

MARYANNE CLINE HOROWITZ

BODIN AND JUDAISM



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Amministrazione: Casa Ed. LEO S. OLSCHKI, C.C.P. 12707501 - CAS. POSTALE 66 - 50100 Firenze.

Tel. 055/6530684 - Fax 055/6530214 - E-mail: celso@olschki.it

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## BODIN AND JUDAISM\*

Jean Bodin (1529/30-1596) is a French Renaissance thinker who contributes to historiography, jurisprudence, comparative religion, demonology, natural theology, political philosophy, and economics.<sup>1</sup> In the tradition of treatises on human dignity associated with the Italian Renaissance, Bodin is one of the strongest advocates of human dignity and of the freedom of the will (both God's will and human will).<sup>2</sup> Clues to the unity and distinctiveness of Bodin's thought are his application of the ancient Stoic «seeds of virtue and knowledge» to epistemology throughout his works<sup>3</sup> and an empathy to Judaism very rare among sixteenth-century Christian scholars of Hebraica; in all of Bodin's usages of «seeds of virtue and knowledge», he does not modify the phrase by mention of original sin. Agreeing with the Stoics that sages are few, Bodin exhibits a high assessment of human potential – as in his citation of the Stoicizing and Platonizing allegorical commentaries on Genesis of Philo of Alexandria (before the codification of Rabbinic law) and of *De libero arbitrio* (Augustine's book on free will before his debate with Pelagius and before his refinement of the doctrine of original sin). To Bodin, how might a God who provided all of nat-

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\* I appreciate permission to publish here revised sections of Chapter 8 of MARYANNE CLINE HOROWITZ, *Seeds of Virtue and Knowledge* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1998). The book traces from ancient Stoicism through the seventeenth century the notion that the human mind cultivates God-given seeds of virtue and knowledge into a blossoming garden of all the sciences and virtues.

<sup>1</sup> The following is a brief list of Bodin's works in the chronological order of their first publication *Oratio* (1559), *Methodus* (1566); *Response...à M. de Malestoict* (1568); *République* (1576); *Distributio* (1580); *Démonomanie* (1580); *Epitome* (1588); *Paradoxon* (1596); *Le Paradoxe* (1598); *Theatrum* (1596); manuscript «Colloquium Heptaplomeress».

<sup>2</sup> See the brief summary of Bodin as a natural theologian in FRANÇOIS BERRIOT, *Athéismes et athéistes au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle en France*, 2 vols. (Université de Lille, Éditions du Cerf, 1984), II, pp. 775-797. Paul Lawrence Rose reveals that Bodin's view of natural goodness is especially evident in the *Paradoxon*: see *Bodin and the Great God of Nature: The Moral and Religious Universe of a Judaiser* (Geneva, Librairie Droz, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> For an excellent Italian edition of ancient Stoic sayings, that is seeds of knowledge intended for transplantation from sage to student, see MARGHERITA ISNARDI PARENTE, *Stoici antichi*, 2 vols. *Classici della Filosofia* (Torino, UTET, 1989).

ure with its sources for growth and development not provide the human soul with the seeds for its flowering? Our attention here will focus on Bodin's merger of Stoicism and Judaism in the figure of Salomon in Bodin's ecumenical conversation *Colloquium heptaplomeres*;<sup>4</sup> often I shall bring in evidence from Bodin's book of natural philosophy *The Theatrum* that supports Bodin's criticism of Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

Jean Bodin's life and religion have been a matter of controversy partly because his name is a common one in the historical records.<sup>6</sup> There is general agreement among historians that born in Angers, Bodin studied in a Carmelite house in Paris in the mid-1540s. Like Erasmus, Lèfevre d'Étapes, and Calvin, Bodin sought proficiency in the trilingual humanist curriculum of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew texts. Documents published in 1933 indicate his family's background was Catholic,<sup>7</sup> and Bodin took an oath to Catholicism in 1562, joined the Catholic League briefly the same year as Charron, 1589, and received a Catholic burial in 1596. On one hand, one might argue from such evidence that Bodin's knowledge of Judaism

<sup>4</sup> JEAN BODIN, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*, ed. and trans. Marion Leathers Daniels Kuntz (Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1975), XV-XXVIII, especially notes 5-6, 25-15. JEAN BODIN, *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis*, ed. L. Noack (Schwerin, 1857). My references to Colloquium will be to Kuntz's translation followed by page number in Noack's Latin with Hebrew and Greek text. JEAN BODIN, *Colloque entre sept scavans*, ed. François Berriot with Katherine Davies, Jean Larmat and Jacques Roger (Geneva, Droz, 1984) follows a 1923 French manuscript with variants; an international team of scholars currently is working on a critical edition. For source study, see G. ROELLENBLECK, *Offenbarung...und juedische Ueberlieferung bei Jean Bodin* (Gütersloh, 1964). For posthumous criticism of Bodin, see PIERRE BAYLE, selection from *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1734) in JEAN BODIN, *Oeuvres*, ed. and trans. Pierre Mesnard (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), pp. XXIII-XXXVII, especially XXXIII; also MESNARD'S *Vers un portrait de Jean Bodin*, VII-XXI. I have examined aspects of the religious issue in *La religion de Bodin reconsiderée: Le Marrane comme modèle de la tolérance*, in *Jean Bodin: Actes du Colloque Interdisciplinaire d'Angers*, 2 vols. (Angers, Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 1985), I, 201-215, and II, 568-573, and *Judaism in Jean Bodin*, «The Siteenth Century Journal», 13, 1982, 109-113.

<sup>5</sup> *Universae naturae theatrum: in quo rerum omnium effectrices causae & fines quinque libris discutiuntur autore Jean Bodino* (Lyon, Jacques Roussin, 1596). References will be to the 1596 edition, followed by an additional reference to volume, chapter, and page in French translation by Fougerolles. I have also consulted the Frankfurt: Wechel, 1605 edition. Fougerolles, next note, numbers the topic changes as chapters and inserts in the text the numbered chapter headings. ANN M. BLALR'S, *Restaging Jean Bodin: The 'Universae Naturae Theatrum' (1596) in its Cultural Context* (Princeton University Dissertation, 1990), revised form forthcoming at Princeton University Press, makes a major contribution to the history of this book. See also Pierre Bayle's discussion of the *Theatrum* in his article on Bodin, reprinted in *Oeuvres*, p. XXII, XXIV, and W. H. GREENLEAF, *Bodin and the Idea of Order*, in *Jean Bodin* (Munich, 1973), pp. 23-38, especially 23-25.

<sup>6</sup> For example, a Jean Bodin was tried as a heretic in Paris in 1548; a Jean Bodin was noted in the marital records of Geneva in 1552.

<sup>7</sup> EMILE PASQUIER, *La famille de Jean Bodin*, «Revue d'histoire de l'église de France», 19, 1933, 457-462.

might be attributed to his reading of Hebrew texts; on the other hand, very few Christian students of Hebraica gained from reading alone such a closeness to a Jewish view of the patriarchs of Genesis. Already in the 1580s, Bodin's books received criticism for unorthodoxy, and several of his books appeared on the Index of Prohibited Books.<sup>8</sup> Some contemporaries reported that Bodin's mother was a Jewish refugee from Spain, and seventeenth-century readers of the *Colloquium* often identified Bodin with the position of the Jewish speaker Salomon. That was a very reasonable interpretation, for Bodin's breadth of views on history are in fact very distant from a Christological viewpoint on human history.<sup>9</sup> His ability to criticize Christianity from the points of views of non-Christian speakers is unusual among those who only learned their Hebrew from the tri-lingual curriculum.<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly, Bodin's manuscript of ecumenical conversation was highly valued among the *libertins érudits*, including Gabriel Naudé, librarian to cardinals in Rome as well as to Richelieu and Mazarin.<sup>11</sup>

Bodin's view that God has provided human nature with the potentiality for virtue, truth, and piety is the inner functional epistemology upon which his human, natural, and divine types of history attain unity. In the *Epitome*, *Methodus*, *République*, and *Paradoxon*, where Bodin examines reason and experience in human life, Bodin trusts in the seed of virtue as the source for prudence or *honnesté*.<sup>12</sup> In the *Theatrum*, God-given seeds of knowledge enable humans to distinguish truth from falsity in natural philosophy; yet Bodin also has hopes that the seed of knowledge will make comparative study of law, history, and government into a science

<sup>8</sup> Books on the Index: *De Republica libri VI*, 1592; *De Daemonomanie*, 1594; *Methodus*, 1596, Index of Clement VIII; *Universae naturae theatrum*, 1633. For examination of documents showing the criticism that leads to book condemnation, see BERRIOT, *La fortune du 'Colloquium heptaplomeres'*, in *Colloque entre sept savants*, XVIII-XXIV.

<sup>9</sup> JEAN BODIN, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (Paris, Martinus Juvenes, 1572), in BODIN, *Oeuvres*, ed. and trans. Pierre Mesnard; modern French translation, *Oeuvres*, pp. 278-473. JEAN BODIN, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, trans. Beatrice Reynolds (N.Y., Norton & Company, 1945).

<sup>10</sup> For the negative views of Judaism prevalent among Christian Hebraicists, see FRANK E. MANUEL, *The Broken Staff: Judaism through Christian Eyes* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992). For the best analysis of deliberate resistance of Christian Hebraicists to Jewish viewpoints, see JEROME FRIEDMAN, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> See praise for Bodin conspicuously near recommendation to read minor works of great authors and to read unpublished contemporary manuscripts in GABRIEL NAUDÉ, *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque* (Leipzig, VEB, 1963), discussed in MARYANNE CLINE HOROWITZ, *Tolerance and Skepticism in the French Free-Thinkers in the First Decades of the Edict of Nantes*, in *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Tolerance*, ed. Alan Levine (forthcoming).

<sup>12</sup> *La catégorie de l'honnesté dans la culture du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Université de Saint-Étienne, Institut d'Études de la Renaissance et de L'Age Classique, 1965).

(*Distributio, Methodus, République*). From his first publicly delivered and published oration to his secret manuscript copied for private reading, we shall see Bodin's confidence that, despite human disagreements on specific doctrines or rituals, the seeds of religion may be cultivated to create piety and civic harmony.

In the *Colloquium*,<sup>13</sup> we meet the Catholic host Coroaneus who conforms to the Council of Trent, a strict Lutheran Fridericus, a moderate Calvinist Curtius, a Jew Salomon, a natural philosopher and advocate of natural theology Toralba, a congenial doubter and religious universalist Senamus, and a tolerant convert to Islam Octavius. Non-Christians outnumber Christians in a discussion which concludes with a criticism of religious persecution and an agreement to nourish their piety in peaceful harmony (Kuntz 471; Noack 358).

In the conversation at the close of the dialogues, Senamus declares the minimum beliefs shared by all present necessary for religion – that God is the parent of all gods and creator of nature, and that prayer with a good heart to God will please God and lead to knowledge of true religion (465; 354-355). In the criticism there of the persecution of the Jews in Spain and Portugal emerges the notion that religious belief cannot be forced, but must stem from freedom of the will. Senamus in some ways expresses the spirit of the work in declaring «But I, lest I ever offend, prefer to approve all the religions of all rather than to exclude the one which is perhaps the true religion» (465; 354).

Encouraged by Senamus' seeking a common religion, Toralba and Salomon agree with him that the oldest religion is the best, and they cite the religion of the biblical patriarchs (182-183; 1140-1142). Utilizing a Stoic cluster of terms – «reason», «light», «innate», «planted» – Toralba views the law of nature commanding the worship of one God: «Indeed as I view the almost infinite variety of sects, Christians differing with Ismaelites [Muslims] and pagans differing among themselves, no standard of truth seems more certain than right reason, that is, the supreme law of nature, planted in men's minds by immortal God» (337; 257; also 185; 142). This view meets the approval of the Calvinist and the Catholic. Later Toralba adds «Indeed reason, which is divine light, innate to the mind of each man, sees, feels, and judges that which is right, that which is wrong, that

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<sup>13</sup> For the influence of this manuscript, see BERRIOT, *La fortune de 'Colloquium heptaplomeres'*, in *Colloque*, xv-l, and RICHARD POPKIN, *The Dispersion of Bodin's Dialogues in England, Holland, and Germany*, «Journal of the History of Ideas», 49, 1988, 157-160, and *The Role of Jewish Anti-Christian arguments in the Rise of Scepticism*, in *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought*, ed. John Henry and Sarah Hutton (London, Duckworth, 1990), pp. 5-8.

which is true, that which is false» (359; 259). After a debate about the doctrine of reward and punishment in an afterlife, Senamus suggests tolerance to disagreement, and Toralba concludes «is it not better to embrace that most simple and most ancient and at the same time the most true religion of nature, instilled by immortal God in the minds of each man from which there was no division (I am speaking of that religion in which Abel, Enoch, Lot, Seth, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, heroes dearest to God, lived) than for each one to wander around uncertain?» (462; 351-352).

A fuller discussion by Toralba, Senamus, and Salomon of this ancient religion focuses on the Decalogue, that is the Ten Commandments. Salomon suggests a correspondence between the divine laws and hidden secrets of nature, as have been revealed by Philo Hebraeus, Abraham Ibn Ezra, King Solomon, and Leone Hebraeus, and cites Ezra for the Decalogue as natural law (191; 147).<sup>14</sup> Ezra's (1089-1140) biblical commentaries are known to reveal «secrets». Toralba confirms that the two tablets are the law of nature, and all the commands except the resting on sabbath are common to other nations (193; 148). Toralba boldly declares a Pelagian view: «If true religion is contained in the pure worship of eternal God, I believe the law of nature is sufficient for man's salvation» (225; 172). Against Curtius's citation of Paul «The law was given by Moses, but grace has been given through Jesus Christ», (410; 311) both the Jew and the Muslim argue for the benefits of obeying divinely granted law (Mosaic law or the Koran respectively) for attaining a life of virtue and a life worthy of salvation (415, 420; 315, 319). Toralba and Senamus go further into free thinking in suggesting that neither revealed law nor faith in Jesus Christ is necessary. Toralba avows the outstanding virtues of ancient philosophers, and denies they could be eternally suffering (421; 319). Speaking the civic religion of Bodin's *Oratio*, Senamus suggests that those most natural and worthy are religious to the gods, pious to their country, loyal to their parents, charitable to their neighbors, and kind to those in need (422; 320-

<sup>14</sup> A possible source for Bodin's knowledge of Ibn Ezra is a book by a Hebraicist with whom Bodin studied in Paris: JEAN MERCIER, *Aseret ba-Devarim Decalogus*, containing commentary by Abraham Ibn Ezra, Hebrew and Latin (Lyon, 1566-1568). ISAAC HUSIK, *Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (New York, Macmillan, 1916) p. 194, confirms that Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) holds that the Decalogue, with the exception of the seventh day of rest, consists of laws planted by God in the minds of rational beings; that is exactly the consensus of Bodin's seven speakers. Technically, while recognizing that the Decalogue is acknowledged by the intelligent of all nations, Ibn Ezra does not refer to it as natural law. The first Jewish philosopher to introduce into Hebrew the term *dath tiv itb*, «natural law» is Joseph Albo (d. 1444). JOSEPH ALBO, *Sefer ha-Ikkarim*, trans. I. Husik (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946) and J. GUTTMANN, *Towards a Study of the Sources of the Book of Principles*, in *Dat u-Maddab* (Jerusalem, 1955), 169-181 (in Hebrew).

321). Putting Christians on the defensive, the new Muslim Octavius argues that Muslims are superior to Christians in acts of virtue (426; 323-324). Salomon proclaims:

What lawgiver was ever so cruel that he commanded his people to do something which was impossible?...It is so far removed from God's nature for Him to command anything which cannot be done as for Him to blame a man for breaking all the law when he had erred from one commandment, and even a man who has violated all the commands of the law and returned to honor after repentance, attains pardon for all his sins (430; 327).<sup>15</sup>

Salomon on several occasions indicates God's praise for people after Adam such as Noah, Enoch, and Moses (VI, p. 407). However, to Toralba's plea for that natural religion, Salomon suggests that common folk, and even the educated, hold more constant in religion through rites and ceremonies (462-463; 352). As in Philo's *The Decalogue*, Salomon views the Mosaic law code as a detailing of the four commandments of worship to God and of the six commandments of duty to other humans (186-187; 143).<sup>16</sup> Toralba does not find those special laws necessary and other participants reject some details of Jewish law. By Bodin's categories of law in the *Distributio*, Bodin is categorizing the Decalogue as *ius gentium*, the Decalogue excepting the sabbath command is *ius naturale*, and the specific laws as particular *ius civile* of one historical people. Thus Bodin is suggesting that all that humans need for living a good life – the natural law indicating that one should worship God and treat other human beings well – is contained in the divine law and explicitly in the divinely-revealed Decalogue.

In the *Colloquium*, the doctrine of original sin receives refutation, not only from a Jew and a Muslim, and doubter, but also from a natural philosopher expounding principles declared in the *Theatrum*. When Philo Judaeus comes up for discussion, Salomon corrects the church fathers' formative Christianization of Philo, refusing to identify Philo's *logos*, the word, with Jesus (368-369; 279-380). Likewise Bodin gives Philo's allegory of Genesis 1-2 to explain Adam's sin as the turning of the intellect (Adam)

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<sup>15</sup> Salomon takes a position of full divine mercy for evildoers, a libertarian Jewish position of the Arabic period and libertarian Muslim philosophers; see HARRY AUSTRYN WOLFSON, *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979), 198-233. See also BODIN, *Paradoxe*, in *Selected Writings on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics*, ed. Paul L. Rose (Geneva, Droz, 1980), p. 54, discussed in ROSE, *Jean Bodin and the Great God of Nature*, pp. 145-147.

<sup>16</sup> PHILO, *De decalogo; De specialibus legibus*, trans. F. H. Colson (London, Heinemann, 1937), XXIX, pp. 82-93 and 100-101.



away from contemplation toward temptations of the senses (Eve) and of pleasures (serpent). This time the allegory is an opportunity to argue that neither sins nor virtues are passed down from parents to children and that «there is no original sin» (392-393; 297).

Coroneus cites the Council of Trent anathema against those who would deny original sin, identifying that view as the Pelagian heresy; Fredericus cites Augustine's support for original sin; Curtius cites the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. However, in support of Salomon, the Muslim Octavius and the naturalist Toralba argue that the doctrine would credit to the Creator evil in a newborn infant (392-396; 296-300). The natural philosopher cites Christians, Muslims and Hebrews for concurring that the soul is created clean and pure from God (396-402; 299-305). Toralba's denial of the possibility of original sin passing from generation to generation utilizes principles found in *Theatrum*: sin originates not in the body but in decisions in the soul; the human soul does not come in the seed but is directly created by God (Aristotle, *De gen. animal.* II. 3 736b. 28); sin therefore cannot be passed down from parent to child (399-400; 302-303). *Theatrum* IV, ch. 11, cites Augustine's *De libero arbitrio* for the argument that each has freedom of the will, the power within to control passions; not only can one prevent evil deeds, but also restrain one's eyes and thoughts.<sup>17</sup> Fredericus cites Augustine to argue that the contagion of the flesh defiles the souls, but, as we already know from *Theatrum*, Bodin denies evil in matter.

What follows next from the natural philosophy of Toralba, which is consistent with the principles of the *Theatrum*, is an argument against the possibility of the union of the Divine and human in Jesus. Toralba views God as «eternal essence, one, pure, simple, and free from all contact of bodies, of infinite goodness, wisdom and power» (325; 248). The gap between Creator and created is too great for a union of infinite immaterial Divine and the finite bodily human (351; 267). Likewise Salomon borrows the same technique from Bodin's *Methodus* to suggest how religion can corrupt humankind: «All this discussion about the Fall of origin, which I think is no fall, has its beginnings in the leaders of the Christian religion ...Hence the seeds of errors began to creep far and wide through men's minds». (404-405; 306).<sup>18</sup> He then refers to God ordering Noah after

<sup>17</sup> AUGUSTINE, *The Free Choice of the Will*, in *The Teacher, The Free Choice of the Will-Grace and Free Will*, trans. Robert P. Russell (Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 1968). Bodin is influenced by Augustine's Stoicizing phrase «eternal law impressed upon our nature», p. 85. Augustine praises human free will and dignity, pp. 178-179.

<sup>18</sup> See *Methodus*, in *Oeuvres*, ed. Mesnard, pp. 163-164.

the flood to be good as commanding only what is possible (430; 327). The dialogue on evil takes on an arborescent flavor. Lutheran Fredericus argues: «...with whatever color the root is imbued, it imbues the trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits with the same flavor, odor, color, and poison. So it is with the nature of man, overturned from the foundation, seems to have no spark of any good or virtue» (396; 299). Returning to Philo of Alexandria's allegory, Salomon discusses Adam's recovery as mind regaining control over senses. That clue to Philo's allegory reminds us of the passage in the *Theatrum* where the teacher Mystagogue describes the human soul as a garden, containing fruit trees of virtue and knowledge: «Likewise we recognize that the seeds of all the virtues and sciences have been Divinely sown in our souls from their origins, in order to permit humans to live delightfully, as in the middle of a garden odiferous with flowers and trees, and most abundant of all sorts of fruits».<sup>19</sup> Fredericus' argument, although evocative of trees of vice derived from the gospel of Matthew, would not hold up with Mystagogue.

Salomon goes on. Capable of fathering a child in God's image and perpetuating humanity, Adam has the ability to enjoy and perpetuate the tree of life, that is contemplation of true wisdom (Prov. 3:13-18) (405; 306). Fredericus reinterprets the tree as referring to the cross (505; 306-307), but Salomon proclaims that anyone may repent and God will help restore their right reason (405-406; 307) and Octavius reads a verse in which «the wrong doing of the father does not harm the son »and «the figure of trees displays this secret of hidden wisdom» (406-407; 307-308). Octavius suggests a metaphor of ascent to the Divine that is pleasurable, like a Muslim paradise: through love of God, one «plucks the sweetest fruits of happiness. This is that faith, or rather a unique trust in God, which, having embraced all virtues, nourishes and safeguards them» (422; 320).

For all their tolerance amid diversity of belief, all seven agree that if a storm breaks out on the Mediterranean sea and a nearby ship carries on board a mummy from an Egyptian tomb, it would be wise to throw the mummy overboard to be rid of the demons.<sup>20</sup> In fact, Bodin's natural phi-

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<sup>19</sup> «sic etiam in animis nostris, virtutum ac scientiarum omnium semina divinitus sparsa fuisse, ut quasi in hortis odoratissimis, floribus & arboribus, ac frugum omnium copia abundantissimis, homini iucundissimè vivere liceret. Nam modicè culta mens abundanti fertilitate luxuriat». *Theatrum*, p. 475.

<sup>20</sup> *Colloquium*, pp. 73, 58; *Theatrum*, pp. 143-144, as well as *Démonomanie*. Kuntz, p. XLI, note 78. Montaigne points out that Bodin does not apply his own critical methods of the Methodus to the so-called «witnesses» of demonic activity: MARYANNE CLINE HOROWITZ, *Drogue médicale ou vieux conte: l'histoire et la justice chez Montaigne, Bodin et saint Augustin*, in *Montaigne et l'histoire*, ed. Claude G. Dubois (Bordeaux, Université de Bordeaux Press, 1991).

losophy consistently differs from Aristotle's in not attributing storms, earthquakes, or plagues to natural causes but to divine punishment (66-67; 51). Thus Bodin need not burden the laws of natural causation with all the haphazard and troublesome happenings of nature.<sup>21</sup> Demons represent no Manichaean evil force separate from God's providence and creation; rather they are instruments of God's justice. Likewise, as in the Hebrew Bible, God can intervene to reward individuals or whole societies. Bodin refers to Aristotle and Theophrastus to support his belief that plants and animals sometimes grow without seed as by spontaneous generation,<sup>22</sup> and Curtius proclaims that some fish are grown from the sea without seed (67; 51). In the *Response*, Bodin tries to get the French to eat more fish, as God has blessed their seas with such abundance. Bodin's biblical view that the created universe and the work of the sixth day, human beings, are «*tov meod*» is the fundamental source for his need to explain natural disaster and human wrongdoing as brought about by demons.

Bodin emphasizes free will in achieving virtue, and the belief that divine help would be given to anyone who turned to God. In assessing that human beings have full capacity to choose between right and wrong, Bodin, satirizing Aristotle, attributes full free agency to God. «Yet what more impious, more arrogant, finally, more mad than to give free will to himself, but wish to take it from God? The consequence is that God cannot stay the course of the sun, or check the power of the celestial stars, or change anything in universal nature; nor even the impulses and the volitions of man can He impel whither He wishes».<sup>23</sup> One of the reasons for Bodin's reluctance to cite Stoics in the context of free will and virtue is his rejection of their doctrine of determinism. God might have created humankind to pursue virtue always, and the world so that in no mind or matter could exist a seed of evil (*semen malorum*); but God chose to grant humans the greater good of free will.<sup>24</sup>

A short ethical treatise published at the end of Bodin's life confirms his distance from an acceptance of original sin and the consequent need for

<sup>21</sup> JEAN CÉARD, *La nature et les prodiges: L'Insolite au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle en France* (Genève, Droz, 1977).

<sup>22</sup> *Theatrum*, pp. 272-275; *Methodus*, 210 b.

<sup>23</sup> JOSEPH DAN, 'No Evil Descends from Heaven' – *Sixteenth Century Jewish Concepts of Evil*, in *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Bernard Cooperman, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 1983), 89-105, citing p. 93, thirteenth-century *Sefer ha-Yashar* (Venice, 1544) for the natural process by which thorns are created with the rose and dirt with fruitful seed of wheat. Bodin, likewise, views all aspects of nature, including poisons, as beneficial from the perspective of the totality of nature.

<sup>24</sup> *Methodus*, VIII, 231 b 1-10; Reynolds, p. 310.

Jesus Christ and his closeness to a merger of ancient ethics with a Hebrew biblical perspective (key achievement of Philo of Alexandria). Bodin's *Paradoxon* (written 1591) is published in 1596 and his French translation (1596) is published in 1598 when the *politique* movement is culminating in King Henry IV's Edict of Nantes, which legally establishes freedom of conscience and public office for Calvinists throughout France and allows public Calvinist religious services in some areas of Catholic France.<sup>25</sup> Like neo-Stoic Du Vair, Bodin in his dedicatory letter indicates that he is providing a moral discipline that might serve well in time of civil war.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Du Vair's *La constance* (1594), Bodin's *Paradoxe* does not Christianize his philosophical ethic, but presents it in a way suitable to individuals of not only different Christian denominations but of different world religions, as would become apparent to readers of the manuscript *Colloquium*. Bodin very succinctly presents a moral system based on ancient moral philosophy.

The dialogue form proceeds in a conversation between father and son. In answer to the question whether the virtues and vices are in our souls, the father responds:

Nature has not planted vices in us: that is why the wise would say that he was well born, and that his soul being good will find a body pure and dry: but all the Hebrews and Academics have held for an assured thing, that we have souls inseminated by a Divine seed of all virtues,<sup>27</sup> that we can lead very close to the very happy life, if we allow that they take their development: and for the proof, we see that tender minds, which have never before learned, suddenly conceive the principles and foundations of all fields: and also the earth is filled naturally with an infinity of plants, metals, minerals, and precious stones that which she produces without seed and without labor, the sea produces the fish, which are sustained by celestial influences: thus it is that the soul which is inseminated by an infinitude of beautiful sciences and virtues, which being aroused by the divine influence produce the sweet fruits which grow to be trees of prudence and of knowledge: but one should not stop at the fruits of prudence, but one should go farther to the fruits of life, that wisdom.

<sup>25</sup> King Henry IV, *Edict du Roy & Declaration sur les precedents Edicts de Pacification* (Paris?, Royal Press, 25 February 1, 1599). The king signs the edict in April 1598, but it not published by the Parlement of Paris until February 1599. G. A. ROTHROCK, *The Huguenots: A Biography of a Minority* (Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1979), pp. 124-126.

<sup>26</sup> *Paradoxon quod nec virtus ulla in mediocritate, nec summum hominis bonum in virtutis actione consistere possit; Le Paradox de Jean Bodin Angevin qu'il n'y a pas une seule vertu en mediocrité, ny au milieu de deux vices*, Dedicatory letter p. 37, in *Selected Works*, ed. Rose, p. 54; commentary pp. vii-x. ROSE, *Jean Bodin and the Great God of Nature*, pp. 145-147. For an overview, emphasizing his view of salvation for non-Christians, see MESNARD, *Jean Bodin et la morale d'Aristote*, «*Revue Thomiste*», 49, 1949, pp. 542-562.

<sup>27</sup> «*mais tous les anciens Hebreux & Academiques ont tenu pour chose assuree, que nous auons les ames parsemees d'une semence divine de toutes vertus....*» *Le Paradox*, p. 65, in *Selected Writings*, ed. Rose, pp. 63-64. ROSE, *Jean Bodin and the Great God of Nature*, p. 108.

Here, Bodin sums up his view that the natural world including human nature is good, basing his claim on the two ancient fountains of wisdom – the Hebrew scriptures and the Platonic Academy (to which Bodin attributes the Stoic phrases *seeds of virtue* and *seeds of knowledge*). That argument by authority supports the reality of the seeds of virtue and knowledge in the human soul. Further proof is a child stating fundamental principles, as in the geometry lesson in Plato's *Meno*. Bodin declares that the observation of nature shows that the earth and sea can produce without seed as well, demonstrating the Creator's continuing active providence. Readers may differ in interpreting the relative impact of the God-given seeds, the natural sunlight, the celestial astrological influence, or divine aid. Nevertheless, in this garden-in-the-soul passage, Bodin emphasizes both God's original creation and God's continuing influence in the growth of the trees of virtue and knowledge in the human mind. Bodin views the ultimate goal to be wisdom, symbolized as in the Hebraic tradition as the tree of life; Leone Hebreus and Philo view archetypal Adam in Paradise and Adam whose reason is in proper order as comprehending the wisdom of the tree of life.<sup>28</sup> What is evidently apparent is the coalescence in the mature Jean Bodin's thought of Hebraic, Platonic, and Stoic imagery of the goodness within human nature.

A fundamental viewpoint of Bodin is that nature, including human nature, is good. Bodin's view of the goodness of all of nature and of God's creation is founded fundamentally on Genesis, on a traditional Jewish reading of Genesis, common to Philo, the rabbinical tradition, and Kabbalists, that contrasts with Augustine's creation of the doctrine of original sin and the Fall of humanity evident in *The City of God*.<sup>29</sup> While the rabbinical Jewish tradition discusses free will as choice between good and evil inclinations in human nature, Bodin tends to omit discussion of the evil inclination. Gen. 1:12, 18, 21, and 24 declare «And God saw that it was good». Bodin cites that passage at the conclusion of his *Theatrum*, and after recalling the candelabra of seven lights and the analogous seven

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<sup>28</sup> LÉONE HÉBREU, *Dialogues d'amour*, trans. Pontus de Tyard (Lyon, 1551), ed. T. Anthony Perry (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1974). The other edition's publications indicate extensive popularity: LÉONE HÉBREU, *Dialogues d'amour*, trans. Denys Sauvage (Lyon, 1551), rpt. 1559, 1577, 1580, 1595. See ARTHUR LESLEY, *The Place of the 'Dialoghi d'amore' in Contemporaneous Jewish Thought*, and EVA KUSHNER, *Pontus de Tyard entre Ficino et Léon l'Hébreu*, in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1968), 71-86.

<sup>29</sup> See ELIZABETH A. CLARK, *Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichean Past*, and ELAINE PAGELS, *Adam and Even and the Serpent in Genesis 1-3*, in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1988).

planets, Bodin cites in Latin the culminating repetition in Genesis 1:31 after God saw his creation of human nature: «all that God had made was very good» and adds that the Hebrews said it elegantly «*tova me'od*», «very good».<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> «...cùm disertè scriptum sit, 'omnia quae Deus fecerat optimà fuisse', quod Hebraei elegantius dicunt, *tova me' od*». *Theatrum*, p. 631; V, 12, pp. 914-915.