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The Problem of "Stoic Fate" –
Or whether Herbert of Cherbury was a Lipsian[2]

ABSTRACT

In this paper I explore what the term "stoic fate" was supposed to mean in Edward Herbert of Cherbury's *De Veritate*. Famously, the ancient stoics had divergent views regarding this question, hence early modern reconstructions of the concept could be based on different sources (and, consequently, could have different significations). My aim is to prove that the Herbertian sense follows that of Justus Lipsius. Keeping in mind that Herbert's epistemology involved soteriological considerations as well, all this can not be regarded as a mere philological nuance, since – although scholars tend to focus solely on the epistemological content of the work – the whole project outlined in the *De Veritate* is grounded on the distinction between fate and providence.

Keywords:
Edward Herbert of Cherbury, Justus Lipsius, neo-stoicism, divine providence, stoic fate

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is almost a commonplace to refer to Herbert's indebteness to ancient stoic philosophy due to his reliance on the concept of *common notions* or *koinai ennoiai* – as the ancients would put it. Still, his attitudes towards neo-stoicism – and particularly towards Justus Lipsius – are not at all obvious. Lipsius is mostly remembered today as a political theorist or sometimes as a moral philosopher, but he is hardly ever considered as an influential metaphysician of his time. Yet, as Herbert's example might also reveal that, from a historical perspective, this is a completely false assumption.

Albeit the main focus points of Herbert's philosophy were mostly epistemological and logical questions, he also pulled the strings of determinism and metaphysical necessitation in his *De Veritate* (although his exposition there is far from systematic, which might also be the reason for the scholarly negligence of the issue). One of the theses of this paper is that the significance of the Herbertian theory concerning providence, grace, and free will is a crucial one, and hence should not be underestimated. This is proved by the mere fact that Herbert's epistemology famously cherished soteriological ambitions (as well as worldly ones): according to the author, truths based on common notions would (1.) enable believers to regard the doctrines of revealed religions as merely *possible* or *hypothetical* truths, rather than as ones of necessity (his programme can hence be compared to Grotius' irenicism, or to the latitudinarian views of the Cambridge Platonists); (2.) but – he also claimed that – it would reveal the only possible way towards salvation. These common notions, responsible for providing people with infallible knowledge, are regarded by Herbert as "sacred principles, arguing with which is an impious act" (De Verit., 1966, p. 1).[3] But, in turn, the author also claimed the knowledge of these sacred principles to be the necessary condition of human salvation.

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[3]   Edward Herbert of Cherbury, *De Veritate*, Stuttgard, 1966 (=De Verit.). This "List of Words Used in a Sense Different from Their Vulgar Meaning" is missing from the 1937 English edition. Moreover, since Meyrick H. Carré's translation seems to hide some important aspects of Herbert's text, and the translator sometimes seems to be relying on Marin Mersenne's 1639 French version (*De la Vérité, en tant qu'elle est distince de la Révélation, du Vray-Semblable, du Possible et du Faux*, Paris, 1639) rather than the Latin original (see below), all the qoutations from the *De Veritate* are here translated by myself. However, wherever it is possible, I also refer to the page numbers of the English edition as well in order to make it easier for the reader to find the passages in question.

2. DID HERBERT HAVE AN ELABORATE THEORY CONCERNING PROVIDENCE, FATE OR FREE WILL?

Considering all this, it seems rather odd that while Herbert is so eager to define the nature and conditions of truth so carefully, he puts so little emphasis on clarifying his theory of divine providence and free will. Yet, some passages of the *De Veritate* might reveal his views on them.

Right in the beginning of his work, Herbert clarifies the meaning of some terms of importance. In this catalogue, one can find the concept of "*libertas arbitrii*" defined as "such an *internal sense* [*sensus internus*], which originates from a faculty by which one can turn himself wherever he pleases". Even more importantly, Herbert explains the concept of *nature* [*natura*] as "universal divine providence" and *grace* [*gratia*] as "particular divine providence" (De Verit., 1966, p. 1). Since Herbert is regarded by many interpreters as the father of British deism, one might find the definition of the second concept slightly disturbing: while even a deist could accept the existence of universal providence, the claim that God might interfere directly into particular events seems contradictory to the definition of deism. Supposedly, the concept of "*particular providence*" is not employed by Herbert in the same sense as some other thinkers (i.e. Arnauld, Bayle or Malebranche) used it some decades later referring to the conditions of human salvation.[4] In Herbert's case the main problem is that he hardly ever specifies which type of providence he is referring to when using the word.

He even introduces a third type that he calls "*supreme*" providence (*summa providentia*). He ranks this third one superior to the previous types, and credits it with the capacity to reign over them both:

> Since God wanted that all other beings [*reliqua animantia*] should reach their perfections in humans, God gave the latter faculties for virtue and religion (beyond the ones they have in common with other beings). Therefore some kind of *supreme providence* [*summa providentia*] is given to them, to which *universal providence* or *nature*, and *particular providence* or *grace* both belong, and which tempers them both (De Verit., 1966, p. 57; On Truth, 1937, p. 136[5]).

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[4] See: Patrick Riley, *Introduction*, in. Nicholas Malebranche, Treatise on Nature and Grace, New York, 1992, 1–105.

[5] Edward Herbert of Cherbury, *De veritate* [On Truth], trans. Meyrick. H. Carré, Briston, 1937 (= *On Truth*).

Hence, particular providence has to be taken as something received by every human being equally: the only reason why it is not regarded as universal is its being confined exclusively to humans. All this is consistent with those interpretations of Herbert's, which claim that man is not first of all "*animal rationale*", but rather "*animal religiosum*". Still, on the other hand, this locus can also be comforting for those, who emphasize Herbert's deism, since particular providence seems here to be a subspecies of the universal one.[6]

This *aufhebung* of particular providence, hence, rather indicates a rhetorical gesture (towards Calvinism, for instance) than a philosophical resolution. Still, Herbert seems sometimes to be permissive towards the representatives of the latter view, whence one may suggest that he might have not regarded the validity of this distinction as one of crucial importance. He even quotes some rival claims (supposedly from Calvinist thinkers). These opponents – he claims – intend to ground their theodicy on denying the existence of universal providence (since the lack of grace could then account for the existence of sin). However, these interlocutors – as he portrays them – tend to subjugate providence to predestination, as a result of which humans will no longer have control over their salvation, and prayers will be of no use either.[7] Although, Herbert clearly does not agree with these claims, he seems to be satisfied even if someone allows the existence of *at least one* type of providence:

> While these men are trying to give grace its foundations, let them take care, that they do not destroy both of them [viz. *nature* and *grace* together], by which the mystery of salvation [*salus*] could be attributed neither to nature, nor to grace, but to some kind of *stoic fate* (De Verit., 1966, p. 58; On Truth, 1939, p. 137).

Considering that Herbert famously drew a strict (or even too strict[8]) line between *true* and merely *possible* claims (the first ones being scientifically valid and

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[6] See: Richard W. Serjeantson, *Herbert of Cherbury before Deism: The Early Reception of the De Veritate*, "The Seventeenth Century" 16, 2001, 217–238.

[7] Although logically it would also be equally plausible to deny the existence of grace in order to prove God's justice, Herbert does not even mention this possibility. Such (libertarian) claims had been labelled as *Pelagian* since Augustine's *De Correptione et Gratia* [A treatise on rebuke and grace] at last, and seem not to have constituted a substantial part of the debates concerning divine providence in England in Herbert's times (this might also account for Herbert's silence concerning such a position).

[8] One reason why the Lutheran theologian, Christian Kortholt ranked Herbert (along with Hobbes and Spinoza) among the most harmful thinkers of his time was the too strict criterion of truth.

necessary for human salvation, while the second ones being indifferent from any point of view), one must conclude that he did not regard the question of *general* and *particular providence* as belonging to the first group. The distinction can, hence, be regarded as a mere *captatio benevolentiae,* aiming to protect the author from accusations in religious matters. What *did* matter for Herbert was, in turn, the distinction between providence (of any kind) and *stoic fate*.

The latter was a highly controversial issue in the early decades of the seventeenth century: its critics held that the stoic theory of fate determined things and events independently from (1.) God's free will, and (2.) from his intellect as well, hence the view became equally objectionable among voluntarist and intellectualist circles.

3. PREDECESSORS AND/OR OPPONENTS: CALVIN AND LIPSIUS

The debate in which Herbert needed to occupy a certain position is known today as one concerning *stoic* and *Christian* fate. One of its earliest formulations is from the Dutch scholar, Justus Lipsius (1584; 1604), but some early traces can also be discovered in Johannes Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (1536) as well.

> Those, who wish to invoke animosity [*invidiam*] against this doctrine [viz. against the doctrine of predestination], berate it as if it was the teaching of the stoics concerning fate […]. Although we do not usually debate over the usage of words, still we can not accept the term fate […]. Since, as opposed to the stoics we do not imagine any kind of necessity resulting from the invisible connection and concatenation of causes [*ex perpetuo causarum nexu et implicita quadam serie*], that might be contained *in nature*; but we make God [*constituimus*] the judge and governor [*arbitrum ac moderatorem*] of the

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In his *De Tribus Impostoribus Magnis*, he criticized him mainly for having completely outlawed possible truths: "He [víz. Herbert] stresses the old sayings of philosophers: any claim [*enunciatio*] is either true or false. What he is up to, is to oppose not only false [claims] but *probable* and *possible* ones [*verisimile ac possibile*] to truth as well. He also plays with the ambiguity of this word. He takes *truth* [*verum*] to be equal with *certain* [*certo*], and confuses *falsity* [*falsum*] with *impossibility*. No philosopher has ever taught a claim to be true or false the way he does. He said that <from our perspective [*respectu nostri*] a probable or possible thing can not be held to be simply true or false, since it induces an ambiguous sense>; but the difference between the two concepts is that the first refer to things past, while the second refer to things to come. In this new kind of wisdom, no sane thing can be found" (Christian Kortholt, *De Tribus Impostoribus Magnis* [The Three Great Impostors], Hamburg, 1701, pp. 6–7).

world, who has – according to his wisdom – ordained from eternity whatever is to be done [*quod facturus esset*]; and now, based on his power [*potentia*], he executes [*exequitur*] whatever he has *decided* [*decrevit*]. Whence we claim [*asserimus*], that his providence governs [*gubernari*] not only the heavens, the Earth and inanimate beings, but also the decisions and volitions [*consilia et voluntates*] of humans, in order that they should tend towards their destination [*destinatum scopum*] (Institutio, 1559, p. 64[9]).

The indictment above enumerates two major concerns regarding the stoic theory of fate. According to the first one, (1.) the stoics' position concerning physical necessitation did *not* include metaphysical necessity as well as physical (as a result of which mental events, for instance, could be regarded as contingent ones); but on the other hand (2.) they regarded this physical necessitation as independent from God.

Besides many other issues, Justus Lipsius intended to provide satisfactory responses to these claims as well. He first gave an overview on his theses concerning providence and free will in his best-selling work, *De Constantia* (1584)[10], but modified them later in his *Physiologia Stoicorum* (1604)[11] – albeit according to some views there is no substantial difference between the major theses included in these works (viz: Sellars 2014, pp. 653–674).[12]

In his earlier work, Lipsius provides one with a fourfold distinction between the types of fate (the third and fourth of which will be of major importance from our point of view). (F.1.) The first one is the *fatum mathematicum*, outlined by the Pythagoreans and Hermetic thinkers. According to this, heavenly bodies operate as such *physical causes*, which necessarily determinde all natural events. However, these heavenly bodies are not regarded as first movers either, since their operation is also determined by certain metaphysical causes: these metaphysical causes can be drawn up into three further groups: *providence* [*providentia*], *necessity* [*necessitas*], and *fate* [*fatum*]. These are regarded to constitute a hierarchical order in such a way that *necessity* and *fate* become subordinated to *providence* (which is considered as identical with the divine intellect): "Fate helps and serves providence

[9] Johannes Calvin, *Institutio Religionis Christianae libri quatuor* [The Institution of Christian Religion], Geneve, 1559, 64 (= *Institutio*).

[10] Justus Lipsius, *De Constantia libri duo* [On Constance] Antwerp, 1584 (= *De Constantia*).

[11] Justus Lipsius, *Physiologia Stoicorum libri tres* [Three Books concerning the Physiology of the Stoics], Antwerp, 1610 (= Physiologia).

[12] John Sellars, *Stoic Fate in Justus Lipsius's De Constantia and Physiologia Stoicorum*, "Journal of the History of Philosophy", 52, 2014, 653–674.

and necessity; and fate itself is served by heavenly bodies" (De Const., 1584, p. 56). Although Lipsius does not elaborate it in detail, supposedly the contingent relationship between the above mentioned metaphysical causes should have been secured by this hierarchy. Albeit this is very similar to the Lipsian solution to be provided in the *Physiologia*, the author here claims that this model would necessarily determine heavenly bodies.

> No-one can escape the power of fate, and also no-one can keep away himself from the strength and power of heavenly bodies. This is the weapon and arsenal of fate, by the decision [*arbitrio*] of which every effect comes into being and comes to pass for humans (De Const., 1584, p. 56).

Lipsius' rejection of the *fatum mathematicum* becomes even more surprising if one considers that such a necessary determination of worldly events presupposes here both physical and metaphysical causes as well, and hence, the theory becomes an early formulation of the Calvinist type of determination. (What Lipsius implicitly criticises here is consequently the Calvinist account of providence.[13])

It is worth noting that Lipsius never intends to reject the claim of physical determination, but is only interested in metaphysical causation. The case is similar regarding the second type of fate, called (F.2.) *fatum naturale* by Lipsius.

> I call *fatum naturale* that order of natural causes, which (when not impeded) certainly produces the same effect by its power and nature (De Const., 1584, p. 56).

Apart from the fact that one may discover here an early phrasing of the thesis of negative liberty (which is also a necessary condition of the causal process), the problem with *fatum naturale* is that it also renders a wide spectrum of contingent events possible within the borders of nature. Not surprisingly, many weird events could be regarded as contingent according to the defenders of this theory:

> From the thinking of those [viz. Aristotle's commentators] [it follows] that if humans give birth to humans, that is due to fate: in case that a man dies due to internal causes lacking any other kind of power, that is also due to fate.

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[13] Early in his life, Lipsius received Catholic education. When he later moved to Jena, he converted to Lutheranism, a faith that he also abandoned later. When writing the De Constantia in Calvinist Leiden, he was already a follower of Calvinism.

> But if humans give birth to snakes or monsters, that is beyond fate: the same way as if he gets killed by sword" (De Const., 1584, p. 56).

Similarly to the previous one, Lipsius does not provide his readers with a refutation of this account. His major problem might have been that having provided enough grounds for fortune and haphazard events, this theory left the question of providence (and its relationship to fate) unanswered.

This is strictly opposed to that type of fate, which was called (F.3) *fatum violentum* by the author (the one which became known as *stoic fate* during the 17th century). The name violent comes after its property by which it "refers to all things and actions, which is not broken by any kind of power" (De Const., 1584, p. 57). Although Lipsius explicitly sympathises with this account, even he emphasizes the hardships involved in it: according to him it is unacceptable that (O.1.) the stoics subordinated God to fate; (O.2.) that they claim the existence of an eternal chain of physical causes (*caussarum naturalium*)[14]; (O.3.) that they denied the possibility of any contingent (*possibile*) event to be carried out; (O.4.) and also denied the possibility of free will in humans. As we have seen, objections (1. and 4.) are identical with those of Calvin's as well.

All this made Lipsius move apart a bit from this, supposedly orthodox stoic account, and introduce the concept of (F.4.) *verum fatum* (which later became labelled as *Christian fate*). The foundation of all this is a distinction between providence (*providentia*) and decree (*decretum*[15]). As he says:

> If God exists, then so does providence: and if it does, then so does a decree [*decretum*] and order [*ordo*] of all things; and if the latter exists, then events occur according to strong and strict [*rata*] necessity. (De Const., 1584, p. 53)

To the first objection, Lipsius replies with a quotation from Seneca, according to which God obeys the law created by himself, because he has from eternity regarded them as right ones, and hence his will is directed at the best laws possible, which could not be otherwise at all. He later reinforces this in the *Physiologia*, saying that "it is a magnificent argument, that he, who has strong will, never modifies his decisions, although, he had the possibility to do that" (*Physiologia*, 1610, p. 31). Regarding the second objection, (2.) Lipsius introduces the concept of secondary

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[14] (O.2) should not be confused with Calvin's first objection, since the latter claimed that the stoics should have accepted the claim of metaphysical necessitation as well as that of the physical.

[15] Calvin also seems to make such a distinction between *providence* and *fate* (see above).

causes (*causae secundariae*). Although God can be regarded as the first cause of all things and events in the world, these secondary causes can produce effects beyond, or even against the laws of nature (*praeter et contra naturam*): "God has often acted in the case of his marvels [*prodigii*] and miracles independently [*citra*], or even against nature" (De Const., 1584, p. 65). Still, it is not exclusively God's privilege to act through secondary causes, but every creature, and hence first of all, humans are also endowed with it. The same is intended to respond to the third objection, (3.) according to which these secondary causes may in fact break the chain of eternally determined causes in case they are really capable of producing effects: "when secondary causes are such, we allow some events to be contingent and fortuitous" (De Const., 1584, p. 65). From the above mentioned arguments one may already suspect that (4.) the question of human free will has to be solved via secondary causes according to Lipsius. As he says:

> We do not intend [to claim] that [humans do not possess free will], since we simultaneously claim the existence of fate, and turn people back to divine grace with the help of free will (De Const., 1584, p. 65).

As it can be seen, three out of four objections (including Calvin's second one) were intended to be fended off by Lipsius with the help of secondary causes. Still, two objections may arise against the Lipsian account: (1.) if secondary causes serve as equally *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions of an effect (and hence operate the same was as primary ones), the theory will equally fall back on metaphysical determinism as if it had not been introduced at all[16]; (2.) but – as it later turns out from the *De Constantia* – secondary causes do not necessarily produce effects, since – according to the Lipsian theory – no mental causation exists at all:

> […] fate is like a master of ceremonies, which holds the strings during the dance in which the whole world takes part: but in a way, that our parts should be able to will and not will [certain things]. But we do not have more power [*vis efficiendi*] than this, since we were given only the opportunity, to be free to be reluctant and to struggle against God [*reluctari et obniti*]; but power [*vis*] *was not given by which we could do that* (De Const., 1584, p. 20).

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[16] Sellars' criticism is based on the fact that effects produced by secondary causes are still caused by something (and consequently cannot be contingent ones). In my view, however, his objection here is not satisfactory, since it is the quality of the causal relationship by which an effect will be produced either necessarily or contingently, not the mere fact that some kind of cause produced it.

According to this account, one has to regard a secondary cause as something that concurs with its effect only *by accident*. If all that is so, the Lipsian theory is seriously challenged, since the author's responses to objections (2–4) can not be regarded as satisfactory at all. John Sellars claims that Lipsius could not even take this theory of secondary causes seriously, and he introduced it only to (seemingly) distance himself from the orthodox stoic theory.[17]

As a conclusion, one must say that the only objection Lipsius could fend off was concerning God's alleged subordination to fate (which – according to Sellars' critique – did not even constitute a part of *fatum violentum* in fact, since Lipsius also claims the ancient stoics to have rejected it[18]). But the question of physical determination by metaphysical causes is not even challenged, while the possibility of contingent events remains unproved as well as the thesis that humans had free agency.

4. WAS HERBERT A LIPSIAN?

Having arrived at such an *aporia* regarding the Lipsian theory of fate can we now turn our attention to our actual question: was Herbert, in fact, a Lipsian? Based on what we have seen so far (namely that it is not at all obvious what Lipsius' position was regarding the nature of fate, since we cannot know whether he regarded *verum fatum* as a plausible theory or simply used it to avoid accusations), this dilemma can be answered in two different ways as well, both depending on how we define the concept of Lipsianism (still restricting ourselves to the question of metaphysics). Firstly, (1.) we may assume that a number of thinkers could accept the Lipsian distinction between *fatum violentum* and *verum fatum* without noticing or admitting to the hardships involved in it; but from another point of view, (2.) even those could be considered as Lipsians who, having seen the contradictions in his theory, rejected the concept of *verum fatum* and admitted to that of *fatum violentum* (one should not forget about the fact that – no matter how Lipsius tries to attribute the claims involved in the latter – it is still his invention[19]). And in the latter sense, thinkers like Thomas Hobbes can also be regarded as Lipsians!

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[17] Sellars' interpretation is weakened by the fact that Lipsius preserves the role of secondary causes in his later work, *Physiologia Stoicorum* as well.

[18] John Sellars, *Stoic Fate in Justus Lipsius's De Constantia and Physiologia Stoicorum*, "Journal of the History of Philosophy", 52, 2014, 653–674.

[19] See: John Sellars, *Stoic Fate in Justus Lipsius's De Constantia and Physiologia Stoicorum*, "Journal of the History of Philosophy", 52, 2014, 653–674.

The difference will hence be one between *intellectualism* and *voluntarism*: according to the definition of *verum fatum*, fate is regarded as the product of God's will (which is itself subordinated to his intellect); *fatum violentum*, in turn, subordinates God's intellect to his will.

As we have previously seen, what Herbert demands is the claim that providence (of any kind) exists. Such a claim – says he – is satisfactory if one does not want to fall back on necessitation by stoic fate. In order to meet this demand, one has to regard only the distinction between providence and decree (or fate) as valid. Herbert, hence, can be said to belong to the first group of Lipsians, and what he refers to as stoic fate can be regarded as identical with *fatum violentum*.

5. THE ROLE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN HERBERT'S DE VERITATE

Still, one might wonder why the author intended to avoid *stoic fate* (or *fatum violentum*) by all means, since Herbert, the deist, should not have been concerned too much about this question. It must have been rather Herbert, the intellectualist, who saw the rational order of the world at risk by the supposition of a voluntaristic divine power (Grzeliński, 2016, p. 199)[20].

According to one of Herbert's famous claims, if common notions are arranged into systematic order in the human mind, they might mirror the composition of divine wisdom:

> We have called attention to that many times, if these [common notions] are freed from the contaminated connection [they currently take part in], and are rearranged methodically into order, then some kind of specimen of the divine [*specimen sapientiae divinae*] wisdom shows up in them (De Verit., 1966, p. 43; On Truth, 1937, p. 121).

Even more interestingly, these common notions, the proper connection of which might mirror the divine intellect, are defined by Herbert as the *mediators of divine providence* (*media providentiae*). Even this definition reveals how tightly the most crucial point of Herbert's epistemology is linked together with the question of

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[20] Descartes obviously refers to the same quotation from Seneca, but arrives at a voluntaristic conclusion in his replies to the fifth series of objections: "I do not think that the essences of things, or mathematical truths, are independent of God: but that they are immutable and eternal because God so wished them to be". René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans: Michael Moriarty, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008.

providence! The only problem is that the author does not clarify what he exactly means by the word mediator.

> We cheerfully receive this providence in order to defend the cause [*causam agamus*] of the best and greatest God, who has always, in *every century* given his common notions to the people as mediators [*tanquam media*] of his universal Divine providence (De Verit., 1966, p. 40; On Truth, 1937, p. 118).

All this might suggest that humans possessing common notions have direct access to the contents of the divine mind[21]. But, oddly enough, this interpretation can be challenged by Herbert's own phrasing, since according to – a somewhat obscure – claim common notions are *in the things themselves*:

> It can be seen, that only common notions [*media*[22]] can be found connected to the things themselves [*in rebus adsunt*], and grace [*gratia*] achieves that they can be enjoyed by us [*fruimus*] (De Verit., 1966, p. 42; On Truth, 1937, p. 119).

This claim is contradictory to some other ones, according to which common notions are not in the things themselves, but only excited by these things: this way, things constitute a necessary condition for intellectual cognition, since common notions would "stay silent" if no object excited them (De Verit., 1966, p. 42; On Truth, 1939, pp. 119–120). Still, employing the charity principle, one could easily interpret this claim as one not implying an inherent inclusion of common notions to the things, but only a tight connection to them (the usage of the term *adesse* instead of *inesse* might support such an interpretation). As it is manifest, Herbert also comes up with divine grace as a necessary condition for grasping

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[21]   Natural instinct, the faculty responsible for obtaining common notions, is defined as the most approximate or nearest instrument (*proximum instrumentum*) of providence. Both Mersenne and Carré (supposedly not independently from each other) translate this as "instrument immediat" (see: Mersenne, 1639, p. 81) or "immediate instrument" of providence (suggesting, hence, a stronger connection of our common notions with those of the divine intellect).

[22]   Mersenne and Carré both translate the word medium as "moyens" or "means". Although it is not at all obvious what Herbert meant by the term, this interpretation seems to be highly problematic. This is highlighted by the example of God, being defined as a medium once by Herbert: [God] is regarded as the cause, the *medium* and the purpose of everything)". (De Verit., 1966, p. 41; On Truth, 1937, p. 118). Translating medium as "moyens" or "means" would here suggest an instrumentalisation of God (who would have to be desired not for his own sake, but for that of something else). For this reason I am advocating an alternative solution, namely, that the word medium should be taken as common notion (after its definition as *medium providentiae*).

common notions, but – as we have already seen it – grace, defined as *providentia particularis*, is the *differentia specifica* of mankind, and, hence, has nothing to do with particular divine interaction into worldly affairs. Every human being is – by definition – endowed with grace, and, hence, capable of possessing common notions.

We might, hence, conclude that common notions are not properties of things, but they are derived from the intellect (the latter being connected to divine providence in some manner). There is, hence, some kind of relationship between the contents of the human intellect, and the divine one, but still, their exact relationship has to be clarified.

Herbert provides us with the clearest definition of *medium* while elaborating on the conditions of the truth of appearance. "The second condition of the truth of appearance is that [the perceptible thing] should have its necessary *medium* for transition" (De Verit., 1966, p. 17; On Truth, 1937, p. 93). Here, he says, anything can be a mediator from the perspective of something else.

> Not only the faculty of seeing […] is a medium from the perspective [*respectu*] of the intellect, but common notions [are media] as well, which have to be regarded as the supreme media of demonstrations. (De Verit., 1966, p. 17; On Truth, 1937, p. 93).

Common notions are, hence, related to demonstrations the same way as air is related to the faculty of seeing: in case seeing is not hindered by the medium, it will take place; we could, hence, formulate the latent Herbertian claim as such: "if a demonstration is not hindered by false premises, it will be valid". Although Herbert only speaks of common notions as "*media demonstrationis*[23]" and does not mention the case of providence in this chapter, one can easily discover an analogy between this and his definition of common notions as "*media providentiae*". The Herbertian claim could be reconstructed as follows: "if human knowledge concerning divine providence is not hindered by false premises, this knowledge will be valid".

We are, hence, arriving at the question, whether Herbert properly defined the conditions of truth, which would make it possible for humans to have access to the mysteries of divine providence. But this is not the question we were intended to answer here. The aim of our investigation was restricted to whether the divine mind is concerned at all when intellectual cognition does take place.

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[23] The phrasing is my invention, it never occurs in the text.

6. PIERRE GASSENDI'S CRITICISM OF HERBERT BEING A "STOIC"

The question surrounding Herbert's views on the relationship of the human intellect with divine providence fascinated many of his contemporaries. Among them, there was the Epicurean thinker, Pierre Gassendi as well, who – in a letter never to be sent – based his criticism on Herbert's quasi-stoical views regarding the nature of the discarnated soul.

In Herbertian terms, this discarnated soul must be identical with *natural instinct*, which (understood as an emanation of the mind) is the only immortal part of human beings according to the author (De Verit., 1966, p. 45; On Truth, 1937, p. 123). But the question regarding the capacity of natural instinct is a difficult one. As it is well-known, Herbert claimed humans to "possess as many faculties as many differences things have". Since, according to him, some kind of antecedent empirical experience is a necessary condition of the cognition of anything, only such things can be regarded as things in the strict sense, which are perceptible at a macro level. This would, hence, mean that an infinite (or at least indefinite) number of faculties should men be endowed with in order to have knowledge of the heterogeneous differences of things. Jerome Schneewind (who also seems to interpret Herbert within a stoical framework, since he examines his views in a common chapter with Lipsius and Guillaume du Vair[24]) suggests that the Herbertian claim concerning the equity of faculties and differences should not be taken literally, since it would require the presupposition of a quasi-infinite number of faculties, and consequently a quasi-infinite mind and body. According to his interpretation, what Herbert means, is simply "that there is no limit to the extent to which we can conceptualize differences among our sensory and internal experiences, and among our concepts" (Schneewind, 1998, p. 177). This suggestion of Schneewind's seems even more plausible, if one recalls Herbert's claim, according to which many words are used by him in a double sense: by the term, *natural instinct*, for instance, he claims to mean sometimes a faculty (or a disposition), while other times and activity carried out by this faculty. The claim, according to which we "possess as many faculties as many differences things have", should be hence taken as "our mind and body can possess as many dispositions as many differences things have". Even if this version of the definition sounds much more plausible than in its original form, still another problem may rise from it: the phrasing "can possess" intimates some kind of weak dispositionalism, which does not seem satisfactory at this point, since

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[24] Jerome Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, Cambride University Press, Cambridge, 1998, 176–184 (= Scheewind).

Herbert seems to regard the actuation of our faculties as events of necessity: and if one does not regard faculties as dispositions, but as actuations, then the definition will looks as follows: one "possesses as many actuated dispositions as many differences things have". Following Schneewind's interpretation, we must conclude that Herbert's phrasing suggests a strong dispositionalism, according to which "our mind and body" not only can but also will "possess" these dispositions in question. And this – at least at first sight – seems to be a highly problematic claim.[25]

However, Gassendi seems to focus on the same hardship when he quotes Herbert's claim that the human soul, deprived of its bodily nature, will become capable of much more, than in its present worldly state. But this should not be taken as a qualitative improvement regarding our cognitive capacities, but only a quantitative one. Speaking about the latent faculties of the soul – which are inactive due to the body's material dispositions – Gassendi accused Herbert of advocating such an idea that the discarnated soul would be so similar to God regarding its cognitive capacity that the two could not even be distinguished from each other:

> You imagine [*recurris*] a "state, when the soul is divorced from the body, [and] those faculties become explicated, which have been silent so far regarding unknown things". But, even if I concede that [the existence] of such a state can be demonstrated at the light of nature, still, could it be possibly demonstrated, that the soul would be able to know everything, so much, that nothing could hide away from it? And what kind of difference would there be – if that were the case – between God and the soul, if there was nothing that God could know and the soul could not? Would not that power of cognition [*vis cognoscendi*] be infinite? What about those [things] which hide from our faculties, since the faculties of animals are specialized in distinguishing between a lot of things. Whether the soul – that has been divorced from the body – would be able to evoke some faculties by which it would operate its cognition from then on?[26]

Unfortunately we do not know what Herbert's reply was or would have been to these remarks, but if Gassendi was right to say that Herbert's theory drew close to the claim that humans can become divine beings in their discarnated state, then this interpretation can answer the question how the strong dispositionalism of human

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[25] See: Jon Miller, *Innate Ideas in Stoicism and Grotius*, "Grotiana" 22, 2001, 157–175.

[26] Pierre Gassendi, *Ad Librum D. Edoardi Herberti Angli De Veritate Epistola* [Letter To the Englishman's, Edward Herbert's Book on Truth], in: Petri Gassendi Opuscula Philosophica Tomus Tertius, Florence, 377–384.

faculties has to be taken (viz. our dispositions will of necessity be actuated in the discarnated state of the human soul), and also lines Herbert up among Lipsians[27].

This interpretation will seem plausible also if we regard Herbert's concerns with the conditions of truth: since the validity of an intellectual truth necessarily depend on that of the *veritas apparentiae* and *veritas conceptus* (both being products of the external and internal sense and hence belonging to the material part of human beings), "imagining a state", where humans can be identified with their immaterial part, will render *veritas intellectus* unconditional.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper was to contextualize Herbert in a neo-stoic, or – more precisely – in a Lipsian framework. According to my claim such a contextualization can be a useful tool in understanding many vague aspects of Herbert's philosophy. What I intended to show was that Herbert can be regarded as Lipsius' follower regarding the latter's theory concerning *verum fatum* (which is a rather neglected but crucial point of his philosophy), and also the relationship between common notions and the divine mind can be uncovered in such a framework.

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[27] In the *Physiologia* Lipsius claimed the human soul to be an emanation of God (Physiologia, 1610, pp. 67–80), hence, deprived from its bodily nature, it will become identical with the latter. In a – rather weird letter – written to Hyeronimus Berchemius he summarizes it so: "Why are you asking me, dear Berchemius, to claim and prove you the existence of God? Are you sane [*sanus es*]?" But later Lipsius turns to the description of human qualities: "Obviously, only one being is endowed with such beauty, dignity, power and virility [*víz. man*], that if God does not exist [*Deus non est*], then he should be God". Justus Lipsius, *Iusti Lipsi Epistolarum selectarum chilias* [A selection of Justus Lipsius's letters], Lyon, 1616, 589–90.

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