

NEOSTOIC PYROTECHNICS IN FRANCISO DE ALDANA AND SAN JUAN DE LA CRUZ

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The early Stoic Cleanthes says in a hymn to Zeus: "All mortals should salute you, for we are of your lineage, and similar to you in having reason and speech" (Barth 84).¹ These two shared characteristics are also the basis of creative activity for both the human being and the divinity. According to the Stoics, the creator of the cosmos is the *pyr technikón*, from whence today's 'pyrotechnics'. This *pyr technikón* is a divine and artistic fire, sometimes called *lógos*, or word, that issues from *nous* or *mens*, that is, from reason or divine thought (Ortiz García 25).² The founder of Renaissance Neostoicism, Justus Lipsius, describes the artistic nature of this creative fire and calls it the teacher of all other arts: "*Natura, magistra artium reliquarum.*"³ Lipsius cites to a number of authorities in support of his argument, including Hermes Trismegistus, who describes the moment of his own intimate union with Poimandres or Mens, that is, divine Thought, when he witnessed the activities of this creative fire, which he glosses as sacred 'reason' or 'word'.⁴

Hermes Trismegistus is the author of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a collection of tractates dating to the first centuries of the Common Era, and printed in 1471 in Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation. The texts incorporate the teachings of a number of cultures and philosophies, including a healthy dosis of Stoic thought, and they became what in today's terms would be called a runaway best-seller throughout Europe; by the end of the sixteenth century, there were two dozen editions of the work. Its author, Hermes, is one of Lipsius's favorite authorities in his *Physiologia stoicorum*.⁵ That he should be so is not surprising, and not only for Hermes' importance to the Neoplatonists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; the importance of 'will' or 'volition' to the Stoa is well known, and Hermes is named the *king* of volition in the works of another favorite authority of Lipsius, the fifth and sixth century Byzantine, Stobaeus.⁶

The Stoics teach that one should study nature so as to understand divine creation,⁷ and then make correct use of one's volition in order to filter the 'representations' received from the outside world without

allowing oneself to be deceived by them. Karl Alfred Blüher observes that this “combat” of reason confronted with exterior impressions or, as he calls them, “deceitful opinions,” is a constant theme in Neostoic writings.⁸ The goal of rational processing of representations is wisdom, that is, the process of thought that is, in turn and most fundamentally, a process of creation. According to Epictetus, the human being is able to create itself just as the universal, divine principle creates all within the cosmos.⁹ Justus Lipsius details the acts of the creative fire, whose name he glosses with ‘God’ or ‘Reason’ with a capital letter, but he points out that, even with its gift of a small portion of reason, man is not capable of creating divine or celestial things.¹⁰ Hermes Trismegistus explains the fundamental difference between the two creations:

So it is that thought has, as its body, the most ardent of the elements, fire, precisely because it is the most ardent of the divine concepts; and thought makes use of fire as the instrument of its creative activity of all things; creation of all in the case of the universal Thought and only of the terrestrial in the case of human thought. Because the thought that lives in man, having the human body as its home, is dispossessed of fire, and that makes it incapable of creating divine things. (*Corpus Hermeticum* X.18)¹¹

The effects of both the representations that give rise to creativity when properly filtered by the will, and others, so pure and direct that their power incapacitates the human being’s creative intent, are exemplified in certain lexical and semantic uses shared by Hermes Trismegistus and two sixteenth century Spanish poets, Francisco de Aldana and San Juan de la Cruz. Where the seventeenth century Neostoics, fearful of the effects of the ‘deceitful opinions’ of sensory perception, engaged them in ‘combat’, these sixteenth-century poets appropriated the representations, using them to create in imitation of the divinity, and recognizing the limits of their own reason and words only when confronted with the absolute creator, that is, divine Reason and its word of fire, the *pyr technikón*.

Faced with a representation, Epictetus counsels: “The first thing, don’t let yourself be shaken by its intensity but, rather, say to it: ‘Give me a minute, representation; let me see who you are and what you’re about, let me put you to a test’” (*Disertaciones* II.18.24). Justus Lipsius details the steps of this testing: one receives the representation or *phantasia*¹² and feels its impact; if sufficiently vivid, that perceived is remembered; from the memory one derives conceptions; these thoughts, rationalized, lead to knowledge and wisdom.¹³ Lipsius also quotes Cicero, who observes that wisdom is the knowledge and the science of all things, human and divine, and of the causes by which

they are controlled.¹⁴ Hermes distinguishes between the body's "sensory breath of air" that "has the capacity to receive all things," and reason, "characteristic of essence," which "brings with it the knowledge of worthy things,"¹⁵ and says that wisdom comes with the entry of divine thought into a pure soul,¹⁶ and that "it is necessary to plead with God that we be partners in excellent Thought, because it is thus that the soul is bettered" (*CH X.62*).¹⁷

This betterment of the soul through partnering in divine Thought allows the human being to imitate the divinity in accordance with its most fundamental activity: creation. The greatest creations of the corporeal being are the arts and sciences that are analogous, in the scale of creations, to the divine rays, and from these descend to man. Justus Lipsius describes the arts and sciences as the daughters of the ideas that proceed from the study of nature.¹⁸ Hermes is a bit more literal: "The rays of God are his visible acts. The rays of the world are the elements of nature: and surely, the rays of man are the arts and sciences" (*CH X.63*).¹⁹

Francisco de Aldana, the "divine captain" and poet very much admired by his contemporaries of the sixteenth century and by the Neostoic writers of the seventeenth,²⁰ offers an intimate look at a moment when the inspirational rays overcome him; he is speaking with friends:

cuando, sin advertir, hete en el alma
 un trueno disparar, hete que veo
 un relámpago dar con presta vuelta
 inusitado asalto a la memoria.
 El sentido exterior quedó turbado
 luego el común revuelve las especies
 y a la imaginación las da y entrega,
 la cual, después, con más delgado examen,
 hace a la fantasía presente, y luego
 de allí van a parar dentro al tesoro
 de todo semejanza inteligible;
 en esto el puro sale entendimiento,
 casi vestido sol de rayos de oro,
 y en torno ve bullir, gritando: «¡arma, arma!»,
 ídolos, simulacros y fantasmas;
 irradia y resplandece con su llama
 clara y espiritual sobre ellas todas,
 y en breve recogió de todas ellas
 la información que dio sosiego al alma. (XXXV,5-23)²¹

With a lexicon appropriate to nature's elements, Aldana relates how the thunder explodes in his soul and the lightning bolt assaults

his memory;²² the stimulation leaves obvious results in the body, “the exterior senses are troubled”; the species, or ideas,²³ once activated, are mulled over first by “common sense” which proceeds to “give them over to the imagination”; this latter examines them more carefully before presenting them to “fantasy.” Finally appears “the treasure / of all understandable similarities” dressed as a golden-rayed sun that is pure “knowledge,” capable of seeing the forms and images, “idols, simulachra and phantasms,” about which it “shines and shimmers” with “its clear and spiritual flame,” thereby calming the soul so as to allow it to create and, thus, comply with its most exalted function.

The description of the moment of poetic necessity is tremendously detailed; in its interweaving of inspiration and intellect, Aldana presents the apogee of human experience. The poet’s “treasure of all understandable similarities” is human thought, the reflection of divine Thought.²⁴ Once activated, it enables the workings of understanding and, so, poetic creation. This creation is the most exalted act of the mind and it only takes place once the ideas have penetrated far enough within to touch on the deepest part of oneself: the rays have to pass through common sense, through imagination and through fantasy before arriving at that culminating point, understanding, the “pure knowledge” capable of participating with phantasms and lights because it, too, can dress itself with the creative fire, for the poet “the clear and spiritual [that is non-corporeal] flame.”

Hermes Trismegistus offers a literal version of the process’ steps: “In the world the [divine] acts are carried out and, so, nature’s rays descend to man in the world. In nature, through the elements and, in man, through the arts and sciences” (*CH X.63*)²⁵ but Aldana offers his own reaction after the arrival of the divine rays, those acts that descend and reverberate in the poet, thereby inspiring and making possible his creation. He begins with their arrival “when, without warning, is felt in my soul,” and proceeds to describe the next steps with a lexicon analagous to that of the Hermetic: the thunder and lightening of the poet are the *radios naturales* of the Hermetic, the species or ideas reach the imagination, and then the result, literal for Hermes, “*hominis, per artes atque scientiae*,” but with vivid poetic expression for Aldana: fantasy with idols, simulachra and phantasms that infuse his understanding in order that it might shine and shimmer with his inspired soul.

For Lipsius and the Neostoics, *phantasia* is the word used to describe the first, immediate representation perceived by the senses.²⁶ In his more Aristotelian use of *fantasy*,²⁷ Aldana allows that it becomes activated only after the representation passes through various previous tests: of the exterior senses, of common sense, and of the imagination.

Blüher tells us that the Neostoics 'combat' the *phantasia*; Aldana puts it in charge.

I referred earlier to a tractate of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in which Hermes, like Aldana in the verses quoted, describes in intimate terms his reaction to the first sighting of divine Thought, named Poimandres,²⁸ followed by Poimandres's explanation of what he had just witnessed: "And so, I took in and understood Poimandres's word, and the discourse was such that it left me dumfounded. Did you see in your mind the first, most potent species of the infinite empire? Such am I, Poimandres" (*CH* I.3).²⁹ Through its contact with the capital letter, divine Thought, the small letter, human thought senses and grasps the primordial species, or ideas. The impact of these strongest, infinite ideas is such that it leaves the corporeal being dumfounded. He was, however, capable of the act because, as Epictetus teaches, ". . . [you are] primordial, you are a divine spark; you have within you a part of it [the divinity]" (*Disertaciones* II.8.11).³⁰

Aldana made use of the species' impact to create, but Hermes' description of his sighting of the "first, most potent species" is of a different, mystical-transcendent, inspirational sort, as is the following of San Juan de la Cruz, who remembers his own union with the divinity and describes an identical result, that of finding himself left dumfounded by the experience. San Juan begins with a verse that echoes Aldana's first verse "when, without warning, is felt in my soul" as to the element of surprise:

Entréme donde no supe
y quedéme no sabiendo
toda ciencia trascendiendo.

Yo no supe dónde entraba
pero cuando allí me vi
sin saver dónde me estaba
grandes cosas entendí
no diré lo que sentí
que me quedé no sabiendo
toda ciencia trascendiendo.

De paz y de piedad
era la ciencia perfecta,
en profunda soledad
entendida vía recta
era cosa tan secreta
que me quedé balbuciendo
toda ciencia trascendiendo. (1-17)³¹

San Juan suffers the same reaction as Hermes when faced with the perfect science: “me quedé balbuciendo” he says, “I was left stammering”; “*me stupore attonitum*” was Ficino’s translation of Hermes’ phrase. In another poem, Aldana also warns that for the divine trance there are no adequate words:

Torno a decir que el pecho enamorado
la celestial, de allá, rica influencia
espere humilde, atento y reposado,
sin dar ni recibir propia sentencia,
que en tal lugar la lengua más despierta
es de natura error y balbucencia. (LXV.181-86)

The only adequate word for both poets is *balbucir*, ‘to stammer’, a Latinism first documented in San Juan,³² and used a bit earlier in Aldana, apparently without subsequent use. It is noteworthy that Seneca also described one who sees the divinity as *obstupefactus*.³³

The knowledge that is without knowing, the science that transcends all science; on understanding it, one also transcends the limits assigned to the reach of humanity’s creative powers, the arts and sciences, for it is an understanding that human speech will not allow one to explain. Just like San Juan, Marsilio Ficino, the *Corpus Hermeticum*’s translator and commentator, describes this science in his gloss of tractate XI of the work:

Look, the truth is it maintains within itself the proportion that escapes all proportion, it waits comprehending the incomprehensible and of the all, of all things which might not be knowable, it shows itself knowledgeable. You, then, be pious in all things up to this point, and then incline your minds to the thought of the mind, and together you will come to know what is the principal cause of all things, and to understand it as one. (*CH XI.77, commentaria*)³⁴

In other verses of the same poem of San Juan quoted from above, we find more parallelistic echoes:

Este saber no sabiendo
es de tan alto poder
que los sabios arguyendo
jamás le pueden vencer
que no llega su saber
a no entender entendiendo
toda ciencia trascendiendo. (39-45)

The unknowing knowledge, *comprehensus incomprehensibilis* for the commentator Ficino, transcends worldly science and takes one to where “*omnibus incognitus, omnibus in rebus se praestat cognoscibilem*” (CH XI.77, *commentaria*). It is a “perfect science” found within oneself, and only by awaiting its arrival, for there is no means by which to find it: “It entered I know not where” says San Juan; Aldana observes that one must “wait humbly, attentive and poised”; and Ficino points out the need to “wait comprehending the incomprehensible.” As the Stoics say, “wisdom is the practice of being wise” (García Rúa 112).³⁵ The goal is the process and so, in the words of San Juan, “wise men arguing / can never conquer it.”

The Hermetic and the Neostoic Lipsius agree that, for his love of science, man is capable of penetrating the heavens and grasping the divine mind.³⁶ However, where Lipsius explains the Stoic debates about the soul’s immortality without declaring himself precisely to one train of thought or the other,³⁷ Hermes observes that there is *one* step prior to knowledge of the arts and sciences, notably that of recognizing that nothing is impossible and that one is immortal: “accept that nothing is impossible for you, understand that you are immortal, in order to understand all capacities and all sciences and, in like manner, all arts” (CH XI.75).³⁸ Aldana sings the praises of “that great world / so hidden to the view of this mundane one” (LXV.vv.275-76), where are to be found the true fruits of immortality: “Aquellos nutrimentos divinales, / de la inmortalidad fomentadores, / que exceden los posibles naturales” (LXV.vv. 268-70), and San Juan explains that, in order to understand the perfect science, one must vanquish only oneself:

Y es de tan alta excelencia
aqueste summo saber
que no ay facultad ni sciencia
que le puedan emprender
quien se supiere vencer
con un no saber sabiendo,
yrá siempre tracendiendo. (vv.46-52)

The science of all is preceded by the lesson that nothing is impossible and, once the perfect science is perceived, one “will forever be transcending” with its “unknowing knowledge.” Another sixteenth century Spanish poet, fray Luis de León, also praises the exalted state of being and hopes for it to last:

¡Oh desmayo dichoso!
 ¡oh muerte que das vida! ¡oh dulce olvido!
 ¡durase en tu reposo
 sin ser restituído
 jamás aqueste bajo y vil sentido! (III.36-40)

Not death, as man understands death to be but, rather, the transformation of the human being who, on sensing the “dulce olvido” or “sweet forgetfulness,” recovers in due measure his primordial, divine spark, thereby putting himself in touch with his own divinity and, so, with the divine centre:

And so, there is nothing that exists that might rot or perish, and that which confounds men is nothing more than a question of semantics: life is not birth but, rather, consciousness and the change is not death, but forgetfulness. This being so, all of which the live being is composed: matter, life, vital breath, soul and thought, is immortal. For this same reason, all live beings are immortal, and man even more than the rest, since he is capable of harboring God and of having an intimate relationship with Him. (TH XII.18)³⁹

The arts and sciences are the fruits of that relationship with the divinity, and they are activated when man recognizes himself capable, “*qui deum capit, qui diuinae conformatur essentiae,*” and immortal, “*maxime vero omnium immortalis est homo.*” Science is a gift from God and one must await the stimulus, for Aldana the divine rays and, for San Juan, “such a secret thing” that it cannot be explained but that does, as the saint makes clear in another work, “on killing death, transform it into life” (*Llama*, 12).

In another tractate of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, we read again of the science that inhabits the body, of necessity a contradictory and antithetical science. It bears a noteworthy resemblance to Stoic teachings on the relationship between knowledge and knowing, here with the lexicon of science and cognition (*scientia-cognitio*) that brings to mind the Ciceronian formula quoted earlier, “wisdom is the science of all things human and divine”:

Sensation as such is the product of that which stimulates it, while knowledge is the aim of science, and science is a gift from God. All science is, thus, incorporeal and its instrument is thought which, in turn, serves itself of the body in which both are housed along with matter; it is clear that everything is constituted on the basis of antithesis and contradiction. It cannot be otherwise. (TH X.9)⁴⁰

The arts and sciences, gifts⁴¹ from God that come to the human being through the divine rays, animators of the body, have knowledge as their ideal aim. They lead to the creative acts of the human being, expressing himself with words proceeding from the body's matter, *ergo* corporeal. Far from feeling himself in danger of being 'engañado' or 'deceived' by the representations, as will warn the seventeenth century's Neostoics, Aldana conducts them as would an orchestra's maestro. However he, Hermes and San Juan, although confident of their ability to escape the body's confines to unite with divine Thought, when faced with that perfect science of the incorporeal being, are left as Seneca says they would be, *obstupefactus*: "me quedé balbuciendo"; "*me stupore attonitum*." In that moment of cosmic union with the ineffable *pyr technikón*, the primordial, creative fire that also bears a strong resemblance to San Juan's "flame that consumes yet gives no pain" (*Cántico* 39),⁴² and that Hermes tells us human thought will redress itself with as soon as it is freed itself from the terrestrial body,⁴³ the "cleverest tongue," as Aldana warns us, "is, by its own nature, mistaken and stammering."

The Neostoics of the seventeenth century will do what their favorite Stoic authors Seneca and Epictetus did, that is, highlight Stoic ethics while downplaying Stoic physics, and they will do it right after Justus Lipsius took the trouble to put the physics back into the texts on Stoic philosophy,⁴⁴ using a Hermetic text written by the king of the volition as part of his guide to understanding that physics. In Quevedo's *Stoic Doctrine*, we read of the ideal Stoic sage tortured by flames: "When set ablaze, he does not burn. The sage in flames does not burn; what does burn is the clothing of his life in his body, which, as no one will deny, is part of the man . . . The sage is not overtaken by the flames, for he is far away from the furies of mankind" (218).⁴⁵ Quevedo's fire is not the *pyr technikón*, those creative and divine flames of the sixteenth century poets, nor that described by Lipsius in his *Physiologia stoicorum*, but just the wordly kind, that leaves only ashes.⁴⁶

Notes

¹As quoted in Paul Barth, *Los estoicos*. The translation is mine, from the Spanish citation in Barth. Barth says the hymn is found in the works of Stobaeus, and refers the reader to A. C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Zeno and Kleanthes* 274.

²"Ese principio primero que es el *pyr technikón*, ordenador, generador, dotado de movimiento, sirve de vehículo y símbolo al *lógos* y por sus características se aproxima mucho a la divinidad, de modo que con frecuencia son mencionados como idénticos" (Ortiz García 25). See Paloma Ortiz García, *Epicteto*. Henceforth, Ortiz García for the editor's introduction and notes, and *Disertaciones* for the philosopher's text. Any translations are my own.

³Lipsius quotes Cicero to support his reasoning: "*Artis enim maxime proprium esse creare et gignere: quodque in operibus nostrarum artium manus, efficiant, id multo artificiosius Naturam*. Itaque dicitur ab iisdem *Natura, magistra artium reliquarum*" (*Physiologia stoicorum* i.6) (IV.540). I quote here from the following edition: Justus Lipsius, *Iusti Lipsi. V.C. Opera omnia*. In subsequent citations, *Lipsius*, followed by title and dissertation number of Lipsius's work, then tome and page of the collection *Opera omnia*. Saunders points out that the idea of nature as "teacher of all other arts" is also found in the *Physica* (ii.2.194a) of Aristotle (Saunders 126). See Jason Lewis Saunders, *Justus Lipsius*.

⁴"Haec igitur in brevi Stoicorum sententia, super rerum conditu: cum quam valde Trismegistus ille consentit: . . . *Ratio sancta* (sive Verbum) *Naturae supervenit, et Ignis purus exsiluit ex Humidam naturam in altum...* Movebantur autem, a *Rationi spiritali, quae super eam ferebatur, ad auditum*. Est sane nostra hic *Ratio, est Ignis*" (*Lipsius, Phys.* ii.8) in *Opera* IV.578.

⁵Saunders takes note of the importance of Hermetic and Gnostic thought in Lipsius's Neostoicism (xvi).

⁶*Extractos de Estobeo* (XXVI.9) in *Textos herméticos*, ed. and trans. Xavier Renau Nebot 406. Henceforth, Renau Nebot for introduction and notes, *Estobeo* for the text. Additionally, in the margins of Lipsius's *Politica*, alongside the references to texts he cites, and next to a quote from the *Corpus Hermeticum* is found the indication: "*voluntas enim eximia*." See Justus Lipsius, *Iusti Lipsi. Politicorum*.

⁷"Physical nature, not a sacred text or revelation or inspired prophecy, is the Stoic's guide to the divine" (Long 146). Long observes that Seneca also counsels one to study nature, for "thereby the mind gains a cosmic perspective on the pettiness of a purely earth-centered view of life" (177) and points out that, for Epictetus, "lifeless images of God are pointless when God's living works are available for contemplation" (179). See A. A. Long, *Epictetus*. This last also brings to mind the Spanish *alumbrados* of the early part of the sixteenth century, and their rejection of all icons and exterior manifestations of faith.

⁸See Karl Alfred Blüher, *Gracián y el neoestoicismo*. Blüher describes the interior freedom, or the *eudamónia* of the Stoic sage: "*una autarquía espiritual que aplica un desengaño constante a las 'cosas exteriores' y permite una devaluación radical del mundo exterior*" (19).

⁹Long quotes from the *Disertaciones* (1.6.37): “Study the capacities you have, and after studying them say: ‘Zeus, bring whatever circumstance you like; for I have the equipment and resources, given to me by you, to make a cosmos of myself [*kosmêsai*] by means of everything that happens’” (Long 172). Barth offers further examples, in the writings of Marcus Aurelius, Cicero and Chrysippus, of this belief that “todo hombre debe formarse un pequeño cosmos” (Barth 91 and n. 277). For a complete treatment of man’s *microcosmos* and its relation to the surrounding *macrocosmos* in Spanish literature, see Francisco Rico, *El pequeño mundo del hombre*.

¹⁰“Siquid est, inquit Chrysippus, quod efficiat ea, quae homo, licet ratione praeditus, efficere non possit; id profecto est maius, et fortius, et sapientius homine. Homo autem non potest facere caelestia: ergo illud, quod haec effecerit, superat hominem arte, consilio, prudentia, potestate. Quid igitur potest esse, nisi Deus?” (*Lipsius, Phys.* ii.8) in *Opera* IV.576.

¹¹*Corpus Hermeticum* in *Textos herméticos*. Henceforth, *TH* where my translation of the Hermetic text is a translation from the Spanish of Renau Nebot. The selection in Latin reads: “qui cum acutissimus ac velocissimus sit omnium divinarum conceptuum, singulorum comprehendit elementorum corpora: etenim ipse coelorum artifex, igne potissimum ad suam fabricam utitur. Opifex quidem totius utitur omnibus: omnis autem faber iis quae sunt circa terram: orba nanque igne mens hominis, ad humanamque dispositionem duntaxat idonea, divina construere nequit” (*CH* X.60). Henceforth, for the quotes in Latin and for my own translations of the same source, *CH*, for Adrien Turnèbe’s 1554 edition, *Mercurii Trismegisti Poemander*.

¹²Long defines the *phantasia* of Epictetus: “anything at all that ‘appears’ to us—any thought or object of awareness” and explains that for the Stoic, “human beings are naturally inclined to accept all impressions that appear true. Yet, because apparent truth is far from equivalent to actual truth, he [Epictetus] takes the task of judging and interpreting impressions to be the critical test of human rationality, consistency, and moral character” (214).

¹³See Saunders, who refers to Lipsius’s *Manuductio*, and its “brief, and in some ways incomplete, analysis of the Stoic theory of knowledge” (69).

¹⁴Lipsius quotes Cicero (*De off.* II): “Sapientia autem, cognitio et scientia rerum divinarum et humanarum, caussarumque quibus haeres continentur”; Seneca (*Ep.* 89): “Sapientia, perfectum bonum est mentis humanae: Philosophia, Sapientiae amor et affectatio”; and Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* I): Est enim Philosophia, studium et meditatio; Sapientia autem, scientia divinarum humanarumque rerum, et quae earum sunt caussae” (*Lipsius, Manuductio* ii.7) in *Opera* IV.465-66.

¹⁵*Estobeo* (XIX.5-6). Renau Nebot observes of this “sensory breath of air”: “Se trata del pneûma sensorial. Es una doctrina estoica . . .” and offers quotes from the third century’s Greek historian Diogenes Laertius and from Iamblichus (340-41, n. 96). In the verses of San Juan de la Cruz, we also read that the “summa sciencia” or ‘highest reason’ is the “sudden lifting up / of the divine essence” (vv.54-56). *San Juan de la Cruz. Poesía*, Ed. Domingo Ynduráin. Here and henceforth, all quoted verses of San Juan are from this edition and all translations are my own.

¹⁶⁶"at cum in sanctam mens influit animam, extollit illam ad sapientiae lumen"; "but when Thought (*Nous, Mens*) enters into a pure soul, it carries it to wisdom's light" (*CH X.62*).

¹⁷⁷"quamobrem oportet o fili nos agentes deo gratias obsecrare, vt bonae mentis participies efficiamur: in melius quidem anima migrat" (*CH X. 62*).

¹⁸⁸"Illud utilius moneo, Notiones in praestanti natura explicatiores esse, et facile Rationis iudicii que opera educendas: quod quibusdam evenisse, ante Artem Scientiam que natam, paene sit fatendum" (*Lipsius, Manu. ii.11*) in *Opera IV.471*.

¹⁹⁰"Dei radij, actus existunt. mundi radij, sunt naturae: radij vero hominis, artes atque scientiae." In *Estobeo* (IV), one reads of the energies that act through matter, i.e., bodies. Seneca also advises that one should imitate nature and create oneself in conformance with it: "Quid est ergo ratio? naturae imitatio. Quid est summum hominis bonum? ex naturae voluntate se gerere" (*Ep. LXVI*). I cite here from Lipsius's edition of Seneca's works: *L. Annaei Senecae. Opera*. The ideas are also reflected in the Stoics' "principio de simpatía," or "la interdependencia de todo lo creado" (Ortiz García 100, n. 51).

²⁰Francisco de Quevedo praises Aldana as that "most valiant and erudite Spanish soldier and poet" (*Anacreón castellano*); Cervantes calls him "the celebrated Aldana" (*La Galatea*); Gil Polo doubts if Aldana "is Petrarch, or if Petrarch is he" (*Diana enamorada*). The praises of these and others are listed in Carlos Ruiz Silva, *Estudios sobre Francisco de Aldana* 49-51. The translations here are my own.

²¹*Francisco de Aldana. Poesías castellanas completas*, Ed. José Lara Garrido. Here and henceforth, all verses quoted are from this edition and all translations are my own.

²²Epictetus uses similar terminology for the representations: "Pues, ¿qué mayor tempestad que la de representaciones poderosas y que nos quitan la razón? ¿Y qué otra cosa es esta tempestad, sino una representación? Porque, quítale el miedo a la muerte y traéte los truenos y relámpagos que quieras y te darás cuenta de qué gran bonanza y qué gran calma hay en el regente" (*Disertaciones II.18.29-30*).

²³In philosophy's lexicon, the "especies" are: "Ideas. Representaciones de la mente" (Moliner). It is noteworthy that the same word is used in the religious lexicon: "Especies sacramentales. Accidentes de olor, color y sabor que quedan en la Eucaristía después de la transubstanciación" (Moliner). What Aldana describes in these verses is his own "transubstantiation" due to the inspiration of his poetic, or divine muse.

²⁴In his *De docta ignorantia* (II.9), Nicholas of Cusa also describes wisdom as a "treasury of being out of which flow all existing things and a treasury of wisdom filled eternally with the Idea of these things" (as described by Rice 21-22). See Eugene F. Rice, Jr., *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom*. He could owe the image to Hermes Trismegistus, who also uses "thesaurum" when describing existence: "Quoties vero existentia dico, dei dico thesaurum: nam existentia ipse deus amplectitur"; "Certainly, whenever I say existence, I say the treasure of God; for existence itself is encircled by God" (*CH IX.50*).

²⁵"Per mundum exercentur actus, iique in hominem per mundi radios naturales descendunt: naturae, per elementa: hominis, per artes atque scientias" (CH X.63).

²⁶See *supra*, note 12.

²⁷In his notes to these verses, Lara Garrido refers to the Aristotelian demonstration of the imagination moved by sensory impressions, and then quotes from Fernando de Herrera's commentary on Garcilaso: «pasa la efigie de ella por medio de los sentidos exteriores al sentido común; del sentido común va a la parte imaginativa y de ella entra en la memoria» (Lara Garrido 277, n. to verses 5-52, citing to Fernando de Herrera, *Garcilaso y sus comentaristas* 336 y 363). Speaking of the works of Galen (a Greek physician and writer of the second century) and Plato, Guillermo Serés also points out the role of "la *phantasia* (imaginación) aristotélica, que . . . el Estagirita hacía derivar de phos ('luz'), en tanto que era la encargada de encauzar las percepciones sensibles, las imágenes, al intelecto" (59). Aldana separates fantasy and imagination, with the latter one step prior to the activation of the former, but with identical aim, that is, awakening the intellect that is, for the poet, "the treasure" etc.

²⁸Poimandres translates *nous*. Renau Nebot offers that some critics accept three *nous*: "correspondiendo a la serie *Deus, mundus, homo*" while the Hermetic texts make frequent reference to four: "*nous* divino, *nous* de la eternidad, *nous* cósmico y *nous* humano" but he dismisses this difference as non-problematic "porque aquí no se trata de una emisión de hipóstasis sino de cuatro momentos de un mismo proceso" (477-78, *Asclepio*, n. 77).

²⁹"Haec ipse percepi per Poemandri verbum: qui me stupore attonitum sic iterum affatus est. Vidisti in mente primam speciem infinito imperio praeualentem? Eiusmodi quedam mihi Poemander" (CHI.3). Here, I translate as 'species' the Latin word "especies" where others might serve just as well, for example, ideas, figures, visions: all are among the various translations that Renau Nebot uses throughout his twentieth-century Greek to Spanish translation of the Hermetic tractates, in many instances where Marsilio Ficino, the Greek to Latin translator of the same texts in the fifteenth century, decided for 'especies'.

³⁰It is the distinguishing characteristic that separates rational from irrational being. The latter is neither "primordial" nor a "part of the divinity" but, rather, a creation or "work."

³¹In a note to these verses (not knowing / transcending all knowledge [science]), Elia and Mancho point out that paradox is a favorite recourse of mystics (210, n. vv. 2-3). See Paola Elia and María Jesús Mancho, eds., *San Juan de la Cruz, Cántico espiritual y poesía completa*. Saunders calls the Paradoxes the "special contribution of the Stoics" to philosophy and points out that Lipsius deals with them at length and "in a wholly sympathetic manner" in his *Manuductio* 70.

³²Mancho Duque says of the word "balbuciendo" that it is a "neologismo aparecido ya en el Cántico (35)." See *Poesías de la colección San Lucar de Barrameda*, nota 03.htm#97. In their edition of the saint's works, Elia and Mancho point out that the word is a "cultismo de origen bíblico" (*Canción* 7,

n. to vv. 32-35), and also that it is found in another, earlier work, the *Subida al monte Sión* (1535) of Bernardino de Laredo (Elia and Mancho 446).

³³"Si quis viderit hanc faciem altiolem fulgentioremque quam cerni inter humana consuevit, nonne velut numinis occurso obstupefactus resistat" (*Ep. CXV*).

³⁴"Mira profecto proportione ad eum comprehendendum vtitur, qui omnem effugit proportionem, qui comprehensus incomprehensibilis manet, & qui omnibus incognitus, omnibus in rebus se praestat cognoscibilem. Vos ergo quicumque pij, huc toti nunc adeste, & mentis sermonibus vestram mentem inclinate, vt eum tandem cognoscatis, qui omnia ob eam causam fabricatus est, vt eum per singula cerneretis" (*CH XI.77, commentaria*). In 1450, Nicholas de Cusa used strikingly similar phraseology in his *De sapientia* 12-13: "This knowledge of its incomprehensibility is the most joyful and most desirable comprehension" (as quoted in Rice 26). Morón Arroyo observes that in the writings of Saint Bonaventure "este amor trasciende todo entendimiento y toda ciencia" (Morón Arroyo 121). See Ciriaco Morón Arroyo, *La mística española*. Inclining one's mind to the words of the Mind brings to mind the actions of Aldana's soul, as described in his celebrated work, "Carta a Arias Montano," in which the poetic voice delves into its own being in order to speak with the "interior hombre," following which, "como si no hubiera acá nacido, / estarme allá, cual Eco, replicando / al dulce son de Dios, del alma oído" (LXV.50, 56-57).

³⁵See José Luis García Rúa, *El sentido de la interioridad en Séneca*.

³⁶"solus homo scientiam omnium et amat, et, pro captu, habet. Quid ei clausum est? caelos penetrat, et Deum ac divina mente adit . . . Itaque Trismegistus prolem Mundi, id est Mundum alterum, Hominem facit . . . Est Mundus quidem Dei filius, Mundi autem soboles Homo. Imo verum si dicimus, nos Dei filii, et velut proximi ab illo sumus... Homo animal est divinum, aliisque animantibus non confertur, sed iis qui sursum in caelo Dii dicuntur" (*Lipsius, Phys. iii.2*) in *Opera* IV.604.

³⁷See Saunders 210-14.

³⁸"impossibile nihil in teipso supponens. Teipsum immortalem puta, comprehendere cuncta potentem, scientiam omnem, atque omnem pariter artem" (*CH XI.75*).

³⁹"Simul quippe mundus vniuersus existens, totus quidem immobilis, partes autem eius agitabiles vndique: nihil tamen corruptioni subiectum, sed appellationes quaedam falsae homines turbant. Neque enim generatio, vitae creatio est, sed latentis explicatio vite: neque mutatio mors, sed occultatio potius. Cum haec igitur ita se habeant, immortalia cuncta. Materia quidem vite spiritus est, mens anime. Ex mente viuens omne profluit. Omne igitur viuens, per mentem permanet immortale. Maxime vero omnium immortalis est homo, qui deum capit, qui diuinae conformatur essentiae" (*CH XII.86*).

⁴⁰"Sensus enim superantis motus existit: cognitio, scientiae terminus. Scientia dei donum: siquidem vnaquaeque scientia incorporea, mente vtens, vt organo, mens autem corpore. quamobrem vtraque in corpora, tum intelligibilia, tum etiam materialia recurrunt. Ex oppositione enim, & contrarietate constare omnia necesse est, neque aliter se habere possibile est" (*CH X.56*). Barth offers details as to arguments for the necessity of

opposition as a constant in all things in Chyrisippus and Epictetus (Barth 78-81). As to the reasoning that concludes “incorporeal” the science: “Among the incorporeals recognized by the Stoics were time, place, void, and certain logical entities that exist only in thought, e.g., predicates and propositions” (Hahm 5). See David E. Hahm, *The Origins of Stoic Cosmology*. I believe it is correct to include “science” in this group, as it is an activity, i.e., a predicate of thought.

⁴¹Petrarch also called wisdom a “divine gift” (as quoted in Rice 32).

⁴²In his *Declaración* to the verse, San Juan describes this as the moment of “perfección de amor” when the flame of love is transformed in “llama suave” that consumes the soul and moves it into God, in whom its movements and actions become divine (Elia and Mancho 198-99).

⁴³The Hermetic’s creative fire surrounds divine Thought as its body, and once human thought has freed itself from its terrestrial body, “se reviste de inmediato con la túnica ígnea, que es la suya propia, y que debió de abandonar al asentarse en un cuerpo terrestre” (*TH X.17-18*); “Itaque cum primum mens a terreno corpore soluitur, proprium mox subit amictum, igneum videlicet corpus, quo sane quandiu circumtecta est, in terreum corpus turgescere nequit” (*CH X.60*). There are various parallels: biblical, as in the burning bush that speaks with Moses; poetic, as in this flame of San Juan de la Cruz, that “consumes yet gives no pain” during the mystic union of the poet and his God. Also, in the religion of ancient Iran (prior to Zarathustra), there was a cult that worshipped fire because “se consideraba el elemento superior del hombre, que retomaba el fuego celeste al morir (Blázquez 153). See José María Blázquez, et al, *Historia de las religiones antiguas*.

⁴⁴Saunders explains that one major change in Stoic writings during the time of the “Roman Stoicism” of Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius is the “increased proportion of ethical speculation over logic and physics” (xiii), but he also notes that “Lipsius considered the physics or natural philosophy of the Stoics to have the central position in the doctrines” (67). There are problems inherent in reconciling Stoic physical doctrine with Christian tenets, notably that the Stoics accept a periodic destruction and recreation of the cosmos by the *pyr technikón*, an eternal return antithetical to Christian redemption and salvation (Ortiz García 25). There were also problems with historicist questionings of Hermes Trismegistus’ authority. Isaac Casaubon, a colleague and correspondent of Lipsius, wrote in 1614 that Hermes is not cited by the Greek sources of antiquity, that he did not live in the time of Moses, that he was an invention of other authors, and that the Neoplatonist Iamblichus really wrote the tractates. He adds in ridicule that, were Hermes the author of all the works attributed to him, he would have to have written twenty-five thousand books: “& sub finem eius libelli refert idem, scripsisse Mercurium, (hoc est, scripta sub nomine Mercurii extitisse) voluminum viginti quinque millia” (69). I cite from *Isaaci Casauboni, De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis. Exercitationes XVI*. Casaubon’s study added to questions already raised (see Frederick Purnell, Jr., “Francesco Patrizi and the critics of Hermes Trismegistus” and “A Contribution to Renaissance Anti-Hermeticism: The Angelucci-Persio Exchange,” and Hermes’ prestige, like Stoic physics, went into disfavor.

⁴⁵See *Francisco de Quevedo. Stoic Doctrine*, trans. Luc Dietz and Adelheid Wiehe-Dietz.

⁴⁶Lipsius distinguishes between the two: "Sed ignem non quemcumque, non hunc nostrum corruptorem et corruptibilem; sed artificiosum: id est, artificem atque opificem, condentem ratione et velut arte, vegetantem ac servantem" (Lipsius, *Phys.* i.6) in *Opera* IV.540.

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