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Philosophy Among and in the Wake of the Reformers: Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, and Calvin

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Introduction

The most influential figures of the Protestant Reformation were not only spiritual leaders but also academically educated theologians. Martin Luther (1483-1546), Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), and John Calvin (1509-64) were raised in the late medieval world and studied according to the medieval curriculum, which was based on Aristotelian philosophy. Although during the Reformation their main interests were in theological issues, all of them commented in various ways on philosophy in general and philosophical doctrines in particular. They also adopted philosophical theories that served their theological thinking. Also, Melanchthon was an active writer of philosophical treatises. Finally, their impact on the way philosophy was practiced in the Protestant countries was significant.

One can approach a late medieval theologian's relationship to philosophy in terms of three important themes. These themes, rather than a separate discussion of individual Reformers, will serve in what follows as a guide through the complex nest of questions relating to the Reformers' relationship to philosophy.

Firstly, there is the question of the theologian's relationship to his philosophical context. This includes questions about the continuity and discontinuity of the Reformers' thinking with their late medieval Aristotelian education. Secondly, there are the meanings and nuances that the Reformers ascribed to the word "philosophy" in their discourses. These are often negative ones. This theme also includes the Reformers' expressed views on the relationship between philosophy and theology, and their ideas about the relevance of reason and philosophy to gaining knowledge of God. Thirdly, it is interesting to examine how the Reformers discussed specific philosophical questions as well as the positions they held in philosophical matters.

The Philosophical Contexts of the Reformers

A division between different schools of philosophy and theology dominated the teaching in early 16th universities. Therefore it has been customary to refer to these schools as one of the most important philosophical contexts of the Reformers. However, recent scholarship has questioned the traditional ways to define the characteristics of the schools. The confusion in older scholarship has originated from the fact that the names of the schools were related to 13th and 14th century authorities. Thomists, Scotist and Albertists were commonly called *via antiqua*, whereas *via moderna* “the Moderns” referring to adherence to the 14th century authors later than John Duns Scotus. Despite the naming, the division between the “ways” developed during the 15th century and there is no clear doctrinal continuity between 15th century schools and their 13th and 14th century authorities. (Hoenen 2003: 11-12; 19.)

There was also no doctrinal uniformity inside the individual schools; the idea of a particular method, especially concerning the interpretation of Aristotle, was more formative for school identity. Even the method was applied variously within each school tradition. In practice, the term “way” indicated the authorities used throughout a particular textbook or as a basis for teaching in a particular university context. For understanding the philosophical context of the Reformers it is, therefore, necessary to bear in mind that the teaching of philosophy according to the *via antiqua* was usually based on the works of either Thomas of Aquinas (the Thomists), John Duns Scotus (the Scotists), or Albert the Great (the Albertists), or some other authors who considered themselves as followers of these. Accordingly, the teaching of the *via moderna*

followed mainly such authors as John Buridan, Marsilius of Inghen, William Ockham, Peter of Ailly or Gregory of Rimini. (Hoenen 2003: 11-13.)

Since the beginning of modern historical studies in the late 19th century, Luther's relationship to his philosophical context has aroused interest. The earliest approaches identified a strong distinction between philosophy and theology in Luther's polemics against scholastic philosophy. However, the more positive tones regarding philosophy in his later writings were also noted and explained by the withdrawal of evangelical theology from scholasticism. (On the early approaches of Nitzsch and Bahlow, see Dieter 2001: 1; Kopperi 1997: 93 fn. 12.) Later scholars have often criticized the simplistic search of the influences from late medieval philosophy in Luther's thinking, and instead have called for a study of Luther's theology that takes seriously both the continuities and discontinuities between Luther and his late medieval philosophical context (Baur 1993: 14; White 1994: 84; Dieter 2001: 23-28).

Luther's biographers have always noted that he had a solid philosophical training according to the *via moderna* school at the University of Erfurt. Indeed, the descriptions of some biographers have for a long time remained the most comprehensive accounts of Luther's immediate philosophical context (see Scheel 1921: 174-234; Brecht 1981: 42-53). Despite the availability of the sources of Luther's known philosophy teachers in Erfurt, Jodocus Trufetter of Eisenach and Bartholomaeus Arnoldi of Usingen, the philosophy of the *via moderna* in Erfurt has largely remained unexamined by modern scholarship. (For a significant exception, see Lalla 2003.)

The *via moderna* in Erfurt has often been inaptly designated as “Ockhamism.” In addition to Ockham, several other authorities such as John Buridan, Gregory of Rimini, Peter of Ailly, and Gabriel Biel were frequently followed. In opposition to the strict adherence to particular authorities by the Thomists and Scotists of the *via antiqua*, Trutfetter had a relatively permissive attitude towards rival school positions. For example, concerning the traditionally dividing question whether there are universals in the extramental world Trutfetter answered negatively and affirmed as the position of his nominalist school that universality is a property of words or concepts, and not of the things which words and concepts signify. According to him, Scotist and Thomist views can be still tolerated, if they do not posit the real existence of universal natures in the extramental world. This includes for Trutfetter a Scotist view, according to which there is an objective principle in a singular substance of its being known as a universal nature, which resides in the thing prior to any operation of the intellect. Similarly, Trutfetter did not object the Thomist view, which posited universal natures in the things of the extramental world, which were not really or formally distinct from the things themselves, but only by rational distinction as the result of the intellect's operation (Kärkkäinen 2009: 428-9; 431-2). During his studies as an Augustinian friar in Erfurt, Luther still referred mainly to the authorities of the *via moderna* instead of the standard theologian of his own order, Giles of Rome (Kärkkäinen 2010: 475-6).

Among the Reformers discussed in this chapter, the most active in philosophy was undoubtedly Philip Melanchthon. Through his many published textbooks he earned the title Teacher of Germany, and not least because of his several textbooks on logic and natural philosophy. Whereas Luther did not engage himself in the teaching of

philosophy, Melanchthon carried the main responsibility of the content of philosophy teaching in the University of Wittenberg during the early years of the Reformation.

Like Luther, Melanchthon had a solid late medieval education in philosophy, even though he was involved in the circle of leading German humanists since his early years. If Luther was educated in a university exclusively representing the *via moderna*, Melanchthon's academic background was less uniform. He began his studies in the arts faculty of the University of Heidelberg, but later moved to Tübingen, from where he was invited, as a brilliant young Greekist, to Wittenberg. In Tübingen, the faculties of theology and arts had since the founding of the university been officially divided into two parts, one being the Thomist-Scotist *via antiqua* and the other the *via moderna*. According to his own later memories as well as his biographer **Joachim Camerarius**, Melanchthon followed in Tübingen the *via moderna* school, but the importance of this in the genesis of his philosophical insights has proved difficult to evaluate (Frank 1995: 33-5).

Already during his Tübingen years Melanchthon was deeply involved in the study of Aristotle from a humanist point of view. The most conspicuous sign of this was the project to publish a new edition of Aristotle's works according to the humanist principles in which Melanchthon participated. During his first years in Wittenberg Melanchthon still seems to have been engaged in this project, but soon abandoned it in the midst of the growing criticism of Aristotle. Through to his close contacts with the leading humanists of his time, Melanchthon was probably exposed to Renaissance Platonism, although there is little evidence of this aspect in his philosophical thought (Frank 1995: 17; 26).

Like other early reformers, Zwingli, too, was educated in a manner in which humanism complemented his basic training in late medieval school philosophy and theology. Unlike the Wittenberg reformers, Zwingli acquired his scholastic training in a strictly Scotist context. According to Daniel Bolliger, the Scotist influences had far-reaching consequences in Zwingli's thinking, extending to his theological disagreements with the Wittenberg reformers on the nature of the Eucharist and Christology, as will be seen below (Bolliger 2003).

Very little is known about Zwingli's studies at the universities of Vienna and Basel. It is most probable that his education was Scotist, and there are no clear indications of a Thomist influence as some scholars have suggested. His numerous comments on the works of Scotist authors (Duns Scotus himself, Stephen Brulefer, and Conrad Summenhart) reveal a close acquaintance with Scotist philosophy and theology, which most likely dates back to his years as a student of theology and his early years as a humanist and Reformer (Bolliger 2003, 495-7).

Crucial figures in Zwingli's introduction to contemporary Scotism seem to have been Thomas Wytttenbach and Antonius Beck, both teachers of the University of Basel after 1506. Wytttenbach had studied in Tübingen under Scotists Conrad Summenhart and Paul Scriptoris, the latter having been a student of Stephen Brulefer, one of the leading Scotists of his time. In the early sixteenth-century Scotism was a strong force in southwest Germany, especially because of the Franciscan theologians, many of whom were Zwingli's close colleagues. Regarding Zwingli's later development, it is worth noting that some of the leading figures of southwest German Scotism, such as Brulefer

and Scriptoris, strongly advocated church reforms along Scotist lines. To a certain degree the same applies to Summenhart and Wytttenbach, although their concerns were more about social-ethical and spiritual issues than actual church reforms (Bolliger 2003, 501-4).

In comparison with Luther, Melanchthon, and Zwingli, the role of late medieval philosophy in Calvin's education is more difficult to determine. There has been a long dispute among scholars over the influence of the Scottish philosopher and theologian John Mair (1467/68-1550) on the young Calvin. It is a known fact that Calvin studied philosophy in the college of Montaigu at the University of Paris during the 1520s. There, Calvin might have attended Mair's lectures on philosophy, but no conclusive evidence exists concerning whether Mair taught in Paris during Calvin's time there. More plausible would be to suggest that Calvin had received his basic education in philosophy from teachers of the late *via moderna* school where Mair was a respected authority, but even this thesis has not been properly examined and sources on the young Calvin are scarce. (Lane 1999, 16-25; on Mair's theology and philosophy, see Slotemaker & Witt forthcoming.)

The Reformers' views on Philosophy, Natural Theology and Philosophers

Luther's earliest known critical comments on philosophers as “doubters full of opinions” date already from the time of his theology studies in Erfurt:

“Although I have held that the spoils of philosophy are not to be utterly rejected insofar as they are suitable to the sacred matters of theology ... The world is full of

Chrysippuses, yes even Chimeras and Hydras! The poets could fashion nothing more expressive and humorous to ridicule the quarrels, battles, and sects of the philosophers, than such monsters as these: laughable indeed, yet also appropriate and most acute in their witty pungency. Therefore, love sound, faithful, and pure authors, or at least (if necessary it must be so) join them to you in secular familiarity, the philosophers I mean, that is to say, the doubters full of opinions” (Luther 2009, 258 trans. by Philipp Rosemann in Rosemann 2007, 179).

Although placed in a text strongly colored by humanist language, it echoes similar comments found among the *via moderna* (Kärkkäinen 2010, 477). However, during his early years in Wittenberg Luther used the Aristotelian theory of motion in a positive manner as a tool for articulating a central theme of his theology: the justification of the sinner. A key idea for Luther was a succession of existence of two contrary attributes in one human subject. According to Ockham, human being is progressing from morally good to better in a series of successive states, where first one possesses attributes of being righteous (*iustus*) to a degree a and not-righteous to the degree b and then not-righteous to the degree a and righteous to the degree b. Luther applied the principle to total sinfulness and total righteousness, which according to him are not successive states, but instead co-exist in the human being during her spiritual movement towards becoming righteous. In one sense they are mutually exclusive attributes, but at the same time they exist as partial realities: the one waxing and the other waning. One must note that here Luther made use of an idea found in Ockham, but applied it in a different way. Luther even considered the whole of creation as being in motion, and examined the relationships between the persons of the Trinity as analogous to physical movement but did not develop the idea into a philosophical theory of being (Dieter 2001: 344-5; 375-

7). At the same time Luther applied Aristotle's theory of knowledge to theology, because he considered the union between Christ and believer as analogous to the Aristotelian idea of the non-substantial unity of the intellect with the intelligible. As intellect and its object are one in the act of intellection, so are Christ and Christian united in the word of the Gospel and in faith (Dieter 2001: 260-75). Moreover, during the same years Luther theologially applied the concept of *synderesis*, which can be found in the natural philosophy of his teacher Trutfetter. Trutfetter had presented *synderesis*, which was traditionally conceived as unerring faculty closely related to the conscience, as both voluntary and intellectual power leading human being to know and will the good in general, although the conscience may lead the human being to err in the particular applications of the general good. Luther adopted the twofold nature of the *synderesis*, and described *synderesis* of the will including a desire to be saved, but considered it active also when one follows one's distorted selfish will against God's will (Kärkkäinen 2012: 891-2).

The classic case where Luther takes a definite stance on philosophical issues and philosophers is the *Heidelberg disputation* (1518). Although the disputation as a whole has a theological focus, its latter part – 12 of a total of 40 theses – discusses philosophy. (On the disputation, see Dieter 2001.) Luther argues that Aristotle's philosophy, if understood in its own right, is futile and harmful to theology and even to understanding questions of natural philosophy. This attack on philosophy is clearly directed at Aristotle's own texts, and in a humanist manner Luther tries to find the Philosopher's own voice without referring to later interpreters. To validate his argument, Luther presents Aristotle's views of the mortality of the soul and the eternity of the world, which had both caused trouble for generations of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian

philosophers. Furthermore, Luther presents the principles of Aristotle's physics in a way that lead to the impossibility of a real distinction between matter and form. Furthermore, Luther denies that Aristotle had a genuine concept of eternity, and interprets the relevant expressions to mean that something is eternal only from a certain point of view, but in reality is transient, which for Luther contradicts the Christian view of the eternity of God and the immortality of human intellectual soul (Dieter 2001: 627-8).

Luther's repudiation of philosophy in the Heidelberg disputation was targeted specifically at Aristotle, and from that viewpoint he considered some other ancient philosophers more positively. These included Plato's doctrines of ideas and the theory of participation, which Luther judged to be better tools for natural philosophy because of their compatibility with Christian understanding of creation. Scholars have noted that Luther's early theology contained expressions that can be considered Platonist in some sense, and that he uses Plato in the elucidation of some theological ideas. However, only in the Heidelberg disputation does Luther clearly contrast Aristotle and Plato to the favor of the latter, together with other ancient philosophers criticized by Aristotle. In his later works Luther continues to refer to Plato in positive terms, although with growing criticism towards the speculative nature of Plato's philosophy and without plans to develop a Christian philosophy on a Platonist basis (Kopperi 1997: 225-31).

Nevertheless, at the time of the Heidelberg disputation Luther was not completely dissociated from his early Aristotelian education. According to Dieter, the view of Aristotle's philosophy dating back to Ockham was constitutive for his rejection of Aristotle, although Luther never explicitly refers to Ockham or other late medieval authors in his interpretations of Aristotle's. Therefore, even when Luther turned against

the philosophy of Aristotle, it was, at least partially, the Aristotle of Ockham and his followers that he rejected. The crucial points of his inherited interpretation were the rejection of a real distinction between form and matter, and between components of movement (mover, movement, and end of movement) in physical movement (Dieter 2001: 343; 630).

Following the Heidelberg disputation Luther continued to attack Aristotelian philosophy, which eventually contributed to the reforms of the curriculum of the University of Wittenberg where the teaching of Aristotelian philosophy was discontinued in the early 1520s. The *Organon* (along with *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*) found Luther's approval even during these years, but he considered *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and *On the Soul* as the worst of the Philosopher's works. In his treatise *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520), Luther demands the removal of these books written by the "blind pagan" Aristotle. He especially highlights the content of the *Ethics* as contrary to the Christian doctrine of virtues, as well as the idea of the mortality of the human soul in *De anima*. However, it has been claimed that when Aristotle again gained more acceptance in the university through reforms initiated by Melanchthon, a theological basis for the more positive attitude towards philosophy in general and Aristotle in particular was laid in Luther's sharp distinction between the domains of divine and civil laws, which he had been developing since 1521. Luther did not openly oppose restoring the Aristotelian lectures, and some positive comments on Aristotle creep into his late works (Scheible 1996: 123; 142; 144).

Luther's most important contributions to the discussion on the relationship between theology and philosophy during these years are to be found in his disputation theses. In

the *Disputation on the human being* (1536) Luther praises reason as the most excellent gift of God, even as something divine in humans. However, the Aristotelian definition of human as a rational animal shows, according to Luther, the feebleness of philosophy in providing reliable knowledge, at least in the case of human beings. In his explication of this main thesis Luther uses the Aristotelian fourfold scheme of causes: philosophy conveys some weak knowledge of the material cause of human beings and contradictory opinions about the formal cause, the intellectual soul. The efficient and final causes of human beings as creatures of God (efficient) made for eternal life (final) belong solely to the domain of theology (White 1994: 76-7; 80-1).

Furthermore, even during the Reformation years some features of Luther's actual use of philosophy appear to be traceable to his early education in Aristotelianism. Luther's criticism of Zwingli's colored position parallels the criticism of Scotists in his early theology (Bolliger 2003: 426-31). However, in the late disputations Luther also openly attacks certain positions of the *via moderna*. In his *Disputation on "The Word was Made Flesh"* (1539), he maintains that the maxim every truth agrees with the truth does not entail that the same thing is true in different disciplines, especially in philosophy and theology. Luther takes as the target of his criticism the Sorbonne, which can be identified with theologians like John Mair from the University of Paris. In his *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ* (1540) Luther elaborates the idea into semantic considerations of theological discourse as a new kind of language in a way that again is not completely dissimilar to the authorities of the *via moderna* (White 1994: 130; 347).

During the early years of the Reformation Melanchthon shared Luther's harsh criticism of philosophy in general. As Luther, he focused on philosophy's pernicious influence on theology. In 1521 Melanchthon specified that not all parts of philosophy, such as mathematics or zoology, are harmful. According to him, Luther's criticism is targeted at (Aristotelian) philosophical explanations of the principles of natural philosophy, which he identifies with metaphysics. The criticism of metaphysics seems to be grounded in scepticism of natural theology. Melanchthon also shared Luther's view of the fundamental disagreement between Aristotelian ethics and Christian faith (Frank 2003: 52-3).

The appropriation of Aristotelian ethics was one of the main areas where Melanchthon's view underwent a substantial change from the late 1520s onwards. In the study reform of 1526, Aristotle was still in disfavor and Melanchthon substituted the *Nicomachean Ethics* with Cicero's *On Duties*. Nevertheless, already during next the two years he devoted himself to studying the *Nicomachean Ethics* with the intention of lecturing on it publicly, which resulted first in a commentary in 1529 and later in several commentaries and lectures on the same work. During this phase, Melanchthon began to consider Aristotle as the methodological ideal for teaching ethics and politics, without dismissing Cicero as the authority in the discussion on virtues (Kuropka 2002: 177; 276; 286-7).

The rehabilitation of Aristotle's *Ethics* was preceded by a rewriting of logical textbooks in the spirit of Aristotle (on Melanchthon's logic, see chapter ?). These were soon followed by an intensive study of other works by Aristotle, including his *Politics*, *Physics*, and *On the Soul* in both lectures and publications. This radical reorientation

was possible only through a strict demarcation being made between the domains of theology and philosophy. On the one hand, philosophy or philosophers – which must here be understood as meaning mainly Aristotelians – had nothing to say about such theological themes as God, or the remission of sins. Melanchthon also continued to point out themes where Aristotle's views collided with Christian faith. On the other, Melanchthon developed a basis for a Lutheran natural theology, a rational and argumentative method for discussing the doctrine of God. Nonetheless, Melanchthon highlighted Aristotle's works as ideals for teaching logic, natural philosophy, ethics and politics, but did not neglect the contribution of other ancient philosophers. In moral philosophy, Aristotle provided the general methodological framework, whereas Cicero remained the authority in the discussion of virtues. Although a heathen philosopher, Cicero was also influential in Melanchthon's natural theology, which was closely connected to the Stoic epistemology of natural light and inborn knowledge of the theoretical and practical principles (Frank 1995 esp. 17; 23-4; 112-3; 118; Kuroпка 2002: 177; 182).

As the theoretical basis for a rational knowledge of God, Melanchthon proposed an ontological similarity between God and the human mind. Humans were originally created with the capability to know God, although this capability was seriously damaged by the Fall, resulting in uncertain and unreliable knowledge about God without the aid of the special revelation. However, the remaining natural knowledge testified to by the writings of the heathen philosophers derives from this capability which was part of the original constitution of a human being. Its remaining core lies in the natural spirit of the human, which can identify God as a spiritual and intelligent being. From this basic notion, philosophers have been able to conclude that God is

immaterial and eternal, etc. This relatively optimistic view of the possibility of gaining knowledge of God encouraged Melanchthon to carefully study philosophical arguments for apologetical purposes (Frank 1995: 198-9; 209).

Although there is little evidence of a Platonist influence on Melanchthon's philosophical views, some hints of the influence of Platonist philosophy independent of Ciceronian sources from 1530s onwards are evident. At that time Melanchthon seems to have read ancient Platonists such as Imblichus, Proculus, and Priscian, and his Aristotle interpretation shows strong affinities with the Platonist Simplicius, although a direct literary connection cannot be established (Salatowsky 2006: 92; 130).

As for Zwingli, the influence of the Protestant Reformation, which he had fully endorsed by 1522, made him join in criticism of scholasticism including of his own Scotist background. However, the critical tones seem to have only shadowed Zwingli's interest in Scotist authors without completely extinguishing it. Finally, the discussion of the nature of the Eucharist from 1525 onwards, where Zwingli advocated the symbolic view of the presence of Christ's body in the Eucharistic elements against Luther's rivalling realist view, transferred this interest to a new level, enabling him to use Scotist metaphysics as a philosophical basis for his theological argumentation. Nonetheless, now in the context of the Reformation and humanism Zwingli did not highlight the affinities of his basic metaphysical principles with Scotism. However, when comparing Zwingli's early comments on the Scotists and his reformatory writings, the similarity is clear (Bolliger 2003, 505-12).

Scotist thinking in Zwingli is mainly to be found in two doctrines: 1. The Scotist view of infinity, where infinity was considered as primary attribute of God and consequently the whole reality, norm of other divine attributes, and categorically distinguished from the finite and temporary nature of the creation; 2. The use of formal distinction as the third option between the metaphysical real and rational distinctions. Zwingli does not discuss these philosophical doctrines for their own sake, but uses them as tools for developing theological doctrines. As regards infinity, Zwingli applies Scotist theories of infinity mostly in the explanation of the knowledge of God and divine nature, where infinity serves as the primary attribute of the divine, to which other attributes such as eternity and omnipotence are proportioned. Particularly important for Zwingli is also the principle according to which there is no proportion between finite creation and the infinite Creator, which was an integral part of the late medieval Scotist tradition (Bolliger 2003, 395-423).

The other core Scotist doctrine, formal distinction, appears most clearly in Zwingli's eucharistic controversy with Luther, where it serves to ground his interpretation of the expression "This is my body" in the words of institution. The formal distinction enabled him to interpret the identity predication as the expression of a rational identity between the bread and Christ's heavenly body together with the formal presence of the body in the bread, which did not contradict the real non-identity and real absence. Zwingli applies the formal distinction here quite heavily for his own theological purposes in a way that is far removed from its original Scotist context. In contrast, in the theology of the Trinity and Christology, Zwingli uses the distinction almost traditionally (Bolliger 2003, 434-5).

In comparison with the Wittenberg Reformers, Zwingli's relationship to philosophy has its own distinctive character. Zwingli was never deeply involved in reforming a university like Luther and Melanchthon, and perhaps this is why his career does not include such stages of harsh criticism and reappraisal of the philosophical heritage as theirs did. Nevertheless, Zwingli's use of Scotist philosophy reveals a pattern which is not far from the influence of the *via moderna* in Luther's thinking. Accordingly, the use of ancient philosophers (apart from Aristotle) was never so prominent in these two coeval Reformers as it was in the somewhat younger Calvin and Melanchthon.

In Calvin, philosophy, if understood correctly, holds a high position in the service of theology, as it did in the humanist Christian philosophy of Melanchthon. At the beginning of the *Institutes*, Calvin defines wisdom as knowledge of God and human beings in a way that reflects the Stoic definition of philosophy mediated to contemporary humanism by Guillaume Budé, and uses the expression "Christian philosophy" as a designation of his work (Partee 1977: 10; 14). However, in Calvin's version, human reason has a strongly instrumental role compared to that of the Scriptures, faith, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, which together convey the correct knowledge of God and human beings. Besides, according to Calvin the reason for the errors among the heathen philosophers derives from their ignorance of human sinfulness and its implications, which are known only through the Scriptures and not by reasoning. Occasionally Calvin describes human reason as blind. Despite this, Calvin is ready to give credit to the classical philosophers regarding many issues. His view here is based on the idea shared with the Wittenberg Reformers that reason alone is not so blind that it cannot be helpful in the domain of earthly matters pertaining to government, the household, and so on (Partee 1977: 15; 34).

Concerning the natural knowledge of divine things, Calvin follows the same lines as the Wittenberg Reformers, especially Melanchthon. Philosophers can know that God exists, but cannot correctly identify what God is like. In particular, they cannot come to the idea through natural reason that God created the world out of nothing. However, the natural knowledge of God does not include only God's existence, but also that God should be worshipped. The specific nature of such natural knowledge of God in Calvin has been a subject of long-standing discussions among scholars since the dispute between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner in the early 20th century (Partee 1977: 44; 46-7; Frank 2003: 69-71).

Calvin seems to have had little to do with Aristotle's philosophy. As is the case with the Wittenberg Reformers, some Aristotelian themes appear sporadically in Calvin's theology. These include the view of God as the highest good, hylomorphism, the use of the four causes, and Aristotelian substance metaphysics. However, usage of such Aristotelian elements was so common at the time that it does not reveal any thoroughgoing commitment to Aristotelianism vis-a-vis Luther and Melanchthon. However, on the basis of the fair amount of references to Aristotle there is no need to doubt Calvin's knowledge of Aristotle's works, even if a deeper influence is unapparent (Partee 1977: 97; 99). A target of Calvin's explicit criticism of Aristotle is the view of divine providence mediated by secondary causes, which he associates with the Epicurean idea of the gods' disinterest of mundane matters. Epicureans themselves serve in Calvin's texts as the worst of the heathen philosophers. In denying any idea of creation, providence, and immortality of the soul, and considering pleasure as the

highest good, they appear to him as "crass despisers of piety" (Partee 1977: 99-101; 104).

However, in Plato and the Stoics Calvin found allies in building a Christian philosophy. In the spirit of Erasmus, Luther, and Melanchthon, Calvin praises Plato over other philosophers, but considers Augustine's Christian philosophy as too Platonic. Although Calvin may have read Plato in Latin translations, much of his knowledge and appreciation of Plato, as well as of other philosophers and schools of ancient philosophy, may have been mediated by Cicero (Partee 1977: 110-1; 117). Concerning the Stoics, whom he knew, in addition to Cicero, at least through reading Seneca, Calvin prefers their view of providence to that of the Epicureans, although he distances himself from their use of the term 'fate'. In fact, one can consider Calvin's view of divine providence and predestination of a free God as a kind of middle way between Stoic fate and Epicurean chance as principles governing all things. Furthermore, Calvin approves of the Stoic praise of nature and the (Aristotelian/Stoic) view of human beings having a rational and social nature (Partee 1977: 120-2).

The Reformers as Philosophers

All four Reformers occasionally commented on philosophical discussions. Among them, only Melanchthon appears as a professional writer and teacher of philosophy, alongside his career as a theologian. The reputation of Melanchthon as a philosopher has remained controversial mainly for two reasons. First, the nature of his philosophy was, following the usual character of humanist philosophy at the time, strongly influenced by various traditions of ancient philosophy and therefore susceptible to charges of eclecticism (Frank 1995: 15-6; 46-7). Among the philosophical disciplines, logic was central for

Melanchthon, but since Melanchthon's logic will be discussed elsewhere in this book (see chapter ??), what follows will concentrate on other topics. These include natural philosophy (and psychology as part of it), ethics, and political philosophy.

As seen above, Luther's writings include various references to Aristotelian natural philosophy ranging from the applications of physical theories in his early writings to his highly polemical discussions of Aristotle's hylomorphic theory of the human soul. Only occasionally, as in the Heidelberg disputation, did Luther engage himself in discussions of natural philosophical issues, and generally it was with the intention to repudiate Aristotle's relevance to theology. Concerning the question of the immortality of the human intellectual soul, Luther remained in later years sceptical towards the possibilities of natural reason and philosophy. In 1532 he clearly states that Aristotle did not consider the soul to be immortal and that Plato did not succeed in proving it, but only recited the opinions of others (Salatowsky 2006: 67).

But in Wittenberg it was not Luther but Melanchthon who was in charge of the philosophical disciplines. Several years after the reintroduction of Aristotle lectures in Wittenberg, Melanchthon began his publications on natural philosophy. He published his first textbook in this field, *Commentary on the Soul* in 1540, which is relatively late, although the first textbook on physics came out even nine years later. Nevertheless, Melanchthon had been preparing the publications since the early 1530s (Salatowsky 2006: 70; 73). His dedicatory letter to the *Commentary* reveals that he still considered the work to be a short introduction and recommended to the reader three earlier treatises on the same subject for further reference. The three treatises are *On the Soul and Life* by Juan Luis Vives, a famous humanist, and two treatises by already departed authors: *Sum*

of *Whole Physics* by Jodocus Trutfetter, a scholastic philosopher from Erfurt, and *Compendium of Natural Philosophy* by his own Lutheran colleague from Wittenberg, Johannes Bernhardi, whose textbook on natural philosophy had been posthumously published in two editions, in 1537 and 1538 (Kärkkäinen 2012: 894; 896).

Melanchthon's remark in the dedicatory letter shows that he was both a traditionalist and a reformer of psychology. In general, the work and its later edition, *Liber de anima* (1553), follow the traditional form of late medieval treatises on Aristotelian psychology, except for the passage on human anatomy, which Melanchthon included in the first part of the treatise. Regarding the contents, Melanchthon wrote in a thematic style similar to his other textbooks, and made use of authors who had been less used by others. In the section on human anatomy, Melanchthon uses Galen from the Greek original and later his contemporary, Andreas Vesalius (Salatowsky 2006: 112-3).

Apart from the obvious influence of his Lutheran context, Melanchthon also adopted certain elements from ancient philosophy. The human soul was for him a strictly spiritual entity, and he was even willing to posit a distinct animal soul responsible for bodily functions and material movements, which he identified with Aristotle's *entelecheia*. When discussing this Melanchthon entered into a dispute with his colleague Vitus Amerbach about the correct rendering of *entelecheia*, in which he attempted to defend Cicero's reading of it as a "continuous movement" rather than perfection. Furthermore, Melanchthon saw *entelecheia* as an imperfect movement towards the perfection of form. All this in some way underlined the distinction between body and soul and the provisional nature of the philosophical understanding of the human soul. Considering the soul essentially as a movement distinct from the body,

Melanchthon could avoid the Aristotelian conception of the soul as a form of the body, which Luther had seen as implying the soul's mortality. However, according to Melanchthon the philosophical definition of the soul defines only its general nature, and only theology brings knowledge of the nature of the immortal human soul. Theology, which relies on special revelation, defines the human soul as an immortal spiritual substance capable of understanding. Thus Melanchthon further develops Luther's ideas by spiritualizing the notion of the intellectual human soul, but at the same time bringing the Aristotelian definition of the soul, at least nominally, into the discussion (Salatowsky 2006: 93-4; 103-4).

Unlike Melanchthon, who wrote a treatise on psychology, Calvin is not particularly interested in systematically discussing the powers of the soul. However, he prefers Aristotle's division of the soul's faculties to Plato's, and even considers the division between intellect and will to be useful. As a theologian, Calvin adds to the natural capacities of humans the capacity to obey God, which had been lost in the fall. Regarding the present state of human beings, Calvin focuses on the depravity of the will due to original sin, and calls the depraved part of a human being, or the natural human being, flesh, in contrast to the spirit of man which has been regenerated by grace (Partee 1977: 31-4; 59). According to Calvin, the initial image of God in human beings, lost in the fall, consisted of reason capable of discerning good and evil, the seed of religion, a sense of shame and guilt, and the governance of the laws (Partee 1977: 52).

An important part of the epistemology of Melanchthon was the notion of permanent principles of knowledge. Here Melanchthon used terminology influenced by Cicero, and through him by the Stoic notions of common notions (*koinai ennoiai*) and

preconception (*prolepsis*). Melancthon understood these permanent principles as the third safeguard of reliable knowledge (*kriterion*) in addition to sense perception and syllogistic reasoning. All of these belonged to the capabilities which God had given to humans at creation, and are accessible to all humans even in the present conditions tainted by original sin. The principles of knowledge consist of propositions which differ in the diverse fields of knowledge, such as "cause is not subsequent to its effect" in natural philosophy, or "the whole is greater than any of its parts" in geometry (Frank 1995: 116; 166; 168).

Criticism of the medieval theories of freedom of the will has been considered a hallmark of the Reformation. As part of his larger criticism of medieval scholastic theology, Luther developed the view that in matters of salvation, human will is not free to choose between good and evil. This led him into a dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam, against whom Luther published his *Bondage of the Will* (1525). Luther's main position was that we are free to choose only as regards matters that are below us – the matters of this life – but not matters that are above us, namely our salvation. Occasionally Luther is ready to extend God's general influence to all human actions, approaching a genuinely deterministic view. Luther even proposed that God works through sinful human actions, but expressly denied that God would be the author of sin and consequently the origin of evil. In his argument Luther resorts to a rather excessive use of the concepts of necessity and predestination (Lohse 1999: 167). Calvin sees freedom of the will along the same general lines as Luther: the will is free only regarding external matters, which he calls "indifferent" (Partee 1977: 73).

Melanchthon developed a more nuanced view of freedom of the will. As well, Melanchthon saw human will as relatively free in worldly matters, but bound as regards God. He then discussed freedom in worldly things in connection with civil righteousness. On account of this freedom it is possible to demand external good works, which are useful even if not justifying before God. Furthermore, freedom in worldly matters does not automatically imply the capability for a good life even in terms of external works, which leads one to know one's sinfulness and to seek the grace of God. Concerning the role of the will with respect to God, Melanchthon held that the human will is not free to fulfill divine law or produce spiritually good works without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. However, with the aid of the Holy Spirit the will becomes free to perform good works before God (Wengert 2012: 188; 193-4; 206).

Regarding the psychology of moral reasoning, the Wittenberg reformers gradually dropped the medieval concept of *synderesis* and articulated their views using the Pauline notion of conscience, which Melanchthon identifies with the total process of forming an ethical judgement concerning good and evil (Kärkkäinen 2012: 898). Luther's famous statement about the conscience bound to the Scripture, during the Diet of Worms (1521), has many times served as a kind of manifesto for freedom of conscience. The call for freedom of the conscience regarding the laws enacted by the Pope and the Church councils was indeed an integral part of Luther's criticism of ecclesiastical practices. During the Reformation, Luther, and Calvin following him, turned away from considering conscience as part of the process of practical reasoning. Instead, the function of conscience as a judge of the ethical-spiritual character of the whole person was emphasized. This has been seen as a further development of Scotus's

and Ockham's views of the close link between conscience and the virtues, and as anticipating later views of conscience as an independent faculty (Langston 2001: 77)

As seen above, Melanchthon's revival of Aristotelianism included lectures on Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*. Aristotle gave him the ideal of moral and political philosophy, but he did not dismiss Cicero either. Aristotle served as the methodological basis, whereas Cicero was important for the discussion of virtues. After distinguishing moral philosophy from theology, Melanchthon could adopt the Aristotelian teleological view of human life as a pursuit of happiness, which consists of virtue, although civil virtue is not the same as the final end of Christian life. Generally speaking, Melanchthon sharply distinguishes between philosophical ethics and theology, but sees no disagreement between them. Furthermore, Melanchthon strongly emphasizes the role of the authorities in society and refers to them as substitutes of God. In his commentaries on the *Ethics*, Melanchthon also discussed the ethically and theologically central concepts of justice/righteousness and freedom of choice (Kuropka 2002: 177-81; 188; 242-244). Melanchthon's moral thinking is based on the knowledge of natural law, which constitutes part of the natural knowledge given to human beings by the Creator (Frank 1995: 140-158).

Although Calvin is interested in ethics primarily as a Christian theologian and in the context of salvation, he comments on several ideas from ancient moral philosophy. He rejects the Stoic rule of following nature on the basis of his view of the corruption of nature. Contrary to this, the Stoic view on the natural sociability of humans finds Calvin's approval, yet supplemented with Christian pity for the suffering which contradicts the Stoic ideal of apathy. Interestingly, Calvin was accused by his opponents

of holding the Stoic doctrine of the equality of the vices because of his refusal to distinguish between mortal and venial sins. Calvin's answer to this accusation was that all sins can be mortal without being equal; they are only equal insofar as they offend the holiness of God and are subject to his judgment (i.e. mortal), but in other respects they are not equal (Partee 1977, 69-71).

Calvin admits that there have been truly virtuous people among the heathens. According to him this is not due to their natural capacities as fallen human beings, but to God's grace instead. Regarding this matter, Calvin seems to posit a mode of operation in God's supernatural grace which creates virtuous acts without cleansing the person of original sin (Partee 1977: 34).

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