though they claim to shun ignominy, as does Cléopatre in the very next lines:

Mais je veux que la gloire anime ses ardeurs,
(celles de l'ambition)
Qu'elle mène sans honte au faîte des grandeurs;
Et je la désavoue alors que sa manie
Nous présente le trône avec ignominie.

l. 435-438.

Her idea of avoiding ignominy in this instance is to encourage César to flee because she feels duty-bound to provide Pompée with troops to fight against him. This concept of duty is devoid of all rational content, relying on external, non-rational principles.

Nadal concluded that reason does not motivate the Cornelian généreux; it is the passion or ambition for personal gloire that does: "C'est la gloire, non la raison, la vertu morale, ou la
connaissance, qui commande tout le système."  

The Cornelian hero does not act solely, or even primarily, on the basis of considered judgments as does the Stoic Sage. Attempts to reason are often futile and offer hope where there is none, they are signs of weakness, and they detain the hero from getting on with the pursuit of gloire.

**Passions dominating reason**

The desire for glory becomes a passion to which the hero succumbs, but he does not see himself as succumbing to a passion. He has elevated it to a position of the highest good, and honor demands that he pursue it. Passions other than this thirst for glory are pursued or rejected depending on their utility to this quest, but they are not regarded as inferior impulses to be controlled or eradicated.

Love is the most difficult of passions to rule. The Stoics felt that love, like other passions, could be ruled by reason because their concept of love was much less complex than that of the 17th century. Diogenes Laertius cites Zeno as calling love "an irrational appetency...a craving from which good men are free; for it is an effort to win affection due to the visible presence of beauty."  

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31 *Le Sentiment de l'amour*, p. 306.

tion, so the Stoic concept of reason controlling it is not adequate. Nadal suggests that, for Corneille, the origin of love is mysterious: "ni la raison, ni la gloire, ni la volonté ne font naître l'amour."33 No matter the origin, reason is also the least able to control love.

Corneille's heroes have strong emotions, and great passions motivate them. When one passion is rejected, it is usually replaced by another, equally strong, emotion. This is so because actions a hero expected to take, once thwarted, must be replaced by some other form of assertive action if he is to know any sort of satisfaction. For example, Chimène subjugates her love for Rodrigue, but has an emotional outlet for that love in pursuing vengeance. Pauline converts her love for Sévère into Christian zeal. Aemilie's hatred of Auguste is suddenly converted into respect. Horace's love for his friends is turned into a successful effort to win victory for Rome.

By contrast, Sabine is left unhappily in medias res, trying to sort out her feelings. And for Camille, Curia, Maxime, and Selencus (in Rodogune) there is no activity which can relieve the emotional pressure; death is the only way out of their moral dilemmas. A corresponding action for each passion is essential for Cornelian characters.

Other passions, such as hatred, anger, and jealousy, also trigger actions. Aemilie hates Auguste, and that, rather than love for Cinna, motivates her. Horace gives into his anger and murders his sister. Even though Eurydice is assured of Suréna's love, her jealousy will not allow her to tolerate his marriage, for political

33 Le Sentiment de l'amour, p. 320.
expediency, to the attractive enemy princess.

Not only is there a lack, in Corneille, of an absolute standard of virtue, but there is a lack of an absolute standard of glory as well. For example, to ensure his honor, Rodrigue believes that he must offend Chimène by killing her father, whereas Suréna thinks it is more to his glory to die rather than offend the woman he loves. The notion of gloire is interpreted in each play to meet the emotional and tactical exigencies of the hero, and it is often self-serving. This separates even more decisively the "éthique de la gloire" from both traditional, or secular, ethics and Christian morality.

It should be noted that there is at least one passage which is quite Stoic. Instead of being able to marry Suréna, Eurydice must marry Orode with whom, she admits, she is not yet in love, but she intends to shape her emotions, in time, rather than letting them dictate her behavior.

Seigneur; je me vaincrai: j'y tâche, je l'espère; J'ose dire encore plus, je m'en fais une loi; Mais je veux que le temps en dépende de moi.

**Suréna**, l. 1462-1464.

We should remember, however, that it is her jealousy, and not the reasonableness which this passage presents, that determines the fate of her beloved Suréna.

Cornelian characters protest that they are guided by reason, but I have already shown that appeals made to reason are usually ap-
peals made to some other form of passion. Their greatest passion is for gloire which requires energetic action; reason does not provide this maximizing of energy, but the passions do. Hence once again we must conclude that Corneille is far removed from rationally oriented Stoicism in that his characters are more frequently guided by passions than by reason.

Heroic energy and the will

To say that Cornelian heroes are guided by passions raises the problem of the will. While the Stoics did not talk about a faculty called the will, they did maintain that man had the capacity to distinguish that which was within his power from that which was not. This power served as a strong motivating force for the man who decided that a given goal was both virtuous and within his power, just as the opposite decision was a deterrent. Since man's untutored inclinations were not always toward virtue, the ability to distinguish what is within his power, coupled with his moral judgment, equaled a motivating force which later was known as the will. The will, then, was a major factor in compelling a man to do what he believed best, but was not inclined to do, or in refraining from doing what he was inclined to do, but believed to be contrary to virtue.

Thus characters in Corneille frequently appear to restrain their behavior by an act of will. Rodrigue and Chimène both subject their love to a determination to honor family obligations. Horace and Curiace violate family ties by firm resolution to meet patriotic demands. Polyeucte abandons earthly pleasures for spiri-
tual good. All these actions are couched in terms of efforts of the will which run counter to the heroes' inclinations.

Yet it is only in a minor sense that the hero, by effort of will, has shown an ability to change his behavior. In each case, the direction of passion, or the expenditure of energy, has been changed, and another, and usually more rewarding, means of winning gloire has been found. The will has been used, not to adjudicate, not to reduce evil or increase good, but to maximize energy, and thereby increase gloire.

The Cornelian hero must act (as opposed to refraining from action) to ensure his gloire. Glory does not come to those who withdraw from public view. It comes to those who are convinced they can accomplish great things, who have ambition to accomplish those things, and who do not permit themselves to contemplate anything but success. They cannot, therefore, admit of a category of things not within their power without loss of stature. Prudence would be a weakness here, and consideration of possible dangers, cowardice. The généreux, who may be more eager for gloire than for vertu, cannot be humble, cannot reflect upon his weaknesses, but must act unhesitatingly and decisively, and those situations most filled with pathos and danger will increase his gloire. This notion of the will is quite foreign to Stoicism.

Does the Cartesian généreux escape the accusation of amorality? Never failing to do "toutes les choses qu'il a jugées être les meilleures" (Article 148) is what Descartes calls virtue. Man is judged virtuous depending on whether he uses his will for good or
evil; therefore the généreux has a "ferme et constante résolution d’en (volonté) bien user, c’est-à-dire de ne manquer jamais de volonté pour entreprendre et executer toutes les choses qu’il jugera être les meilleures." (Art. 153) This is often cited to show the importance Descartes placed on free will, but we should note that equal emphasis is placed on the importance of judgment in directing what actions to take. To be généreux requires not only a determination to act, but to act for the good. Descartes has inserted a moral qualification, which, in turn, presupposes recourse to reason.

Descartes is not opposed to deliberation, which is weakness in a Cornelian hero. Deliberation is a good thing, says Descartes, except "lorsqu’elle dure plus qu’il ne faut, et qu’elle fait employé à délibérer le temps qui est requis pour agir." (Article 170) Two sorts of irresolution need to be guarded against: (1) "qui vient d’un trop grand désir de bien faire, et (2) d’une faiblesse d’entendement." (Article 170) One must give the entendement practice in making judgments, and then in acting on them, even if it turns out that one has made a bad decision. However, Descartes is not sanctioning vice and criminal actions by saying this; he is cautioning against excessive preoccupation with whether or not a right choice has been made, particularly when the alternatives do not offer a clear choice of virtues or vices. The emphasis in Descartes is on the practice which will strengthen the mind, teach it discriminating powers, and help it fortify the will in carrying through on the actions which ought to result from its judgments.
In this sense, Descartes adopts a view similar to Stoicism.

Rather than being assimilated to reason, will is assimilated, in Corneille, to the passions. Will is a manifestation of the passions in that it determines what passions will maximize energy, and it has lost much of the Stoic sense of exercising a moral control over the emotions and of being the handmaiden of reason.

The sense of duty

Cornelian heroes frequently justify actions for which they might otherwise be criticized by appealing to duty, and duty is usually regarded as odious and as against the natural impulses of the hero.

Votre majesté, sire, elle-même a pu voir
Comme j'ai fait céder mon amour au devoir.

*Cid*, l. 1727-1728.

Chimène may well believe that her duty is to seek vengeance, but in fact it is an aggressive action which she substitutes for her passion. Her love for Rodrigue is not lessened, but she must have an equally strong counterpassion in order to control it. She is, in a sense modifying her goals to fit her needs.

Je l'aime, mais l'éclat d'une si belle flamme,
Quelque brillant qu'il soit, n'éblouit point mon âme,
Et toujours ma vertu retrace dans mon coeur
Ce qu'il doit au vaincu, brulant pour le vainqueur.

*La Mort de Pompée*, l. 357-360.

Cléopatre seems, in this passage, to be sacrificing her love to a prior commitment or loyalty. While she recognizes her passion, she believes that it is having no effect on her constancy ('âme') nor on
her courage ('cœur'). But, in order to control her passion, she has found an equally strong counterbalancing passion, and, again, the only one strong enough is one which runs directly counter to her love. When characters do not give in to their love, it is duty, and not reason, which deters them, and duty is based upon accepted conventions.

Duty, like will, is a manifestation of the passions. Duty is the mold through which actions, resulting from the energy of the passions, and selected by the will, are processed. Reason is not necessarily an integral part of this operation, which means that moral considerations may be omitted in the selection of actions.

The tension between Roman virtue and insensitivity.

One of the basic criticisms of Stoicism made in the 17th century was that of insensitivity.

Mais enfin, je renonce à la vertu romaine
Si, pour la posséder, je dois être inhumaine.

Sabin in Horace, l. 1367-1368.

Stoicism was attacked because it advocated control of the passions, and control exercised with too much zeal made people appear insensitive. Pascal cited "Allez vous a nommé, je ne vous connais plus" as "le caractère inhumain."34 Sabine and Curiace both elicit the readers' sympathy by denouncing it, but Horace is a hero partly because of this quality.

34 Pascal, Pensees, Brunschvicg 533.
Rome a choisi mon bras, je n'examine rien
Avec une allégresse aussi pleine et sincère,
Que j'épousai la soeur, je combattrai le frère;
Et, pour trancher enfin ces discours superflus,
Allez vous a nommé, je ne vous connais plus.

Horace, l. 498-502.

It is an unquestioning obedience to his country's call, an ability
to keep human emotions from interfering in his exercise of duty, and
a readiness to sacrifice his life which make Horace a paragon of
Roman virtue.

The Romans had established a hierarchy of duties (to gods,
to state, to family before self) similar to that of the Stoics. This
hierarchy was well entrenched by the second or third century B.C.
when the Romans came in contact with Hellenistic philosophies, and
it fitted in well with the Stoicism revised and spread by Posidonius.

Livy gives many examples of Roman virtue such as the story
of the Horatii which included Horace's killing of his sister, and
his subsequent trial. In other instances, Livy tells of G.M. Scaevola
who burned off his own hand to convince an enemy general that
the Romans would not surrender, even with heavy odds against them.
Horatius held back the Etruscan army of Lars Porsenna from the wooden
Sublician bridge until it could be demolished, and then, despite his
wounds, swam the Tiber to safety. Another story tells how the em-
peror L.C. Brutus discovered his own sons plotting to overthrow the
government, how he adhered strictly to justice and condemned them,
and how he watched them burned to death. It was surely the dramatic
possibilities of these stories which attracted Corneille as much as
their moral import. If the lives of some Romans, such as Cato and
the heroes here mentioned, became examples of virtue among a people who were regarded as Stoic, it is easy to see how the image of Stoicism as inhuman and as demanding the impossible became current.

Corneille's portrait of Horace and of austere Roman virtue represents a kind of self-sacrificing courage and devotion to country which is part of Stoicism. Frequently, however, there is a kind of ostentation as his heroes revel in situations which appear, on the surface, to demand self-denial, but which actually open the doors to greater personal glory, thus detracting from the courage, will power, and selflessness which the hero possesses.

Conclusion

Corneille derives from Stoicism by his interest in action. The Cornelian hero is not reluctant to act, he is not given to metaphysical speculation; he is eager to prove his metal by undertaking the most dangerous of enterprises in the most emotionally tense of situations.

Corneille derives from Stoicism by the readiness with which his characters sacrifice personal comforts for some ideal toward which they are able to channel all their energies and emotions. Their ability to make a grand gesture toward that ideal, while others merely inch toward it, is a Cornelian addition.
Corneille derives from Stoicism by his confidence in human nature and in the abilities of man to mold his own destiny, or, failing that, to live with honor in the world and situations into which destiny has placed him.

Corneille derives from Stoicism in that his characters do not blame their misfortunes on others or on nature (except in the stylistic sense of decrying le sort); the Cornelian character always has within himself the strength, the courage, and the determination to triumph over whatever life has in store for him.

These are significant parallels between Corneille and Stoicism, but I think even more serious differences exist between them.

In the first place, we can cite a significant difference in their understanding of virtue which, for the Stoics, was a desired state of perfection, an object or goal, toward which a man strove. In Corneille, virtue is a quality which les généreux possess, and which enables them to perform any action with energy and courage so that they may increase their gloire.

Cornelian characters rarely talk about seeking virtue as a standard or ideal outside themselves, and toward which they are striving, but rather about amplifying a characteristic which is inherent in themselves; they speak of "ma vertu" or "ma gloire." Corneille may decry pride, but his heroes need it; humility is not seriously considered to be a virtue. The hero has a high opinion of his capabilities, and has the self-mastery to enable him to perform those deeds which will win him glory. Glory, more frequently than virtue, is the hero's preoccupation, and although glory worthy of that name
ought not be divorced from moral considerations, I find that in Corneille there is no safeguard against this divorce, and that the characters, in pursuing one noble cause, may transgress one or more other moral considerations.

The Stoic Sage exercised the cardinal virtues of wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage; in Corneille these virtues have an altogether different coloring.

(1) Justice. Every Cornelian hero must be convinced of his own excellence, and he must decide to compete with other persons in power because subservience does not become him; there is no room in this system for the "loyal opposition." Therefore, justice becomes political expediency. Questions such as whether or not to assassinate Pompée are decided on the basis of power struggles, not on moral issues. If Auguste exercises clemency, it is not because he is being virtuous; it is because retribution has not worked, so he is wooing, rather than beheading, influential opponents.

(2) Temperance, moderation. The Cornelian hero cannot have any controlled passions because he needs the driving force of strong emotions. Pleas to "modérez vos pleurs" and the like go unheeded. An emotion which must be checked is converted into some other emotion and subsequent action. When this is not the case, the characters are either not heroes or they are unfinished ones, e.g., Sabine, Sévère, and l'Infante. Temperate actions are too weak, too passive, to attract the hero.

(3) Wisdom is not sought after; guiding principles of action are unquestioned. The will guides the energies of the hero to ac-
complish deeds within the rules of society, wherein he gains recognition.

(4) Courage, and in some cases only bravery, is the virtue which is most revered by the Cornelian hero, and in a sense it is the only virtue they recognized. Thus the virtues have been so radically modified that they can no longer be considered close relatives of Stoicism.

The vocabulary and self-sacrificing stances of Corneille's heroes are deceptive because they appear Stoic, but they represent an amoral position which, although it can be traced back to it, is markedly different from Stoicism. Corneille may speak of the utility of drama, but his primary interest is in exploiting dramatic possibilities, and his treatment of passions is indeed dramatically very effective. He has established, nonetheless, an "éthique mondaine" which carries with it no guarantee that moral considerations will always be part of the criteria upon which judgments are based, and which serve as the guide for action.
CHAPTER IV

PASCAL

The Entretien avec M. de Saci in Pascal's work

Ludwig Edelstein called Pascal the Stoics' "bitterest enemy and their fairest critic."¹ The differences between Pascal and the Stoics are fundamental and unreconcilable. Pascal believed that man's primary concern should be to face squarely the awesome fact of eternity and to prepare oneself for it; the Stoics aimed at arm- ing men against the vicissitudes of life in this world. Pascal be- lieved that true happiness was to be found outside himself in God, in the form of grace; the Stoics strove to understand the universe and to harmonize their desires with it. They taught men to seek happiness within themselves by the development of their rational faculties; Pascal emphasized the inability of the unaided reason to grasp the most essential truths. Even though Pascal is basically in opposition to the Stoics, it is worthwhile discussing his views because of the use he made of his reading of Epictetus in the Entre- tien avec M. de Saci, and, to a lesser degree, in the Pensées.

There is not much exact information about the date and com-

position of the *Entretien*, but the style and content are close enough to those of Pascal that no serious doubt about its belonging to the corpus of Pascal's work has been entertained.

An *entretien* between Pascal and M. de Saci is supposed to have taken place in January of 1655 during Pascal's first retreat at Port-Royal, hence after his "période mondaine" (1652-54), and after his definitive conversion (November, 1654) marked by the *Mémorial*. The exact date is not known because we have no text by Pascal of this dialogue, and there is no mention of such a writing in any of Pascal's papers. The text of the *Entretien* forms part of the *Mémoires* of M. Fontaine which were first published in their entirety in 1736 by Tronchais. Desmolets had extracted from the *Mémoires*, and published, the "Entretien avec M. de Saci" in 1728 in his *Continuation des Mémoires de littérature et d'histoire*. Four manuscript copies of the complete *Mémoires* exist, and one manuscript copy of the *Entretien* alone.

M. Fontaine was, for a long period of time, secretary to M. de Saci, but it is highly improbable that he was present at any conversation between Pascal and de Saci, and hence able to take it down verbatim, because (1) of the private nature of the conversations between the convert and his spiritual guide, (2) there are no records of public debates at Port-Royal in which this colloquy might have figured, and (3) M. Fontaine was not M. de Saci's secretary in 1655. M. Fontaine would certainly have had access to an account of such a conversation when he became secretary to M. de Saci, and may even have had notes made by Pascal, or correspondence between Pascal and de Saci,
to help him in the composition, some forty years after it occurred, of this conversation.

Il est sûr que lesdits entretiens sont, au moins partiellement, fabriqués selon les règles classiques de la vraisemblance; ils évoquent les procédés antiques de l'historiographie ou de la distribe: Discours de Tite-Live, Entretiens d'Epictète, Dialogues des morts ... procédés qui étaient toujours en faveur au XVIIe siècle.  

Mlle. Delassault has shown that four other "entretiens" which occur in M. Fontaine's Mémoires were composed by him on the basis of correspondence between two people; the evidence which she has collected that he did the same with this discussion has convinced L. Cognet, among others, that this is its true origin.  

Even though scholars cannot establish that Pascal wrote the text, as we have it, of the Entretien, they have enough evidence to hold that it represents quite accurately the preoccupations of Pascal at that time. In the first place, it is quite likely that conversations between de Saci and Pascal, like the one recorded in the Entretien, did take place. Upon his conversion, Pascal vowed to follow the directives of his confessor Singlin who sent him off to Port-Royal to be under the guidance of de Saci. It further seems clear that, during the period immediately preceding his 1654 conversion, Pascal had been reading non-scientific and non-religious works:


such as Epictetus and Montaigne; the latter was admired, and likely recommended to Pascal, by his friends Méré, Miton, and Mme de Sablé.\(^4\) Pascal quotes Epictetus liberally in the Entretien, and shows that he had read with some care and attention the Encheiridion, or Manual, and at least part of the Arrian Discourses.

He read Epictetus in Goulu's translation made in 1609 at the request of Marguerite de Navarre who patronized the Stoics of her time. This edition, republished in 1630, contained both the Entretien (variously called the Discours or the Propos) and the Manual. According to Strowski, no serious misunderstanding of Stoicism could arise from the use of this translation: "De toutes les traductions d'Épictète, y compris les plus modernes, c'est la plus vivante, la plus pittoresque et la plus fidèle."\(^5\) Hence, we cannot blame Pascal's interpretation on a faulty translation. Strowski cited his study of Epictetus as evidence that Pascal was not satisfied with second-hand adaptations, deformations, and transformations of Stoicism, meaning Montaigne, Du Vair, Lipsius, and Charron, but was exacting enough to read the most complete and oldest account available to him of Stoicism. "De ce néo-stoïcisme, Pascal n'a pas voulu ... c'est Épictète tout directement qu'il a étudié."\(^6\) The fact that Pascal read Epictetus is taken as proof that his objections to Stoicism are

\(^4\) Fortunat Strowski, Pascal et son temps (2 vol.; Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1907), II. 331-332.

\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 325-326.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 319.
based on an accurate understanding of it. "Pascal a fait une étude très attentive et personnelle d'Epictète."  

In the third place, it seems entirely likely that a careful director of conscience would meet a new convert on his own grounds, and lead him to see the inadequacies of those preoccupations and the merits of the faith he had just embraced. This procedure could well take the form of asking Pascal to comment on the secular authors he had been reading in order that de Sacy might attack them, and replace the refuted philosophies with Christianity. Pascal needed no persuading by de Sacy; he was thoroughly converted, and, even at the time he was reading Montaigne and Epictetus, he was reading them against a Christian background of thought. The Entretien represents neither a step in Pascal's thinking on the way to the apology, (i.e., it was not a period of time when he adopted Stoicism only to perceive its shortcomings and adopt Christianity more wholeheartedly,) nor a purgation of non-Christian ideas. J.H. Broome points out that Pascal was never very deeply immersed in the writings of classical antiquity, and, although Montaigne was very influential in Pascal's thinking, Epictetus was not as influential as Descartes on his attitude toward reason and its capabilities. Hence Pascal's aim in the Entretien was not an examination of the philosophic merit of what

7 Courcelle, L'Entretien de Pascal et Sacy, p. 92.


Epictetus had to say; he was taking the more audacious step of considering their usefulness in leading non-believers and libertines to Christianity. Since recourse to religious authorities has no effect on the unconverted libertine, he is trying to persuade de Sacy that pagan and secular authors can, and indeed should, be cited and commented upon in any apology directed towards those outside the Church. De Sacy's part in the discussion seems to be to buttress Pascal's refutations of Montaigne and Epictetus, and to give cautious consent to their use in a Christian apology.

In the fourth place, it should be noted that Fontaine followed the Pascalien dialectic of presenting two opposing views (from Epictetus, man's unwarranted self-reliance; from Montaigne, man's natural weaknesses), stating that they cancel each other out because of their mutual incompatibility; he then replaced them both with a Christian faith which goes beyond, but includes, the strengths of the two philosophies while avoiding their shortcomings. Strowski makes the suggestion that Pascal's style was considerably influenced by Epictetus' use of common expressions and unforgettable imagery.

Pascal ... est devenu le disciple, l'imitateur, l'inspiré de cet Epictète. Il est devenu l'écrivain de son temps le plus riche en expressions familières et brutales, en images brèves, fortes incubables. Enfin qui sait si le dialogue des Provinciales n'a pas été suggéré à Pascal par la forme même des Entretiens d'Epictète?10

In summary, we can say that the circumstances surrounding the Entretien, the content and the style of it, as well as the reading

10 Strowski, Pascal et son temps, III. 196.
which preceded it, all stand as strong evidence that this work, although not written by Pascal, fairly represents his thinking in 1655.

Stoicism as seen in the *Entretien*

It is not surprising to find Epictetus condemned in the *Entretien* because most religious writers and moralists of the 17th century condemned the pagan ancients even though they found much that was commendable in their ethics. Pascal was influenced, of course, by Jansenius, who admitted of no pagan virtues, and he was untouched by the writings of Du Vair who allowed them.\(^{11}\)

It is more likely to surprise us to find him praised, until we recognize the psychological advantage Pascal will have if he has first praised Stoicism, and shown himself sympathetic to Epictetus. I do not mean to imply that Pascal was being insincere in his praise of Epictetus. He admired those characteristics, not inconsistent with Christianity, which he praised, but the shortcomings were of greater consequence for him, and totally outweighed the admirable qualities.

P. Courcelle, in his *l'Entretien de Pascal et Sacy*, sets out the text of the *Entretien*, and on facing pages shows the corresponding texts from Epictetus, Montaigne, St. Augustine, and Descartes. Thus we can see that in the first part of his presentation, the part in which he is underlining the admirable characteristics of Epictetus' thought, Pascal drew primarily on passages from the *Manual*, the more

popular work of Epictetus, which is a series of fifty short, disconnected paragraphs. Many of the forty lines devoted to the praise of Epictetus are close approximations of passages no. 31, 11, 8, 17, 21, 22, 36, 47, and 53 from the Manual. The remaining fifty-five lines are devoted to Pascal's attack on Epictetus, and the corresponding passages chosen by Courcelle, which are mostly from Book I of the Entretiens, contain only occasional words in common with the text of Pascal's Entretien, hence, they are much freer interpretations of what Epictetus said.

In the Entretien, Pascal summarizes and criticizes the positions of Epictetus and Montaigne—"les deux plus grands défenseurs des deux plus célèbres sectes du monde infidèle"—of Stoicism and pyrrhonism, and concludes that these two ethical theories, developed without recourse to Christian faith, oppose and cancel out each other, making a void that is filled by the truth of the New Testament.

Each author has strengths as well as weaknesses. Pascal praises Epictetus for maintaining that true happiness is not to be found in external things:

Je trouve dans Epictète un art incomparable pour troubler le repos de ceux qui le cherchent dans les choses extérieures, et pour les forcer à reconnaître qu'ils sont de véritables esclaves et de misérables aveugles; qu'il est impossible qu'ils trouvent autre chose que l'erreur et la douleur qu'ils fuient, s'ils ne se donnent sans réserve à Dieu seul.¹²

¹² Entretien de Pascal avec M. de Sacy, in the Garnier edition of Pascal's Pensées, Paris, s.d., p. 50.
The Stoics likewise are commended for their recognition of the
duties of man:

Epictète est un des hommes du monde qui
ait le mieux connu les devoirs de l'homme. Il veut, avant toutes choses, qu'il
regarde Dieu comme son principal objet;
qu'il soit persuadé qu'il fait tout avec
justice; qu'il se soumette à lui de bon
cœur, et qu'il le suive volontairement
en tout ... il veut qu'il soit humble
... il ne se lasse point de répéter que
toute l'étude et le désir de l'homme
doit être de reconnaître la volonté de
Dieu et de la suivre.13

On the other hand, the Stoics are criticized because they do not
take into account man's weaknesses; they rely solely on his strengths,
and this leads to the sin of pride.

Il me semble que la source des erreurs
des stoïciens ... est de n'avoir pas su
que l'état de l'homme à présent diffère
de celui de sa création; de sort que ...
remarquant quelques traces de sa pre-
mière grandeur, et ignorant sa corrup-
tion, [il] traite la nature comme saine et
sans besoin de réparateur, ce qui le
mène au comble de l'orgueil.14

Stoic virtue and moral idealism

Because of the limited scope of the Entretien, we must turn to
the Pensées in comparing Pascal's views with those of the Stoics.

Pascal cannot accept the Stoic notion of virtue, and of man's
perfectability, because this does not take into account the fall of
man. One of the most drastic effects of original sin is the inability

13 Ibid., pp. 40-41. 14 Ibid., pp. 48-49.
of man to distinguish among things as to which are of greater value. "Depuis qu'il [l'homme] a perdu le vrai bien, tout également peu lui paraître tel." 15 The only way to get back the ability to distinguish that which is good is to embrace the Christian faith, for it is only to those in a state of grace that such distinctions become clear.

"Nul n'est heureux comme un vrai chrétien, ni raisonnable, ni vertueux, ni aimable." (B 541) Espousing the Christian faith seems also to be the factor which enables man to use his capabilities best; he is not only more virtuous, but more reasonable as well, reasonable in the sense of having a more balanced judgment. Pascal feels strongly that the whole course of a man's life, i.e., the actions he performs ici-bas, depends on whether or not he is a Christian.

L'immortalité de l'âme est une chose qui nous importe si fort, qui nous touche si profondément, qu'il faut avoir perdu tout sentiment pour être dans l'indifférence de savoir ce qui en est. Toutes nos actions et nos pensées doivent prendre des routes si différentes, selon qu'il y aura des biens éternels à espérer ou non, qu'il est impossible de faire une démarche avec sens et jugement, qu'en la réglant par la vue de ce point, qui doit être notre dernier objet. (B 194)

What Pascal never does is to tell us specifically how our actions will differ, if we believe in immortality, from the actions of those who do not.

Pascal appears to have little confidence in virtue, and ex-

15 B 425. Hereafter, in referring to the Pensées, I will use the Brunschvicg numbers following the quotation.
pects vices to dominate. Vices are natural to man in his fallen state, virtues are unnatural, imposed, and distasteful. It is an uninspiring view of virtue which Pascal proposes as a tension between two vices: "Nous ne nous soutenons pas dans la vertu par notre propre force, mais par le contrepoids de deux vices opposés ... òtes un de ces vices, nous tombons dans l'autre." (B 359) One of the remarks most lacking in that balanced view of human nature which Pascal claims to favor (cf. B. 418 and B. 423) is the following: "La vraie et unique vertu est donc de se haïr..." (B 485) That sort of wallowing in degradation, that glorification of the sinner, did not figure in Stoic sects, but has existed to some degree in Christianity.

The Stoics looked upon the Wise Man as an ideal of what men could and should be like, and as a standard by which men could judge themselves. In Pascal, such an ideal is unrealizable because it lacks the notion of grace as well as of original sin. In the first place, the idea of human perfection is contradictory; perfection belongs only to God. Secondly, that man should think that he could, by his own powers, attain virtue, is a notion "d'une superbe diabolique"; Pascal condemns the Stoics for teaching that the mind and the will are free:

C'est par elles que nous pouvons nous rendre parfaits; que l'homme peut par ces puissances parfaitement connaître Dieu l'aimer, lui obéir, lui plaire, se guérir de tous ses vices, acquérir
toutes les vertus, se rendre saint,
et ainsi compagnon de Dieu.  

This presumption leads to other errors such as the belief that suffering and death are not evils, and that suicide is permissible.

The Goulu translation, from which Pascal derived some of the above summary, reads: "Je vous montreray l'image quand elle aura sa perfection et son lustre. Que vous en semble? Que c'est orgueil? A Dieu ne plaie."  

This passage makes two points about perfection which Pascal omits: (1) the job at hand is unfinished, and (2) when it is finished, humility, not pride, should be the sentiment of the author of the perfection. In the above passage ("nous pouvons nous rendre parfaits"), Pascal has attributed to Stoic doctrine a belief in the potential for perfection, which they held, but has not completed this with an indication that most of the Stoics regarded attaining perfection as work in progress, and that they insisted upon humility for all degrees of progress toward perfection.  

Another error which Pascal makes is to deprive Stoicism of the need for continued and renewed efforts. "Ils [les stoïques] concluent qu'on peut

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16 Entretien, p. 41.

17 Courcelle, L'Entretien de Pascal et Sacy, p. 16 cites this passage as Pascal's source. It is fairly close to the English translation by W.A. Oldfather in the Loeb Classical Library edition of Epictetus: "When the statue is finished and polished, I will show it to you. What do you think of it? A lofty air, say you? Heaven forbid!" II. 8. 23.

18 The notion of moral progress is generally considered to be part of Stoic doctrine from the middle Stoics on, i.e., well before Cicero, Seneca, and Epictetus. Epictetus's humility is often not sufficiently recognized, particularly by those who wish to equate man's reliance on himself with the sin of pride.
toujours ce qu'on peut quelquefois." (B 350)

In the third place, Pascal suggests that it is the desire for glory, "la plus grande bassesse de l'homme," (B 404) that inspires good deeds. Virtuous actions done for the wrong reasons are unhealthy, if not vices. (B 350)

The outstanding virtue for Pascal is to love God; while this is an ideal toward which he would have men aspire, it differs in kind from the Stoic moral ideal because this latter presupposes a rationally arrived at ethic which is quite apart from the theological concerns of Pascal.

Virtue is not the ultimate good for man, nor the end to which he should strive. Pascal defends this by noting that philosophers have never agreed on the nature of the greatest good (cf. B 73); Montaigne alone listed 280 "souverains biens" (B 74). This argument says more about the nature of human reason than about virtue.

It is not only the Christians who ran down man by emphasizing their corrupt nature, Strowski points out, "c'est le trait de tous ces mondains d'avoir un certain mépris de l'homme." Distrust of man seems to have been endemic to the 17th century. "Tous les professeurs d'honnêteté voient bien que la nature est corrompue; sans quoi l'honnêteté serait la chose du monde la mieux partagée."19 The Stoics made no distinction between a human and a divine order, but Pascal did. He put the Stoic notion of virtue into

19 Strowski, Pascal et son temps, pp. 272-273.
the divine order, and the 17th century notion of the *honnête homme* into the human order. Likewise, among the *Pensées* themselves, there are clearly at least two groupings: those belonging to the apology for Christianity, and those belonging to the work of a moralist or secular writer.

**Pyrrhonism, the imagination, and the role of reason**

Pascal devotes considerably more space to Montaigne than he devoted to Epictetus in the *Entretien*. I believe he felt that Montaigne's pyrrhonism was more pernicious than Epictetus's presumption; Montaigne's style made his scepticism more insidious and more attractive.

Although Pascal skillfully counterbalances Montaigne with Epictetus, and treats them as linear opposites, they represent different, but not opposing views. The Stoics are presented as knowing man's duties to God, the highest of human virtues, and are faulted for their pretense that man, unaided, can fulfill them. The Stoics, therefore, represent an attitude toward virtue, whereas the pyrrhonians represent an attitude toward reason. For Pascal, reason must be complemented by revelation, as virtue must be complemented by grace, but the utter abandonment of reason which Pascal saw in Montaigne shocked him.

"Toute la dignité de l'homme consiste en la pensée." (B 365)

If we could find the right method, reason could resolve all problems. Pascal, however, used the term reason in a broader sense than did Descartes or even the Stoics; he used it to mean that which is in-
taut, or sensed, as well as that which is geometrically demonstrable. This fundamental distinction is embodied in his discussions of the *esprit de géométrie* which is that part of reason susceptible to demonstrations, and the *esprit de finesse* which makes judgments, and derives from *le sentiment*. The former provides knowledge only after a lapse of time to allow for the step to step process; the latter operates more rapidly because it deals with the relevant impressions instantly.

The *esprit de géométrie* can be adopted into an *art de persuader* where the person to be won over determines the type of reason, the form of argument, to be employed (e.g., *le pari*).

One of the major tenets of Stoicism was that man had the power to deal rightly with his impressions. Pascal contradicted this view by talking about the power of the imagination, its capacity to deceive men, and the inability of reason to withstand its effects. "Cette maîtresse d'erreur et de fausseté ... l'imagination a le don de persuader les hommes. La raison a beau crier ... elle [l'imagination] fait croire, douter, nier la raison." (B 82) Imagination seems to be the dominant faculty: "L'imagination dispose de tout; elle fait la beauté, la justice, et le bonheur." (B 82) I think Pascal is emphasizing two things in his treatment of the imagination, (1) reason, so uniquely human, is intoxicating, and man can easily attribute to it more power than it has, and (2) the extensive and useful powers it has are weakened by subjective attempts to deal with impressions which can result in error if there is not an external
standard by which to compare results.

This discussion of the imagination does not diminish the respect which Pascal had for the reason. "L'homme est visiblement fait pour penser; c'est toute sa dignité et tout son métier; et tout son devoir est de penser comme il faut." (B 146) "Travailons donc à bien penser: voilà le principe de la morale." (B 347) Reason can be at least, (and perhaps at most,) the starting point of a morale, but it can never be the basis of a true ethical theory, ("toute la morale [consiste] en la concupiscence et en la grace," B 523,) nor of a complete metaphysic. About Stoicism, among philosophies, Pascal claimed that "ne voyant pas la vérité entière, ils n'ont pu arriver à une parfaite vertu." (B 435) Pascal believed that this deficiency could be cured by submitting reason to faith; he believed in both "soumission et usage de la raison." (B 269) No philosophy could find truth in its entirety—only Christianity could provide that—but Pascal always felt that reason could assist man in understanding Christianity; he tried to rationalize his faith as far as possible. Although it cannot replace revelation, reason can show man his need for faith, it can set him on the road, and establish him as a seeker after truth which is its greatest, and unique, benefit to mankind.

Pascal and the Stoic concept of duty

Pascal opens his exposition in the Entretien by stating that Epictetus was "un des philosophes du monde qui ait le mieux connu les devoirs de l'homme." This knowledge of duties was Stoicism's
most praiseworthy aspect. Pascal summarized them as follows:

1) God is the principal object of man. Man should submit to God's will.

2) Men are stewards of God's gifts: life, goods, and all else.

3) Men are actors on the stage of life who cannot choose their roles, but can, and should, play the role given them to the best of their abilities.

4) Man should think daily about death and suffering; this will ward off base thoughts and excessive desires.

5) Man should be humble in all things.

6) In summary, man should learn to know, and to follow, God's will.

The real purpose Epictetus serves in the Ennchantment is that of an example of man's presumption which Pascal wishes to oppose to Montaigne's pyrrhonism. Pascal never proposed an objective study of the Stoic notion of duty; rather he found the note from the Encheiridion on man's attitude toward God a convenient starting point.

We can make several comments about the above list of duties:

(1) Pascal is presenting Epictetus from the viewpoint of a Christian, and not from that of a philosopher. This is in accordance both with his own convictions, and with the fact that Stoicism had, on many previous occasions, been adapted into Christian ethics.

(2) The emphasis is on man's need to submit, to be humble, and to look forward to an afterlife, rather than on the development of rational faculties and their application as practical wisdom in this life.

(3) The Stoics held that man's principal duties were those of citizenship, family, and religion. The quotation in the Manual
(fragment 31) which Pascal incorporates begins, "In piety towards the gods..." indicating that this is a subdivision of duties in Stoicism which Pascal has elevated to the primary duty. The Stoics did not clearly set religious duties above all others, as is indicated by the previous paragraph (fragment 30) which begins: "Our duties are in general measured by our social relationships." Pascal chose to overlook the Stoic range of duties, and restricted himself to duties to God, thereby seriously distorting the Stoic view which insists on man as a social being who can perfect himself only within the community of man.

(4) Pascal chose the metaphor of man as an actor to emphasize his belief that this life is transitory, ephemeral, (and, by implication, of secondary importance,) and that man is playing a passive role in it. The Stoics, who did not believe in immortality, held that this life is all man experiences, and that he can have control over the essential aspects of his life, i.e., his own moral conduct and attitudes, but not over external circumstances such as his station in life. Although Pascal has quoted Epictetus here almost verbatim (fragment 17), he set it in a context which reverses basic Stoic doctrine.

(5) It is unfair to Stoicism to emphasize a preoccupation with suffering and death. The Stoic had to learn that these were beyond his control so that he could moderate his emotions in their presence, but he did not otherwise meditate upon them. Pascal wanted people to contemplate their mortality in order that they might embrace the Christian promise of eternal life.
What do we make of these transformations disguised as praise of Epictetus? Had Pascal not studied Epictetus carefully enough? Was he following the mode of using an idea from a classical author as the starting point for expressing his own ideas? Was he so thoroughly imbued with Christian readings that only those passages which fit into his beliefs registered in his mind? Were his instinctive talents in the art of persuasion coming to the fore, first praising Epictetus so as to gain the confidence of the libertine by referring to his authorities, only to damn him more convincingly in the second part of his exposition? I believe that all of these factors played a part in Pascal's use of Epictetus.

In the second part of his presentation, Pascal condemns Stoicism for claiming to make men perfect. This condemnation depends on claiming that Epictetus equates devoir with pouvoir, that to know what one ought to do is the same as to do it. "Après avoir si bien compris ce qu'on doit, voici comme il se perd dans la présomption de ce qu'on peut."20 This is a misunderstanding of the point that "ought" implies "can." Epictetus never claimed that from merely knowing what one ought to do, it followed that one would, or would be able, to do what he ought to do. Pascal believed that only through grace did one perform moral actions. This belief caused him to reject, or overlook, Epictetus's emphasis in the Discourses, on training the intellect to know what action would be morally right in a given situation, and on training the will to direct a man to accomplish such an

20 Entretien, p. 41.
action. The Stoics did not claim that any men were perfect as a result of adhering to Stoicism; they claimed only that Stoicism proposed a method for attaining virtue and happiness.

It is in Pascal's interest to develop an "ought-can" equation because he holds that man ought, and can, submit to God's will. Not all men do submit to God's will, not even all those who accept that as the first duty of a Christian, so Pascal can use the example of the enlightened pagan philosophy to strengthen the Christian position.

The notion of duty developed from the Stoic doctrine that proper application of the reason would give one the ultimate persuasion for right behavior in a given situation even if the specific action required was independently distasteful. Pascal did not discuss specific duties; individual moral problems did not interest him because his primary concerns were metaphysical, not ethical. Perhaps part of the reason he had such an aversion to both Jesuit casuistry and to Stoicism is that there is an element of casuistry in Stoicism in the discussions of specific cases and situations. Moral codes are all imperfect substitutions invented by man to counteract the evil effects of the passions.

The role of passions: concupiscence

Pascal offers the standard remarks about the war between reason and the passions (B 412), about passions as the cause of false impressions (B 83), and about passions encouraging man to seek happiness in external pleasures (B 464). Unbridled passions are vices;
mastered ones are virtues.

Ses passions ainsi dominées sont vertus: l’avarice, la jalousie, la colère, Dieu même se les attribue, et se sont aussi bien vertus que la clémence, la pitié, la constance, qui sont aussi des passions. (B 502)

One must always be wary of the passions; they must always be the slaves of the soul and never its masters.

Il faut s’en servir comme d’esclaves, et, leur laissant leur alimenter, empêcher que l’âme n’y en prenne; car, quand les passions sont les maîtresses, elles sont vices. (B 502)

Desire, along with pride, man’s two principal infirmities, is the source of all actions, both good and evil. "La concupiscence et la force sont les sources de toutes nos actions: la concupiscence fait les volontaires; la force, les involontaires." (B 334) It is even a mark of man’s greatness "d’en [concupiscence] avoir su tirer un règlement admirable, et d’en avoir fait un tableau de la charité." (B 402)

On a fondé et tiré de la concupiscence des règles admirables de police, de morale, et de justice; mais dans le fond, ce vilain fond de l’homme, ce figement malum, n’est que couvert: il n’est pas côte. (B 453)

Man has made the best tentative moral code he could based on concupiscence, which seems to be very nearly a faculty for Pascal; this passion of desire can produce noble, as well as unworthy, actions. In this respect, it is appropriate to compare it with the will.
The role of the will: volonté

Pascal defines the will, not so much in terms of a faculty, but rather as an insatiable, self-centered desire.

La volonté propre ne se satisfait jamais, quand elle aurait pouvoir de tout ce qu'elle veut; mais on est satisfait dès l'instant qu'on y renonce. Sans elle, on ne peut être malcontent; par elle, on ne peut être content. (B 472)

To say that one must give up trying to "satisfy" the will in order to find happiness is like saying one must renounce trying to satisfy some appetite. The will is more normally thought of as a faculty which can control appetites, not as an appetite itself.

Pascal also designates the will as the organ which judges, and without whose judgment nothing is true or false.

La volonté est un des principaux organes de la créance; non qu'elle forme la créance, mais parce que les choses sont vraies ou fausses, selon la face par où on les regarde. La volonté, qui se plaît à l'une plus qu'à l'autre, détourné l'esprit de considérer les qualités de celles qu'elle n'aime pas à voir; et ainsi l'esprit, marchant d'une pièce avec la volonté, s'arrête à regarder la face qu'elle aime; et ainsi il en juge par ce qu'il voit. (B 99)

In this sense, the will has the same sort of persuasive power over reason that the passions and the imagination have, the ability to determine impressions or judgments for selfish ends.

The interesting twist here, when applied to "vérités divines" or sapientia, is that the will can direct the reason, so that its role in determining one to believe is even greater than that of the mind,
and the role of reason is even less important. Demonstrative proofs of the existence of God are superfluous when it is le coeur which perceives the existence of God. Pascal is eager to develop in man the will to believe, he wants to persuade the will, he wants to make the will feel the necessity for believing. The will makes it possible for le sentiment or le coeur to believe; it also confirms the mind's acceptance of revelation. Hence, in the supernatural order, the will is a superior power, and only in the natural order is it weak because it is prey to the stronger external forces of the passions.

In summary, Pascal seems to make almost contradictory use of the will. In the first place, it is weak and powerless to ward off the impulses of the passions. Nor can reason rule it. It runs on a downhill path, seeking its own pleasure, lead on by man's natural concupiscence.

In the second place, in the automaton theory of man, ("Nous sommes automate autant qu'esprit." B 252) the will has the power to govern those inferior aspects of the soul, such as habit and desire. Thus by winning over the will, by making it feel the need to believe, habits can be formed, desires channeled, and the effects of man's evil nature can be restrained. The will, through habit, directs the automate, which controls, non-intellectually, l'esprit, and leads to a state of belief that may be completely devoid of rationality.

F. Rauh says that prior to Pascal (or perhaps to Descartes) the will was regarded as an insignificant force, far inferior to the power
of the reason; he suggests that Pascal stemmed the tide of intellec-
tualism, and set the will above the reason as a force for determin-
ing actions.21

Descartes does not admit of a division of the soul into a
superior part, containing the reason and the will, and an inferior
part containing the passions and "appétits naturels" which are at
war with one another. Pascal does not seem to set much store in
this fairly common notion either; he does not hold the reason to be
superior, but instead wants to strike a balance between the indi-
rect action that both the mind and the will can have on the passions
without, at the same time, doing away with the passions. Pascal
seems to favor Descartes' view that by use of the will, which can be
the impulse to start good habits, one could curb the effects of the
passions but not eradicate them. This is closer to what the Stoics
held, i.e., they did not pretend to wish or will away emotions them-
selves, but only the bad effects deriving from them.

Morale provisoire

In Stoicism, training the mind and practicing the will are
basic to determining behavior and to attaining virtue. In the human
order, Pascal recognized the "honnête homme" as a kind of ideal. His
greater concern is in the divine order, in which he wants to make peo-
ple disposed to receive grace. Thus his morale provisoire is a pro-
gram of steps to be followed to become receptive to the action of

21 Frédéric Rauh, "La Philosophie de Pascal," Études sur Pas-
grace, which can in turn put truth and felicity within man's reach. "Il y a trois moyens de croire: la raison, la coutume, l'inspiration." (B 245)

In the first place, one should seek truth. This can best be done with guidance from the Church. The principal preoccupation of Pascal in the Entretien is to show how non-Christian writings, whose merits may be great, fall short of the truth. Without being unjust to Epictetus and Montaigne, he felt he could alert readers to the shortcomings of their philosophies, and show how Christianity resolved all resulting contradictions and dilemmas.

Pascal wished to appeal to the rationalist and to the non-believer on his own terms, and the wager is an example of the way he felt he could do that. The rationalist could offer no demonstration for the mortality of the soul.

Secondly, Pascal believed that man was part automaton, and encouraged men to form habits in keeping with the state of grace they wished to attain.

Vous voulez aller à la foi, et vous n'en savez pas le chemin ... apprenez de ceux qui ont été liés comme vous, et qui partent maintenant tout leur bien ... c'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient, en prenant de l'eau bénite, en faisant dire des messes. (B 233)

Good habits will mold the reason to accept such behavior as natural.

Nous sommes automate autant qu'esprit ... la coutume fait nos preuves le plus fortes et les plus crues; elle incline l'automate, qui entraîne l'esprit sans qu'il y pense ... car d'en avoir toujours les preuves présentes, c'est trop d'af-
faire. Il faut acquérir une créance plus facile, qui est celle de l'habitude.
(B 252)

Man can take the initiative to establish behavior patterns which will make it possible for him to receive grace, but persuasive arguments must win the consent of the reason to establish good habits, and pressure must be applied to the will to fortify it against its natural inclinations toward selfish short term happiness.

Quand notre passion nous porte à faire quelque chose, nous oublions notre devoir: comme on aime un livre, on le lit, lorsqu'on devrait faire autre chose. Mais, pour s'en souvenir, il faut se proposer de faire quelque chose qu'on hait; et lors on s'excuse sur ce qu'on a autre chose à faire, et on se souvient de son devoir par ce moyen. (B 104)

There is an interesting parallel with Stoicism here, in that Epictetus advised people on occasion to be overly asiduous in eliminating bad habits. He used the analogy of a bent stick which must be bent in the opposite direction for a time in order to become straight. Given the strength of man's concupiscence in its various manifestations, the will is up against a major obstacle: habit is more influential in the order of things divine than is either the will or reason.

To be receptive to inspiration, man must be humble, and humility was lacking in Epictetus, Pascal felt.

La religion chrétienne, qui seule a la raison, n'admet pas pour ses vrais enfants ceux qui croient sans inspiration; ce n'est pas qu'elle exclue la raison et
la coutume, au contraire; mais il faut ouvrir son esprit aux preuves, s'y confirmer par la coutume, mais s'offrir par les humiliations aux inspirations, qui seules peuvent faire le vrai et salutaire effet. (B 245)

Pascal's training program is aimed not only at the mind and the will, as was the Stoics's, but at the cœur, or sentiment, as well, and ultimately the promptings of the heart will be more persuasive than demonstrable arguments.

Conclusion

Much of the Pensées is devoted to persuading man that he is "ni ange ni bête" but has some of the characteristics of both. Pascal can come to no conclusion other than that man must try to counterbalance his grandeur and his bassesse in order to avoid emphasizing one extreme at the cost of the other, the error he felt both Epictetus and Montaigne had made. Man's capacities and weaknesses must be kept in balance, and it is this middle path between two extremes that I think Pascal is, however uneasily, forced to take. "Deux excès: exclure la raison, n'admettre que la raison." (B 253)

The intellect is just one of man's faculties which he must make use of, but not rely on exclusively. On the one hand, Pascal is reluctant to embrace such an apparent compromise; on the other, he is drawn to it as the synthesis of two "contrariétés."

Contrariété. Après avoir montré la basse et la grandeur de l'homme. Que l'homme maintenant s'estime son prix. Qu'il s'aime, car il y a en lui une nature capable de bien; mais qu'il n'aime pas pour cela les bassesses qui y sont.
It is surprising to find Pascal saying that man has "en lui la capacité de connaître la vérité et d'être heureux" because it seems that this is what he was condemning, as presumption, in Epictetus. However, he was never able completely to renounce the importance of the intellect, nor to overlook other human capacities. "Les philosophes qui ont dompté leurs passions, quelle matière l'a pu faire?" (B 349) Although he had adopted the Christian doctrines of original sin and of grace, thereby removing himself from the possibility of certain fundamental accords with Stoicism, and although he calls more frequently on man to recognize his weaknesses, while the Stoics underlined man's strengths, the conclusion which follows from his premisses is a combination of optimism and pessimism, of l'homme sans Dieu, a creature with no true happiness or truth, and l'homme avec Dieu, man in a faith seeking posture. Pascal is constantly working with two different levels, or orders, the human and the divine, and he has double conclusions depending on which order he is emphasizing. On the human level, then, he concludes not as far from the Stoics as we might suppose: man must make use of his capacities, rational and voluntary; he must recognize their relative strengths and weaknesses, and control them by training and by developing good habits.
CHAPTER V

MOLIÈRE

The debate about moral content

Since his lifetime, critics have debated whether Molière expounded a morale in his comedies with the intention of reform or whether it was incidental to the entertainment. Critics who disclaim for Molière any intention other than entertainment cite in their support his vocation to the theatre, his ability as a comic mime, actor, and writer, his good-natured attitude toward men, the fact that he treated popular themes in his plays, and the fact that in his plays there is no systematic presentation of a moral position. Lack of a clear moral system does not, of course, entail lack of moral content, as critics point out who wish to claim that Molière exposed men’s weaknesses in his plays with the intention that they should mend their ways. They call Molière himself as witness, they cite his frequent use of raisonneure to present an intelligent, moderate perspective where the protagonist’s behavior has lead to fru-

1 "Le devoir de la comédie étant de corriger les hommes en les divertissant, j'ai cru que, dans l'emploi où je me trouve, je n'avais rien de mieux à faire que d'attaquer par des peintures ridicules les vices de mon siècle." Premier Placet au Roi, Théâtre complet de Molière (Paris: Garnier Frères, s.d.), Tartuffe, I. 632.

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stratification, unhappiness, and public ridicule, and they contrast the gratuitous plots of Molière's predecessors with the "profondeur jusque-là inconnue" which he gave comedy.\(^2\) Moral content alone is not sufficient to retain our interest in a literary work, as is attested by the numerous moral treatises of the 17th century which have ceased to be read, but on the other hand, Molière's contemporaries, who were not without literary and dramatic ability, wrote comedies which lacked the moelle substantifique that has given Molière's comedies the stature of classics. Donneau de Visé wrote, when the Misanthrope was first performed, that Molière "laisse partout deviner plus qu'il ne dit" and scholars have been trying to capture Molière's thoughts since then.\(^3\)

This curious lack of consensus as to Molière's moral stand has lead to debates centering around what issues he was attacking and what ones he was defending. The cabale lead by the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement was successful in having Tartuffe banned on the grounds that Molière was attacking Christianity, rather than false piety or hypocrisy. Some people thought Molière was attacking identifiable people in Les Précieuses ridicules (e.g., Mile. de Scudéry), rather than attempting to unmask the excesses to which the inept admirers of les précieux were lead by their inability to discern the external trappings of behavior and language from the more abstract and essential goals of préciosité. He was accused of indecency and


impiety for witty answers such as the "tarte à la crème," and the
le..., as well as the supposed satire on the Ten Commandments in
the Maxims of Marriage in l'Ecole des Femmes. He was again accused
of attacking Christianity, and indeed all decent moral standards,
because his Don Juan is chastized by a ridiculous looking servant
who, by his manner of reproach, deprives the ethics he propounds of
nobility and loftiness. The most compelling, yet enigmatic, charac-
ter of all, Alceste, calls for sincerity and frankness, but resorts
at times to the empty civilities he decries, or to brutal insults,
leaving Molière open to further accusations of making a mockery of
nobility of purpose.

Those who do not regard Molière as impious or immoral, see
him as a keen observer of mankind, as a realist holding up to man
his shortcomings so that he may better note them, and reform. Molière
criticism has arrived at no definitively accepted decree on this mat-
ter, but there is now less tendency to accuse him of immorality, and
more emphasis on the realism of his observations. He is not thought
of as an intentional social reformer, but most critics believe that
some discussion of the morale of his work is necessary to any compre-
hensive discussion of Molière.

Elements of Molière's morale

Molière clearly made a distinction between Christian morality
and an ethic independent of religious doctrine. In this, he reflected
the liberalizing spirit of his times, although those who could not
comprehend a moral code dissociated from Christianity accused him of
being an atheist and his plays, therefore, of being heretical and immoral. His "moral" stands, his confidence in life, human nature, freedom, spontaneity, sincerity, and generosity, his opposition to fanaticism, autocracy, avarice, hypocrisy, complacency, pedantry, and conformity are quite independent of any Christian pronouncements. If the good, or likeable, characters triumph over the pernicious, or hateful, ones, it is not because they have or have not followed Christian teachings, but because they have responded to an independent ethic which Molière saw as deriving from the nature of the real world. He is not saying that Christian ethics is unnatural, nor is he positing an ethics which is in opposition to Christianity. Critics studying Molière from a Christian viewpoint usually conclude that he was an atheist whereas he is perhaps more aptly called an agnostic.

The 16th century humanism basic to Molière's ethics had its roots in classical philosophy which he studied in school. 4 He pursued this interest through his friends Chapelle, La Mothe Le Vayer, who influenced him to look on the cheery side of life, and disciples of Gassendi. Their philosophical speculations, which grew out of a desire to be free from entrenched beliefs, were often thought to be

4 All Molière critics acknowledge Molière's debt to his interest in ancient philosophies. They point out his especial interest in Lucretius (he was interested in doing a translation of De Natura Rerum and may perhaps have completed part of such a translation) and the similarities between Lucretius and gassendisme which also had a special appeal for him, and was much discussed in his circle of friends. He certainly knew the sceptics, Montaigne and Erasmus, as well as the ancient popularizers of Stoicism, Cicero and Seneca, and he probably knew Justus Lipsius and Guillaume Du Vair. He may have read Epictetus, of whom numerous translation were made in the 16th century, and Diogenes Laertius's Lives of Philosophers, and all of this material formed a major part of the literary and philosophical background upon which he drew in writing his plays.
attacks on Christianity, and the absence of explicit support for
Christian dogma was also taken as a sign of atheism.

Molière believed in the essential goodness of man to the
extent that when he was suffering, personally, from human viciousness,
he did not even pay lip service to the notion of original sin, nor
did he become a cynic like La Rochefoucauld, nor a moralizer. He was
closer to Stoicism and ancient philosophies in propounding the per-
fectability of man than he was to Christianity which held that man
had to rely on God's grace to overcome his evil nature.

For Molière, as for the Stoics, nature refers both to the order
of the universe and to human nature which is a part of Nature. J.D.
Hubert interprets Molière's naturalism as "regarding life as a mani-
estation of Nature capable of overcoming all obstacles." In addi-
tion, Lanson sees it as a reaction to Christian morality which, he
claims, resisted nature. The Stoic admonition to "follow nature,
restored to prominence by the Renaissance, seems clearly supported in
Molière's plays.

Can one aspect of human nature be in conflict with another?
And if so, what then? Molière's plays present several such conflicts,
most notably Alceste's love for the coquette Célimène and his insis-
tance on sincerity. But how, then, does he avoid the controls which
are "unnatural"? The real crux of the matter, for Molière, as for the

5 J.D. Hubert, Molière and the Comedy of Intellect (Berkeley:

6 Histoire de la littérature française (Paris: Hachette, 1951),
p. 526.
Stoics, rests with the ability of the rational faculty, including
discernment and judgment, to distinguish between what is "contrary
to nature" and what is disciplined nature.

Based on the initial premises of human nature as good and
as part of the order of the universe, both Molière and the Stoics
held two attitudes in common: (1) individual human natures are
manifestations of Nature, and, as such, should not be constrained
or contradicted, and (2) human nature can be molded and modified;
man ought to seek virtue rather than excusing defects and vices as
though they were normal. This rational naturalism is compatible
with both humanism and with an ethic independent of Christianity.

Although no Molière critic has called his morale Stoic, it is
of particular interest to see what, if any, elements of Stoicism
exist in Molière's work for several reasons: (1) most of his plays
were written after 1660, by which time the popularity of Stoicism
was on the decline, and a reaction against it had set in, (2) the
tone of his plays seems more anti-Stoic than Stoic, with the occa-
sional Stoic maxim coming from characters Molière is ridiculing; 7
however, we should recall that (3) Molière was not a revolutionary,

7 "Ferme, ferme mon coeur, point de faiblesse humaine."
Orgon in Tartuffe, l. 1293. Concerning cuckoldry, Chrysalde advises
Arnolphe that "tout le mal ... n'est que dans la façon de recevoir
la chose; car, pour se bien conduire en ces difficultés, il y faut,
comme en tout, fuir les extrémités ... le cocuage sous des traits
moins affreux aisément s'énvisage; et, comme je vous dis, toute
l'habilité ne va qu'à le savoir tourner du bon côté." L'Ecole des
Femmes, l. 1248-1251; 1272; 1274-1275. Hubert claims that Molière
uses philosophy as grist for his comic mill, Molière and the Comedy
of Intellect, p. 128.
that he did not turn his back on previous literary and philosophical vogues, (4) that he did deal with topical issues in his plays, those that were subjects of conversations in salons and at the court. Although moralists and Christian apologists had ceased to be attracted by Stoicism, it was to be a long time before its influence ceased to be felt among Molière's patrons.

There are several unveiled allusions to Stoic philosophy in Molière's plays. Philaminte, in *Les Femmes savantes*, is a clear example of the efficacy of Stoic philosophy. When she hears of her total financial ruin she takes it calmly, knowing that possessing wealth is not a primary virtue and that emotional outbursts will not change the circumstances over which she has no control; she therefore suffers less from her losses.

Chrysale: Votre procès perdu!

Philaminte: Vous vous trouvez beaucoup!
Mon cœur n'est point du tout ébranlé de ce coup.
Faites, faites paraître une âme moins commune,
A braver, comme moi, les traits de la fortune.

Chrysale: 0 Ciel! tout à la fois perdre ainsi tout mon bien!

Philaminte: Ah! quel honteux transport! Fi! tout cela n'est rien
Il n'est pour le vrai sage aucun revers funeste
Et perdant tout chose, à soi-même il se reste.

l. 1694-1698; 1705-1708.

Molière's use of phrases such as *le vrai sage* make his allusions to Stoic philosophy indubitable.
When Arnolphe, in *l'Ecoie des Femmes*, hears that Agnès has received a visitor during his absence, he goes by himself to the garden to calm down, advising himself:

Tâchons de modérer notre ressentiment.  
Patience, mon coeur, doucement, doucement.

l. 409-410.

and again:

Un certain Grec\(^8\) disoit à l'empereur Auguste,  
Comme une instruction utile autant que juste,  
Que lorsqu'une aventure en colère nous met,  
Nous devons, avant tout, dire notre alphabet,  
Afin que dans ce temps la bile se tempère,  
Et qu'on ne fasse rien que l'on ne doive faire.  
J'ai suivi sa leçon sur le sujet d'Agnès...

l. 447-453.

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Athenodorus is cited several times by Diogenes Laertius as a Stoic and the author of a work entitled *Walks*, one of Diogenes Laertius's sources.

"Athenodorus of Tarsus . . . was a Stoic, a friend of Cicero and Strabo, and a teacher of Augustus . . . he probably came to Rome with Octavian in 44 B.C. . . . he probably represented the views of the Middle Stoa. He sent a summary of some views of Posidius to Cicero who wanted them for his De Officiis . . . Seneca used his ethical writings." *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd edition, p. 140.

This anecdote was also used in a play by Bernadino Pino de Cagli which Molière may well have known.
In an attempt to console Alceste out of one of his black moods about the iniquities of man, Philinte reminds him of the commonplace of Christian Stoicism, that vice provides a test for virtue:

Tous ces défauts humains nous donnent dans la vie
Des moyens d'exercer notre philosophie:
C'est le plus bel emploi que trouve la vertu;
Et si de probité tout étoit revêtu,
Si tous les coeurs étoient francs, justes et dociles,
La plupart des vertus nous seroient inutiles,
Puisqu'on en met l'usage à pouvoir sans ennui
Supporter, dans nos droits, l'injustice d'autrui.

Misanthrope, l. 1561-1568.

These examples offer evidence that Stoicism was still a current topic because Molière would not have included them unless he was sure that his audience would understand the allusions. Do the above quotations show that Molière was accepting or rejecting Stoicism? The answer to that question depends on whether one takes Philinte, for example, as Molière's porte-parole, or as another caricature. Adam wants to maintain that Molière is far removed from Stoicism; he denies that Chrysalde is Molière's porte-parole in l'Ecole des Femmes and claims that he is only a "prétendu sage."

[IL enseigne aux maris, non pas du tout la sagesse, mais une complaisance ridicule ...
 ... avec une platitude d'expression, une
bassesse de pensée ...
 ... le bon sens prend
 ... la bouche du raisonneur une allure
bouffonne, et lorsqu'il développe pesamment
 ... qu'il fait de cocuage il faut fuir toute
extrémité, compréhens bien que Molière
 ... veut alors nous faire rire de cette drô-
 ... lerie, et non point du tout nous révéler
 ... sa morale.9

9 Histoire de la littérature française au XVII siècle
Molière is certainly not above mocking any philosophy, even one which is dear to him, so we must assume that he can repeat Stoic maxims both in earnest and in jest. We can also assume that he could appear to be mocking Stoicism when in fact he was attacking an abuse of it. The comments referred to above by Adam on cuckoldry confuse absolute values with moderating or controlling the passions; Molière could be pointing out the ridiculousness of this confusion. His overt references to Stoicism are not enunciated solely by ridiculous people, nor solely by raisonneurs, which complicates determining his attitude toward that moral theory.

I am interested in discovering if there are further, less explicit, influences of Stoicism on Molière’s moral views, or if the anti-Stoic turn in morality and literature marks his work as well as that of his contemporaries.

Moral idealism and morale mondaine

By contrast with Corneille, Molière is thought not to portray heroes, or people with ideals of virtue which they attain by superhuman efforts of will. Lanson has stated: ["Il n’y a pas de lutte contre l’égoïsme, pas de sacrifice, pas d’abnégation, d’immolation, dans ... l’effort sanglant vers l’idéal."]10 Reynier states flatly:

La morale de Molière, fondée sur l’observation et sur le bon sens, est parfaitement accommodée à la faiblesse humaine. Elle ne nous demande pas de grands sacrifices; elle ne vise pas très haut; la théorie du juste milieu

et de la mesure la retient loin des sommets. Elle tend à écarter toutes les formes de l'idéalisme.\textsuperscript{11}

Molière's principal characters are typically put into trying situations where it is important to them to do the right thing, but in spite of their best efforts, they do the wrong thing, and end up frustrated and unhappy, having succeeded only in providing merriment for those around them and for Molière's audiences.

Critics have made more plausible cases for Molière as an anti-Stoic by recourse to his biography and to quotations from his plays. For example, Philinte, often regarded as a spokesman for Molière, summarized a contemporary attitude toward Stoicism:

Cette grande roideur des vertus des vieux âges
Heurte trop notre siècle et les communs usages;
Elle veut aux mortels trop de perfection.

\textit{Misanthrope}, l. 153-155.

These were the standard criticisms of Stoicism: virtue is too demanding, too dour, too austere for an epoch used to self-indulgence rather than to self-sacrifice. Stoic virtue set unrealistic standards of perfection which discouraged rather than inspired men; human nature was imperfect, so to expect manifest virtue was to expect men to go against nature.

The proper guide for human behavior, then, was not some impossible standard such as Stoic virtue, but a more "human(e)" one. Whereas virtue was an absolute for the Stoics, for Philinte, it is relative, it is "virtu traitable" which regards human weaknesses as normal rather

than as defects to be corrected. Such a moral view was labeled mon-
daine and implied a contrast with an absolute standard outside norma-
tive behavior. Lionel Gossman saw honnêteté, rather than virtue,
as the moral guideline in Molière, and summarized his morale as "do
as the honnêtes gens do."

12 Even Paul Bénichou put the emphasis on
the social aspects of Molière's sagesse, as he calls it, by defining
it as "ce composé de vertus solides et adroites où s'exprime finale-
ment l'équilibre de la civilisation courtisane." 13 Lanson identified
virtue with altruism; he believed that the lesson of the Misanthrope
was to show that society could not function if everyone strove for
virtue, that the very viability of society is based on "un ensemble
de mensonges et de conventions." 14 These definitions fall short of
Molière's nobility of purpose and the exigencies of his ethical views.
Molière was closer to the high standards of Stoicism than he was to
the sort of social convention embodied in the above definitions, and
I shall attempt to show why I believe this to be the case.

Perhaps a clue to the reason for which Molière does not stress
the notion of virtue per se can be found in Jasinski's suggestion that
the term vertu did not have as strong a meaning in the 17th century as
it does today; it denoted a good disposition or quality, as vice de-
noted a defect or imperfection. This, however, did not keep the

12 Men and Masks: a Study of Molière (Baltimore: Johns Hop-

13 Morales du grand siècle, NRF Idées (Paris: Gallimard, 1948),
p. 300.

14 Histoire de la littérature française, p. 528.
moralists from being very much in earnest in criticizing man's vices and pointing out how little he cared for, or sought after, virtue, and surely they were not just talking about "good dispositions," especially not when they speak of the virtue of the honnête homme who seemed to embody innumerable good qualities and about whose real existence there seems to be no doubt.

Corneille's moral code is no less mondaine, based on social concepts of honor and duty and the desire for good repute. His heroes' goals were more general, more uniform from play to play, and seemed to audiences and critics more acceptable, whereas Molière's protagonists had varied goals, not all of which were noble. Corneille presented "success" stories in which ideals were achieved even though personal happiness was postponed, whereas Molière dramatized "failures" in which either the goals were unworthy or the wrong actions were taken to meet worthy goals.

Not all critics have seen Molière's plays as lacking examples of ideals or virtue achieved. J.J. Rousseau and later the Romantics regarded Alceste as a misunderstood and unappreciated hero, as a paragon of virtue.15 John Cairncross claims that in the Misanthrope Molière was making fun of his own "soif de l'absolu."16 Jacques Arna-

15 Cf. Lettre à d'Alembert, M. Fuchs, ed. (Geneva: Droz, 1948), pp. 48-56. Molière's contemporaries were puzzled by Alceste. Perhaps they did not understand the play, or perhaps it was too "realistic"; at any rate, after the first two performances, the audience dwindled so in size that the play was soon withdrawn from the repertoire.

von claimed that Molière did not portray any perfect characters because he did not believe that any existed, but that this did not rule out an ever-present ideal which haunts his characters and which they never achieve.  

This is a more religious moral view in which Molière presents self-sacrificing, hard-working characters who have a sense of duty and responsibility; if people fail to achieve happiness it is because they are imperfect and frail. Arnavon is giving a Christian interpretation to Molière without using the traditional vocabulary, and this perspective encourages him to see Molière as a Christian Stoic:

C'est la douleur, la solitude, l'épreuve qu'il choisira et non les satisfactions terrestres. Stolcisme tranquille et fort, parfumé de christianisme, que n'ont pas soupçonné les contemporains.

Jasinski finds in Molière's works an example of virtue incarnate: Philinte in the *Misanthrope*.

Dans l'intention de Molière, il s'éleve à la plus haute humanité par d'éminentes vertus, tant d'esprit que de coeur ... Philinte, par la logique de son caractère et le sens de son rôle, incarne la sagesse parfaite selon Molière. Il intervient moins comme raisonneur que comme sage en action.

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18 Ibid., pp. 215-216.

It would be helpful to my thesis to be able to accept Jasinski's view that Philinte is the ideal sage because this would give me a stronger argument for a more explicit Stoic morale in Molière's work. But I think it is more correct to see Molière's views as a combination of Alceste's and Philinte's, and I hope I shall be able to show that such a synthesis does not weaken the claim that Molière's moral ideas are akin to those of the Stoics.

Molière and his characters certainly do give expression to ideals, not the least of which is love. Is it not an ideal form of love to wish that two people could exist and suffice for one another alone, as Alceste dreams of loving and being loved by Célimène? Arnaud, and even Sganarelle in l'Ecole des Maris, have an ideal of marriage which haunts them: it is the ideal of a faithful wife who does not stain her husband's honor. The ideals of generosity, trust, confidence, freedom from constraints, authenticity, sincerity, friendship, true piety instead of hypocrisy are all given repeated expression in Molière's plays without his placing before his audience any character who embodies all virtues. I believe that even though Molière does not speak specifically about virtue, nor show how a perfectly virtuous man ought to behave, he does make it clear that he holds a moral ideal, that his characters in varying degrees hold moral ideals toward which they strive with very imperfect success. Part of Molière's art, part of the nature of comedy, is in helping us laugh at how far short men fall of their ideals.

The goals Molière's characters strive for in the context of a play, and for which they are ridiculed, are often petty versions of
their real ideal. For example, Arnolphe falls in love with Agnès and has certain ideals he wishes a wife to realize, an important one of which is that she should so love him in return that she never dishonor him with infidelity. But he sets his sights much below that, and can think only of avoiding cocuage. His behavior, then, only measures up to this petty goal which he fails to achieve having omitted to pursue more worthy and essential goals such as confidence, generosity, and love.

In other examples, Cathos and Magdelon desire self-improvement; they wish to be part of the cream of cultured society, but the goal they actually work for is only a mimicry of a vogue. Orgon wants to be pious, but settles for parading in the shadow of a hypocrite to whose motives and practices he remains blind in the mistaken belief that he can convince himself and others of his own piety only by keeping the constant company of a dévot. Alceste has an ideal of universal sincerity and honesty, but is himself at times sidetracked into being hurtfully crude; he has an ideal of love but it cannot be reciprocated because it is in conflict with the goals and nature of the person he loves.

What Molière did, that theatre goers were perhaps not prepared for, was to depict the more human and 'real' possibility of one man incarnating simultaneously virtues and vices even though he put his main characters into situations where he could develop the dramatic possibilities of one characteristic, or one response to a given circumstance. Alceste is a good example of a man with some virtues and failings, but because men are not perfect, it does not follow that the
goal of virtue should be abandoned. Molière presents studies in 'indifferent' but 'preferred' objects and the problems that a person who attaches ultimate importance to them will encounter, i.e., he will be defeated in his attempts to attain these goals, and unhappy because he will have attached disproportionate importance to them. This does not mean that whether one is cuckolded or not makes no difference, but rather that seeking not to be cuckolded must not impinge on the exercise of primary virtues.

The ideals are there; Molière's characters have perhaps a grander ideal than do Corneille's heroes who aim less at abstract inner qualities, and more at measurable objectives such as honor and good reputation. The Stoic moral ideal of perfect virtue may not be overtly flourishing in Molière's plays, but it is far from being absent.

The raisonneurs

Like Stoic ethics, Molière's sagesse is founded on reason. Those characters who are ruled by passions, or who fail to discern the right action or attitude in a given circumstance, are those who meet with disappointment, adversity, and unhappiness. Molière has generally been regarded as taking a view concerning the primacy and efficacy of reason which is humanistic, and opposed, in particular, to Jansenism.

The theory that reason is the key to Molière's moral view derives in part from the existence in his major plays of a raisonneur, a person who tries to correct the protagonist's interpretation of
events. The raisonneur has been called Molière's porte-parole, and interpretations of his morale have often been derived from an amalgam of the speeches of the raisonneurs.

There are several problems with this approach to discovering Molière's moral ideas: (1) the raisonneurs often sound very rational on the main subject of the play, but occasionally they support silly, or even unreasonable, positions on other matters. An example of this is Ariste's speech, in *L'Ecole des Femmes*, in which he is trying to convince his brother, Sganarelle, to dress according to fashion rather than his own fancy:

\[
\text{Toujours au plus grand nombre on doit s'accommoder,} \\
\text{Et jamais il ne faut se faire regarder.} \\
\ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \ldots \\
\ldots \text{il vaut mieux souffrir d'être au nombre des fous,} \\
\text{Que du sage parti se voir seul contre tous.}
\]

1. 41-42; 53-54.

It is contrary to Molière's ethics, and completely without rational foundation, to identify morality with the behavior of the majority. To understand this passage, it is pertinent to recall that Molière, who played Sganarelle, wore a ridiculous costume for heightened comic effect in this early full-length play; Sganarelle had not yet completely evolved from the clown in the Italian *commedia dell'arte* which relied heavily on sight gags and outlandish outfits for laughs and for identification of characters.

Chrysalde, the raisonneur in *L'Ecole des Femmes*, gives Arnolphe the following famous words of consolation on being cuckolded:
Quoi qu'on en puisse dire enfin, le cocuage
Sous des traits moins affreux aisément s'envisage;
Et, comme je vous dis, toute l'habileté
Ne va qu'à le savoir tourner du bon côté.

1. 1272-1275.

This advice has been variously interpreted (1) as an example of the
juste-milieu behavior which Molière advocates, advice to avoid the
extremes of emotion (if you are cuckolded, take it "stoically"),
practical advice resulting from a realistic outlook on life, and (2)
as a devastating parody of the notion of juste-milieu. To the per-
son set on having a wife who will not damage his honor, this advice
is comfortless, and is a compromising attitude about a value which
is absolute. Fortunately, Chrysalde sounds more reasonable earlier
in the same speech:

Etre averse, brutal, fourbe, méchant et lâche,
N'est rien, à votre avis, auprès de cette taches;
Et, de quelque façon qu'on puisse avoir vécu,
On est homme d'honneur quand on n'est point cocu.

1. 1232-1235.

Chrysalde is clearly twitting his brother about the undue importance
he places on not being cuckolded—"être averse, brutal, fourbe, méchant
et lâche"—any of these is a vice; being cuckolded is a misfortune.
The advice is on how to react once the misfortune has occurred. Man's
best response, says Chrysalde sounding very Stoic, is to "corriger
le hasard par la bonne conduite." Philinte, the raisonneur in the
Misanthrope, makes us feel uncomfortable with his extravagant praise
of Oronte's sonnet, his admission that he scarcely knows the man he
has just embraced so fondly, and his uninspiring recommendations to
follow social conventions and customs, and not ask so much sincerity
and forthrightness of people.

We should also note that the raisonneurs are rarely personally involved in the dilemma on which they comment, and hence it is easier for them, from a detached perspective, to be "reasonable." It is a notorious aspect of human psychology that people can see clearly into the problems of others, but cannot observe themselves with the same objectivity.

(2) Not only do the raisonneurs make occasional irrational observations, but many ridiculous characters make very intelligent statements on subjects other than the basic situation in the play; they have to their credit qualities that Molière praises elsewhere. For example, both Harpagon and Arnolphe are figures of ridicule, the former for his avarice, the latter for ideas on how to insure himself a faithful wife, but Arnolphe is generous to Horace, the son of a long lost friend, who turns up and needs financial assistance. Likewise, Chrysale, dominated by his wife in matters traditionally reserved for the husband, does not hesitate to marry his daughter, Henriette, to a man with limited funds. Arnolphe wants Horace to forego ceremonious expressions of gratitude and reverence, thus exhibiting the virtue Alcestis is preaching. Philinte, who speaks in favor of a fitting amount of civility, has constantly to be defended because of his excessive praise of Corneille's sonnet. We must conclude that Molière's moral views are not to be found exclusively in the speeches and actions of the raisonneurs; the positive contributions of the protagonists must also be considered.

There is a third problem: what people say and what they do may
differ. Alceste knows it is unreasonable for him to love Célimène, and he longs to be able to regulate his love by his reason. But love has never been ruled by reason. He refuses to hire a solicitor for his trial because he feels that truth and justice should triumph without recourse to the conventions of lawyers and bribes. But justice must be dispensed by human beings, and, given Alceste's view of human nature, it is quite inconsistent of him to think the judges will espouse his cause without the encouragement of a solicitor. Sganarelle is finally willing to accept the fact that Agnès does not love him in the hopes of salvaging marriage with her because, contrary to all his reason, he loves her more than he despises the risk of being cuckolded.

We should not try to define Molière's morale in terms of characteristics he ridicules because being the object of ridicule is not a moral lapse. Bénichou claims that Alceste is "risible par ... ses échecs" but if he is, it is an uneasy laugh aimed not at his failure to achieve his ideal, but resulting from Molière's comic art, which, like Ionesco's, forces us to laugh at tragic situations. The only really odious and immoral character which Molière puts on stage is Tartuffe; not even Don Juan or Harpagon is immoral as Molière presents them. They may be wrong or foolish because of their choice of goals, but Tartuffe consciously chooses vice and conceals it under a cloak of virtue.

20 Morales du grand siècle, p. 355.
Two of the most interesting studies done recently on Molière have challenged the view that reason is the motivating force of Molière's moral theory, and have generally tended to detract from the emphasis placed on reason. Hubert claims that, although Molière is an intellectual, he has launched a thorough attack on the abuses of systematic thought, behavior, and ready-made attitudes which often pass for reason.  

Francis L. Lawrence goes even further and claims that what Molière's raisonneurs say is not reasonable, nor does it represent bon sens; it is an ironic humor which uses logic to prod the closed mind of the protagonist into frantic speech and action. He states firmly that reason cannot solve the problems of life.

Reason cannot solve life: it is unable to relate to the chaotic stuff of human action which operates . . . not by any discernible rule nor even the elementary natural order of cause and effect but from unfathomable and unalterable springs.

Lawrence performs a service for Molière scholarship by pointing out the occasions when reason is either absent or misapplied in Molière's plays, but it is incorrect to conclude that, because reason can be misused, it is useless.

Because Arnolphe claims that he had "tant philosophe" about his choice of wife, and then finds his efforts are for nought, we cannot conclude that Molière finds reason unable to cope with man's

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21 Molière and the Comedy of Intellect.

problems. Clearly Arnolphe was concerned about only one aspect of marriage: how to avoid being cuckolded, and he saw only one danger to that: education, i.e., he mistrusted reason and felt it invited evil rather than good. He was unable to see the complexity of his problem; he tried to meet it with too narrow a system and failed.

Sganarelle, in Dom Juan, reasons more nearly like a pedant, using the arguments Molière knew his critics would use, and thus he appears too learned in that play, too ready to appease the critics, by contrast with the innocent and natural logic and common sense of Molière's untutored servants. The only comic aspect of Sganarelle's earnest enumeration of the sins of libertinism is that he pretends to exempt his master from them.

Hubert is more correct in suggesting that Molière is attacking the abuses of systematic thought, such as pedantry, in which a form of reason is being used to subjugate the naive who do not understand that its good name is being prostituted. Trissotin is the outstanding example of a pedant whose misuse of reason turns Henriette, in Les Femmes savantes, against intellectual pursuits. She refuses to analyse sonnets and to talk philosophy, but when it comes to telling Trissotin that she will have none of him, she is capable of turning his philosophy against him. Although she has not become a femme savante, she is not a sotte either. Armande, on the other hand, works

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23 Ibid., pp. 93-99. Lawrence claims that l'Ecole des Femmes illustrates the utter defeat of reason be it philosophic, practical or instinctive naturalism.

24 'Education' here is more a matter of training, of indoctrination, than it is a matter of education in the honorific sense, opening people's minds to concepts and understanding.
very hard at initiating herself to her mother's interests; she seeks security in adopting the pose of a *femme savante*, but she is the one who is really attached to social conventions like marriage and the belief that a suitor, once cast off, is unworthy of anyone else. Her mother is not posing; she is a bit extremist, and not sufficiently self-confident to allow her husband his traditional role. She has to assert herself everywhere and she does not always distinguish the important from the unimportant; hence, she fires a maid for misuse of grammar. But when the family fortune is lost, her philosophy stands her in good stead; she is calm in the face of disaster. She is an example, not so much for her academic achievements, as for the freedom and independence they have given her, which is the Stoic promise.

Molière uses *raison* to include both formal academic training and that sensitivity to people, events, and circumstances which is fostered by experience. Each situation must be approached as an independent problem to be solved with discernment based on guiding principles. Reason, which serves to criticize or question goals, is a practical guide to action as well; it is not solely metaphysical. It is this practical aspect which has attracted to Molière's *morale* the encompassing, and Stoic, term *sagesse*. It is a very elusive capacity, and one must always be ready to modify one's actions, to be flexible. It does not mean one should try to conform to the behavior of the majority without regard for the moral quality of that behavior. Alceste gains our sympathy much more than Arnolphe because, although he may go about it awkwardly, the values for which he stands, even in the
midst of his failure to impress them on others, are more worthy of his stand.

Each of the characters fails to achieve his goal, not because he is ruled by passions rather than reason, but because moral issues are very complex even when Molière presents them each somewhat isolated from others, and the characters have failed to discern all aspects of the problem or have failed to apply reason to them with equal vigor. There is an analogy between the high regard which Molière had for reason, and the Stoics' confidence in the intellect.

Nature as complementary to reason

According to Stoic philosophy, to test whether or not reason has been properly applied, one must know if the conclusions of the rational faculty are in harmony with nature. With the revival of Stoicism, came a renewed interest in "following nature"; by the second half of the 17th century the emphasis became centralized on human nature (psychology), and following nature was often interpreted as obeying one's impulses without regard to established moral codes such as Christianity. The next step in the application of the dictum was to profess that reason sometimes ran contrary to natural inclinations, and should therefore be subordinated to nature. Thus, the original Stoic concept had been completely inverted, and in this form

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is quite anti-Stoic.

Critics cite examples of "nature" triumphing over "reason" either to attack the primacy of reason, or to support "naturalism" as Molière's morale by showing that attempts to force human nature to conform to unnatural standards will be met with defeat. But the two are not warring factions struggling against each other for a position of superiority. In Molière, as in Stoicism, reason and nature are mutually complementary.

Under the extended and anti-Stoic interpretation of "follow nature" it became easier to excuse man's shortcomings, but there are no characters, no speeches, no plots through which Molière gives even the slightest comfort to the morally lazy. Don Juan, the one full-fledged amoral character which Molière put on the stage, comes to grief, and what is more, he is never happy during his lifetime. Molière's characters tend to find themselves in difficult straits because they lack some moral virtue, so it is clear that Molière did not interpret "follow nature" as a licence; he did not espouse a degenerate form of Epicureanism. Nature has to be tempered by reason.

Nor is Molière denouncing the sin of pride. All the energy and élan of the plays is very strongly humanist and free from any taint that the heroes are guilty of excessive pride. Aspirations toward moral perfection are completely distinct for Molière from theology because the latter is extra-rational.

There is an echo in Molière of the concept that people of differing classes had different natures, and that the most perfect and virtuous people were royalty and the aristocracy. Molière satirized
that notion with the aristocratic Sotenville family in whom virtue was transformed into mere insistence on being treated as though they were superior. Virtue is not the prerogative of any one social class; it is an independent value which can be shunned or pursued by anyone. There are numerous incidents in Molière's plays which show that virtue is related to a person's character, not his social class. Molière keeps virtue separate from class, and posits an equality of human nature worthy of Stoicism.

Agnès is the example most frequently used to show the triumph of nature via instinct over reason. Anyone may exhibit natural responses in a given situation as does Agnès when she foils Arnolphe to win Horace. This reliance on nature is intuitive and does not involve the use of reason. But instinct alone will see one through only a limited number of situations—Agnès as a married woman will need other resources to draw on—but that is not dramatically interesting material. Instinct can guide, particularly in situations where reason is in disarray, but it is not an adequate foundation for a morale.

Molière's raisonneurs are often thought to speak for common sense, and thus Molière's moral ideas are said to rest on bon sens. Unlike instinct which is intuitive and not based on previous experience, common sense is more clearly rational, and relies heavily on the evidence of previous experience for making judgments. It is practical wisdom in contradistinction to scientific reasoning, and Molière finds ample room in his morale for solid common sense. Some amount of education or experience is required before the first judgments of common sense have merit. It is no more a gift at birth than is virtue,
but it is a commodity which is acquired by many people in some degree during their lifetime. It can resolve specific problems, but guiding moral principals are formed by the intellect.

Instinct and common sense are valuable parts of human nature. They are not excluded by a theory which supports the primacy of reason because reason cannot operate in a vacuum. Reason, with a firm empirical basis, prompted by nature, can lead men to virtue.

If Molière's philosophic interests included epistemology, he did not expose them in his plays. Precisely how common sense, instinct, experience, and reason are supposed to guide man so that his actions are in harmony with nature and in accordance with virtue is still perhaps more suitable to philosophers' treatises than to the comic playwrights' pen.

Duty and the exercise of will

We have been able to trace in Molière's ethics several similarities with classical Stoicism, but we reach an apparent stumbling block when we examine parallels between him and the Stoics on the question of duty and will. By mid-century, the interpretation given the Stoic notions of duty and will had become unattractive constraints which were seen as opposed to nature. The libertins rejected them, while the religiously devout promoted them as a corrective to nature. Virtue had become a duty which offered no tangible rewards, and for which one needed to make constant efforts, often in directions opposite to natural inclinations.

Molière wrote for an audience, and a time, which did not have
great affinity for self-discipline. Heroes exhorting themselves to
do their duty, to control their emotions by strength of will, are a
thing of the past. Arnolphe makes a mockery of the offices of wives,
and Molière fails to point to any discernible duties which he would
have men follow. Perhaps even he thought that duty was a form of for-
cing, or deforming, nature, and as such was unacceptable.

Molière was opposed to unquestioning obedience to authority,
and this would have increased his reluctance to embrace any form of
duty.

But let us not overlook the fact that characters of strong
will are present in Molière's plays. Alceste, Orgon, and Philaminte
are all able to stand firm against majority opinion when they believe
their principles are right. Exercise of will is not restricted to
doing things one does not want to do; the will may well engage a man
in many agreeable activities, and keep him steadfast in his pursuit of
virtue.

Passions which dominate

To what extent are Molière's heroes ruled by passions, and to
what extent do they rule their passions with reason? Harpagon's
avarice cannot be touched by reason, and is so all engulfing, that by
playing on it he is made easy prey on all other matters: for the re-
turn of a stray sum of money he will renounce marriage with Mariane.
Tartuffe is not as single-minded. He wants money, but not just for
hoarding; he wants the power and luxuries it can buy, and the pleasure
of duping Orgon out of both his money and his wife. He was clever
enough to keep Orgon from discovering how he was manoeuvring him out of his wealth and household, but was unmasked when he let his appetites for Elmire blunt his wits and alertness. Elmire took advantage of a passion temporarily not guarded by reason which, in Tartuffe’s case, is a calculating, non-emotional faculty guiding him to a pre-established goal. Tartuffe regained his footing because he was not in love with Elmire; he is a lecher who enjoyed the pleasures of the bed when he could get them, but sexual gratification was not his primary passion. Nor is it Don Juan’s. His passion is seducing; once he has won the girl, the challenge has been met, and the object of his desires changes. As with Tartuffe, the play is concluded with a sort of deus ex machina who punishes these moral transgressions, for the characters themselves have no desire to overcome their passions.

The passion least able to be controlled is love, and Alceste, of all Molière’s characters, experiences most intensely this painful reality. Even Arnolphe, in spite of the gross miscalculation he made concerning his ward, has fallen in love with her, and when, after his patience has been tried to the breaking point, Agnès’s marriage is dictated by someone else, he explodes, and proclaims his love: "J’aurais pour elle au feu mis la main que voilà." (l. 1105) He was more concerned with his reputation than with expressing his love. Perhaps had both Arnolphe and Alceste given fuller rein to their love, as did young Horace, rather than being side-tracked into rational systems and speculative philosophies, they might have won their causes.

Some of Molière’s characters (e.g., Alceste and Arnolphe) wish to control their passions; others (e.g., Harpagon, Tartuffe, Don Juan)
are quite happy exercising theirs. Reason cannot erase love, and where characters have no desire to change, it can do nothing. Thus, one of the major tenets of Stoicism, the ability of reason to modify behavior inspired by the passions, is not really developed in Molière, although nothing is set forth in the plays that would make a Stoic resolution between reason and passions impossible.

**The Stoic concept of moderation**

The question now at hand is to what extent the numerous pleas to avoid extremes and excesses, and to embrace due measure and *juste milieu* constitute a form of Stoic moderation as previously outlined, and to what extent it forms a basic element of Molière's moral ideas.

*Raisonneurs* are most frequently cited as being the mouthpieces for this philosophy of moderation, but I have tried to show that they are not always consistent in what they say, their actions do not always reflect their pronouncements, and they are not the only characters to represent this position. Hence we cannot conclude that the *raisonneurs* alone represent Molière's moral views, and we would gain nothing by such a claim; we have a richer ethic for having it represented in various aspects by numerous different characters.

One fairly widespread interpretation of Molière's *morale* is that it is *mondaine*, i.e., lacking idealism, secular rather than religious, and using normative behavior as its standard. Lansan says of this *morale*:

> elle n'est pas sublime, ni dure, ni chrétienne, ni stoïque; elle propose
Bénichou gives this *sagesse* an aristocratic pedigree: it is "ce com-
posé de vertus solides et aurores où s'exprime finalement l'équilibre
de la civilisation courtisane." Based on relative values, a moral
theory that is *mondaine* lacks inspiration, vigor, and incentive, and
becomes the downhill slide to social conformity and mediocrity.

I cannot accept Molière's *morale* as being *mondaine* because
this allows no place for moral virtues independent of society, and
such values are clearly a part of Molière's plays. The *mondaine*
theory is often summarized by a call for moderation in all things,
usually enunciated by the *raisonneurs*, and often amounting to deci-
ding moral questions by a majority vote; this is not Molière's *morale*.
Nor does he mean that moderation is action which falls between the
extremes of absolute virtue, and, not immorality, but amorality. Nor
is the *mondaine* theory moderate because it is practical, it appeals
to common sense, and it avoids the problem of perfection. None of
these, I think, correctly interprets what Molière means by modera-
tion, a concept which is central to his views. I shall discuss four
aspects of his work to which I believe the concept of moderation ap-
propriately applies.

(1) Molière's moral position can be said to have moderation

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26 *Histoire de la littérature française*, p. 528.

27 *Morales du grand siècle*, p. 300.
as a basic element in the immediate and practical sense of moderating one's behavior so as to avoid the excesses to which undesirable emotions (e.g., anger, jealousy, avarice, hatred) may prompt us, and thus to avoid rash, percipitous actions. If one is going to try to maintain equilibrium in one's action, then sometimes very practical devices, analogies, and advice are in order, such as reciting the alphabet before speaking when angry. Conformity is not a form of moderation to which Molière subscribes. It is not the same as observing due measure or propriety because human preferences and tastes change, whereas virtue is a constant. Molière's morale is more robust than complying with social conventions. M. Jourdain, Cathos and Magdelon, and les Sotenville are ridiculed for trying to follow fads; Gorgibus and George Dandin are unpolished, but the rough stone, although abrasive, has an attractive authenticity. Complaisance is not Stoic either, and it must be distinguished from moderation which seeks le juste milieu, due measure or propriety.

(2) Molière recognized the need to meet each moral dilemma on its own terms, and that no specific rules could be set out in advance on how to cope with individual problems. Indeed, he criticizes such an "esprit de système" and shows in his plays that ability to cope with situations independently of an a priori system is essential. But this is the kind of flexibility which has led some critics to call Molière amoral because the moment one approaches a moral problem without a clear-cut set of guiding principles which he can fit onto the problem like a template, he leaves himself open to the
charge of arbitrariness. The line between the trained intellect making an objective judgment, and self-interest operating subjectively on the same moral problem is a fine one. Yet this flexibility is the heart of the matter; it is adaptability which brings about equilibrium, the sense of propriety which produces due measure, moderation which turns out what is fitting to the occasion, and which steers the course as straight as possible toward virtue.

Flexibility is a Stoic ingredient, not uniquely Stoic, but not characteristically Christian, and is necessary, although it leaves doors wide open to abuse. Stoicism appealed to the Jesuits because it approached individual problems to find individual solutions; this is similar to casuistry and is subject to the same abuses. So much depends on the right application of the intelligence, which in turn depends on how it has been trained, which may be attractive as a moral method, but is harder to teach universally than a more proscribed code.

(3) Molière is often called realistic, usually with the implication that idealism is incompatible with realism, thus dismissing the possibility of a moral ideal in his plays. A form of realism is knowing what is within your power to control and what is not; Arnolphe learned the hard way that he could not control his young ward’s beh-

28 "Toute la morale de Molière consiste à savoir s’incliner devant un certain nombre de faits. La force des usages défie la bien- séance. C’est dans ce sens qu’il est amoral ... tout au moins a-t-il réduit la morale à n’être que l’accompagnement, le plus discret possible, de la vie. La souplesse en morale est comme un tribut que le bonheur paie à l’ordre des choses, dont il profite, et, sur le plan social, aux puissances régaliennes, auxquelles il doit s’accommoder pour être heureux." Bénichou, Morales du grand siècle, p. 356.
behavior, much less her emotions. Philaminte knew that financial fortunes, while desirable, were not a worthy ultimate goal so she could face their loss with equanimity. If a man cannot reform the morals of others, or control what happens to himself, he can at least control his reactions to events. He can make a realistic assessment of others' behavior, thereby knowing that a lawyer is a necessary part of the judicial system even when truth and right are on his side; he can make a realistic assessment of the reactions of others to his deviations from their norms, thereby knowing that Célimène and her society were not ready for Alceste's brand of frankness and sincerity, from which it follows, not that Alceste should have "known better" than to fall in love with Célimène, but that Alceste should not have been surprised by the reception he got. This is an important use of reason; it helps us to see situations clearly, to anticipate, and to recognize what actions will be most appropriate.

A Stoic has before him an ideal, and within him the conviction that he is the master of his destiny. I think it is this more assertive attitude that Molière draws upon, and that it imparts to his work an assurance and a determination not to be bogged down in a swamp of human failings. It is in this sense of knowing what is within one's power and pursuing it that Molière's realism is a form of moderation.

(4) Molière asks for indulgence of human weaknesses: one should be tolerant, forgiving, and understanding of human foibles without condoning them. Molière held high standards, but was nonethe-
less indulgent of human frailties, which is an aspect of his moderation.

I have attempted to show the parallels which exist between Molière's moral views and Stoicism. I think that without reshaping what Molière has said in his plays we can show that an initial anti-Stoic impression, created by comic references to stereotypes, must be corrected by the view that many similarities exist between Molière's thirst for an ideal, his reliance on reason, his admiration for characters who stand firmly for their principles, and these same qualities in Stoicism. Of particular interest is the fact that Stoicism, far from making demands on people beyond their capacities, holds a moderate position based on propriety of behavior, flexibility in dealing with moral dilemma, realistic, rational assessment of circumstances and of human nature, including indulgence of human frailties. Jasinski's summary of Molière's morale is similar:

[C'est un] idéal ... équilibré, ennemi des excès, tout de bon sens et de mesure ... un naturalisme qui, sans illusions, réagit néanmoins contre une conception trop assemblée du péché original, et sans croire à la bonté native, fait pourtant plus large confiance à l'homme: juste milieu qui continue la tradition des humanistes de la Renaissance. 29

This moderation is to be found in Molière and is the quality which ties together the other elements of rationalism, moral idealism, and naturalism.

29 Molière et le Misanthrope, p. 38.
Conclusion

W.G. Moore concentrated his studies on the man of the theatre; he put the spotlight on Molière's abilities as an actor and dramatic writer, and chose not to discuss the moral implications of his plays. He went so far as to disclaim that the Misanthrope contains any lesson or moral viewpoint. However, it is difficult for us to read that play, or others such as Tartuffe, without feeling that strong moral claims are being made. There is a moral tone to many of his plays in spite of ridicule and lack of paragons of virtue, because he dealt with problems drawn from daily life, and showed characters in the throes of trying to resolve them. He denounced dishonesty, insincerity, false piety, intolerance, tyranny, pedantry, and religious and intellectual conformity. He believed firmly in the necessity for reform, but he believed equally that it should be undertaken with a smile and with gentleness. Ariste's words are appropriate to Molière's procedure:

Qu'il nous faut en riant instruire la jeunesse,
Reprendre ses défauts avec grande douceur,
Et du nom de vertu ne lui point faire peur.

Ecole des Mariés, l. 180-182.

Molière, like Corneille, was first and foremost a dramatic artist, but he was keenly interested in moral problems. He knew that people did not always recognize nor seek to do what is right, but in—

30 "I cannot find Molière anywhere in this play, precisely because that play is great comedy. It seems to me to present no lesson, to advocate no view, even though, if we are in a moralising mood, we may find many lessons within it." W.G. Moore, "Reflections on Le Misanthrope," AJFS, no. 4-5, 1967-68, p. 201.
stead of sarcasm and scolding, he reproved with friendly good humor. It is a credit to his powers of objective observation that, when suffering from his wife's infidelity, he played Alceste, turning that sensitive subject into entertainment for others, and deliberately putting himself into a position to be laughed at on a matter about which he was in gravest earnest.

As further evidence of his interest in moral problems, we can cite his frequent use of raisonneurs who make many sound remarks and balanced judgments, even though we must not see all of Molière's morale in their wisdom. Nonetheless, the note they frequently strike about doing what is fitting, and about avoiding both excess and defect, is very like the Stoic virtue of moderation or temperance. He taught that men should maintain emotional equilibrium and a sense of propriety. He taught the advantages of flexibility which should always be related to absolute principles. He taught that knowing what is within one's power is a valuable guide to action, as is a tolerance of, and an accommodation to, human weaknesses. Moderation is a characteristic not normally attributed to Stoicism by the 17th century, but Molière found it a convenient cornerstone for his moral views.

Some of Molière's characters have an ideal for which they strive, as did the Stoics, but they strive for it with vague and imperfect methods. Molière was not tempted to formulate a method; but this does not put him at odds with the Stoics whose method is likewise not carefully outlined. Instead, he makes cautionary remarks and general observations which have parallels in Stoicism.
Perhaps Molière retained, from his initial interest in philosophy and in the classics, aspects of Stoicism, such as the emphasis on moderation. His training might have alerted him to themes other than those discussed in social gatherings. It might also have lead him to separate ethics from dogmatism so that he was not tempted to view ancient philosophies through a Christian optic. These characteristics could have made him more susceptible to classical Stoic influence than to Neostoicism, and, in particular, could have made the virtue of moderation appealing to him.

Although the texts do not permit us to posit direct Stoic influence, Molière's rationalism, his moral ideal, his characters of strong will, and his appeals to moderation all have parallels in classical Stoicism.
CHAPTER VI

LA BRUYÈRE

Moral improvement and Les Caractères

La Bruyère's only book, Les Caractères, first published in 1688, consists of a hastily done translation of Theophrastus's Characters followed by La Bruyère's observations, under the guise of a commentary on Theophrastus, about contemporary society. Its popularity lay as much in its display of the author's personal qualities as in the pleasure people took in attaching names to the portraits which increased in number with each successive printing.

La Bruyère's ethical views are not systematically set forth in it; indeed, he did not pretend to expound an original moral theory. He observed in his opening sentence: "Tout est dit, et l'on vient trop tard depuis plus de sept mille ans qu'il y a des hommes et qui pensent." (I, 1)\(^1\) His timidity, his education with its respect for traditional authoritative classical authors, and his reverence for established social, political, religious, and literary insti-

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1 References to les Caractères are given in Roman numerals for the section [I = Des Ouvrages de l'Esprit] and Arabic numerals for the passage. The standard edition of La Bruyère's work was edited by Gustave Servois and published by Hachette in the Grands Écrivains de la France series, 1865-1882, 3 volumes.
tutions strengthened his conservative nature. He represents the tendency of the second half of the century to be more preoccupied with specific social situations than with general metaphysical questions. This partisan of les anciens was not prone to observations different from those of his revered predecessors. He tended to follow, rather than set, intellectual trends, and thus we can ascertain through his writings, what an attitude of the educated milieu was toward Stoicism near the end of the 17th century.

"Le philosophe consume sa vie à observer les hommes, et il use ses esprits à en démêler les vices et le ridicule." (L. 34) That which was ridiculous, while not a vice, was so closely related in the minds of La Bruyère's contemporaries with weakness or imperfection, that it was to be got rid of as though it were a vice. It was a guiding criterion to distinguishing vice from virtue. We should also add that La Bruyère is something of a philosophe in the 18th century sense of the term; he was not a philosopher in that his work contains no rational demonstrations and no logical order to mark it as a treatise in ethics; he presents opinions and the results of others' thoughts.

La Bruyère's expressed aim was to provide a useful tool for improving men. This is clearly and repeatedly stated in the preface:

Il [le lecteur] peut regarder avec loi-sir ce portrait que j'ai fait de lui d'après nature, et s'il se connaît quelques-uns des défauts que je touche, s'en corriger. C'est l'unique fin que l'on doit se proposer en écrivant. 

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He has been accused of conducting a personal vendetta against people he did not like; undoubtedly he succumbed occasionally to the somber pleasure of venting his spleen, but I prefer not to doubt the sincerity of his stated aim. The greatest compliment any author can aspire to is moral reform: "L'approbation la plus sure et la moins équivoque est le changement de moeurs et la reformation de ceux qui les lisent ou qui les écoutent. On ne doit parler, on ne doit écrire que pour l'instruction." There were times, at least, when he was enthusiastic about the possibilities of moral reform even though he has since been called a cynic for dwelling at length on men's vices.

Stoicism was espoused by fewer people and attacked more frequently after about 1640, but it was not completely lost from sight by the end of the century, as is attested to by the fact that La Bruyère singled it out for attack from the fourth edition on in the section De l'homme. "Le stoicisme est un jeu d'esprit et une idée semblable à la République de Platon." (XI. 3) Stoicism proposes a utopian state of morality, which can exist in the imagination only, because it does not take into account human nature. At another point he belittles Stoicism, calling it useful in fortifying oneself against poverty, sickness, and death, and in consoling oneself at the sight of another's happiness (XI. 132). He depicts Ruffin, who accepted the death of his promising son with equanimity, as a person with no feelings whatsoever, and as such he is an incomplete human being (XI. 123).

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3 Ibid.
There are, however, moments of relaxation towards Stoicism. Cato, the outstanding model of Roman Stoic virtue, is cited as the model of the Good Man (XII. 78); the Platonic idea of a philosopher-king, echoed by the Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius, is praised, and, most notably, La Bruyère often calls his model man by the peculiarly Stoic term sage. He was influenced by Seneca's criticisms of bad literary style, of vain occupations, and of wasted time, but not by his Stoicism.  

La Bruyère's attitude toward men was essentially optimistic, for he saw a constructive role for social criticism; men would perhaps be worse if there were no censors and critics. Society had not improved by being given examples of virtuous heroes for emulation, so he proposed to follow the path of social satire and ridicule.

La Bruyère proposed a method of moral reform which he believed to be quite opposite to that set forth by the Stoics.

_Ils [les stoiques] ont laissé à l'homme tous les défauts qu'ils lui ont trouvés, et n'ont presque relevé aucun de ses faibless. Au lieu de faire de ses vices des peintures affreuses ou ridicules qui servissent à l'en corriger, ils lui ont tracé l'idée d'une perfection et d'un hééroisme dont il n'est point capable, et l'ont exhorté à l'impossible._

XI. 3.

Maybe he thought men were governed more by fear of open ridicule than by desire for reform; that being made an object of laughter could

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do what more honorable motives could not do.

He thought it was impossible to reform men with illustrations of virtue because men were indifferent to virtue, and they were easily turned away from its pursuit by desire for acclaim. His understanding of human psychology lead him to reject any presentation of virtue as a help to morality.

Ne nous emportons point contre les hommes en voyant leur dureté, leur ingratitude, leur injustice, leur fierté, l'amour d'eux-mêmes, et l'oubli des autres: ils sont ainsi faits, c'est leur nature, c'est ne pouvoir supporter que la pierre tombe ou que le feu s'élève.

XI. 1.

He believed that a more realistic appraisal of man's natural imperfection would make clear the impossibility of moral perfection; if perfection were not humanly possible, it should not be set as an example.

Further, men are constituted so that they may devote themselves wholeheartedly to some interest, even to Virtue, for a period of time, yet they need frequent changes of infatuations: "Ils [les hommes] souffrent beaucoup à être toujours les mêmes, à persévérer dans la règle ou dans le désordre." (XI. 147) It is another failure of Stoicism to think that men can constantly pursue virtue.

On the other hand, he did not think men were incapable of seeing their vices and of reforming them. The Stoic composite notion of Virtue was too demanding; perhaps his portraits of vices were inspired by a belief that men should try to erase one vice at a time. "Il
coûte moins à certains hommes de s'enrichir de mille vertus, que de se corriger d'un seul défaut." (XI. 98) Acquiring virtue and overcoming vice are so arduous that few men can persist at the task.

La Bruyère gives us glimpses from time to time of his model man, l'homme de bien, who is a man of pure virtue, and of discernment, with social graces and a sense of good taste. He is a sympathetic and reasonable man, whose humanitarian interests are coupled with an understanding of the world, enabling him to make balanced judgments about men. These are characteristics of la véritable grandeur (II. 42) which La Bruyère contrasts with la fausse grandeur hiding behind ferocity and inaccessibility. He contrasts this man with the honnête homme, who has vices but they are not scandalous, and with the habile homme, a sort of hypocrite who, in self-interest, masks his passions and motives. Thus La Bruyère accepts man as already corrupted; he places the emphasis on overcoming one vice at a time. He faults the Stoics for assuming a sort of moral tabula rasa upon which to build.

He states his ideal using the terms vertu, ambition, and gloire so as to appeal to the honnête homme; he calls his model, not a hero, but a sage, and to the key terms he gives Stoic rather than hercic connotations.

Le sage guérit de l'ambition par l'ambition même; il tend à de si grandes choses, qu'il ne peut se borner à ce qu'on appelle des trésors, des postes, la fortune et la faveur: il ne voit rien dans de si faibles avantages qui sert assez bon et assez solide pour remplir son coeur, et pour mériter ses soins et ses désirs; il a même besoin
La Bruyère's audience may have seen themselves as ambitious and glorious, but the ending is anticlimactic; it is a condemnation of those who seek primarily glory, and of those who cannot by-pass glory for the sake of virtue. The genuine sage, however, has no need of the sort of glory that is most frequently associated with wealth and station. This passage is a good example of La Bruyère's moral ideal, of his ability to state it in terms unmistakable to his contemporaries, and of the way in which, in spite of his condemnation of Stoicism, he imports Stoic terms to amplify his own observations on morality. Using them in an authentic Stoic sense.

Although he does not question Christian morality, and claims that it is the basis of social morals, his terminology is secular, and virtue is dependent on each man alone. Man's imperfections are natural, not theological. He maintains a combination of philosophical and religious ideals, but his morale is independent of divine interpretation and intervention. In this, he is closer to Molière than to Pascal or Du Vair.
L'homme de bien

"La vertu seule, si peu à la mode, va au delà des temps."

(XIII. 31) The ideal man is the virtuous man, but La Bruyère is careful to state this in terms which avoid the presumptuousness of which Stoicism was accused. "L'Homme de bien est celui qui n'est ni un saint ni un [fau]x dévot, et qui s'est borné à n'avoir que de la vertu." (XII. 55) By contrasting l'homme de bien with a saint, he avoids the religious problem of human perfection, and by taking advantage of the variety of meanings attached to the term vertu, he appeals to the man who deems himself virtuous, but who does not have the total merit which is understood here.

La vertu a cela d'heureux, qu'elle se suffit à elle-même, et qu'elle sait se passer d'admirateurs, de partisans et de protecteurs; le manque d'appui et d'approbation non seulement ne lui nuit pas, mais il la conserve, l'épure et la rend parfaite; qu'elle soit à la mode, qu'elle n'y soit plus, elle demeure vertu.

XIII. 5.

By understating the merits of virtue, La Bruyère gains a psychological victory over those he wishes to reform. He also adeptly uses the standard view of Stoicism as consolation in order to introduce that strong point of Stoicism, the ability to keep one's actions and attitudes independent.5

5 The more standard use of the consolation theme is as a defense against envy and self-pity. Note how he adds levity to this proposed role of Stoicism by reversing the last item: "Elle [la philosophie des stoiques] nous console du bonheur d'autrui, des indignes préférences, des mauvais succès du déclin de nos forces ou de notre beauté; elle nous arme contre la pauvreté, la vieillesse, la maladie et la mort, contre les sots et les mauvais rieurs; elle nous fait vivre sans une femme, ou nous fait supporter celle avec qui nous vivons." (XI. 132).
Virtue is tied, in La Bruyère's view, to benefitting mankind:

Hommes ... ayez de la vertu et de l'humanité; et si vous me dites: "Qu'aurons-nous de plus?" je vous répondrai: "De l'humanité et de la vertu." Maîtres alors de l'avenir, et indépendants d'une postérité, ... l'idée de vos louables actions sera encore fraîches dans l'esprit des peuples ... ils diront: "Cet homme ... a plus craint de ... nuire que de ... déplaire."

X. 21.

Again La Bruyère's appeal for virtue and good works is tied to some sensitive goal, such as a name which lives on in posterity. Stoicism tried to make men independent of fortune and reputation, and was always a guide to action; in its later form, it served as a standard for men in political life. La Bruyère is not usually thought of as advocating service to one's country, but he did feel that men had a duty to be helpful to their fellows, if only to lend a sympathetic ear to their concerns.

La Bruyère regrets that men more often prize the "talents du corps et de l'esprit" than the "vertus du coeur" such as goodness, constancy, fidelity, and sincerity. He further laments the fact that unless the virtuous man is in a position of power, his virtue may have no utilitarian value. "Les petits sont quelquefois chargés de mille vertus inutiles; ils n'ont pas de quoi les mettre en œuvre." (XI. 93)

This says two things: virtue is not limited to the nobly born, but only those people in power can turn their virtues to the benefit of their countrymen.

La Bruyère's psychological insights and language make his pic-
nature of virtue seem less elusive than the Stoic ideal, which it nonetheless resembles. It is not a compromise with men's weaknesses, and it does not look outside man for fulfillment. The fact that La Bruyère says that men never tire of vice should not prevent us from seeing that he holds pure and simple virtue as the ideal, that he encourages men to be more virtuous, that he believes some men of virtue exist, and that even a small number of such men is beneficial. Hence, even though he denounces what he calls a Stoic ideal, the ideal he espouses is very similar to the one he has denounced; the difference is mainly in the psychological force of his presentation.

Unexploited potential: the reason

La Bruyère had reservations about man's ability to perceive truth. "L'homme est né menteur: la vérité est simple et ingénue, et il veut du spéculer et de l'ornement." (XVI. 22) This is a commentary not only on how difficult it is to ascertain truth, but also on how easily reason is at the mercy of the emotions. "La raison et la justice dénuées de tous leurs ornements ni ne persuadent ni n'intimident. L'homme, qui est esprit, se mène par les yeux et les oreilles." (II. 154)

Non-rational factors can win a man's allegiance or his opposition, but this did not dimish La Bruyère's respect for man's rational faculties. "Il faut chercher seulement à penser et à parler juste" (I. 2) is reminiscent of Pascal: "Travaillons donc à bien penser: voilà le principe de la morale." La Bruyère admonished men to use

6 Pascal, *Pensées*, Brunschvicg 347.
with application that reason which is universal: "La raison est de
tous les climats, et ... l'on pense juste partout ou il y a des hom-
mes." (XII. 22) This recalls the opening sentence of Descartes' Dis-
cours de la Méthode: "Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux par-
tagée ... cela témoigne que la puissance de bien juger et distinguer
le vrai d'avec le faux, qui est proprement ce qu'on nomme le bon sens
ou la raison, est naturellement égale en tous les hommes." Reason is
the basis of morality: "Le bon esprit nous découvre notre devoir,
notre engagement à le faire, et s'il y a du péril, avec péril: il
inspire le courage, ou il y supplée." (II. 23) La Bruyère does not
lose sight of the necessity de bien faire; as in Stoicism, reason pro-
vides not only the direction, but the impetus, to do what is right.
Few men have a developed reason, i.e., discernment; many are suscept-
tible to the persuasive powers of language, and must be put on guard
against those who would abuse them through it. "Dans la société, c'est
la raison qui plie la première. Les plus sages sont souvent menés par
le plus fou et le plus bizarre: l'on étudie son faible, son humeur,
nen caprices, l'on s'y accommode; l'on évite de le heurter, tout le
monde lui cède." (V. 41)

La Bruyère also distinguished between learnedness and its pre-
tense. In a nice passage on the difference between un docteur and un
homme docte (II. 28), he shows how far short of wisdom is the man who
relies on external trappings to lend credence to his knowledge. The
wise man uses his knowledge neither to evoke admiration nor to sub-
jugate others. "Un homme sage ni ne se laisse gouverner, ni ne cherche
à gouverner les autres: il veut que la raison gouverne seule, et tou-
jours." (IV. 71)

La Bruyère suggests there are three stages of reason, which recall the stages of education for the Stoics.

Il y a un temps où la raison n'est pas encore, où l'on ne vit que par instinct, à la manière des animaux, et dont il ne reste dans la mémoire aucun vestige.

This is nearly identical to the Stoic first, or non-moral, stage of self-preservation.

Il y a un second temps où la raison se développe, où elle est formée, et où elle pourrait agir, si elle n'était pas obscurcie et comme éteinte par les vices de la complexion, et par un enchaînement de passions qui se succèdent les unes aux autres, et conduisent jusques au troisième et dernier âge.

In the Stoic second stage, reason is developed; unlike the Stoics, La Bruyère notes that this is the stage where the vicious aspects of the passions, of society, and of human nature take over. The Stoics combatted this take over without the warnings of imminent danger which La Bruyère offered. It is in the third stage that the concept of moral good emerges for the Stoics; La Bruyère recognizes its potential at this middle level.

La raison, alors dans sa force, devrait produire; mais elle est refroidie et ralentie par les années, par la maladie et la douleur, déconcertée ensuite par le désordre de la machine, qui est dans son déclin: et ces temps néanmoins sont la vie de l'homme.

XI. 49.

Having reached the point of development where it could do some good, the mind is now distracted by physical discomforts and old age. La
Bruyère observes a decline in man's mental and physical capacities which is not hinted at by the Stoics whose levels move to a climax in the fourth stage, that of the Wise Man. La Bruyère is pessimistic, not about the capabilities of reason, but about man's application of it.

La Bruyère is convinced that reason is the cornerstone of ethics; he is not just bowing in the direction of the supremacy of reason. But realistically speaking, one cannot expect people to behave regularly on the basis of reason. Mme de Motteville reportedly quipped, "La corruption des hommes est telle que pour les faire vivre selon la raison, il ne faut pas les traiter raisonnablement." Attempts at reform must be based on something other than appeals to pure reason, which helps explain La Bruyère's method of satire.

Because La Bruyère is not as systematic even as Pascal, he did not talk about using habit in his reform program, although he recognized its power.

Je connais la force de la coutume, et jusqu'où elle maîtrise les esprits et contraint les moeurs, dans les choses même les plus dénuées de raison et de fondement.

XIV. 35.

Had he tried to harness it, as did Pascal and the Stoics, he might have made of it a positive force for moral reform. La Bruyère did not set down steps for people to follow; he felt that he, at least, could do nothing more beneficial than to hold the mirror up to man.

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The key to humanitarianism: the passions

Desire is the greatest of all forces that motivate men. "La vie est courte et ennuyeuse: elle se passe toute à désirer." (XI. 19) La Bruyère was not unique in noting that this is the force that enslaves man, and makes it impossible for him to act according to reason. "Lorsqu'on désire, on se rend à discretion à celui de qui on espère." (XI. 20) It was this dependence on others and on circumstances from which Stoicism tried to free men by helping them to recognize what was not within their power, and to look upon the gaining of such objectives with indifference.

La Bruyère's image of the Stoic is the popularized one of a man who lacks all desires, all emotions; such a man, if indeed he exists, is repulsive to La Bruyère.

Les stoïques ont feint qu'on pouvait rire dans la pauvreté; être insensible aux injures, à l'ingratitude, aux pertes de biens, comme à celles des parents et des amis; regarder froidement la mort, et comme une chose indifférente qui ne devait ni réjouir ni rendre triste; n'être vaincu ni par le plaisir ni par la douleur; sentir le fer ou le feu dans quelque partie de son corps sans pousser le moindre soupir, ni jeter une seule larme; et ce fantôme de vertu et de constance ainsi imaginé, il leur a plu de l'appeler un sage.

XI. 3.

He therefore tries to justify desires and emotions by making them the foundations for a sort of humanism. A man should have feelings about his family and friends, he should be concerned about his reputation among those he respects, and he should share a mutual dependence
with others. None of this is counter to what the Stoics in fact held, but it is counter to La Bruyère’s understanding of Stoicism. Man should have such feelings, and express them, because they are inevitable and part of human nature.

Ruffin ... perd son fils unique, jeune homme de grande espérance, et qui pouvait un jour être l’honneur de sa famille; il remet sur d’autres le soin de le pleurer; il dit: "Mon fils est mort, cela fera mourir sa mère"; et il est consolé. Il n’a point de passions.

XI. 123.

Ruffin is not only unnatural, he lacks an essential human quality. This is a caricature of Stoic self-control, but La Bruyère does not believe that one can experience emotions and refrain entirely from showing them.

He does not, however, suggest that all emotions are good, and that all inclinations should be given in to; some must be resisted no matter how pleasant. Virtue, as a form of constraint, must be called on.

Il y a quelquefois dans le cours de la vie de si chers plaisirs et de si tendres engagements que l'on nous défend, qu'il est naturel de désirer du moins qu'ils fussent permis: de si grands charmes ne peuvent être surpassés que par celui de savoir y renoncer par vertu.

IV. 85.

Man ought to have, and to express, feelings, not only because they are natural, but because they provide part of the inspiration to morality. La Bruyère differs markedly from Stoicism in not seeing dependence on others as necessarily bad; it is better, in fact, to be ori-
ented toward humanity. He criticizes Stoicism precisely for the mistake of aiming to make men independent, in their actions and behavior, of their fellowmen.

Il y a une philosophie qui nous élève au-dessus de l'ambition et de la fortune, qui nous égale, que dis-je? qui nous place plus haut que les riches, que les grands et que les puissants; qui nous fait négliger les postes et ceux qui les procurent; qui nous exempte de désirer, de demander, de prier, de solliciter, d'importuner, et qui nous sauve même l'émotion et l'excessive joie d'être exaucés.

In this first part of the passage, he listed those sentiments which he felt a human being ought to experience because they constitute an interaction among people. In opposition to this reference to Stoicism, he defends submission and dependence.

Il y a une autre philosophie qui nous soumet et nous assujettit à toutes ces choses en faveur de nos proches ou de nos amis: c'est la meilleure.

XII. 69.

Stoicism strives to make men too independent of each other, and this is an unfortunate deprivation to which men ought not be subjected; it is an unnatural, and therefore unattainable, goal.

Furthermore, La Bruyère felt that many of man's activities and emotions were dictated by the people they wished to emulate, and by fortune and events beyond their control. (Cf. XI. 15) Therefore, it is illusory to think that any person could be completely independent.

Passions are natural to man, even though they frequently lead him away from virtue. They are not solely responsible for vice; man
is born with some vices which he fortifies by habit, and he acquires others in society, either through constraints imposed on his good nature, or through bad examples. Passions are also the source of some good qualities, and in particular, they form the basis of ties between men, and thereby the inspiration to succor one's fellows.

Undeveloped power: the will

Following the decline of Neostoicism, interest in the nature of man centered around the psychology of the passions, the violence done to human nature by constraining and suppressing them, and the tragic effects of unchecked passions. Emotions were shared, feelings expressed, as what was natural was sought after. Some used this doctrine of nature as a licence, others, like La Bruyère, used it to explain why there was little hope of modifying the behavior of those not naturally inclined to virtue. Interest in the will as a faculty directing actions declined; it was an unnatural constraint.

C'est plus tôt fait de céder à la nature et de craindre la mort, que de faire de continus efforts, s'armer de raisons et de réflexions, et être continuellement aux prises avec soi-même pour ne la pas craindre.

XI. 42.

The Stoics tried to erase the fear of death; La Bruyère is here noting the difficulty man has in conquering that fear. The need for a continued effort, and for bringing reason to bear on the subject, are Stoic; La Bruyère is not condemning them in the above passage, but in a longer passage he specifically condemns Stoicism for supposing
that men, with no effort and no outside help, can put themselves
above expressions of suffering and anguish.

Ainsi le sage, qui n'est pas, ou qui
n'est qu'imaginaire, se trouve naturel-
lement et par lui-même au-dessus de tous
les événements et de tous les maux: ni
la goutte la plus douloureuse, ni la colli-
que le plus aiguë ne sauraient lui ar-
racher une plainte; le ciel et la terre peu-
vent être renversés sans l'entraîner dans
leur chute, et il demeurerait ferme sur
les ruines de l'univers; pendant que
l'homme qui est en effet sort de son sens,
crie, se désespère, étincelle des yeux,
et perd la respiration pour un chien perdu
ou pour une porcelaine qui est un pièces.

XI. 3.

La Bruyère is marking an antithesis here between an unattainable and
undesirable "ideal," and human, emotional man as he really exists.

He is misinterpreting Stoicism to say that it presents man as able
dispassionately to cope with the greatest of catastrophes, but how
are we to interpret the end of the passage? Is he saying that there
is nothing wrong with becoming overwrought about the loss of a dog or
the loss of a piece of china? Or has he mixed in with his condemnation
of Stoic repression, an illustration designed to ridicule emotional
outburst, and, by implication, to point to an appropriate expression
between such extremes as emotional void and rage.

He lacks confidence in the will, but looks longingly in the
direction it would take us; if men could find it within themselves to
live dependent on themselves alone, they would realize great benefits.

Se faire valoir par des choses qui ne
dépendent point des autres, mais de soi
seul, ou renoncer à se faire valoir;
maxime inestimable et d'une ressource
II. 11.

The tone, vocabulary, and reference to the practical value of this philosophy are echoes of Stoicism. La Bruyère's vocabulary is more Stoic and philosophic than religious, although he was not a libertin, and he spoke against the esprits forts who denied the truths of Christianity. He liked to call himself a philosophe, and he did believe in the utility of philosophical studies.

Bien loin de s'effrayer ou de rougir même du nom de philosophe, il n'y a personne au monde qui ne dût avoir une forte teinterie de philosophie. Elle convient à tout le monde; la pratique en est utile à tous les âges, à tous les sexes et à toutes les conditions.

XI. 132.

Recommending philosophy for its useful qualities is as far as La Bruyère is willing to go in recognizing a faculty such as the will. Even though Stoicism did not have a faculty of will, it certainly taught that men could determine their actions. La Bruyère's position is a much weaker one, which is in keeping with his observations on human behavior.

Moderation and adaptability

A theory of moderation in behavior is not unique to Stoicism, but aspects of it, deriving from Aristotle, were developed in Stoic moral theory, although such an attitude was not recognized as part
of Stoicism by the 16th and 17th centuries. In an even more specific manner than Molière, La Bruyère speaks on behalf of moderate behavior, moderate in the sense not simply of avoiding extremes, but of doing what is fitting to the circumstances. "Le modestie est au mérite ce que les ombres sont aux figures dans un tableau: elle lui donne de la force et du relief." (II. 17) He compares a courageous man with a roofer:

Un homme de cœur pense à remplir ses devoirs à peu près comme le couvreur songe à couvrir; ni l'un ni l'autre ne cherchent à exposer leur vie, ni ne sont détournés par le péril; ...Ils ne sont tous deux appliqués qu'à bien faire, pendant que le fanfaron travaille à ce que l'on dise de lui qu'il a bien fait.

II. 16.

We note here the Stoic emphasis on doing a job well without regard to acclaim received, without exaggerating the dangers involved in order to gain recognition, nor pretending that real dangers are frivolous. The actions fit the circumstances, but the agent may go unheralded, which is a blow to self-esteem, especially for a hero.

L'esprit de modération et une certaine sagesse dans la conduite laissent les hommes dans l'obscurité: il leur faut de grandes vertus pour être connus et admirés, ou peut-être de grands vices.

XII. 112.

La Bruyère recognized that fortune is unfair in her dealings with men, but he suggested that the wise man takes advantage so adapt-ly of whatever chance brings his way that he is thought virtuous be-cause of it. This is very near the Stoic notion of living according
to Nature.

Le guerrier et le politique, non plus que le joueur habile, ne font pas le hasard, mais ils le préparent, ils l'attirent, et semblent presque le déterminer. Non seulement ils savent ce que le sot et le poltron ignorent, je veux dire se servir du hasard quand il arrive; il savent même profiter, par leurs précautions et leurs mesures ... Ces hommes sages peuvent être loués de leur bonne fortune comme de leur bonne conduite, et le hasard doit être récompensé en eux comme la vertu.

XII. 74.

This is not a form of compromise, nor an avoidance of extremes. It is an alertness to all possibilities, a sensitivity to people and circumstances, and a flexibility in approaching problems.

Moderation can be a matter of external behavior; as well as being a form of courtesy, it trains a person so that what is fitting will become natural.

L'homme, de sa nature, pense hautement et superbelement de lui-même, et ne pense ainsi que de lui-même: la modestie ne tend qu'à faire que personne n'en souffre; elle est une vertue de dehors, qui règle ses yeux, sa démarche, ses paroles, son ton de voix, et qui fait agir extérieurement avec les autres comme s'il n'était pas vrai qu'il les compte pour rien.

XI. 69.

It is easier to perceive one's own merits than those of another. A man must have a sense of his own worth in order to have the psychological impetus to strive to be better; this is why ambition was accounted a virtue. In writing and in speaking there is a sense of what is fitting and reasonable which should be maintained.
This comment evokes memories of Alceste's difficulties, as the following one reminds us of Chrysalde's speech: "Un philosophe se laisse habiller par son tailleur: il y a autant de faiblesses à fuir la mode qu'à l'affecter." (XIII. 11) Such a fleeing of extremes in the name of good taste is not very germane to moral problems; its analogy, when applied to morals, must be used cautiously.

But this moderation, as La Bruyère has already made clear, is not an easy or a common path.

Ils [les hommes] ont des passions contraires et des faiblesses qui se contredisent; il leur coûte moins de joindre les extrémités que d'avoir une conduite dont une partie naîsse de l'autre. Ennemis de la modération, ils outrent toutes choses, les bonnes et les mauvaises, dont ne pouvant ensuite supporter l'exces, ils l'adoucissent par le changement.

XI. 147.

This trait of going from one extreme to another is particularly well drawn by Molière in Orgon who denounces all people of faith because he has been hoodwinked by one dévot. In this case, moderation is the recognition that there are possibilities between the two extremes which are more in keeping with the nature of the universe.
La Bruyère is another example of a writer who has adopted moderation into his moral views: one should do what is right, with moderation as a guide to discovering and to putting that into action. Our sample of authors is too limited to claim that the Stoic notion of moderation is finding increasing acceptance toward the end of the century, but it is interesting to see how it is percolating up through ethical thinking, coming perhaps from sources completely unrelated to ancient philosophy, or perhaps coming from dimly remembered acquaintances with classical texts where it is clearly to be found.

Conclusion

In a rather subtle, or perhaps vague, manner, La Bruyère proposes moderation, that is, a measure of flexibility and a guide to what is fitting, as a model of behavior. He offers the following rule of thumb:

Sachez précisément ce que vous pouvez attendre des hommes en général, et de chacun d'eux en particulier, et jetez-vous ensuite dans le commerce du monde.

XI. 12.

In spite of the numerous reefs of passions and of vices on which men run aground, necessitating an alertness and sensitivity in all commerce among men, La Bruyère sketched the outline and substance of an ideal virtuous man. The Stoics engaged in more discussion of theory, but like La Bruyère, their ultimate goal was that men should make, and act upon, morally right choices. Reason is fundamental to morals,
but La Bruyère is more interested in psychology than in epistemology; he has little to say about reason other than to underscore its importance and to put men on guard against its frailty.

Although La Bruyère enumerated men's vices, he did not think that eliminating the passions would get at the root of evil. Morality is built not only on reason, but on the passions as well. Emotions are part of human nature; rather than emphasizing their control, he advocated learning to recognize those sentiments to which each man is particularly susceptible, and dealing with him against that background. He would not deprive man of pleasant emotions, but he was not a partisan of following inclinations without due regard to the moral qualities of the actions they inspire.

His homme de bien is a virtuous man who does not seek glory; he is a rare character who is not to be confused with the honnête homme or the habile homme. His criticism of Stoicism as presenting a fantôme de vertu is due in part to misrepresentation, and in part to his different attitude toward the passions. He is certainly misrepresenting Stoicism when he claims that it presents men who are naturally, and from birth, virtuous. The tone of his book is not one of confidence in a step by step method of education, although he does include passages which show that he believes that men can improve; his method was primarily to attack individual vices by holding them up to ridicule.

La Bruyère thought he was presenting an essentially Christian philosophy, but his language is secular and philosophic. He speaks not of sin, but of vice, not of Providence, but of fortune, not of
Christianity, but of religion, not of a Christian (or a hero), but of a sage. There are no references to divine wisdom, revelation, or God, and all his subtopics are secular, even the one entitled De la \_\_\_\_\_haire in which he discusses, not theology, but the style and content of sermons.

Thus, La Bruyère, who has not consciously questioned dogmatic ethics, and indeed thinks he is reiterating Christian morals, presented moral views which are more akin to the natural ethics of the classical Stoics than to the Christian ethics of Neostoicism or the Church. Since his book was not condemned as libertin, or as representing pagan moral ideals, its language and content must rather have represented an accepted current of thought, established, and no longer shocking. La Bruyère did not exhibit a need to equate philosophical terms with Christian ones, as the Neostoics had; he could use the former with no sense of heresy. There is much more similarity between La Bruyère and Stoic philosophy than his denunciation of the latter would lead one to believe.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSIONS

Modifications of Stoicism

Specific references and clear allusions to Stoicism made by moralists, playwrights, Christian apologists, and social commentators are evidence that Stoicism remained a popular and debated topic throughout the 17th century. Although it was purportedly espoused during the first four decades of the century, to be rejected thereafter, the attitude toward it was more dependent on the predilections of individual writers than on chronology.

Neostoicism, which was imbued with Christian ethics, and is distinct from classical Stoicism, was known widely because of Christian moralists and popularizers such as Charron, Montaigne, and Du Vair, but the classical texts of Cicero, Seneca, and Epictetus were also available. Aside from Justus Lipsius, and, to a lesser extent, Guillaume Du Vair, there was little interest in recovering ancient Stoicism; its Christianized form better suited the interests and inclinations of the 17th century. It is therefore perhaps more accurate to say that Neostoicism, rather than Stoicism proper, was a component of the 17th century morale during the early decades.

The Church Fathers who incorporated Stoic ethics into Christian
morality in the early centuries of the Church were attracted to the themes of virtue, of submission to divine will, and the role of the passions as causes of sinful actions. There was a natural assimilation of Stoicism by Christianity; this contrasts with the conscious comparisons we find in the 17th century apologists who contrasted the moral excellence of the pagans with the moral lapses among professed Christians.

On the other hand, secular writers in the 17th century also appear to have assimilated unconsciously some elements of Stoicism. These include supporting a moral ideal, the supremacy of reason, and the efficacy of moderation in behavior. Stoic influence had spread so far that even those who thought they were untouched by it, not interested in it, or even opposed to it, show evidence in their writings of having incorporated aspects of it. In some cases, they proposed views closer to classical Stoicism as a result of a reaction to Neostoicism.

Selection of material from Stoicism which characterized early Christian borrowings continued in the 16th and 17th century revival, with a marked predilection for topics such as the role of the passions, apathy, self-control, virtue, and honor. The Neostoics inherited a moral philosophy in which Stoic and Christian ideas were so entwined, and to which Neo-Platonism had been added, that it was virtually impossible to separate them. This applied as well to editors who tried
to publish accurate texts, but added copious commentaries with their bias for one of these three main streams of thought. It was thus a very modified form of Stoicism that the 17th century intelligentsia knew, and upon which they based their criticisms. The curious result of this is that in some instances what they are criticizing (e.g., the passions as evil) is a misunderstanding of classical Stoicism; the antidote which they prescribed (e.g., the possibility of using the passions for good or for evil) was closer to the original Stoic intent.

Stoicism is not as extremist, or as far removed from a consideration of human capabilities, needs, and desires, as it is popularly thought to be. It does not maintain that people can, and ought to, become insensitive, apathetic, and given over to a search for personal tranquility. It does not maintain that the passions are evil; there are both good and bad emotions. It proposed a state of happiness and virtue in which men could be independent of the vicissitudes of life and politics, and of the evils of war, famine, disease, and death. It expressed confidence in human abilities, especially in reason. Virtue is a moral ideal independent of earthly rewards; it is perhaps beyond the reach of most men, but all can make progress toward it. It is a balanced, moderate theory which avoids the extremes of rationalism to the exclusion of sentiment, of idealism to the exclusion of practical wisdom, and of asceticism to the exclusion of social civilities, but does not adopt conformity to the detriment of individuality and integrity.

The standard criticisms which Christian moralists made of Sto-
icism were about man's presumption and pride, the Stoic acceptance of suicide, and apathy. In this latter, they had misunderstood the Stoics's use of that term, believing them to disallow all emotions, even pity and charity.

The 17th century paid little attention to the Stoic distinction between objects worthy of pursuit, those unworthy, and that third category of neutral, or indifferent, ones which are neither preferred nor rejected. They overlooked the need for training the will and educating the reason in order to produce behavior which accords with the ideal of virtue. They often misrepresent the Stoics as thinking men were born perfect, or suddenly attained virtue, rather than as having to practice, and then progressing slowly toward an ever elusive goal. They developed the notion of virtue as including the more secular notions of honor and glory.

In order to define the elements and modifications of Stoicism which appear in the works of the 17th century writers I have been studying, I shall summarize the development of several basic Stoic topics from their origins through the 17th century.

Compatibility of Stoic and Christian virtue

Virtue for the early Christians meant the imitation of Christ; martyrdom was the perfection of this imitation, and next to that was life in the desert. This gave rise to a dual standard of Christian virtue, a higher standard for those in the monastic life than for those who continued their daily routines. It was this latter standard which was compared with the Stoic ideal of the Sage, and which
made that pagan ideal seem beyond human reach.

Seeking virtue became the art of living according to Christian charity; natural virtues were replaced by theological ones.

St. Thomas taught that man is justified in seeking honor as a spur to virtue; in fact, he encouraged it. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, honor was assimilated to virtue, and it was a small step from there to an ethic of personal glory such as Corneille depicted. Virtue was still associated with this quest for glory, but it was being dissociated from that which is morally right, and was being transformed into general capabilities: it was not so much a desired state as a set of characteristics. There was no requirement that all actions undertaken in the name of glory be virtuous, or morally good, and for this reason we must conclude that the "éthique de la gloire" is an amoral ethic.

It is amoral because (1) virtue as its own reward is no longer sufficient; virtuous deeds must earn the agent honor and glory. (2) Seeking virtue, which necessitates doing what is morally right, is superseded by the ambition for glory, whose resulting actions may be, but are not necessarily, morally good. (3) Ambition for glory becomes maximizing energy for action, exhibiting characteristics which are called virtues, but which do not necessarily lead towards a moral goal. (4) Since glory is the result of opinions others hold, the hero measures his virtue, not by an absolute standard like that of Stoic virtue, but by the honor he receives, and the desire for public applause can unsuspectingly woo him away from the desire to do what is morally right.
Virtue appears to have taken second place to public acclaim, but it did not remain so throughout the century. Pascal called the desire for glory "la plus grande bassesse de l'homme." Those characters concerned about their reputation are usually ones which Molière is holding up to ridicule; few of his sympathetic characters are overtly concerned about virtue, honor, or glory.

La Bruyère capitalized on the desire for glory with psychological subtlety rather than with St. Thomas's theological finesse; he promoted virtue for the sake of the good name, independent of one's heirs, that it would procure for posterity. Like the Stoics, he maintained that virtue is the one self-sufficient good, but his observations lead him to believe men to be incapable of a sustained effort toward virtue. For this reason, portraits of pure virtue on the stage or in moral treatises could be of little or no help to moral reform.

A moral ideal was still apparent and longed for in 17th century writers; virtue retained the Stoic notion of the highest good, but its association with reputation and glory moved that ideal, in some cases, away from a moral foundation.

The frailty of reason

St. Thomas divided the rational faculty into two types of reason, the act of choice and the act of will, the speculative and the executive faculties. The Stoics had differentiated between right reason and irrationality, without developing a separate seat for the passions or a separate faculty of the will, but the 17th century was
so eager to preserve the integrity of reason that it removed the
impetus for immoral actions to the passions, and made them a warring
faction against the reason.

It is not surprising, then, to find reason pitted against the
passions, and to find writers at variance as to which is the predomi-
ant faculty. La Bruyère gave verbal assent to the supremacy of rea-
son, but, like Pascal, he held that it is susceptible to persuasions,
that emotional appeals, perhaps in the guise of rational arguments,
may turn a man away from doing what is right. Pascal made a positive
force of this malleability of reason; although it is powerful, it does
not have the capacity to understand matters of faith, and at that
point an intuitive faculty takes over. This sentiment can direct man
and his reason; it represents another, and different, level of knowl-
dge from that recognized by the Stoics.

Molière's morale is based on reason, but he puts his audience
on guard against its abuses, such as pedantry and tyranny. In his
understanding of reason, Molière includes that sensitivity to people
and circumstances which is fostered by experience; this is similar to
classical Stoicism, but is not an element of it recognized as such by
the 17th century. When Molière's characters fail to achieve their
goals, it is not because they are ruled by passion rather than rea-
son, but because the moral issues are complex, and reason is misap-
plied. Cornelian characters appeal to reason, but more often are
guided by their passions, for that which they call reason is usually
a counterbalancing passion.

Reason retains much of the prominence it had in Stoicism, but
it has been purified of its irrational aspects, the emotions, and set in opposition to them; some took the view that reason can control the emotions, and others took the view that the passions are more powerful than reason.

Natural man reaffirmed

The term *logos*, in the motto of living in harmony with Nature, was changed from the Stoic meaning of universal reason, or the formula which governs existence, to the Word of the Father; to the Stoic notion of Nature, the Christians gave the connotation of unknowable and uncontrollable destiny, as distinct from Providence, which is nature under the guidance, and with the knowledge, of God. Whereas Nature and Virtue were linked by Reason in Stoicism, Man and God are linked by Faith in Christianity. As Christianity had made distinctions in the unified notion of reason in Stoicism, so Nature was divided into two categories.

Pascal recognized these categories; he perceived nature as divided between human nature, which is corrupt, and the nature of God, which is perfection; Christians strive to make their behavior compatible with God's design for them and the universe. In Corneille, one is more or less perfect depending on his station in life; his heroes are examples of people who never contemplate human nature as weak or frail, but who measure it only in terms of strength and courage.

Molière's ethic retains elements of Stoic naturalism: one should not constrain, or go contrary to those aspects of Nature (uni-
versal law) which are manifested in human nature. Nature does not triumph over reason; they are mutually complementary, as with the Stoics. Molière gives no comfort to the morally lazy; on the contrary, he believes that human behavior can be modified. Men ought to seek virtue rather than excusing their defects and vices as natural.

La Bruyère is more pessimistic about man's willingness, as well as his ability, to reform himself. He criticized the Stoics for their human ideal which is "contrary to nature," i.e., which claims that men should feel no emotions. A man who expresses no emotions is a man who feels none. Far from being an ideal, La Bruyère saw this as an unnatural and undesirable state.

The Stoic notion of Nature as the governing principle of the universe had been lost long before the 17th century, and was not recovered in it. The Renaissance did see the recovery of an affirmation of human nature as good, and some 17th century writers, those most inclined toward a secular tradition, retained this attitude. This interest is not uniquely Stoic, nor is the disparaging of human nature, common to all ages, uniquely Christian.

The diminished strength of will

Voluntarism is a belated addition to Stoicism, deriving from ethical commentaries of the middle ages and fostered by St. Thomas's executive faculty of the reason. The Cornelian hero thought himself to be a man of will, under which term he combined resolution, courage, and energy. His will enabled him to undertake otherwise unattractive enterprises; it was more persuasive than his emotions or desires, more
powerful even than love. But this will is, in part at least, a misnomer, for it is often merely a change of activities rather than a change of basic behavior patterns: the hero determines that another activity will gain him more glory. Be that as it may, the Cornelian hero is self-reliant, he feels that everything is within his power. It is precisely this quality that critics of Stoicism called presumption, and which they saw as a major flaw of Stoicism.

In opposition to this view, Pascal stressed the need for man to rely on a power outside himself, on God. Man can do nothing by himself, by his own will power, because it is really an insatiable appetite, a kind of desire rather than a faculty. He retains something of the one unified rational soul by making it the seat of both appetites (the irrational aspect) and judgment. As judgment, it can bend the automaton to believe, and in this sense it has greater power than reason alone.

Neither Molière nor La Bruyère expressed much confidence in the will. La Bruyère thought that men are easily dissuaded from bending their wills to do what is right because virtue is not intrinsically attractive, and will not earn them recognition. Against such odds, the will is ineffective. While Molière does not present the hero who arms his will with courage against pain, the loss of love, and even death, he nonetheless has some strong-willed characters, and shows that the will can confirm and direct men in human virtues.

Elements of an executive faculty are present in the Stoic concept of reason; they believed that right reason could, and ought to, triumph over the irrational impulses. In this sense, then, it is Cor-
neille who is closest to the Stoic notion, although his emphasis is on the activity, whereas the Stoics divided it equally between judgment and execution. As the century progresses, there seems to be a loss of confidence in man's ability to govern his own actions and attitudes.

Natural passions

Passions were irrational impulses of the soul or mind, and, as such, the Stoics sought to minimize them, or to turn them to good use; Christians viewed them as causes of sin. Rational judgments could control the Stoic irrational impulses, but the Christian's powers were reinforced by factors outside himself, such as recollections of Christ's life and the promise of grace.

Pascal subsumed all the passions under concupiscence; men should beware of the powers and evil of desire, but concupiscence could be diverted from pursuing its own interests by either reason or sentiment. La Bruyère saw men as motivated primarily by desires, but he did not view this as objectionable. Passions give rise to the humanitarian virtues; their absence would be a defect of human nature. Molière capitalized on the strength of the emotions: love is not based on reason, and reason cannot control it. Some characters are happily living with strong emotions, such as avarice and the power to manipulate the lives of others, and would not exchange them for a more moral way of life. Corneille's characters all experience strong emotions, and, in spite of protests that they lay aside their emotions, they are in fact governed by them.
In general, the 17th century did not regard the passions as dangerous. Perhaps the major exception to this is Jansenism. Mesnard, the editor of La Fontaine's Œuvres, believes that "Le Philosophe scythe" (Fable XX, Book XII) was directed not so much against Stoicism as against the austerity of life at Port-Royal, and the doctrine of eliminating all emotions. It tells of a Scythian philosopher who encountered a Greek Wise Man pruning his fruit trees; once home, the Scythian pruned away at his own trees, without rhyme or reason, killing everything. La Fontaine comments,

Ce Scythe exprime bien
Un indiscret stoicien:

Celui-ci retranche de l'âme
Desirs et passions, le bon et le mauvais
Jusqu'aux plus innocents souhaits.

While the 17th century did not lose sight of the importance of reason, it never did come to grips with the Stoic application of reason to the control of the passions. Nor did it feel the necessity to do so. The tendency was to favor strong sentiments; it was harder to comprehend any rationale for suppressing or controlling them. This is one of the reasons why Stoicism was not a major factor in shaping the morale of this century.

Morale provisoire

The lack of rational control of the passions resulted in part from a failure to understand the educational program proposed by the

1 qui ne distingue rien, ni "le bon" ni "le mauvais."
later Stoics which was essential to attaining their objectives. Pascal has a kind of **morale provisoire** which allows for growing toward faith, reminiscent of the Stoics' progress toward virtue; it involved initiative on the part of the agent as did Stoicism, although the final justification came through revelation rather than through human reason.

Molière's mode of operation in some ways resembles that of the Stoics in that he calls upon reason, experience, human sensitivities, and flexibility to changing situations to help him toward a moral ideal.

La Bruyère pointed out how far short of an ideal man falls, on the conviction that such is the only way to bring about moral reform; he felt this method was better adapted to human nature than the Stoic portrayal of an inaccessible ideal of virtue. Each man had to see and correct his own faults, but had to be prepared to deal with people who had many vices. Corneille was not dealing with people who are searching, but with heroes who instinctively feel the direction in which to move, and then move with a minimum of hesitation and questioning. They have been trained to know what behavior to fit to each situation, and they react in the kind of natural, instinctive way which is the aim of the Stoics.

None of the authors I have discussed indicated that he understood the Stoic concept of training, nor that he saw its utility in ethics. The fact that Molière happened onto a course similar to the **morale provisoire** set forth by the Stoics suggests that he was perhaps more indebted to his earlier contact with Stoic philosophy than
has hitherto been suspected.

**Stoic moderation reappears**

Cicero cited the Stoic definition of moderation as "the science of disposing aright everything that is done or said." He attempted to clarify this statement by speaking of an appreciation for the fitness of things, which he called *decorum*, and which is translated as 'propriety.' He claimed that what is proper is the same as that which is morally right; he virtually equated propriety with order, with temperance, and with moderation. It is the amount proper to circumstances, i.e., neither excess nor defect; it means observing ordinary limits and ordinary measure.

This concept of moderation seems to me quite clearly to exist, not only in Cicero and Epictetus, but in passages from Seneca, and in Diogenes Laertius' accounts of all but the earliest Stoics. It was certainly not attributed to Stoicism by the 17th century, so the fact that Molière adopted an attitude similar to the Stoic notion of moderation is perhaps only a curious coincidence, or it is perhaps again one of the fruits of his intimacy with ancient philosophical texts.

The Stoic term 'moderation' evolved from 'what is fitting' or 'propriety' to 'mediocrity,' a word which had no pejorative sense in the 17th century. In its preoccupation with greatness and re Known, many saw great vice, as well as great virtue, as preferable to the oblivion which is entailed by mediocrity. La Rochefoucauld saw moderation as the 'virtue' of mediocre people who lack fortune and mer-
it. "On a fait une vertu de la modération, pour borner l'ambition des grands hommes, et pour consoler les gens médiocres de leur peu de fortune et de leur peu de mérite." (Maxime 308) Going even further, he disallows it as a virtue, claiming that it is laziness, a weakness, which is the opposite of the strong characteristic of ambition.

The dissemination of classical texts made the recovery of Stoicism possible, but the 17th century wanted to go beyond the ancient authors; an accurate understanding of what they had said was quite irrelevant. Nor did they distinguish Neo-Stoicism from its pre-Christian and early Roman origins. It did not occur to them that they might be distorting an entire metaphysic, and if it had occurred to them, they would have seen no harm in making use of the remains of a philosophy which had served its purpose and fallen into disuse.

Education became more and more widespread during the 17th century as both Jesuits and Protestants established schools. Once it was clear that a reform movement within the Church was not going to be sufficiently efficacious, the Protestants were eager to distinguish themselves very clearly from the Roman Catholics. Although the Protestants were, at first, attracted to Stoic philosophy, because of its reliance on the individual conscience, they quickly did away with all but Protestant teachings, and the Jesuits schools became the primary source of classical training. Most of the treatises dealing with Stoicism came from writers in the various Roman Catholic orders.

After an initial attraction, the libertines, like the Protestants,
found little inspiration in Stoicisim. This is perhaps explained by a failure to distinguish between Neostoicism, which was heavily Christianized, and the earlier, non-Christian Stoicism. If the two were taken as one philosophy, of which Neostoicism was the better known, then the dogmatic aspects of it may have turned the libertines' interests elsewhere. Furthermore, they were increasingly inclined to scepticism, and to questioning the rational foundations of ethics, so Stoicism would have been too dogmatic for their tastes.

The moralists of the first half of the century had eroded confidence in reason and nature; Descartes had lost the battle to establish metaphysics, ethics, and the sciences on demonstrable certainty, leaving a legacy of uncertainty to the second half of the century. This vacuum was filled, in part, by an interest in the psychology of the passions, and, in part, by a quest for those fundamental values which had been assumed in the early part of the century. People did continue to believe that ultimate values existed, although what they were was not agreed upon. Each moral problem was studied to see what clues it might hold for generalizations about these ultimate values, whereas, previously, generalizations had been applied to particular instances. A universal moral code was no longer thought to exist, and hence universal moral reform, such as presupposed by Stoicism, was illusory.

The inroads made by scepticism turned the philosophical minds of the century toward seeking ways of salvaging what certainty they could, because, as Pascal pointed out, it goes quite against man's nature to regard himself as knowing nothing. The resolution of this
problem in the 17th and 18th centuries lay in a 'mitigated scepticism': "a way by which theoretical Pyrrhonism could be reconciled with our practical means for determining truths adequate for human purposes." Is it looking too hard to see in this reconciliation echoes of Stoic moderation as the criterion to this practical wisdom? If not, then this ancient doctrine will have found new life, and one of the major tenets of Stoicism, although diffuse and detached from its origins, will have come to the aid of a new generation of men.

Some of my conclusions concerning Stoic influence on the four authors I have studied are markedly different from what I expected to find when I initiated the study. For example, I believed that the Stoic influence on Corneille had not been given the place of prominence that it deserved, particularly as he was writing before the wane of the Stoic revival, and I expected to be able to show that many of his moral views coincided with Stoicism. Instead, I have discovered a fundamental difference in the attitude toward virtue: it was the Stoic goal, and it entailed the performing of morally right actions. Corneille portrayed virtue as an essential characteristic of a hero which enabled him to attain other goals; the deeds he accomplished were often, but not necessarily, morally right. The vocabulary, coupled with the hero's self-reliance, independence, and self-sacrifice, all of which assuredly derive from Stoicism, lose their Stoic qualities by being associated with the expectations which society had for the hero, and dissociated from an absolute such as Stoic virtue.

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The fundamental differences between Pascal and Stoicism are irreconcilable, but the use he proposed to make of this pagan philosophy would quite probably have been more persuasive to the libertine than standard Christian adaptations. Pascal alienated himself from Stoicism because he believed that the problems of this life are of secondary importance by comparison with the major issues of eternity and immortality. In Pascal’s terms, the Stoics concerned themselves solely with the human order, whereas Pascal was concerned almost exclusively with the divine order. However, he was drawn to a synthesis of the two orders, and so was not completely unsympathetic to the Stoic belief in human capabilities and potential.

I did not expect to find in Molière any substantial echoes of Stoicism, and indeed, his connections with this theory are tenuous. His plays contain an ideal of virtue not unlike that of the Stoics even though their substance and dramatic success depends upon the failure of the characters to realize their ideals. The most striking similarity which I have found with Stoicism is in the attitude toward life and moral issues, the attitude I have called moderation. This moderation, which I find in Stoic writings and in Molière, appears to be one resolution to the moral upheaval of the 16th and 17th centuries in which the foundations of dogmatism and of rationalism were attacked. While it is not possible to show any direct influence of Stoicism on Molière’s attitude, there is the possibility of a connection both because of Molière’s educational background and interests, and because of the Stoic revival.

La Bruyère, whom I chose to study as a representative from the
closing decades of the century, devoted space to the criticism of Stoicism, thereby showing that even if moralists had ceased their support and/or attacks, it was still a topic of conversation in educated circles. He believed that he was presenting an essentially Christian moral viewpoint, but his terminology is that of secular writers, and indeed, is even Stoic. Thus he denounced Stoicism with no apparent awareness of the extent to which he had incorporated into his thinking Stoic ideas and language.

In closing, I should like to reiterate that the main interests of the four authors I have been studying were in areas other than ethics: Molière and Corneille were primarily concerned with the dramatic arts, Pascal with apologetics, and La Bruyère with social commentary. Although their interest in ethics was secondary, no doubt it is still a vital enough part of their work to warrant independent study. It raises important questions about the frontiers between literature and philosophy, and it involves antiquity and the seventeenth century literary achievement. It treats one aspect of the literary process, that of selecting, modifying, and using materials which are not exclusively, or even primarily, literary.

The Stoic revival continued to attract the serious and the social milieu; although not well labeled, traces of it marked the writings of some of the foremost authors of the 17th century, and it continued as a wedge separating from dogmatic morality new and independent moral viewpoints.
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Chapter VI


