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AUGUSTINE, BOETHIUS AND THE FORTUNE VERSES OF THOMAS MORE

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William J. Bouwsma influentially argued, in 1975, that "[t]he two ideological poles between which Renaissance humanism oscillated may be roughly labelled 'Stoicism' and 'Augustinianism.'" He suggested that while individual humanists might, at different times, favour some version of one over some version of the other, their intellectual allegiances were nonetheless fundamentally divided between the two. An unacknowledged possibility in Bouwsma's essay is that humanist texts might interplay the two—knowingly or unselfconsciously. Stoical elements and Augustinianism can be seen to co-exist in Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy*, a notable precedent, perhaps. Further, they can be seen to co-exist in More's Fortune Verses, which are at once a sophisticated contribution to the literature of Fortune and an example (most likely a self-conscious one) of Stoicism's literary cohabitation with Augustinianism.

Key words: fortune, free will, rhetoric, humanism.

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En 1975 William J. Bowsma écrivait que "les deux pôles idéologiques entre lesquels oscille l'humanisme de la Renaissance peuvent être, grosso modo, étiquetés "'stoïcisme' et 'augustinisme,' " position qui s'est avérée influente. Selon lui, même si des humanistes individuels pouvaient, à des moments différents, préférer telle ou telle version d'une de ces écoles à telle ou telle version de l'autre, leur allégeance intellectuelle était néanmoins divisée fondamentalement entre les deux. Une possibilité que l'essai de Bouwsma ne reconnaît pas, c'est que des textes humanistes pouvaient combiner les deux, par jeu délibéré ou inconscient. On voit des éléments de stoïcisme coexister avec l'augustinisme dans le Consolatio Philosophiae *de Boèce : ce précédent est peut-être digne d'être noté. La même coexistence se voit dans les vers de More sur la Fortune, qui sont à la fois une docte contribution au thème littéraire de la Fortune et un spécimen, fort probablement délibéré, de cohabitation entre stoïcisme et augustinisme.*

Mots-clés : fortune, libre arbitre, rhétorique, humanisme.

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En 1975 William J. Bowsma escribía : "Los dos polos ideológicos entre los cuales va oscilando el humanismo del Renacimiento pueden ser tratados de estoicismo y augustinismo". Esta su opinión se reveló influyente. Según el autor, si bien algunos humanistas pudieron individualmente, en distintos momentos, preferir tal o cual versión de una de aquellas escuelas a tal o cual versión de otra, sin embargo su adhesión intelectual se repartía esencialmente entre las dos. Una posibilidad que el ensayo de Bowsma no señala es que ciertos textos humanistas podían combinar las dos, deliberada o inconscientemente. Se ve que elementos de estoicismo coexisten con el augustinismo en el *Consolatio Philosophiae* de Boecio : quizás sea este precedente digno de ser subrayado. Se comprueba la misma coexistencia en los versos de T. Moro sobre la Fortuna : esos versos son al mismo tiempo una docta contribución al tema literario de la Fortuna y un ejemplo—deliberado según toda probabilidad—de cohabitación entre estoicismo y augustinismo.

Palabras claves : fortuna, libre albedrío, retórica, humanismo.

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Every day we are at war within ourselves, Augustine argued in *The City of God,* and all the Stoics do is offer us misinformation. In his words, "[W]e are engaged in [an] internal war" where "'The spirit lusts against the flesh.'"[1] The Stoics, he continued, deny that the ills produced by and accompanying our self-division (which, in any case, they do not accurately perceive) are in fact ills and so their philosophy is misleading rather than merely unhelpful:

> Now I am amazed that the Stoic philosophers have the face to argue that these ills are no ills, though they admit that, if they should be so great that the wise man cannot or ought not to endure them, he is compelled to inflict death on himself and depart from this life. But such is the stupid pride of these men who suppose that the supreme good is to be found in this life, and that they can be the agents of their own happiness, that their wise man,—I mean the man whom they describe as such with astounding inanity,—whom, even if he be blinded and grow deaf and dumb, lose the use of his limbs, be tortured with pain, and visited by every other evil of the sort that tongue can utter or fancy conceive, whereby he is driven to inflict death on himself, they do not scruple to call happy. What a happy life, that seeks the help of death to end it! [2]

That outburst against the Stoics implicitly emphasises, of course, the antipathy between two views on personal agency: theirs, that reason can direct and perfect the will; the later Augustine's, derived from Scripture, that the free though corrupted will can be made sound and empowered by grace alone.[3] Two views on personal agency and, as a consequence, the worldviews to which they belong are indirectly set in opposition. It does not take much historical imagination to see why those conflicting visions could have made powerful counter-claims on the allegiances of humanist scholars when they re-evaluated or rediscovered Stoic texts and pondered afresh the writings of Augustine.

Just how widespread and enduring those counter-claims in fact were on humanists has been documented by William J. Bouwsma. His study, "The Two Faces of Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought," pioneered the concept that "[t]he two ideological poles between which Renaissance humanism oscillated

1 *The City of God: Against the Pagans*, eds. and transs. G.E. McCracken et al., Loeb Classical Library, 7 vols (Harvard UP 1957-1972), 6, 19.4 *("[I]n hoc bello intestino sumus"* and *"[S]piritus concupiscit adversus carnem'")*. Subsequent reference to *The City of God* is from that edition. He quotes Gal. 5:17, as the editor and translator of volume 6, W.C. Greene, notes. As early as 1501, at least, More was very familiar with that Augustinian view on Stoicism.

2 *Ibid. ("Quae mala Stoici philosophi [...] mortis quaerit auxilium").*

3 See, for example, *The Free Choice of the Will* 2.20.54 and *Grace and Free Will* 15.31 in *Saint Augustine The Teacher The Free Choice of the Will Grace and Free Will,* trans. R.P. Russell, *The Fathers of the Church A New Translation,* vol. 59 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic U of America P, 1968). Reference hereafter to the second and third of those texts is from that edition. Cf. *The City of God* 5.9-11 and Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, ed. and trans. J.E. King, Loeb Classical Library (1927; rpt. Harvard UP, 1966), 4.17.37-39. The changes in Augustine's thinking on the freedom of the will are much discussed. Here I am emphasising at once Augustine's mature thought on the issue and that aspect of it with which More seems to have been most in sympathy. See *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer,* eds L.A. Schuster *et al.*, CW8, 503-505, 510-511, 799.

may be roughly labeled 'Stoicism' and 'Augustinianism.' "[4] Observing that neither term indicated a smooth continuum of thought or doctrine Bouwsma traced clusters of notions or doxa connected with each term from, approximately speaking, Petrarch to Calvin and Lipsius. He stated his "general conclusions" as follows:

> At least two general conclusions emerge from this contrast between Stoic and Augustinian humanism. The first comes out of the fact that we can illustrate either with examples drawn indiscriminately from anywhere in the entire period of our concern, and this suggests that the tension between them found no general resolution in the age of the Renaissance and Reformation. But it is equally striking that we have often cited the same figures on both sides. Neither pure Stoics nor pure Augustinians are easy to find among the humanists, though individual figures may tend more to one position than the other. Erasmus, for example, seems more Stoic than Augustinian; Valla appears more Augustinian than Stoic. A closer study of individuals may reveal more personal development, from one position to another, than it has been possible to show here. (58)

Looking back at the conclusions of Bouwsma's magisterial study, one sees an unacknowledged possibility. Not included is the possibility that, within one text or a related group of texts, a writer may interplay the Stoic with the Augustinian—deliberately, as far as the reader can tell (and which is not to say unambiguously), or in such a way that the reader cannot tell to what extent the interplay and its consequences are deliberate (which is not to say that the text or group of texts is therefore confused). Leaving aside the question of whether Stoicism and Augustinianism are indeed "[t]he two ideological poles

[4] Originally published as a chapter in a *Festschrift* (1975), the essay has been reprinted in Bouwsma's *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1990), 19-73, here at page 20. Subsequent reference to the essay is from that volume. Added information on the complex relations between Augustine and the Stoics can be found in Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, 2 vols (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985). See especially vol. 2, 225-232.

between which Renaissance humanism oscillated" or perhaps are better seen as pre-eminent alternatives recurring throughout humanist attempts to make sense of the world, this essay seeks to explore that possibility, initially focusing on Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy*—one of the landmark sources of Stoic (and other) concepts for Renaissance as for medieval readers—and then on More's poems written apparently to preface a volume called *The Boke of Fortune*.[5]

In considering *The Consolation* I shall very briefly suggest that, just as it may be difficult to ascertain whether Boethius is alluding to Scripture or not, so it may be hard to know whether or not he is alluding to Augustine, to whose writings he acknowledges a debt in his *Theological Tractates*.[6] His text at times speaks ambiguously to us: not necessarily because what he writes may have divergent meanings but, rather, because the words and (or) sentiments of his syncretic text may at some moments closely resemble those of, say, both Augustine and Plotinus. Hence there are times when *The Consolation* seems not unlike a whispering gallery, where the Augustinian and the Stoic can both be heard among the mingled voices. The main argument to be put forward about *The Consolation*, however, will be that there Boethius' view on personal agency—an issue crucial to his analysis of human

[5] Reference to Boethius is from *The Tractates: The Consolation of Philosophy*, eds. and transs. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, S. J. Tester, Loeb Classical Library (1973; rpt. Harvard UP, 1997). Unless otherwise stated, however, the translations from *The Consolation* are mine. On the interplay between Stoic and other concepts in *The Consolation* see H. Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (1981; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990 223-253). Reference to More is from *English Poems, Life of Pico, The Last Things*, eds A. S. G. Edwards, K. G. Rodgers, and C. H. Miller, CW1, 1997. Hereafter cited as CW1. Nothing seems to be known about *The Boke of Fortune* apart from its title. See CW1 xxix-xxx.

[6] See "De Trinitate," 31-34. Chadwick (see Note 5) remarks that Boethius' *Theological Tractates* "manifest a deep knowledge of St Augustine" (xiii). Affinities between Augustine's writings and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* have been discussed before, as one would expect, and the literature on the topic is not small. See, for example, Courcelle as cited in note 8. My point in this essay is to consider specific likenesses, and their natures, specifically in the context of Bouwsma's thesis and in relation to the argument about More that I wish to put forward.

dealings with Fortune—appears both to differ from and clearly to resemble Augustine's.

Ambiguity and similarity linked to those in *The Consolation* can also be identified as traits of the longest and most substantial of More's Fortune Verses. In considering his poems I shall argue that they present what seems at once a Stoic and an Augustinian critique of Fortune and of human responses to her. Proposing that the Stoic elements of More's poems seem Boethian rather than otherwise, though their absolute identification with Boethius is not crucial to my thesis, I shall argue chiefly three things. First, More's characterisation of Fortune resembles Augustine's account of God and the depiction of Fortune by Boethius; further, Stoicism and Augustinianism are used in More's portrayal of her to reinforce each other despite their contradictions. Second, personal agency is a major issue in the poems, one that More treats primarily in Stoic terms. Elsewhere he would write on personal agency in terms that are thoroughly Augustinian; the Fortune verses indicate his choosing not to do so for reasons associated with his parodically Augustinian portrayal of Fortune.[7] Given, then, that he writes of personal agency in mainly Stoic terms but that Boethius' thinking on the issue resembles Augustine's in some ways, his consideration of personal agency at once accords with and also departs from that of Boethius. Finally, in interplaying the Stoic/Boethian with the Augustinian, More's "To them that trustith in fortune" ends by implicitly displacing the latter in favour of the former, thereby appearing to make another strategic departure from Augustine and, in part, from Boethius. A direct consequence of those arguments is this. It seems that in the most substantial of his Fortune verses More follows—or, at the least, recreates—Boethius' example of interplaying the Stoic and the Augustinian in *The Consolation*: the Stoicism in his poems replicates or accords with the Stoicism in Boethius' work, but their Augustinianism has independence from, if some connection with, the Augustinianism that Boethius appears to deploy.

7 In addition to the sections of *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* mentioned in note 3, see *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, eds. L. L. Martz and F. Manley, CW12, 1976, 3.21 and 3.24.

By way of clarifying and specifying the arguments outlined above, I should like to begin with a moment in *The Consolation of Philosophy* when Philosophy, as she praises God, sings in a voice that reminds the reader distinctly of other voices. She sings: "You are truly tranquility, / You are quiet rest . . ." ("*Tu namque serenum, / Tu requies tranquilla* . . . ," 3. *met*. 9. 26-27). Throughout that hymn her singing echoes Plato and Proclus, as has been discussed with reference to the *Timaeus* and to Proclus' commentary upon it.[8] But those words seem likewise to echo Augustine's in his celebrations of *quies*, as for example when, at the start of his *Confessions*, he considers the human impulse to praise God: "[Y]ou have made us for you and our heart is restless until it rests in you" *("[F]ecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te*").[9] As a further example, one could cite the end of the *Confessions*, where Augustine says in anticipating that "[W]e may rest in you in the Sabbath of eternal life" ("[*S*]*abbato vitae aeternae requiescamus in te*"): "You yourself are rest" *("*[*Q*]*uies tu ipse es*").[10] The reader, perceiving the Augustinian resonances of Philosophy's words, cannot know whether that is as Boethius planned or whether Plato's vision of the soul's return home—refracted through Proclus' commentary on it—and that of Augustine are being accidentally juxtaposed: whether, in short, an elaboration on Plato's vision of the reason-ordered soul's return to "his dwelling place in his companion star" is being deliberately or accidentally set against Augustine's vision of the soul's return, by way of grace rather than

8 Note b in the Loeb edition at pages 270-271 highlights P. Courcelle's *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la tradition littéraire antecedents et posterite de Boece* (Paris : *Études Augustiniennes*, 1967), pages 161ff. See also pages 10 and 230.

9 *Confessions*, ed. W. H. D. Rouse and trans. W. Watts, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (1912; rpt. Harvard UP, 1968), 1, 1.1. The translation here is mine.

10 *Confessions*, 13.36 and 38. My translations. Cf. *The City of God*, 11.8 and 22.30.

reason, to *quies* in God.[11] Whichever may be the case, there is an Augustinian as well as a Platonic inflection to what is in some respects also a Stoic text.

In harmony with the Augustinian note ending 3. *met.* 9 is the tone that Boethius gives to spiritual nostalgia in *The Consolation.* To read 4. *pros.* 1. 31-38, for instance, against Augustine's commentaries on Psalms 86 and 148—and also against Plotinus' *Enneads* 1. 6. 8 and 5. 9. 1—is to recognise the echoes when Philosophy speaks of the soul's homesickness and way of reaching home.[12] Yet a more important similarity, to which attention must rather be given, is that between Boethius' and Augustine's views on personal agency. Early in *The Consolation* Philosophy sings that, because the Stoic wise man overcomes Fate and cannot be unsettled by Fortune, he will not be disturbed by hostile forces of nature or by fear of the rage of tyrants (1. *met.* 4; cf. 1. *pros.* 3. 31-49).[13] Through reason's control of the will, through wisdom, he achieves transcendence. For everyone else, as Boethius later explains, things are different. In 4. *pros.*7. 49-50 Philosophy urges, after the Stoic fashion, "Hold on to the middle way with steadfast strength" ("*Firmis medium viribus occupate!*"), adding, "Indeed it is placed in your hands, what kind of fortune you prefer to shape for yourself" ("*In vestra enim situm manu qualem vobis fortunam formare malitis . . . ,*" 52-54). She nonetheless subsequently points out that, although to have reason is therefore to have freedom of will, "[T]his [freedom] is not equal in all" ("*hanc non in omnibus aequam esse,*" 5. *pros.* 2. 13; cf. *ibid.*11-12).[14] As she considers that

[11] The quotation is from *Timaeus*, trans. D. J. Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 42b. Whether deliberate or accidental, the juxtaposition is (of course) in any case implicit.

[12] See *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, trans. A. C. Coxe (1888 ; rpt. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1974), 86. 1 and 8; 6 and 8; (according to the numbers assigned to the Psalms in the Vulgate); *The Six Enneads*, transs. S. MacKenna and B. S. Page (Chicago: Benton, 1952).

[13] Philosophy alludes to the Stoic sage in her opening words: "*Quisquis composito serenus aevo....*" Cf. 1. *met.* 7.20-31.

[14] On freedom of the will, see also 5. *pros.* 6. 163-166.

inequality of freedom, a concept familiar to the Stoics, Philosophy draws close to the thought of Augustine.

Human souls, she continues, lose some of their freedom when they cease to contemplate the divine mind, "fall into" ("*dilabuntur*") and thereafter are bound by the flesh (*ibid.* 16-20)—more, as is self-evident, if they experience the "final slavery" ("*[e]xtrema* [. . .] *servitus*") of giving themselves over to vice and so losing possession of the reason proper to them (*ibid.* 19-21). Then they wholly become victims of their desires, strengthening the servitude that follows from their flawed and mistaken choices (*ibid.* 22-29). It should be mentioned, in anticipating discussion of Augustine, that before Philosophy deprecates in Book 3 the desire for wealth or honour or power, and so on, she emphasises "ferocious, gain-devouring rapacity" ("*quaesita vorans saeva rapacitas,*" 2. *met.* 2. 13), "headlong greed" ("*praecipitem* [. . .] *cupidinem,*" *ibid.* 15) as a dominant human desire.[15] Of immediate relevance here, however, is this question: if one sets aside Philosophy's portrayal of those who have lost reason, the antithesis to her evocation of the Stoic sage, what does she say about how people in between the extremes make good the loss of unimpaired freedom—about how they overcome the damaging impairment of free will? Part of the answer has been evident from almost the start of *The Consolation*, for there Boethius has suggested the remedial power of philosophic education or, to be exact, re-education. But near the end of his work he suggests, too, that philosophy alone cannot make good the depletion of the will's freedom; in fact, he has Philosophy point to the rest of the answer and thereby to the source of perfected healing. The rest of the answer is prayer, which links the petitioner to God and so to the source of healing's completion. Through aptly humble prayer, Philosophy teaches, grace may be obtained and vice avoided.[16] She adds, near the very end of *The Consolation*: "Not in vain are hopes placed in God—and prayers, which when they are befitting cannot be ineffective" ("*Nec frustra sunt in deo positae spes precesque; quae cum rectae sunt, inefficaces esse non possunt,*" 5. *pros.* 6. 170-172).

[15] I have adopted "gain-devouring" from the Loeb translation.

[16] See 5. *pros.* 3. 84-112, especially at 102-107.

Boethius' view on personal agency, as expressed directly or otherwise throughout *The Consolation*, differs from yet also markedly resembles Augustine's. It might better be said that his view resembles some of Augustine's views as expressed in various works. Both Augustine and Boethius write of the soul's inhabiting the body as a fall into and entrapment in matter. Augustine may not always use that neoplatonic topos when he describes the relationship between soul and body; still, he does use it (compare *The Consolation* 5. 2. 18-20 with *Confessions* 13. 8 and 12. 10).[17] Both suggest—in line, too, with Biblical precedent—that the flesh hinders the soul's capacity at once to reason and to will freely (*The Consolation* 5. 2. 14-18 and, for example, *The City of God* 19. 27).[18] Both emphasise that, in particular, the fallen soul's unrelenting acquisitiveness impairs its freedom of will, although Augustine's *cupiditas* is not identical to Boethius' *cupido* or *rapacitas* (the thinking of both may be further linked through connection with Cicero's "*caeca ac temeraria dominatrix animi cupiditas*" or his overtly Stoic "*cupiditatis sitis*").[19] However, and as has been mentioned above, Augustine and Boethius each insist that the will is free (in addition to the Augustinian texts cited earlier, see *Confessions* 7. 3). They likewise insist that, if reason may to some extent enable the will to overcome vice, ultimately grace obtained through prayer enables the free though impaired will to choose what is truly the good (*The City of God* 19. 27, *The Free Choice of the Will* 2. 20. 54, 3. 18. 50-19. 53, *Grace and Free Will* 15. 31-16. 32). There are

[17] See, among recent discussions (and discussions in general), J. M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (1994; rpt. Cambridge UP, 1996), 97-112; R. Teske, "Augustine's Theory of Soul," in E. Stump and N. Kretzmann, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge UP, 2001), 116-123.

[18] Germain Marc'hadour has drawn my attention to Wisdom 9.15 and to its citation by both Erasmus and More.

[19] Respectively: *De inventione* 1. 2. 2 *De Inventione, De Optimo Genere Oratorum, Topica*, ed. and trans. H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library (1949; rpt. Harvard UP, 1960); *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 6, in *De Oratore Book III, De Fato, Paradoxa Stoicorum, De Partitione Oratoria*, ed. and trans. H. Rackman, Loeb Classical Library (1942; rpt. Harvard UP, 1968). Subsequent reference to the latter is from that edition.

clear affinities, then, between Boethius' and Augustine's views on personal agency; the last of those identified above is arguably most important among them. If Augustine is not openly acknowledged by Boethius when he writes of the will's freedom, neither in other contexts are Plato, Plotinus and Proclus; that aside, the range and nature of the affinities imply a deliberate rather than an accidental similarity between Boethius and the predecessor whose theology he certainly knew and actively respected.

To identify the interplay of Stoic and Augustinian concepts in *The Consolation* is to suggest their interaction in what was, for Renaissance as for earlier readers, a major account of how to understand and deal with life's uncertainties. It is therefore to suggest that Boethius' text was an example for humanist writers—and not merely of how to manage a dialogue about Fortune: rather, in addition, of interplaying the antithetic worldviews that, as Bouwsma has illustrated, tended to dominate their efforts to make sense of experience. Given, then, that Boethius' text was an example of the kind described, what was its availability to More and to what extent did he use it when he wrote his Fortune verses? Any answer is necessarily influenced, although only in part, by the date one assigns the poems; and the most accurate date assignable seems just to be this: before "the beginning of 1505."[20] The fact that no more precise date can be given the poems does not greatly matter, however. In 1478 Caxton had published Chaucer's rendering of *The Consolation*, so More had access to Boethius' text in that English form whatever the totality of versions available to him.[21] It should be mentioned as well that, still a young man, More had given a series of lectures on *The City of God*. Some of Augustine's views on free will, Stoicism and other topics were thus known to him from the work which was the focus of his attention—and

[20] CW1, xxviii. "[P]ossibly" the poems were written "much earlier" than "the 'Rufull Lamentation,' " Edwards suggests (*ibid*). That would mean the poem was written prior to 1503 (CW1, xxiv).

[21] More refers to Boethius in *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, Book VIII, citing his defense of the will's freedom, CW8, 939/1.

there is not much likelihood that, when preparing his lectures, he did not know or choose to read anything else by Augustine.

Availability of the Boethian example is not really at issue; neither is knowledge of Augustine independent from knowledge of the Augustinian elements to be discerned in *The Consolation*. Use of the example is, of course, but I think the problem can be seen reasonably from several angles. As will be presently argued, the most substantial poems among More's Fortune verses seem at times to evoke or at least to parallel the Stoic concepts in *The Consolation*. Likewise, as will be also argued, they seem to evoke a number of Augustinian categories (some evoked, too, in Boethius' work but some not). Hence the interplay of Boethian Stoicism and Augustinianism appears deliberate although, as remarked at the outset, absolute identification of the Stoicism in the poems with that of *The Consolation* is not crucial to my thesis. Now if the interplay is not deliberate, then a cogent, alternative perspective on it would be this. While More must have known of Boethius' work when he wrote the Fortune verses, he had not as yet studied or perhaps even read it—or, if he was to whatever degree personally familiar with it, he did not consciously gesture toward it; as a result, in his poems he unknowingly fashioned parallels and not allusions to *The Consolation*. Consequently, in the most substantial of his Fortune verses More made use of conventional Stoic notions that he unwittingly phrased in ways that recall phrasing in Boethius. More did not, then, follow Boethius' example of interplaying the Stoic and the Augustinian but created a counterpart to it.[22] And if, to pursue a relevant albeit remote line of thought, the evocation of Augustinian categories in his poems were unplanned as well, then a further dimension to an alternative perspective would be that More, knowing though not consciously making use of some Augustinian concepts, fashioned parallels to them in his Fortune verses and thereby set unwittingly in motion what can be seen as a

22 *It is not impossible* that More did follow Boethius' example but, doing so, did not consciously recreate his Stoicism: merely unlikely. In a similar vein of unlikelihood: More could have read *The Consolation* without recognising its Augustinianism and then have unknowingly recreated its Stoic-Augustinianism dialectic in the Fortune verses.

dialectic between Stoicism and Augustinianism. The corollary to that is interesting. In his poems More would then have produced, without knowing it, a version of what modern readers, in light of Bouwsma's essay, can recognise as an interplay of worldviews opposed repeatedly throughout humanist writings of the European Renaissance.[23]

Before that interplay of worldviews in the most substantial of the Fortune verses is considered, some things should be quickly said of all the poems. More wrote up to perhaps seven prefatory poems for *The Boke of Fortune*; attribution is not uniformly uncontested. But no one has questioned his authorship of the three longest and most ambitious: "The wordes of Fortune to the people," a *sermocinatio* and virtually also a *suasoria* (42 lines); "To them that trustith in Fortune," an *admonitio* and *adhortatio* (168 lines); "To them that seketh Fortune," it too an *admonitio* and *adhortatio* (49 lines). The remainder include a brief prologue, two short poems in French and another brief poem in English. They state quite simply some ideas shrewdly developed or positioned within their longer companions; as a result, discussion need not be diverted from those three and will now proceed to them.[24]

The reader first encounters Fortune's self-presentation to humanity. More has her present herself as the divine principle ruling this world, its Unmoved Mover who offers, in parody of the Christian

23 On "weak intentionalism," a notion relevant to this part of the discussion, see M. Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge UP, 1999), 67-77. It all but goes without saying that More's contemporaries familiar with Augustine and Boethius could also have seen that (hyperthetically unplanned) dialectic at work in the poems.

24 In an earlier discussion of the Fortune verses I drew attention to the short English poem other than the prologue, that is, to "Fortune, O myghty and varyable" as heightening the contradictions in the portrayal of Fortune by More. I now do not hold that view—and should observe that the present essay differs in subject and scope from its predecessor, "More and the Refiguring of Stoicism: The Prefatory Poems to *The Boke of Fortune*," *Moreana* 115-116 (1993), 19-32; see page 32.

God, material salvation and spiritual perfection derived from it (lines 53-66). His strategy is, in other words, to suggest that committing oneself to the chance of what are in effect such salvation and perfection is of course to worship one's preferred divinity. The terms through which Fortune specifies her own godhead—the reasons that would persuade humanity to perceive chance as the solely ruling principle of this world—are mainly Augustinian and Stoic. Where they are either of those, they tend also to be Boethian. In presenting herself implicitly as the Aristotelian Unmoved Mover but likewise as a personal deity Fortune suggests, for example, that she causes change yet her "high estate power and auctoryte" (line 53) are not contingent, that she intervenes in individual lives:

> With owt my ffauour ther is no thyng wonne.
> Many a mater haue I browght alaste
> To good conclusion, that fondely was begonne
> And many a purpose, bownden sure & faste
> With wyse provisioun, I have over caste. (33/ 60-64)

Immediately before those lines, however, she has specified her interventionist godhead in terms that reveal her as a parodically Christian deity, a parody because self-consciously a double. She says, seeking worship,

> That riches, worshipe, welth, & dignite
> Ioy, reste, & peace, and all thyng fynally,
> That any pleasure or prophet [profit] may cum by,
> To mannys comfort, aid, & sustynaunce,
> Is all at my devise & ordeynance. (33/ 55-59)

Fortune in effect declares herself to be the source of material salvation, for she indicates that not to honour her—hence not to gain material goods and (therefore, perhaps) not to accrue honour—means condemnation to perpetual "shame, penvry, & payn" (line 76). From material salvation by her, as she indicates, follows spiritual perfection, in the sense of gaining "[i]oy, reste, and peace," along with all "pleasure" (lines 56-58). Her claim that she confers rest and peace is clearly if indirectly two things: a claim that she supplants God; a claim

made in Augustinian terms. Augustine identifies God alone as conferring rest (*quies*) and, as has been shown, Boethius repeats that argument. In addition, Augustine associates peace with God alone and so, too, does Boethius.[25] Further, Augustine proposes that pleasure and happiness come only from love focused on God; and Boethius concurs.[26] It should be mentioned as well, with reference to both "pleasure" and "prophet" [profit] (line 57), that Fortune implies she confers identity. Through granting both, according to her—in other words, through granting material salvation and spiritual perfection—she fulfils interior and public selfhood. Should she withhold both, Fortune indicates, inner selfhood is disrupted and public selfhood all but erased (lines 75-80). When she denies her "ffauour" (line 60) her victim becomes a self-divided nobody, an outcast. Fortune parodies, then, Augustine's notion that to move from God is to move toward non-being; at the same time, she parodies the Stoic notion (iterated of course by Boethius) that the essential self, the rational and integral consciousness, lives in defiance of Fortune and all her works.

It seems fair to say that the Augustinian categories evoked in Fortune's presentation of her divinity tend to be the same as, or to agree closely with, categories of Boethian thought in *The Consolation*. It seems no less reasonable to say that the Stoic categories evoked by Fortune are also among those used in Boethius' text. The most obvious example of that, which is by no means simple as well, can be seen when Fortune states her opposition to elected poverty—Boccaccio's struggle between Fortune and Poverty being reworked by More out of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*.[27] More has Fortune initiate her

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[25] See, for example, *The City of God* 19.11 and *The Consolation* 4. *met.* 1. 19-30.

[26] See, for example, *The City of God* 11.28, *Confessions* 4. 10-13 and *The Consolation* 3. *pros.* 7-*pros.* 11.

[27] See John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. H. Bergen, *Early English Text Society*, 4 vols (1924; rpt. Oxford UP, 1967). Reference to the *Fall* is from that edition. Sister Edith Willow points out similarities between some images in the *Fall* and some in More's Fortune verses. See her *An Analysis of the English Poems of St. Thomas More* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1974), 200-201.

statement of opposition by having her take up the issue of wisdom, whereas Lydgate continuously pays greater attention to the issue of freedom (freedom from Fortune, gained by the choice to be poor).[28] More has Fortune introduce her statement this way:

> With owt good happe ther may no wit suffise.
> Better is to be ffortunate than wise.
>
> And therefore hath som men bene or [before] this
> My dedly ffooys & wrytyn many a bok,
> To my disprayse. (lines 65-69)

Fortune's opposition to those who have rejected her and chosen poverty is, then, first an attack on wisdom. So it continues to be. What she wants to make "the people" believe can be epitomized as follows: the only salvation and perfection that matter are at her disposal (lines 55-64); wisdom cannot confer them because she overrules "wyse provisioun" as she sees fit (lines 64-65); therefore, "Better is to be ffortunate than wise" (line 66); and therefore the wise who write against her and her gifts (wholly unidentified writers, even as being among the wise, since Fortune aptly refuses to give them any name), act out of anger at her not having favoured them, out of frustrated desire for the very goods they denounce, choosing in fact to be self-divided nonentities (lines 67-80). More's Fortune, when she unfolds a reworked version of the conflict between Poverty and herself, tries to reveal wisdom as folly. It is clear that Fortune thereby reveals herself as a type of Folly; it is clear that, at the same time, she thereby parodies the Pauline topos of God's wisdom overthrowing the wisdom of those accounted wise and making wise the simple. But it seems clear, too, that in deprecating wisdom directed against her she obliquely alludes to Stoicism and seeks implicitly to discredit it. Of particular relevance here is that one of the main things at stake in her assault on wisdom is the attribution of power to confer identity. Fortune claims, as discussed above, that identity is hers to bestow; in doing so she counters the notion, a notion asserted especially by the

[28] See, for example, the *Fall*, 1. 6126 and 6182 in relation to 3. 212, 315, 332, 343, 350, 449-450, 587.

Stoics and at length by Boethius, that wisdom produces a selfhood at once authentic and independent from her. Among her unnamed targets are precisely writers such as Boethius and the authority of texts such as *The Consolation*.

Further Stoic elements are added to the characterisation of Fortune in "To them that trustith in fortune" and "To them that seketh fortune." As two examples from the latter indicate, those elements likewise replicate or accord with the Stoic concepts evoked by Boethius. The poem begins with a warning (*admonitio*):

> Who so deliteth to prove & assay,
> Of wauerying fortune the full vncertayn lot,
> Yf that the answere plese the not alway,
> Blame not me: for I comande you not[,]
> Fortune to trust, and eke full well ye wot,
> I haue of her no brydyll in my ffiste,
> She renneth lose, and torneth wher she lyste. (41/ 265-271)

More's "brydyll" image may allude ironically to 2. *met.* 2. 15-16 in *The Consolation* or, perhaps, to Chaucer's translation of those lines.[29] In any event, his argument echoes that of Philosophy when she says, "These [changes] are always her [Fortune's] ways; such is her nature" ("*Hi semper eius mores sunt ista natura,*" 2. *pros.* 1. 29-30). Then:

> If, when you have voluntarily chosen [Fortune] as your mistress, you wish to draw up a law about her staying and departure, won't you be acting unjustly and by your impatience make worse a lot which you cannot change? If you commit your sails to the winds, you go not where your will desires but where the blasts push you; if you entrust your

[29] See *Boece, Metre II, Si quantas rapidis*, lines 17-18 in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. J. H. Fisher (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977).

seedlings to the fields, you balance fruitful years against sterile ones. (*ibid.* 51-58)[30]

Subsequently in More's poem, his speaker offers this counsel about Fortune:

> [S]he kepeth euer in store
> From euery man som parcel of his will,
> That he may pray therefore and serue her still.
> Som man hath good, but children hath he non.
> Som man hath both, but he can get non helthe.
> Som hath all thre, but vp to honowrs trone
> Can he not crepe, by no maner stelthe.
> . . . . .
> [I]t is fortunes gyse
> To graunt no man all thing that he will axe,
> But as her self liste ordre and devise. . . (42/ 290-296; 300-302)

As Philosophy asks, "For who is so thoroughly happy that something does not to some degree conflict with the quality of his situation?" ("*Quis est enim tam conpositae felicitatis ut non aliqua ex parte cum status sui qualitate rixetur*?" 2. *pros.* 4. 41-43). She continues:

> The nature of human prosperity is unsettled; either it never wholly flourishes or it never remains constant. This man abounds in wealth but his ignoble birth shames him; noble birth makes this man stand out but, hedged about by the poverty of his family possessions, he would prefer to be unknown. That man, rich in money and birth, bewails not being married; that man, happily married but childless, breeds riches for an heir not of his blood. Another man, blessed with children, cries, dejected, at the faults of son and daughter. So no one agrees unhesitatingly with the condition of his fortune. . . [31]

30 "*Quod si manendi* [...] *sterilesque pensares.*"

31 "*Anxia enim res est* [...] *cum fortunae suae condicione concordat...,*" *ibid.* 43-53.

In More's characterisation of Fortune, as apparently in *The Consolation*, the Stoic and the Augustinian do not just co-exist but are made to work in harmony despite their contradictions. The Fortune that he presents is the Stoics' personification of chance given new life and meaning as a parodically Augustinian deity.

By contrast, when More's poems examine human responses to Fortune rather than her nature—how folk will or may respond to chance if they perceive it (with particular emphases) as being in effect the divine principle governing human experience—the Stoic and the Augustinian come to be used differently. In such contexts their interaction is primarily affected by two things: first, as one would expect, the characterisation of Fortune that More concordantly uses them to unfold; no less important, the audiences whom More's speaker addresses in "To them that trustith in fortune" and "To them that seketh fortune." A striking difference can be seen when More focuses on personal agency. His speaker seems in doing so to follow primarily the Stoics. That is to say, his speaker appears virtually to ignore Augustinian thinking on personal agency in favour of a Stoic perspective on it. Thus he accords with some elements of Boethius' thought in *The Consolation* but departs from some others, namely, those which distinctly resemble or iterate the thought of Augustine. Difference of a related kind can be seen when, in "To them that trustith in fortune," More's speaker ends his address with advice (*adhortatio*) and implicitly ignores Augustinian wisdom in favour of Stoic. The former is again strategically displaced by the latter.

More has Fortune herself establish the basis for his speaker's consideration of personal agency. Mock-Augustinian as well as Stoic figure that she is, she can readily announce: "Eche man hathe of hym self the gouernaunce" (line 89). She makes that announcement near the end of "The wordes of Fortune to the people" and adds nothing to it. But More's speaker, in the two subsequent poems, develops the Stoic rather than the Augustinian implications of her assertion. He

does not contradict what Fortune says. He does modify it, emphasising how miserably limited and impaired human nature is in its frailty, impercipience, instinctive greed and unreason (despite its possessing reason). For example he complains in "To them that trustith in fortune," with reference to the obviousness of Fortune's instability:

> Yet ffor all that we brytill men ar ffayn,
> (So wrechid is owr nature and so blynde)
> As sone as fortune list to lawgh agayn,
> With fayre countenaunce and deceytffull mynde,
> To crowche & knele & gape after the wynde,
> Not on or twayn but thowsandes on a rowt,
> Lyke suarmyng bees cum flateryng her abowt.
>
> Than as a bayte she bryngith forth her ware,
> Syluer, gold, rich perle, & precyous stone:
> On which the mased peple gase and stare,
> And gape therfore, as dogges for the bone. (35/ 110-120)

The speaker's complaint harmonises with Augustine's portrayal of humanity in terms of *concupiscentia, cupiditas, libido*; it agrees, too, with Boethius' imaging people in terms of *saeva rapacitas* and *cupido*. However what he proceeds to say accords with Boethius, in so far as Boethius follows Stoic convention, rather than with Augustine—or with Boethius in so far as he follows or parallels Augustine. Neither in "To them that trustith in fortune" nor in "To them that seketh fortune" does he urge or mention liberation from weakness, from the force of desire, from consequent impairment of the will (and therefore from Fortune's blandishments) through grace won by prayer. Augustine both advocates and celebrates such liberation, though not in the context of opposing Fortune; Boethius concurs with Augustine but, of course, he does so when reflecting on resistance to Fortune and escape from her.[32] Instead More's speaker presents exemplary "old filosophers," who variously committed themselves to poverty, as models of how to

[32] Augustine's ridicule of deifying "fortune" can be seen in *The City of God* 4. 18-19.

overcome human frailties and gain freedom from Fortune ("To them that trustith in fortune," line 192; see lines 187-221). He focuses chiefly on "Byas," a whole stanza being devoted to his commemoration of the philosopher used by Cicero in *Paradoxa Stoicorum* as a version of the Stoic sage: as an example of someone who—transcending human acquisitiveness—wisely preferred the possession of virtue to the possession of worldly goods.[33] More's speaker offers, in other words, a Stoic perspective on personal agency; and it is one congruent with Boethius' ideal of the truly wise man who transcends desire, not with Boethius' Augustinian view of free will as that is possessed by those other than Stoic sages. (It is likewise in agreement with Boethius' praise of frugality and his argument that to be human is to possess mental riches but never, in fact, material and transient wealth or resources.[34]) The model of the Stoic wise man is, the speaker seems to suggest, there for all to see and to imitate ("To them that trustith in fortune," lines 222-256).

That More's speaker should place the Stoic well before the Augustinian when he considers personal agency makes sense at once if it is viewed in light of the two immediately relevant factors mentioned earlier: the characterisation of Fortune as a hybrid mingling the mock-Augustinian with the Stoic; the nature of his supposed audience. He addresses those who trust ("trustith") in Fortune. Therefore, as "The wordes of Fortune to the people" has indicated, he addresses those who have already chosen, not necessarily understanding in full what they have done, to establish chance as the ruling principle of their lives—as a virtually divine principle to which they assign those attributes assigned by Augustine to God. Consequently they have chosen to live, as it were, outside grace and

[33] See *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 8-9. Cato is of course Cicero's prime and direct example of the Stoic wise man. In CW 1, on page 205, it is noted that W. E. Campbell and A. W. Reed first linked More's Byas with Cicero's Bias in their volume 1 of the *English Works* (London, 1931) and that Robert M. Coogan thereafter linked More's *exemplum* with the account of Bias in Petrarch's *Rerum memorandarum libri*.

[34] See *The Consolation* 2. *pros.* 5. 40-100, especially: "*Paucis enim minimisque natura contenta est...*" (44).

under the "ffauour" of Fortune. Living under that "ffauour" which is her grace, they cannot seek help against her or freedom from her by that grace's aid, so the course available to them is secular—liberty gained by emulation of the Stoic ideal manifested in Byas. Then, by implication at least, wisdom opens the way for them back to the domain of divine grace (for which they now have no desire). Having abandoned their parodically Augustinian god, they may return indirectly to the original. More's strategy is, when his speaker considers personal agency in specific circumstances, to put the Stoic before the Augustinian but not to set them in opposition.

He uses the same strategy when his speaker ends "To them that trustith in fortune," though he does not use it in exactly the same way. At the end of that poem, More's speaker counsels moderation to his notional audience should its members be unwilling to abandon trust in Fortune and to espouse poverty. He says:

> But & [if] thou wilt nedes medill with her tresur,
> Trust not therin, & spend it liberally.
> Bere the [thee] not prowde, nor tak not owt of mesur.
> Byld not thyn hows high vp in the skye.
> Non ffallith ferre, but he that clymeth hye,
> Remembre nature sent the [thee] hether bare,
> The gifts of fortune cownt them borrowed ware. (lines 257-263)

His Stoic advice is spoken in terms familiar from Horace and Boethius. Lines 259-261, for example, have an affinity with *Odes* 2.10. 1-12 and with *The Consolation* 2. *met.* 4; line 262 seems clearly to echo Boethius' work at 2. *pros*. 2. 9-10.[35] Again, those who have chosen to live outside the domain of divine grace—and choose so to remain—are offered secular aid. More's speaker seems to direct his audience

[35] On page 207 of CW 1 it is indicated that some of what More's speaker says in the lines quoted may have—or could be seen as having—associations with proverbs; indeed, that they have a proverbial ring confirms that they were familiar in More's time. Reference to Horace is from *The Odes*, ed. an trans. J. Michie, Penguin Classics (1964 ; rpt. Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1967). The Wife of Bath cites Seneca when she defends "glad poverty" (I owe that reference to Germain Marc'hadour).

toward *aequus animus* in so far as that may be available to them. In other words, he accommodates Stoicism to them: if they cannot aim at the Stoic ideal, then a Stoic way of dealing with experience is nevertheless still possible. Those living in effect by trust in a parodically Augustinian deity are counselled to observe the mean; it is implicit that, were they living by trust in her original, the comparable advice would be *uti non frui* (as can be seen in *A Dialogue of Comfort* 3.7 and 3.12).

That phrase suggests indirectly what the most substantial and ambitious of More's Fortune Verses are at the last concerned with, namely, the unrelenting acquisitiveness that prompts or impels people to commit their lives to chance as if indeed to a god. In order to cope with Fortune, More suggests (as did Boethius before him), initially one must try to understand and to control desire. More's representations of chance and of desire, his portrayals of how to deal with them, have been identified in this discussion as predominantly Stoic and Augustinian. Now the question to be considered is this: given Bouwsma's documentation of those discourses as polarities in humanist thought throughout the Renaissance, what are the relations between them as used in More's poems? The short answer is, complementary rather than merely oppositional. Their complementarity has several aspects. To begin with, it is possible in part because More's longer poems among his Fortune Verses are ultimately concerned with human possessiveness, a phenomenon of deep interest both to the Stoics and to Augustine. Further, it is possible also because More can have Stoicism and Augustinianism co-exist separately in "To them that trustith in fortune" and in "To them that seketh fortune"—and so without direct confrontation. He has Fortune define herself, in "The wordes of Fortune to the people," with reference to either discourse. Stoic elements of characterisation are added in the two subsequent poems. In those poems, however, people who are imagined as virtually having made chance their god are offered the therapy of Stoic counsel; Augustinianism expresses a worldview alien to them, thus it is obliquely evoked in the first of the poems and merely penumbral to the second. Contradictions between Stoicism and Augustinianism are therefore not so much suppressed as

made to appear irrelevant. More would write elsewhere on Fortune in terms neither predominantly Stoic nor Augustinian. As has been mentioned above, he would later write on personal agency in thoroughly Augustinian terms. But in the longest of his Fortune Verses, when focusing on a concern common to both, he brought the discourses together for a moment of productive interplay or juxtaposition. His doing so affirms Bouwsma's emphasis on the importance of Stoicism and Augustinianism to humanist thought while suggesting that they could be made to cooperate rather than to conflict in humanist texts.

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