The Humanistic, Fideistic Philosophy of Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560)

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by

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ABSTRACT
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This dissertation examines the way Philip Melanchthon, author of the *Augsburg Confession* and Martin Luther's closest co-worker, sought to establish the relationship between faith and reason in the cradle of the Lutheran tradition, Wittenberg University. While Melanchthon is widely recognized to have played a crucial role in the Reformation of the Church in the sixteenth century as well as in the Renaissance in Northern Europe, he has in general received relatively little scholarly attention, few have attempted to explore his philosophy in depth, and those who have examined his philosophical work have come to contradictory or less than helpful conclusions about it. He has been regarded as an Aristotelian, a Platonist, a philosophical eclectic, and as having been torn between Renaissance humanism and Evangelical theology. An understanding of the way Melanchthon related faith and reason awaits a well-founded and accurate account of his philosophy.

Having stated the problem and finding it inadequately treated in the secondary literature, this dissertation presents an account of Melanchthon's philosophical development. Finding that his philosophy was ultimately founded upon his understanding of and method in rhetoric and dialectics, this dissertation explicates his mature accounts of these arts. It then presents an account of Melanchthon's philosophy as both humanistic (i.e., rhetorically based and practically rather than speculatively oriented) and fideistic (i.e, skeptical about the product of human reason alone, but finding certainty in philosophy founded upon, and somewhat limited by, Christian faith). After a final assessment of claims about Melanchthon's philosophy from the secondary literature, this dissertation considers how such a humanistic, fideistic philosophy might be helpful for Christians in a philosophically post-modern situation.

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First, I thank God that I've had the opportunity to complete this dissertation, which for me has not been merely an academic or professional exercise, but an exploration of how I might move ahead in life and service with integrity and in good faith. I pray that somehow this dissertation can in some very small way advance or support the mission of the Church to the glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I offer sincere thanks and gratitude to the faculty and staff of the Departments of Philosophy and Theology at Marquette University. Most especially I wish to thank Dr. James South, without whose guidance, encouragement, constructive criticism, and patience this dissertation would have been literally inconceivable. I am grateful as well to Drs. Noel Adams, Mickey Mattox, and Jennifer Hockenbery, the other members of my dissertation committee, each of whom has graciously offered their time and wisdom, not only as committee members, but throughout my years of study at Marquette. I gladly acknowledge a lifelong debt of gratitude to Dr. Richard Taylor who drew me into graduate studies in philosophy at Marquette, who was my first mentor in philosophy, and who introduced me to the fascinating world of medieval philosophy. Many thanks as well to Dr. Markus Wriedt who in his years at Marquette sharpened my understanding of the theology and history of the Wittenberg Reformation and who paved the way for a summer's research in Mainz, Bretten, and Wittenberg; Günter Frank who shared his time and the resources of the Europaische Melanchthon-Akademie Bretten during my short visit there; and Dr. Kevin Gibson whose urging and encouragement as Director of

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

This dissertation will seek to present the foundations and principles of the philosophy of Philip Melanchthon, the sixteenth century reformer of Church and school, close colleague of Martin Luther, and dedicated humanist.   Melanchthon has been most widely recognized as an important figure for the Protestant Reformation, and so it may not be surprising that this dissertation will find that, as others have claimed, Melanchthon's account of philosophy's possibilities and limits, its proper goals, method, and scope, was closely related to his understanding of Christian faith.   However, as the title of this dissertation indicates, and contrary to what many have thought they've known about Melanchthon, I will propose that his philosophy was fideistic in that it was founded upon and consistently limited by his theological principles.

This dissertation will also find that Melanchthon's philosophy was humanistic in that it can only be appreciated once one understands the foundational role of rhetoric for philosophy (as well as for theology) in his thought. That rhetoric should play such an important role for Melanchthon may not be surprising, especially to those who are somewhat familiar with the man's work. Melanchthon has been widely recognized to have contributed significantly to the development of Northern European Renaissance humanism, and Renaissance humanists widely regarded rhetoric as the highest and most comprehensive of the *artes liberales*. Nor is this dissertation the first place such a claim about Melanchthon's rhetoric has been made; I was first led to consider its importance for Melanchthon through a reading of John's Schneider's *Philipp Melanchthon's Rhetorical*

Construal of Biblical Authority, and was further encouraged by some of Timothy

Wengert's research.[1]

Although the recognition that rhetoric played a foundational role for

Melanchthon's philosophy and theology is not new, I hope that this dissertation will

clarify the way that rhetoric provided the methodological scheme within which

Melanchthon pursued both philosophy and theology. And in doing so I hope that this

dissertation will help make Melanchthon better known by helping to disentangle and

clarify the relationships between *fides et ratio* and between philosophy and the *artes*

logicales in Melanchthon's thought. And in doing this, I hope that this dissertation might

make some small contribution to our understanding of the intellectual history of both the

Renaissance and the Reformation as well as of Melanchthon.

The questions of the relationships between philosophy and religious thought on

the one hand and rhetoric on the other have been of great importance for philosophy from

its very beginning. Indeed, philosophy in the West may almost be said to have taken

form in fifth and fourth century B.C. Greece by way of distinguishing itself from

religious myth and rhetoric. The efforts of Socrates some twenty-five hundred years ago

to distinguish his work from that of the Sophists is familiar to all who have read Plato's

Sophist, *Phaedrus*, and *Gorgias*.[2]

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[1]   John Schneider, P*hilip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority:* Oratio Sacra (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); also Schneider's "Melanchthon's Rhetoric as a Context for Understanding his Theology," in *Melanchthon in Europe: His Works and Influence Beyond* Wittenberg, ed. Karl Maag (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999): 141-159, especially 149. See especially by Timothy Wengert *Philipp Melanchthon's* "Annotationes in Johannem*" in Relation to Its Predecessors and Contemporaries* (Geneva: Librarie Droz, 1987), 170-212, and *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melanchthon's Exegetical Dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[2]   Standard English translations of these are in John M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001): *Sophist,* tr. by Nicholas P. White, 235-293; *Phaedrus,* tr. by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, 506-556; and *Gorgias,* tr. Donald Zeyl, 791-869.

One hundred years ago F.M. Cornford's *From Religion to Philosophy* was founded upon a provocative thesis about the very origins of philosophy in the Aegean:

> There is a real continuity between the earliest rational speculation and the religion which lay behind it…Philosophy inherited from religion certain great conceptions—for instance the ideas of 'God,' 'Soul,' 'Destiny,' Law'—which continued to circumscribe the movements of rational thought and to determine their main directions.[3]

Though Cornford's work was inspired in part by Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, published in 1871,[4] *From Religion to Philosophy* led to a transformation of our understanding the origins of philosophy in Greece, still reflected in more recent work on the pre-Socratics.[5] And although philosophy's ancestry in Greek religious thought two and a half millenia ago has been recognized only relatively recently, the effort to describe or propose ways to relate philosophy and religion has occupied theologians and philosophers from fourth century Athens through to the twenty-first century.[6]

The question of how to relate *fides et ratio* has been at issue within Christian thought at least since the apostle Paul spoke to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17:16-34). While the second century Church father Tertullian is somewhat inaccurately credited with declaring "I believe because it is absurd,"[7] the fideistic irrationalism of this

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[3] F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1991), xiii.

[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (with *The Case of Wagner)* tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966); see also Robert Ackerman's forward in Cornford, vii.

[5] See for example L.P. Gerson, *God and Greek Philosophy: Studies in the Early History of Natural Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1990); and Glenn Most, "The Poetics of Early Greek Philosophy," in A. A. Long, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 332-362.

[6] P.L. Quinn & Charles Taliaferro, eds., *A Companion to the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997) covers many aspects of the subject; see also Walter Burkert, "Prehistory of Presocratic Philosophy in an Orientalizing Context," in *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy*, Daniel W. Graham and Patrica Curd, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 55-88.

[7] Robert Sider claims the quotation was misderived from Tertullian's *De Carne Christe*, V, 4, in which Tertullian wrote, "The Son of God was crucified: I am not ashamed--because it is shameful. The Son of God died: it is immediately credible--because it is silly. He was buried, and rose again: it is certain--

statement nevertheless seems to echo still in the rhetoric of science-denying Christian fundamentalism in our own day. In any case, Christian theologians have since the first century sought out ways to relate philosophy and theology, faith and reason, and, within the last several hundred years, natural science and religion.[8]

In his first published book, the great twentieth-century church historian Jaroslav Pelikan rather shockingly asserted that as of 1950 a true or satisfactory Christian philosophy had yet to be found, at least from the perspective of his own faith tradition. As he wrote:

> If Jesus Christ is truly the Lord, then the intellect, too, must serve Him. It will perform this service if it takes up the task of working out a Christian philosophy.

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because it is impossible." See Sider, "Credo Quia Absurdum?" *The Classical World,* 73 (7): 417-419; also, *Tertullian: De Carne Christe: (Tertullian's Dissertation on the Incarnation),* tr. by Ernest Evans (London: S.P.C.K., 1956), 19.

[8] L .J. Pojman and Michael Rea, eds., *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2008) provides a good introductory selection of readings on this topic from across two millenia of Christian history. Ingolf Dalferth explores several ways the relationship has been conceived throughout Christian history in *Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988). SachikoKusukawa examines the relationship among the first Protestants in "Uses of Philosophy in Reformation Thought," in Russell L. Friedman and Lauge O. Nielson *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400-1700* Texts and Studies in the History of Philosophy Volume 53 (Dordrecht: Kluwer 2003), 143-164; see also Maier, Hans. *An der Grenze der Philosophie. Melanchthon-Lavater-David Friedrich Strauss* (Tübingen: J. C B. Mohr, 1909); Charles Partee. *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); and Harris E. Harbison, *The Christian Scholar in the Age of the Reformation (*New York: Scribners, 1956). Philip Clayton provides an interesting and helpful account of the relationship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); see also Günter Frank, *Die Vernunft des Gottesdankens: Religionsphilosophische Studien zur frühen Neuzeit.* Quaestiones: Themen und Gesalten der Philosophie 13 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2003), 625-626 (see also however Robert Kolb, "Günter Frank, *Die Vernunft des Gottesdankens: Religionsphilosophische Studien zur frühen Neuzeit.* Questiones: Themen und Gestaten der Philosophie 13," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2005): 625-626. Jack A. Bosnor explores the question from a late twentieth century perspective in *Athens and Jerusalem: The Role of Philosophy in Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993). For the influence of Christianity on the development of natural science see especially David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science: the European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Context, Prehistory to A.D. 1450* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); see also David C. Lindberg and Ronald Numbers, editors, *God & Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

It is to be hoped that twentieth-century Lutheranism may produce Christian thinkers of the ability and consecration necessary for this task.[9]

For many who are not Lutheran, Pelikan's claim must surely have sounded parochial if not simply false. As a graduate student at Marquette University, a Roman Catholic and Jesuit school, I have been fascinated by some of the many ways that that Christians have from the beginning found extremely fruitful ways to relate *fides et ratio*. Especially intriguing has been the recognition that several of the most significant branches of the Christian family tree have related faith and reason in characteristic ways, in close association with respective philosophical authorities. Thus Eastern Orthodoxy is generally regarded to have a great appreciation for and to owe a debt to elements of Neo-Platonic thought.[10] Roman Catholicism has since the eleventh century striven to think the faith in close conversation not only with Saint Augustine but also with Aristotle in and through the writings of Thomas Aquinas and other medieval thinkers.[11] Much more recently, since the 1970's, Protestants of the Reformed and Evangelical traditions have done important work in pursuing questions in the philosophy of religion using the tools of Anglo-American analytic philosophy.[12] The latter stream of scholarship, sometimes

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[9]   Jaroslav Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard: A Study in the History of Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), 120.

[10]   See for example John Meyendorf, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1969), esp. 68-84, and Jaroslav Pelikan's account of the role of Pseudo-Dionysius in Eastern Orthodox thought in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), esp. vol. 1: 344-49 and vol. 2: 242-251.

[11]   Classic and still important accounts of the role of Aristotle in medieval thought are in Etienne Gilson, *The History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955) and Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, vols. 2 and 3* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1963). Arthur Hyman, and James Walsh, eds., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1973) is an excellent introductory anthology of primary texts in English translation. For more recent accounts, see the various essays in Norman Kretzman, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg, eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), esp. Bernard Dod, "Aristotle latinus," 45-79, and C. H. Lohr, "The Medieval Interpretation of Aristotle," 80-98.

[12]   Alvin Plantinga's *God and Other Minds* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1967) represents an important beginning for this movement; see also especially by Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers." *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 1, no. 3 (1984):

referred to as "Reformed epistemology"[13] has been credited with reviving interest in and widespread respect for the legitimacy of work in philosophy of religion in the latest part of the twentieth century. [14]

Pelikan wrote as a Lutheran theologian however, and one can take his claim as indicating that there had been no satisfactory explication of the relationship between faith and philosophy consistent with principles of Lutheran theology as he understood them. Pelikan's assessment is then not only remarkable for its rejection of the ways this relationship has been developed and used in the Orthodox East and the Roman West. It also points to a very puzzling truth about this relationship from within the Lutheran theological tradition. The advent and development Lutheranism through the Reformation of the sixteenth century was surely of greatest importance to the history of Europe and of the development of European thought since that time; that such a theological movement could be found not only devoid of foundational philosophical underpinnings, but indeed that it could proceed without a clear understanding of how to regard philosophy, would be quite significant.

Lutheranism can in fact claim to have been the intellectual cradle of many of the most celebrated European philosophers of the last 500 years, including Leibniz, Wolff,

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253-271; "On Taking Belief in God as Basic," in John Hick, ed., *Classical and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Religion (*Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 484-499; *Warranted Christian Belief (*New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); Plantinga and Wolterstorff, *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); and William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1991); Keith Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1999), extends this approach to the examination of other world religions.

[13] See Michael Suddoth, "Reformed Epistemology Timeline and Bibliography." Michael Suddoth, 1999. http://philofreligion.homestead.com/files/rebibliography.html (accessed May 20th, 2012).

[14] M. W. F. Stone, "The Philosophy of Religion," in A. C. Grayling, ed., *Philosophy 2: Further through the Subject* (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 284-5, and 333-337.

Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard.[15] But that there would not be a core set of beliefs, values, or convictions fundamental to Lutheran thought, the adherence to which (or perhaps the rejection of which) has enabled or empowered such amazing philosophical fecundity would be even more astounding. On the other hand, finding such a core set of concepts or values among the above-named philosophers, almost all of whom were in fact sons of Lutheran pastors,[16] would surely provide an interesting key for understanding each of them, and perhaps for understanding the development of philosophy in Germany and other lands influenced by Lutheranism from the sixteenth century on.

Pelikan suggested that in the absence of any clear approach to or grounding in any particular philosophy, the relationship of *fides et ratio* has been a source of vexation for rather than a starting point for Lutheran thought. As Pelikan accurately enough puts it in the opening line of his book, "Lutheranism has had to face the problem of its relationship to philosophy ever since the Reformation,"[17] and there is warrant for describing this relationship as problematic. It is well known that Martin Luther himself had great misgivings about the philosophy in which he had been trained, writing in his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* in 1518, "Briefly, the whole of Aristotle is to theology as darkness is to light."[18] And as Theo Dieter's, recent *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles.*

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[15]   See David Hockenbery's Introduction to Jennifer Hockenbery, ed., *The Devil's Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 1.
[16]   Ibid.
[17]   Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard,* 1.
[18]   The standard critical edition of the Reformer's writings is *Luthers Werk: Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Schriften*, 65 vols. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1930-199; "Disputatio contra scholasticum theologiam Martin Luther, " vol. 1:221-228. Henceforth, references will be from *Luther's Works* American Edition, 55 vols., Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehman, eds. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fotress, and St. Louis, Concordia, 1956-86); "Disputation Against Scholastic Theology," tr. by Harold J. Grimm, vol. 31, 3-16, here 12 (thesis 50). For examinations of Luther's approach to the faith-reason relationship, see Bruno Bauch, "Unseres philosophisches Interesse an Luther*.*" *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Philosophische Kritik* Band 164, heft 2 (1917): 128-148, and Reinhold Seeburg, "Zur Philosophie Luthers*."*) in the same volume; Brian A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Karl Heinz zur Mühlen, "Luther: Sol, Ratio, Eruditio,

Eine historische Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Philosophie shows,

Luther continued to regard Aristotle's philosophy as inadequate, even where the reformer

did not entirely reject it.[19] Pelikan's *From Luther to Kierkegaard* argued that the

attempts of Luther's theological heirs to solve the *fides et ratio* problem, beginning with

Philip Melanchthon, have tended to weaken Lutheran theology rather than shore it up.[20]

 The decades since the publication of *From Luther to Kierkegaard* have witnessed

a number of attempts in North America to wed Luther's theology to some philosophical

tradition or to find its base in a variety of philosophies. Thus Carl Braaten, Robert

Jensen, and William Lazareth responded enthusiastically if cautiously to Finnish

Lutheran research into purported neo-Platonic themes in Luther's thought.[21] Dennis

Bielfeldt and Paul Hinlicky have urged that classical Lutheranism assumes some sort of

philosophical realism and they have explored this claim from analytic and classical

metaphysical perspectives, respectively.[22] But as is suggested by the essays recently

published in *The Devil's Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition* edited

by Jennifer Hockenbery (and named after one of Luther's more colorful metaphors for

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Aristotleles: Probeartikel zum Sachregister der Weimarer Lutherausgabe," in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte,* Band 14, Heft 2, and Band 15, Heft 1, (1971); Wilbert Rosin, "In Response to Bengt Hägglund: The Importance of Epistemology for Luther's and Melanchthon's Theology." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 44, nos. 2-3 (July 1980): 134-140; Christine Helmer, *The Trinity and Martin Luther: A Study on the Relationship Between Genre, Language, and the Trinity in Luther's Works (1523-1546)* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1999); Dennis Bielfeldt, Mickey L. Mattox, and Paul Hinlicky, *The Substance of the Faith: Luther's Doctrinal Theology for Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008); and the essays in Hockenbery.

[19]   Theodore Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles. Eine historische Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Philosophie*, Theologische Bibliothek Topelmann 105 (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), xvi, 687.

[20]   See the discussion in Chapter One below, esp. 34-54.

[21]   See the essays and responses in Carl Braaten and Robert Jensen, eds., *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Cambridge, 1998).

[22]   See in Bielfeldt, Mattox, and Hinlicky: Dennis Bielfeldt, "Luther's Late Trinitarian Disputations: Semantic Realism and the Trinity," 59-130; and Paul Hinlickey, "Luther's New Language of the Spirit: Trinitarian theology as Critical Dogmatics," 131-190.

philosophy),[23] the search continues for philosophical foundations for Lutheran faith, or for principles for any Lutheran philosophy.[24]

As Hockenbery notes, the twenty-first century scholar will find that the relationship between Lutheranism and philosophy is paradoxical in several regards. This tradition is both rooted in a profound suspicion of human reason and yet has been quite prolific of philosophical offspring. In addition to this, or perhaps because of this, as Hockenbery found through her own experience, one can be identified as Lutheran in thought without being able to identify specifically Lutheran patterns of thought. As she describes her own philosophical development:

> I came to realize that… I did read Augustine as a Lutheran. Moreover, I generally thought like a Lutheran and wrote like a Lutheran. But I was not sure where to go with this. There was no Society or Association for Lutheran Philosophers. And when I went to those clubs for Christian Philosophers I found thoughtful Calvinists and Roman Catholics but not many Lutherans.[25]

This dissertation, I hope, will cast some light on the mysterious relationship between faith and philosophy in Lutheran thought. While it will not be concerned to uncover Luther's own way of working through the relationship of philosophy and theology, it will seek to uncover the roots of the philosophy being developed in the cradle of the Lutheran tradition, the University of Wittenberg, during Luther's career, by Philip Melanchthon. That few who are not Lutherans or scholars of the sixteenth century can be expected to have even heard of Melanchthon and that there has been no scholarly consensus on just how Melanchthon approached and pursued philosophical studies may be factors contributing to the vexatiousness of the relationship between philosophy and Lutheran theology since the sixteenth century.

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[23]   See Jennifer Hockenbery's Epilogue in *The Devil's Whore,* 197.
[24]   See Jennifer Hockenbery's Preface to *The Devil's Whore*, xv-vxii;
[25]   Ibid., xv.

B. Who was Philip Melanchthon?

Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), best known as Martin Luther's closest collaborator in the Protestant Reformation, has with good reason primarily been regarded as a theologian. [26] In 1521 he published the *Loci communes theologici,* "General Topics of Theology," which has been called the first Lutheran systematic theology.[27] Martin Luther praised this as an "unsurpassed" work. Indeed, in responding to Erasmus of Rotterdam's *De libero arbitrio,* "On the Freedom of the Will" (1524),[28] in the introduction to his own *De servo arbitrio,* "Bondage of the Will" (1525)*,* Luther wrote to Erasmus of Melanchthon's *Loci*:

[26]   See Chapter One below, 28-33, for a listing of primary works by and biographies of Melanchthon. For introductions to Melanchthon as a theologian, see Hans Engelland, "Der Ansatz der Theologie Melanchthons," In Walter Ellinger, ed., *Philipp Melanchthon: Forschungsbeiträge zur vierhundersten Wiederkehr seines Todestages dargeboten in Wittenberg, 1960* (Berlin: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1961); Lowell Green, *How Melanchthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel* (Fallbrook, CA: Verdict Publications, 1980); G. A. Herrlinger, *Die Theologie Melanchthons in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und im Zuzammenhang mit der Lehrsgeschichte und Kulturbewegung der Reformation dargestellt* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1879); T. Hoppe, "Die Ansatz der späteren theologischen Entwicklung Melanchtons in den Loci von 1521, " *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 6, (1928-9): 599-615; Robert Kolb, *Confessing the Faith: Reformers Define the Church 1530-1580* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1991); Ulrich Köpf, "Melanchthon als systematscher Theologue neben Luther," in Günter Frank and Johanna Loehr, eds., *Der Theologue Melanchthon.* Melanchthon Schriften der Stadt Bretten, Band 5, (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2000), 103-128; and Wilhelm Neuser "Der Theologie Philip Melanchthons," in *Beitrag zu Geschichte und Lehre der Reformierten Kirche 9*: *Melanchthonstudien* (Niewkirken: Kr. Moers, 1957).

[27]   Latin versions of three editions of the *Loci Communes* are in C. D. Bretschneider and H. E. Bindseil, editors, *Corpus Reformatorum Philippi Melanchthonis Operae quae Supersunt Omnia,* 28 vols. (Brunswick, 1834-60; reprinted New York: Johnson, 1963) (hereafter "CR"): vol. 21; German editions are in CR 22. An English edition of the 1521 version of the *Loci communes theologici,* tr. Lowell Sartre, is in Wilhelm Pauk, ed., *Melanchthon and Bucer,* The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 3-154.

[28]   Desiderius Erasmus, "De libero arbitrio," tr. Gordon Rupp and A. N. Marlow, in Rupp and Philip Watson, eds., *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1969), 33-97. Standard editions of the works of Erasmus are *Opera omnia, emendatiora et avctiora, ad optimas editiones, praecipve qvas ipse Erasmus postremo cvravit, svmma fide exacta, doctorvmqve virorvm notis illvstrata. Recognovit Joannes Clericus* (Hildesheim: G. Olm, 1961-1962), and *Opera omnia / Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami ; recognita et adnotatione critica instructa notisque illustrate (*Amsterdam: North Holland, 1969)*.* See also *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, tr. by Donald B. King (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1963); J. Laurel Carrington, "Desiderius Erasmus," in Carter Lindberg, ed., *The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 34-48; also Boyle M. O'Rourke, *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology* (Toronto/Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

His is a book which, in my judgment, deserves not only being immortalized, but also being included in the Church's canon, in comparison with which your book is, in my opinion, so contemptible and worthless that I feel great pity for you for having defiled your beautiful and skilled manner of speaking with such vile dirt...[29]

In addition to the *Loci communes*, and more significant for Church history, in 1530 Melanchthon was the primary author of *Confessio Augustana*, "the Augsburg Confession," the chief doctrinal symbol of the Lutheran Reformation. In response to the Roman Catholic refutation of this work, Melanchthon wrote the *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae,* "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," in 1531. In 1537 these writings, along with Melanchthon's *Tractatus de Potestate et Primatu Papae,* "Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope," *den Großen und Kleinen Katechismus Martin Luthers*, "Luther's Large and Small Catechisms," and the *Schmalkaldischen Artikel,* the "Smallkald Articles," were together accepted into *das Konkordienbuch,* "the Book of Concord," which contains the documents normative for the Lutheran confessional tradition. [30] Melanchthon is the author of about half of the confessional material to which Lutherans have historically subscribed.

But while Melanchthon may have been first and foremost dedicated to the Protestant Reformation, his work is by no means limited to explicitly theological topics. He expressed his dedication to the work the Reformation in part by working to reform the educational system of Germany in the sixteenth century.[31] For all of this work he has long

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[29]   Martin Luther, "The Bondage of the Will," tr. by Philip S. Watson in Watson, ed., *Luther's Works:* American Edition, vol. 33 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 1.

[30]   Latin and German texts of the Lutheran Confessional Documents are collected in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelish-Lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Göttinger Theologische Lehrbücher, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992). The most current and best translation into English is Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

[31]   See Heinz Scheible, "Aristoteles und die Universitätsreform: Zum Quellenwert von Lutherbriefen," and Markus Wriedt, "Die theologische Begründung der Schul- und Universitätsreform bei

been referred to as the *praeceptor Germaniae* "The schoolmaster of Germany," a title

which I will use for him throughout this dissertation.[32] Melanchthon's concern for school

reform is reflected in many essays he wrote and orations he delivered on topics such as

such as the order of learning, the role of schools within a society centered upon and

Evangelical church, on philosophy, and on the relationship between philosophy and the

Gospel.[33]

Melanchthon worked for his entire career, from 1518 until his death in 1560, in

the philosophy faculty of the University of Wittenberg. By the end of his career,

Melanchthon's broad philosophical and humanistic interests encompassed all three of the

major areas of philosophy as he understood it: rhetoric (including dialectics), ethics, and

natural philosophy. He published three different textbooks on both rhetoric and dialectics

between 1519 and 1547.[34] Beginning in 1525 he produced numerous works in ethics.[35]

Luther und Melanchthon," both in Michael Beyer und Günther Wartenberg, eds., *Humanismus un Wittenberger Reformation: Festgabe anläßlich des 500. Geburtstags des Praeceptor Germainiae, Philipp Melanchthon, am 16. Februar 1997* (Leipzig: Evangelisches Verlagsanstalt, 1997), 123-144 and 155-184, respectively; also Thorsten Fuchs, *Philipp Melanchthon als neulateinischer Dichter in der Zeit der Reformation,* NeoLatina 14, (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2008); and Stephan Rhein, Stephan, "The Influence of Melanchthon on Sixteenth Century Europe," *Lutheran Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 383-394.

[32]   This honorific has been preserved in the title Karl Hartfelder's monumental *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae* (Berlin: A Hoffman, 1889; repr. Niewkoop: B. De Graf, 1964). See also H. Ahrbeck, "Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae," in Walter Elliger, ed., *Philipp Melanchthon. Forschungsbeiträge zur vierhundersten Weiderkehr seines Todestages dargeboten in Wittenberg 1960* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1961), 133-148; Hans Maier, "Philipp Melanchthon: Praeceptor Germaniae," in *Philipp Melanchthon als Politiker zwischen Reich, Reichsständen und Konfessionsparteien.,* Themata Leucorea, edited by die Stiftung Leucorea an der Martin-Luther-Univeristät, (Wittenberg: Elbe-Druckerei, 1998), 11-22, and James Richard, *Philip Melanchthon: The Protestant Praeceptor of Germany* (New York: Franklin, 1974).

[33]   See the many speeches translated by Christine Salazar in Sachiko Kusukawa, ed., *Philip Melanchthon: Orations on Philosophy and Education,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially "On the Order of Learning," 3-8, ("De ordine discendi," CR 11: 209-14);   "On the Role of Schools," 9-22 ("De coniunctione scholarum," CR 11:606-18); "On Philosophy," 126-132 ("De philosophia," CR 11:278-84); and "On the Distinction Between the Gospel and Philosophy," 23-26, ("De discrimine euangelii et philosophiae", CR 12: 689-91).

[34]   See Chapter Three below, 166-188 for a summary of Melanchthon's rhetorical works; also Peter Mack, *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden: Brill, 1993): 323-325, and Nicole Kuropka, *Philipp Melanchthon: Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002): 11-50.

As a mature scholar Melanchthon began to publish works in natural philosophy, or as this was customarily called, "physics." His first such work and the only one published during Luther's lifetime was his *Commentarius de anima,* "Commentary on the Soul," first published in 1540, and revised fifteen times from then until the final edition, published in 1548.[36] In 1549, just a year after this final publication of the *Commentarius de anima*, Melanchthon published his *Initia doctrina physicae,* "Elements of Natural Philosophy."[37] The *Liber de anima*, "The Book of the Soul" of 1552, a revision of the *Commentarius de anima*,[38] was the last of Melanchthon's major philosophical works.[39]

Melanchthon was plagued by theological controversy throughout his career, both from outside the sphere of the Wittenberg reformation as well as from other Lutheran reformers dissatisfied with his work. Controversies about his thought did not die with him. In the centuries after his death, a number of questions about Melanchthon's thought have centered on the role of philosophy within it and thus of Melanchthon's faithfulness to the fundamental principles of the Lutheran tradition. Basic to many if not all of these controversies are the questions of just how to characterize Melanchthon's philosophical work, of how Melanchthon envisioned the proper relationship between faith and reason or between philosophy and theology, and of whether Melanchthon's accounts of

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[35]   See Chapter Two below, 121-136. Especially interesting introductory essays on Melanchthon's moral philosophy are Günter Frank, "The Reason of Acting: Melanchthon's Concept of Ethical Philosophy and the Question of the Unity and Consistency of His Philosophy," in Jill Kraye and Risto Saarinen, eds., *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 217-234; and Jill Kraye, "Melanchthon's Ethics Commentaries and Textbooks," in Kraye, ed., *Classical Traditions in Renaissance Philosophy* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), original English version of "Melanchthons ethische Commentare und Lehrbücher," in J. Leonhardt, ed., *Melanchthon und das Lehrbuch des 16. jahrhunderts* (Rohstock: Universität Rohstock, 1997), 1-13.

[36]   Philipp Melanchthon, *Commentarius de anima* (Viterbergae, 1548). See Chapter Two below, 136-160, for an examination of Melanchthon's work in natural philosophy.

[37]   CR 13:413-507.

[38]   CR 13:1-178.

[39]   This chronology is based on that provided by Kusukawa, *Orations*, xxxii-xxxiii. A general index of Melanchthon's works is in CR 28; see also Hartfelder, 577-620.

philosophy and of how to relate faith and reason are reconcilable with Luther's theology.[40]

In addition to the question of the relation of Melanchthon's thought to Luther's, much research on Melanchthon's thought has sought to associate him with or dissociate him from various philosophical authorities or movements. He was himself proud to confess that he was profoundly affected by Aristotle.[41] But the sense and extent to which Melanchthon was Aristotelian has been far from clear. Nor are the influences of Plato, Cicero, Augustine, or other philosophers of antiquity on Melanchthon well understood.[42] An examination of the development and method of Melanchthon's philosophy in its own right should help us answer this question

Melanchthon was among the most important intellectuals writing in Germany during the late Renaissance and early Reformation, just at the point where the medieval world was transforming into the early modern. Over the last fifty years scholars such as Etienne Gilson, Norman Kretzman, Armand Maurer, and David Knowles have helped to make the complexity of medieval philosophy better known,[43] while scholars such as Paul

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[40]   The controversies surrounding Melanchthon as a philosopher will be treated throughout Chapter One below.

[41]   See Günter Frank, "Melanchthon and the Tradition of Neo-Platonism," in Jürgen Helm and Annette Winkelman, eds., *Religious Confessions and the Sciences in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 3-18, here 3; see Chapter One below, 53-60 for claims about Melanchthon as an Aristotelian in the secondary literature.

[42]   See Chapter One below, *passim*, esp. 53-89.

[43]   See for example the above-cited works by Gilson, Copleston, and Kretzman, Kenny, & Pinborg; also Gilson, Etienne, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine* (New York, Random House, 1960); Armand Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1962); David Knowles *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (Londom: Longman, 1962); Leff, Gordon, *Medieval Thought: St. Augustine to Ockham* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1958) ; also the essays in Arthur S. McGrade, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy,* (Cambridge University Press: 2003), esp. Steven Marrone, "Medieval Philosophy in Context," 10-50; also Christopher Hughes, "Medieval Philosophy," in A. C. Grayling, ed., *Philosophy 2: Further through the Subject,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 517-573; also Steven Ozmet, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980). For the endurance of this legacy see P. J. Fitzpatrick and John Haldane, "Medieval Philosophy in Later Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy,* edited by A. S. McGrade, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 300-327;

Oscar Kristeller, Brian Copenhaver, Charles Schmidt, have done much to bring to light

Renaissance attitudes toward and work in philosophy.[44]   Thanks to the work of the

former, we now know that the Middle Ages were not a "dark age" for philosophy; the

latter group of scholars have helped us understand that one can no longer claim the

Renaissance was "a time of philosophical vacuity."[45] But there is still much to be learned

about the pursuit of and use of philosophy in Melanchthon's time, especially among those

who, like Melanchthon, have been regarded as Renaissance humanists.

Several important historical intellectual streams—the Medieval, the Renaissance,

and the Reformation—seem to cross in the person of Melanchthon.   He was educated in

the Medieval philosophical *viae*, showed himself to be a champion of Renaissance

humanism at the beginning of his career, and remained dedicated to the Wittenberg

Reformation from very early in his career. He both played an important role in the

Wittenberg Reformation and he dedicated much time and energy to producing explicitly

philosophical works. No one, it may seem, is better placed to give us a sense of the

development of philosophical thought during this time of transition in philosophy,

theology, and history than Melanchthon. But while Melanchthon, the sixteenth century

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and P. J. Fitzpatrick, "Neoscholasticism," in Norman Kretzman, A. Kenny, and J. Pinborg, eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 838-85.

[44]   See the various essays in Charles Schmidt, Quentin Skinner, and Eckhard Kessler, eds., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), esp. Caesare Vasoli, Caesare. "The Renaissance Concept of Philosophy," 57-74; Brian P. Copenhaver and Charles B. Schmidt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); more recently James Hankins, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Also Paul Oscar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanistic Strains* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961); and "Florentine Platonism and Its Relation with Humanism and Scholasticism," in Robert Black, ed., *Renaissance Thought: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 225-229. Also Jill Kraye, *Classical Traditions in Renaissance Philosophy* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate/Variorum, 2002).

[45]   See Günter Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie, Philipp Melanchthons (1497-1560),* Erfurter Theologische Studien, Band 67 (Leipzig: Benno, 1995), 38 on the claim that the Renaissance was a "Zeit 'philosophischer Leere.'"

theologian, Churchman, and philosopher may have been a product of the medieval and a forerunner of the modern, he seems to belong to neither.

In spite of the several biographies and the considerable amount of attention that has been paid to his theology[46] Melanchthon remains a shadowy figure. It seems he is still, as Robert Stupperich called him sixty years ago, *Der unbekkant Melanchthon*, "the unknown Melanchthon."[47] I believe this is because few have attempted to understand his thought in its own right, few who have attempted to understand his thought have attempted to understand his philosophy in its own right, and no one who has attempted to understand his philosophy, as far as I am aware, has given sufficient attention to the foundations of his thought. I hope that this dissertation can help reveal how Melanchthon's actual approach to philosophy could be regarded as "vacuous" by latter-day philosophers and misunderstood by theologians, especially by those claiming a Lutheran spiritual or theological heritage.

A better understanding of such an important sixteenth century figure can furthermore be expected to shed light on philosophical developments of the modern era which would emerge in the seventeenth century and following. Melanchthon has in fact been regarded as a seminal figure for the rationalism which would develop in Europe in the centuries following his death.[48] Since Melanchthon's works were widely read in England well into the seventeenth century, an understanding of Melanchthon's view of language, faith, and philosophy, may also contribute to an understanding of the intellectual background of philosophers such as Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke.[49]

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[46] See again Chapter One below, esp. 29-53.
[47] Cf.. Robert Stupperich, *Der unbekannte Melanchthon* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1961).
[48] See Chapter One below, 62-68; and Chapter Five, 295-302.
[49] See Chapter Five below, 307-313.

Finally, this dissertation might help to address one of the most important questions of the last century's research into Melanchthon: that of the overall unity of his thought, both over time and within his most mature expressions of it. Perhaps such questions must arise for any figure with such wide ranging interests. But the claim that Melanchthon's later use of philosophy entailed a divergence from Luther's fundamental theological principles has profoundly affected the way scholars have regarded his philosophy ever since that charge was first made.[50] I hope this dissertation can help clarify the ways Melanchthon's thought remained continuous throughout its development.

C. Goals and Motivation

I also hope that readers with several interests may find some helpful or interesting material in this dissertation. First, since this is a dissertation in philosophy, I will attempt to uncover some interesting philosophical ideas and reflection here in Melanchthon's thought itself; I will attempt to provide some as well in my own exposition of and commentary on Melanchthon's philosophy. Second, as noted above, I hope this dissertation will be of interest to students of the history of philosophy, particularly those interested in the Reformation and the Renaissance. I further hope that it will provide some thought provoking material for philosophers of religion, historical theologians, and scholars of rhetoric.

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[50] See again Chapter One below, 74-85. For a very concise and helpful account of the claim that Melanchthon abandoned Luther's Evangelical theology for the Humanism of Erasmus, or that he vacillated between the two, see Timothy Wengert, *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melanchthon's Exegetical Dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 7-14. As Wengert points out, the most important proponent of such a claim has been Wilhelm Maurer in *Der junge Melanchthon zwischen Humanismus und Reformation,* 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht 1967-69), esp. vol. 2: 223-245.

I confess, however, that this project was not originally motivated, or not entirely motivated, by these purely academic, historical, or scholarly interests. This admission, I am pleased to have discovered, would probably not have disturbed Melanchthon himself. After all, as the reader will see at length, the praeceptor rejected any endeavor which was motivated merely by the desire to know something or to develop a field of inquiry for its own sake, whether in theology, history, or philosophy.   Throughout his career Melanchthon felt compelled to justify philosophical study by promising practical results from it for everyday life, for society, or for the Church. According to Melanchthon scholarship is properly driven by human need, commanded by God, and vindicated by its usefulness.

I hope that whatever interest this dissertation may hold for philosophers of religion or intellectual historians, the present work might contribute to the viability of that theological tradition which developed to a great extent through Melanchthon's work and which would soon to become known as Lutheranism. More specifically, I hope the present work will in some small way contribute toward the viability of North American Lutheranism, my own spiritual environment. For I am convinced that Lutherans in North America are unclear about how to relate faith and reason, in particular how to relate our characteristic theological principles to reason and philosophy.

A strong and clear general understanding of how faith and reason were related in sixteenth century Wittenberg would, the Lutheran philosopher hopes and expects, be an invaluable aid to the Lutheran tradition in addressing questions most vital to our mission and required for authentic witness to our faith: questions about Biblical interpretation, about the pursuit of natural science and about how people of faith may integrate

theological doctrines with scientific theory, and about faithful ways of dealing with the ethical perplexities of our day.   Without a clear account of how faith and reason are to be related it is hard to see how these issues can be either reasonably or faithfully addressed. Any tradition lacking a vigorous and clear way of relating *fides et ratio* must, it seems, wane in its ability to speak truth faithfully, with relevance, and thus with vigor. Unfortunately, the inability or unwillingness on the part of Lutherans in North America to establish a consistent or satisfactory way to deal with the *fides et ratio* question, it seems to me, has redounded to an inability to present clear and sound responses to important to some very important and fundamental questions facing our churches.

As a would-be Lutheran philosopher I find this situation uncomfortable and scarcely comprehensible. But it gives hope to consider that at the very time and place of the inception of Lutheran Christianity, Philipp Melanchthon dealt with these very same sorts of issues. Of course, any understanding of Melanchthon's philosophy or his response to the *fides et ratio* problem would be unlikely to simply settle many issues for contemporary Lutherans. It may be that in the end one must regard Melanchthon's entire philosophical project, in the words of Paul Hinlicky, as a "path not taken."[51]   On the other hand, a better understanding of the philosophy Luther's closest associate and author of about half of the Lutheran Confessional documents may at least serve as an opportunity for a kind of theological or philosophical "reboot"—an opportunity to discover the way the first Lutherans dealt with the "problem" of *fides et ratio*.

This dissertation will at best be merely a starting point. It will not present a fully articulated Lutheran philosophy, if indeed there could be such a thing, for the twenty-first

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[51]   Thus Paul Hinlicky's, *Paths Not Taken: Fates of Theology From Luther Through Leibniz* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

century. Nor will it be more than a resource for understanding Luther's own philosophy, if indeed he had one. On the other hand, if it can lay bare fundaments in Melanchthon's thought of that which Pelikan sought—a (Lutheran) Christian approach to and method in philosophy—it might provide a valuable resource for any seeking a Lutheran philosophy for the twenty-first century.

D. Outline

This dissertation will consist of five chapters, the first of which will be dedicated to reviewing the accounts of Melanchthon's philosophy in the secondary literature. This dissertation would not be necessary if a satisfactory, useful, and widely accepted account of Melanchthon's philosophy had been produced in this literature.   Unfortunately, as the review in Chapter One will show, no such account is to be found at present. A primary characteristic of research on Melanchthon, taken on the whole, has been confusion about the philosophical foundations of Melanchthon's thought. The praeceptor has been regarded as a Platonist, and Aristotelian, a follower of one or alternately both of the Medieval *viae,* as an eclectic, and as a humanist. No consensus view of his fundamental philosophical commitments has emerged. Three intriguing and important but mutually exclusive accounts seem to rise above the others, however.

First, a trajectory of scholarship has been based on a thesis of Wilhelm Maurer that Melanchthon's thought was inconsistent through time. According to Maurer Melanchthon arrived at Wittenberg in 1518 as a young scholar committed to humanism, was subsequently moved to abandon this commitment in favor of Evangelical theology, and finally, later in his career, he switched his loyalty for Evangelical theology, either to

some philosophical school, or back to Humanism.[52] In North America from the latter half of the twentieth century until recently, this has perhaps most closely approximated a standard view, the most familiar claim about Melanchthon as a theologian and as a philosopher. Second, more recently German historian Günter Frank has suggested that a key to understanding Melanchthon's philosophy has been to appreciate the fundamental importance of elements of Platonic metaphysics within it.[53]   Third, the least developed in philosophical terms but the most promising among the options in Melanchthon research, Timothy Wengert and John Schneider have developed the suggestion that Melanchthon's conception of and method for rhetoric has provided the chord uniting Melanchthon's thought not only across time but across disciplines.[54]

In Chapter Two I test the claims of Maurer *et alia* by reviewing the development of Melanchthon's thought from the unalloyed humanism of his inaugural lecture at Wittenberg in 1518 through his earliest stage at Wittenberg, during which he developed his theology in close association with Luther, through the period from 1526-1536, during which he began to develop his moral philosophy, through the stage beginning in 1536, when he produced a number of works on mathematics, through to the final stage of his career, during which he developed his natural philosophy. This review of Melanchthon's philosophical biography will find that, contrary to Maurer and others but quite consistent with Wengert and Schneider, Melanchthon's philosophy developed along a clear and unified path which can be clearly recognized as a consequence of his conception of and

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[52]   Again, see Chapter One below, 74-85.

[53]   While this idea is central to Frank's understanding of Melanchthon, it is particularly clearly stated in Frank's "Neoplatonism."

[54]   See Chapter One below, 85-92.

use of rhetoric, which was for him the comprehensive art of speaking in order to teach, please, and persuade.

If it is the case that the *artes logicales* as Melanchthon understood and used them provided the key to understanding his philosophy, then one must understand his conception of these arts before one can understand his general approach to philosophy. In Chapter Three I therefore attempt to explicate Melanchthon's account of rhetoric and dialectic. Of particular importance in this chapter is an examination of the relationship between these arts to each other as Melanchthon conceived of them, and then of the relationship of both dialectic and rhetoric to philosophy and theology, especially in Melanchthon's mature work.

Having achieved the work of the second and third chapters, it will finally be possible, in Chapter Four, to establish a provisional account of Melanchthon's philosophy, in particular his philosophical method. In providing this general account of Melanchthon's philosophy, this chapter tests the claims Frank has made about Melanchthon's alleged metaphysical Platonism. These claims find no support here, and Melanchthon is found instead to have a rhetorically based, fideistic, pragmatic approach to philosophy in which moderate skepticism plays an important role.

Chapter Five will finally draw together conclusions from all of this as well as propose a few directions for further research. It will assess the most important claims about Melanchthon as a philosopher from the secondary literature which are first discussed in Chapter One. More importantly, it will review that way Melanchthon finally deals with the *fides et ratio* question in his rhetoric and dialectics, and it will assess the value of these works for understanding Melanchthon's philosophy generally. It will point

toward further work which will be required for understanding the entirety of Melanchthon's philosophy, to wit, close examinations of his physics and ethics as separate branches of his rhetorical philosophy. This final chapter will conclude with a few words on lessons learned which may be of particular interest to philosophers of religion and important for North American Lutheranism in the twenty-first century.

This project was far more difficult than I could have imagined as I began pursuing it. It involved many more complexities than I had originally expected. Indeed, it turned out to be quite a different project than I had once intended. I had originally planned an examination of the philosophical anthropology of Melanchthon's *Commentarius de anima* for an understanding of his philosophy more generally. I still believe that such a project would still be worthwhile since it would help settle questions about Melanchthon's physics and ethics which the present dissertation cannot. But I found that it could not be undertaken without first completing the present work. Even to complete this work has required research into several areas I had not anticipated—not only into late Medieval philosophy and Renaissance Humanism, but also into Hellenistic rhetorical theory as well as at least an introduction to the medical philosophy of Galen and Hellenistic Galenism.

All of this has been fascinating, challenging, rewarding, and above all, humbling. I hope that the product of it all will be marginally as rewarding to the reader as it was to the researcher. The words Melanchthon wrote to the reader in the preface of his *Commentarius de anima,* one of his most important philosophical works, are surely even more applicable to this dissertation and those who review it: "[This] is a feeble gift, not

perhaps appropriate for your person."[55] "But," as Melanchthon continued," I leave the judgment to the readers, and I request that they apply frankness in judging whether it is worthy of good and learned people."[56]

CHAPTER ONE:
STILL UNKNOWN:
MELANCHTHON'S WORKS AND RESEARCH ON MELANCHTHON

A. Introduction: The Still Unknown Melanchthon

The goal of the thesis is to provide a general understanding of the scope, goals, and limits of philosophy properly pursued as Philipp Melanchthon conceived of it. In this chapter I will show that such a picture has yet to emerge in the secondary literature. I will examine the most important claims made in the secondary literature within the last century about the basis of Melanchthon's philosophizing and about the relation in his work between philosophy and the language arts on the one hand, and between philosophy and theology on the other hand. Since so many of these claims have been presented by theologians interested in the relationship between Martin Luther's theology and Melanchthon's, a considerable amount of this chapter will deal with portrayals of Melanchthon as a theologian working in Luther's shadow, and with an important image of Luther as a theologian which has provided an important context for the last century's studies on Melanchthon. I will attempt however to present just as much explicitly theological material as is necessary for gaining a better perspective on Melanchthon as a philosopher.

The chapter will proceed in several sections. I'll begin by introducing the primary sources of Melanchthon's writings, including English translations, along with some important biographies which have become widely available in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I'll also present what became something of a commonplace about Melanchthon in the secondary literature through the end of the twentieth century—that in

spite of the large amount of primary material available, relatively little secondary work has been done on Melanchthon's thought, and that a number of claims about Melanchthon as a philosopher have been mutually contradictory.

It has surely at least to some extent been hard to get a sense of the contours of Melanchthon's thought because it has been so difficult to gather the fruit of his labors from so many branches of learning. While Melanchthon has been widely regarded as a theologian, a philosopher, and as a humanist, it has been difficult to understand any of his work without first understanding the relationships between theology, philosophy, and the language arts for him. There has also been much disagreement about his principles and methods within each one of these realms. The second through fourth sections of this chapter will in turn explore problems in the ways that research on Melanchthon has presented him, in turn, as a theologian, as a philosopher, and as a humanist.

By far the greatest amount of secondary work on Melanchthon has been done by those interested in Reformation history and theology, and so Melanchthon's philosophy and humanism have been largely viewed through the concerns of those interested in Luther's thought or in Luther*an* theology. Indeed, it almost seems that for much of the twentieth century Melanchthon's work has been a sort of palimpsest written upon a quite visible picture of Luther's theology and personality. The second section of this chapter will briefly outline a few claims about Luther and his theology which have provided the background for much of the research on Melanchthon in the twentieth century. I will critically examine the notion that in contradistinction from Luther's supposed proto-existentialist and occassionalist thought and work, Melanchthon was an "intellectualist" and a "systematizer" who sought to ground theology not in scripture, but in philosophy.

While, as part two will show, many who studied Melanchthon in the twentieth century claimed that Melanchthon's theology was grounded in some philosophical system (Lutheran theologians often criticizing the praeceptor on this account), there has been widespread disagreement about just what is meant by "system" in this regard, and of what sort of system the praeceptor was supposed to have developed or built upon. The third section of this chapter will then review several especially important general claims about the supposed philosophical foundations of Melanchthon's thought. The first of these has been that Melanchthon was an Aristotelian of some sort, perhaps an adherent of one of the medieval Scholastic *viae*. Second, a significant number of scholars have noted that Melanchthon must be understood as in some sense an eclectic thinker, and that coming to terms with his eclecticism requires the discovery of the principle or principles in accordance with which Melanchthon selected ideas from various philosophical authorities and incorporated them into his thought. Third, Günter Frank claims that the key to understanding Melanchthon is to recognize that certain Platonic or Neoplatonic metaphysical and psychological principles were fundamental to his philosophy. Fourth, a few voices have implicitly called Frank's claims into question: Andrew Cunningham believes he has detected an empirical turn identified in Melanchthon's natural philosophy, and Sachiko Kusukawa has found that Melanchthon's philosophy can ultimately be considered neither Platonic nor Aristotelian but must be regarded as being founded, after all, on distinctively Lutheran theological principles.

A final main section of this chapter will begin to consider how the secondary literature has regarded Melanchthon as a Renaissance humanist. Here I will note that Melanchthon's reputation suffered throughout much of the twentieth century from a

general lack of understanding of Renaissance philosophy and humanism. A question in the background of much work in this area has been whether or to what extent the principles of Renaissance humanism were consistent with or necessarily in conflict with Luther's theology. Wilhelm Maurer and others saw Melanchthon as tossed back and forth throughout his career between Erasmus's humanism, which claimed that humans have free will both with respect to choices about life on earth as well as before God, and Luther's explicitly determinist Evangelical theology.

As this final section will show, Timothy Wengert has more recently rejected Maurer's thesis, revealing greater continuity in Melanchthon's thoughts on freedom and philosophy from the beginning through the middle of his career than Maurer claimed. Wengert also found greater unity between Melanchthon's claims about human freedom and Luther's than Maurer had. Perhaps most importantly, Wengert has made a case that in providing a method for scriptural interpretation Melanchthon's rhetoric was fundamental to his theology. John Schneider has further generalized this insight, suggesting that rhetoric was fundamental to the praeceptor's philosophy as well. Both Schneider and Wengert here follow important claims about Melanchthon's philosophy, theology, and humanism made by Siegfried Wiedenhofer.

The chapter will conclude by highlighting several important but yet unresolved questions which the secondary literature poses for one who would make Melanchthon's philosophy known. In doing so, it will reveal a need to take a fresh look at Melanchthon as a philosopher. It will also suggest a clear direction for gaining such a vision, to be pursued in the chapters to follow.

B: Melanchthon Emerging from the Shadows

1. Primary Source Material

Since the nineteenth century scholars have been making more and more primary source material by Melanchthon widely available. The definitive collection of Melanchthon's works and still the basis for most scholarly work on Melanchthon is the 28 volume *Corpus Reformatorum*, published from 1834-60, and edited by Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider and Heinrich Ernst Bindseil[1] About two generations later the five volume *Supplementa Melanchthonia*,[2] produced 1910-1926, provided material not included in the *Corpus Reformatorum*. Beginning in 1951 Robert Stupperich had begun to produce additional volumes of Melanchthon's works, the *Studienausgabe*,[3] the seventh and final of which was completed in 1971.

Almost overlapping Stupperich's work, since 1977 Heinz Scheible has played an invaluable role in revealing Melanchthon to the world by editing *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*, the huge collection of the praeceptor's personal correspondence. This project has to date produced a total of twenty-four volumes, containing over 10,000 letters.[4] This work alone would qualify Scheible as one of the greatest authorities on Melanchthon's life since the sixteenth century. But in addition Scheible has produced numerous essays on Melanchthon's theology and his work to reform the educational

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[1]   See the Introduction above, 7, n. 18.

[2]   Otto Clemen, ed., *Supplementum Melanchthoniana: Werke Philipp Melanchthons, die im Corpus Reformatorum vermißt werden*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Melanchthon-Komission des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte, 1910-26). Hereafter abbreviated "SM."

[3]   Robert Stupperich, ed., *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl,* Studiensausgabe*,* 7vols. (Guttersloh: Bertelsmann, 1951-75). Hereafter abbreviated "MWA."

[4]   Heinz Scheible and Walter Thuringer, eds. *Melancthons Briefwechsel: Kritische und Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe* (Stuttgart und Bad-Constatt: Frommann und Holzboog, 1977-); *Regesten* by Heinz Scheible and Walter Thüringer, 14 vols.; *Texte* by Richard Wetzel , Christine Mundehenk et al, 13 vols.

system in Germany which have contributed greatly to our understanding of the relation

between Luther's thought and Melanchthon's and the central place of theological

categories of Law and Gospel in Melanchthon's thought.[5] The fruit of Scheible's work

has been offered to the general (German reading) public in a recent biography entitled

simply *Melanchthon: Eine Biographie*.[6]

The last fifty years have seen significant publications of translations of some of

Melanchthon's works into English for the first time.   For most of the last century English

readers only had access to his theological-confessional writings in the Book of Concord[7]

along with several editions of his *Loci communes theologici*.[8] This situation began to

change with the publication of Charles Leander Hill's *Melanchthon: Selected Writings,*[9]

which provided more clues to Melanchthon's theology, and then Ralph Keen's *A

Melanchthon Reader*,[10] which contains translations of important essays related to

Melanchthon's educational program. Most recently Sachiko Kusukawa's, *Philip

Melanchthon: Orations on Philosophy and Education*[11] is perhaps the most important

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[5]   See especially Heinz Schieble, "Philip Melanchthon," in Carter Lindberg, ed., *The Reformation Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 67-82; "Die Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium. Ein zentrales Motiv in theologischer Ethik und Prakitischer Theologie am Biespiel Melanchthons," in Wilhelm Gräb et al., *Christentum und Spätmoderne. Ein internationaler Diskurs über Praktische Theologie und Ethik* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 93-100; "Melanchthon zwischen Luther und Erasmus," in August Buck., ed., *Renaissance-Reformation: Gegensätze und Gemeinsamkeiten* (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1984), 155-80; "Melanchthon's Bildungsprogramm," in Hatmut Bookmann, ed., *Lebenslehren und Weltenwürfe im übergang vom Mittelalter zur neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 233-248; "Luther and Melanchthon," *Lutheran Quarterly* 4 (1990): 317-339; and most recently "Fifty years of Melanchthon Research," *Lutheran Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 164-180.
[6]   Heinz Scheible, *Melanchthon: eine Biographie* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche, 1997)
[7]   See the Introduction above, 11, n. 30.
[8]   Ibid., 10, n. 27.
[9]   Charles Leander Hill, trans., *Melanchthon: Selected Writings* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1962).
[10]   Ralph Keen, trans., *A Melanchthon Reader* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988).
[11]   Cf. "Introduction" above 12, n. 33. Also very helpful in understanding Melanchthon's background is Kusukawa ed., *A Wittenberg University Catalogue of 1536.* Medieval &Renaissance Texts and Studies 142, Libri Pertinentes no.3. (Cambridge: LP Publications, 1995).

collection of translations of Melanchthon's essays and addresses related to philosophy and the language arts yet produced in English.[12]

2. Biographies

Two works on Melanchthon's thought and life, one written just after his death, the other at the end of the nineteenth century, have been particularly important for the research into Melanchthon through the twentieth century. The first of these, *De vita Philippi Melanchthonis narratio*, was written shortly after Melanchthon's death by his close friend Joachim Camerarius.[13] The second, Karl Hartfelder's *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae*[14] has been perhaps the most widely referenced treatment of Melanchthon's life and work since its publication in 1889. Hartfelder's work has recently proven to be an important counterpoint to much twentieth century work on the praeceptor in that he treated Melanchthon as a scholar and theologian dedicated to the whole realm of learning as well as to the reform of the educational system in the Protestant lands of the sixteenth century, rather than merely as Luther's theological protégé.

There have also been a number of useful biographies written in or translated into English as well over the last several decades. These have included Robert Stupperich's

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[12]   For others, see Gregory Graybill, and C. D Froehlich, ed., *Melanchthon in English: New Translations into English with a Registry of Previous Translations, 16th Century Bibliography*, Volume 22 (St. Louis, MO: Center for Reformation Research, 1982).

[13]   Joachim Camerarius, *De vita Philippi Melanchthonis narratio,* ed. George T. Stroebellius (Halle: Noessell, 1977).

[14]   Karl Hartfelder, *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae,* Monumenta Germanae Pedagogica VII (Berlin: A. Hoffman, 1889; repr. Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1964).

Melanchthon,[15] James Richard's, *Philip Melanchthon: The Protestant Praeceptor of Germany*[16], and Clyde Manshreck's *Melanchthon: the Quiet Reformer*.[17]

The title of Manschreck's biography points to an important problem in twentieth century Melanchthon scholarship, however. In spite of both the widespread availability of so much primary source material by this time, in spite of the widespread recognition that, as Lutheran theologian Walter Bouman wrote "Philip Melanchthon is without question the second most important figure in the Lutheran reform movement of the sixteenth century,"[18] and in spite of the widespread recognition that Melanchthon was an important figure for both the Reformation and for the Renaissance in Northern Europe,[19] Melanchthon has remained a relatively unexamined figure.   Lowell Green's observation in the middle of the twentieth century that "measured against his importance," studies on Melanchthon "may easily be called the most neglected area of Reformation research"[20] has remained true to the present. While, as John Schneider has pointed out Melanchthon has never been entirely neglected by historians, neither has he received consistent attention. As Schneider put it two decades ago, "The pattern of scholarship [on Melanchthon] has been one of flash floods of writing on and around the anniversaries of

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[15]   Robert Stupperich, *Melanchthon*, tr. R.H. Fischer (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

[16]   James Richard, *Philip Melanchthon: The Protestant Praeceptor of Germany* (New York: Franklin, 1974).

[17]   See the Introduction above, 14, n. 48; see also George Ellinger, *Philipp Melanchthon: Ein Lebensbild* (Berlin: Gaertner, 1902); and, most recently, Nicole Kuropka, Nicole. *Melanchthon* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

[18]   Walter Bouman, "Melanchthon's Significance for the Church Today," in Scott Hendrix and Timothy Wengert, eds., *Philip Melanchthon: Then and Now (1497-1997)* (Columbia, SC: Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, 1999), 34.

[19]   See for example the numerous citations of Melanchthon in indexed in standard overviews of Renaissance philosophy, such as in Copenhaver and Schmidt, Schmidt and Skinner, and Hankins.

[20]   Lowell Green, "Melanchthon," in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, Volume II* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965).

his birth and death, followed by long dry spells with the occasional book or article appearing."[21]

In fact, several of the most widely read mid-twentieth century studies of Melanchthon addressed this historical neglect of Melanchthon and the attendant lack of understanding of the praeceptor's thought. In addition to being "The Quiet Reformer," he was also "The Unknown Melanchthon,"[22] For reasons which will become clearer below, at least part of the reason Melanchthon has travelled so long *incognitus* may be a notable ambivalence or suspicion toward the praeceptor on the part of his—mostly Lutheran—readers. He has thus been the "Reformer without Honor,"[23] because it has not been clear whether he was "Alien or Ally" to Luther.[24]

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[21]   John Schneider, *Oratio Sacra,* 5. For other reviews of Melanchthon scholarship, see Peter Fraenkel, "Fünfzen Jahre Melanchthonforschung: Versuch eines Literaturberichtes," in Walter Ellinger, ed., *Philipp Melanchthon: Forschungsbeiträge zur vierhundersten Wiederkehr seines Todestages dargeboten in Wittenberg, 1960* (Berlin: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1961), 582-624 ; and Fraenkel and Martin Greschat, *Zwanzig Jahre Melanchthonstudium,*Travauex d'Humanisme et Renaissance (Geneva: Librarie E. Droz, 1967); Wilhelm Hammer, *Die Melanchthonforschung im Wandel der Jahrhunderte (Melanchthon Research Across the Centuries)*, 3 vols. (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1967-81); and Ken Schurb, "Twentieth Century Melanchthon Scholarship and the Missouri Synod: with Particular Reference to Richard Caemerer's 'The Melanchthon Blight,'*" Concordia Theological Monthly* 62, no. 4 (October 1998): 287-306.

[22]   Cf. Robert Stupperich, *Der unbekannte Melanchthon* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1961).

[23]   Michael, Rogness, *Melanchthon: Reformer without Honor (*Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969).

[24]   Franz Hildebrandt, *Melanchthon: Alien or Ally?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946). In addition to the material presented immediately below on the relationship between Melanchthon and Luther, see also Martin Brecht, "Melanchthon und Luther oder: Samsons Kinnebacke," in by Günter Frank and Johanna Loehr, eds., *Der Theologue Melanchthon.* Melanchthon Schriften der Stadt Bretten, Band 5, (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2000), 83-102; and Martin Greschat, *Melanchthon Neben Luther: Studien zur Gestalt der Rechtfertigungslehre zwischen 1528 und 1537: Untersuchungen zur Kirkengeschichte I,* (Wittenberg: Luther-Verlag, 1965); Robert Stupperich, "Der junge Melanchthon als Sachwalter Luthers," in *Jahrbuch des Vereins für Westphälische Kirkengeschichte,* 42 (1949), 47-69; and "Luther und Melanchthon in ihrem gegenseitigen Verhältnis," in G. Urban, ed., *Philipp Melanchthon, 1497-1560: Gedenkenschrift zum 400. Todestag des Reformators* (Bretten: Melanchthonverein, 1960), 93-126; and Timothy Wengert, Melanchthon and Luther/Luther and Melanchthon," in *Luther-Jahrbuch 66* (1999): 55-58.

Fortunately, by the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty first the research of scholars including Heinz Scheible, Günter Frank, Sachiko Kusukawa, Jonathan Schneider, Timothy Wengert and others are dispelling the mystery surrounding Melanchthon. But in order to grasp the significance of much of this recent work, it will be helpful to take measure of some of the ways in which and some of the tendencies by which Melanchthon's thought has been obscured until relatively recently. I propose that there has been confusion about Melanchthon as a philosopher largely because there has been much confusion about the relationship between his humanism and his own theology and philosophy on the one hand, and on the other hand there has been confusion about the relationship between his work and personality and Luther's.

C: Melanchthon as Theologian

1. Melanchthon as Luther's Anti-Type

Perhaps no figure from the sixteenth has received as much of the world's attention, nor has anyone stood as tall in the imagination as Martin Luther (1483-1546), with whom Melanchthon worked so closely from 1518 until the former's death in 1546.[25] But it has seemed that the unparalleled light of scholarly attention which has shined upon Luther has cast a darkening shadow upon Melanchthon's work. Thus, as Timothy Wengert points out in his essay, "Beyond Stereotypes: The Real Philip Melanchthon," while there's been relatively little research into the unique features of Melanchthon's thought, a number of false images of Melanchthon have been promulgated in the

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[25] For an introduction to the enduring legacy of Luther, see Günter Gassmann, "Luther in the Worldwide Church Today," and Franz Hillerbrand, "The Legacy of Martin Luther," both in Donald McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 289-303, and 227-239, respectively.

secondary literature.[26] These stereotypes include the image of Melanchthon as merely

the spokesperson for Luther or as his most intimate friend, of the praeceptor as weak

spirited and pusillanimous, as hopelessly torn between the greater figures and forces of

his day, and of Melanchthon as one who, whether through weakness or treachery,

betrayed Reformation theology for the sake of Renaissance humanism or philosophy.

Seldom has Melanchthon been viewed as one with much of his own to contribute that

was *both* unique *and* valuable.[27]

Wengert has done as much as anyone alive to bring Melanchthon out of the

shadow of obscurity. As editor with Robert Kolb of the latest English language edition of

the *Book of Concord*, Wengert has lent clarity to our understanding of Melanchthon's

theology and of early controversies surrounding it. Most important for any understanding

of Melanchthon as a philosopher, and so for this dissertation, Wengert's book *Human

Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melanchthon's Exegetical Dispute with

Erasmus of Rotterdam* has provided important insights into Melanchthon as a

Renaissance humanist and into the praeceptor's account of and use of rhetoric. This book

also explicates Melanchthon's understanding of the legitimate goals and limits of

philosophy, at least as of the praeceptor's final *Scholia* on Colossians in 1534.[28]

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[26]   Timothy Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes: The Real Philip Melanchthon," in Hendrix and Wengert, 9-32, esp. here 9-11, where Wengert lists stereotypes of Melanchthon as *Leisetretter*, as Erasmian Humanist, as close friend to Luther, and as torn between Eramus and Luther.; cf. Manshrek 13-18.

[27]   But as Wengert points out, this is the approach attempted more recently by Alfons Brüls in *Die Entwicklung der Gotteslehre beim jungen Melanchthon 1518-1535* (Bielfeld: Luther Verlag, 1975), and by Martin Greschat, *Melanchthon neben Luther: Studien zur Gestalt der Rechtfertigungslehre zwischen 1528 und 1537* (Wittenberg: Luther-Verlag, 1965); cf. Wengert, *"Annotationes in Ionanum"* 143-146. See also the work of Scheible cited above, n. 5, and Markus Wriedt, "Die theologische Begründung der Bildungsreform bei Luther and Melanchthon,",esp. 169.

[28]   See the Introduction above, 2, n. 1.

2. Melanchthon as "Light Stepper"

In his essay "Beyond Stereotypes" Wengert seeks "a fair minded appraisal" of the historical record on Melanchthon.[29] But this is a difficult task given that almost wherever Melanchthon's thought has been regarded as different from Luther's it has been embroiled in controversy. In fact, it seems that nothing is clearer about Melanchthon's thought than that it has been the occasion for conflict—especially among Lutherans—since the sixteenth century.[30] A factor in a number of these controversies has been the impression that Melanchthon was quite far from being the sort of figure who, like Luther, could with boldness proclaim before papal legate and emperor "Here I stand!"[31] Instead, Melanchthon has widely been portrayed as timid or perhaps even treacherous *leisetretter,* "light-stepper," or perhaps, more pejoratively, "pussy-footer".

As Wengert notes, it was Luther himself who first applied the epithet *leisetretter* to Melanchthon. In 1530 Melanchthon prepared the *Augsburg Confession* as a statement of the main articles of the Evangelical faith to be presented to Emperor Charles V. Luther was living under the imperial ban, and so was unable to appear before the emperor, and while there is clear evidence that he was anxious about the procedures leading up to Melanchthon's preparation of and presentation of this confession, Luther was well pleased with the results.[32] He eventually wrote to the elector John of Saxony of this

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[29]   Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes," 14.

[30]   Ibid., 11-13; see also Michael Aune, "'A Heart Moved:" Philip Melanchthon's Forgotten Truth About Worship," in Hendrix and Wengert, 75-98, here 75-77; Manschrek 13-17; Stupperich 76-150.

[31]   This image is central, for example, to Roland Bainton's very popular portrayal of Luther in *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009; first published in 1950). For the question of whether Luther actually said these words, see Richard Marius, *Luther* (London: Quartet, 1975), 155, and Scott Hendrix, "Legends about Luther," *Christian History* 34 (1992), accessible at http://www.christianhistorymagazine.org/index.php/back-issues/34-luther-content/ as of March 26, 2011.

[32]   Interesting accounts of the events surrounding the presentation of the Augsburg Confession are in Manschrek 158-209, Stupperich, *Melanchthon* 82-92, Scheible, *Melanchthon: Eine Biographie,* 100-116.

document, which now stands as the chief confession of faith for the Lutheran tradition, "I know nothing to improve or change it…Nor would I this be appropriate, since I cannot step so softly and quietly."[33]

Wengert suggests that Luther's epithet "light stepper" was thus originally intended as a compliment of Melanchthon's scholarship and churchmanship in a specific situation. But the label was in effect soon generalized by Camerarius into a claim about the praeceptor's very personality. As Wengert writes:

> [Camerarius] managed to create a wonderfully stoic Melanchthon, who bore under the slings and arrows of outrageous attacks…with patience and calm. His temper—for which Melanchthon actually was notorious—came like a fleeting cloud and dissipated in the warm sunshine of his disposition. In fact, Camerarius' depiction of Melanchthon was so successful that it has endured, mostly without question, for over 400 years among both Melanchthon's supporters and critics."[34]

Thus, while Luther regarded the praeceptor as one able to restrain his passion for the sake of clarity and in the virtuous causes of diplomacy, his first biographer, probably one of his best friends,[35] transformed Melanchthon's image into that of one seemingly incapable of passion.

It was perhaps a short step for Melanchthon's critics to invent a vice on the basis of this imagined virtue, transforming Camerarius's image of the virtuous "Quiet Reformer" into a picture of one too meek or indeed too cowardly to stand up for—or perhaps too duplicitous to reveal—his true convictions in the midst of theological and ecclesiastical controversy. Thus arose an image of "Melanchthon as the betrayer of Luther and of the Reformation." According to this criticism, "He did not have the spine,

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[33]   *Luther's Works* vol. 49, 297-98; cf. *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtsausgabe: Briefwechsel* 5: 319-20; cf. Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes," 10.

[34]   Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes" 13-14; see also Wengert, "'With Friends Like This…' The Biography of Philip Melanchthon by Joachim Camerarius," in Thomas Meyer and D. R. Wolf, eds., *The Rhetorics of Life-Writing in Early Modern Eurpoe: Forms of Biography from Cassandra Fidele to Louis XIV* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1995), 115-131.

[35]   Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes," 13.

or was too committed to philosophy or to humanism, or abandoned the evangelical position entirely in favor of Rome or Geneva [i.e., Calvin's theology] or both."[36] Melanchthon thus famously faced the accusation of cowardice or treachery in the conflict between Roman Catholics and Lutherans leading up to the Augsburg Interim[37] and of being a crypto-Calvinist, not only a betrayer of Luther's thought, but unwilling to honestly declare his allegiance to the theology of the Genevan Reformer.[38]

3. Luther as Existentialist

This image of the wavering, fearful, or perhaps even treacherous Melanchthon perdured through much of the twentieth century. And because it was constructed to stand in contrast to a predominant—and perhaps more accurate—nineteenth and twentieth century image of Luther as a churchman and theologian it will be worthwhile to proceed by briefly painting the latter. In a particularly clear and helpful recent essay on Luther's theology, Markus Wriedt writes:

> Martin Luther was not a systematic theologian. He did not develop and present his "teachings" in concise treatises, logically arranged and secured to all sides. Luther's theology rather grew out of a concrete situation. As much as he favored reliable and clear statements on the one hand, so little would he have himself tied down to specific doctrinal formulations on the other. The lively, situation-centered and context-related style of Martin Luther's Scripture interpretation cannot and could not be pressed into a Procrustean bed of orthodox confessional

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[36]   Ibid., 11.

[37]   Stupperich, *Melanchthon*, 122-132; Manschrek, 280-290.

[38]   Stupperich, *Melanchthon*., 141-145; see also on Melanchthon's stance on the presence of Christ in the eucharist, Wilhelm Heinrich Neuser, *Die Abendmahlslehre Melanchthons in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung 1519-1530* (Neukirken: Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1968); Ralph Walter Quere, Melanchthon's *Christum Cognoscere: Christ's Efficacious Presence in the Eucharistic Theology of Melanchthon*. Bibliotheca Humanistica & Reformatorica Volume 22 (Leiden: Nieuwkoop, De Graaf, 1977); and Gordon E. Rupp, "Philipp Melanchthon and Martin Bucer," in H. Cunliffe-Jones and Benjamin Drewery, ed., *A History of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

and doctrinal writings... Luther develops his theological view out of existentially troubling spiritual trials.[39]

Dr. Wriedt points here toward an important aspect of Luther's thought which has been widely recognized by Luther research through the present. Luther's "lively, situation-centered and context-related style" and his responsiveness to his "concrete situation" have been recognized to have much in common with and may indeed have served as an inspiration for certain themes in the development of twentieth century existentialist philosophy. Some of the most influential twentieth century Protestant theologians and Luther scholars have made this connection, including Paul Tillich,[40] Rudolph Bultmann,[41] Gerhard Ebeling,[42] and perhaps even Karl Barth.[43] And so in spite of the acknowledged danger that in characterizing Luther as an existentialist one would be guilty of anachronism, as Randall Stephens writes, "almost any scholar would have to admit at some points that Luther's theology bears a remarkable similarity to the philosophy of Christian existentialism," according to which "the Christian's life is determined by a living relationship with the God the ultimate."[44]

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[39] Markus Wriedt, "Luther's Theology," tr. by Katharina Gustavs in Donald McKim, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 86-119, here 87.
[40] See for example Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought from Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism,* ed. by Carl Braaten (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 227-251, esp. 227-233.
[41] See Bultmann's rejection of Barth in favor of Luther's thought in "The Problem of Hermeneutics" in James C. G. Grieg, ed., *Rudolph Bultmann: Essays Philosophical and Theological* (New York: MacMillan, 1955), 234-261, esp. 257 ff.
[42] See Ebeling's treatment of Barth, Bultmann, and Luther in "Karl Barths Ringen mit Luther" in *Lutherstudien Band III: Begriffsuntersuchungen—Textinterpretationen Wirkungsgeschichtliches* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr 1985), 428-573, here 495 ff; also "New Hermeneutics and the Early Luther," *Theology Today*, 21 no 1 (1964): 34-36 , where Ebeling describes "the existential element in Luther's theology" as a hermeneutical task: "The fundamental problem for his is not a verbal description of God, but the exposure of man's existence before God; that is to say, the proclamation of God's judgment over man…And the decisive question is what constitutes man's being as person, i.e., the question of man's being before God," 35.
[43] See Karl Barth, "Reformation as Decision," tr. by Lewis Spitz in Spitz, ed., *The Reformation: Basic Interpretations* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Co.), 153-170.
[44] Randall Stephens, "An Examination of Luther's Theology According to an Existentialist Interpretation," *Quodlibet Journal* 2, no. 2, (Spring 2000), accessed on March 25, 2012 at

This connection or affinity between Luther's thought and Christian existentialism was central to Jaroslav Pelikan's influential treatment of the relationship between philosophy and Lutheran theology in his book *From Luther to Kierkegaard*. Here Pelikan claims that both the existentialists, including Kierkegaard, and Luther 1) treat of the total person, "mind, body, and spirit" (not just the intellect) as, 2) being called to account before ultimate reality, 3) in crises experienced as determining one's existence or nihilation (and not merely as determining one's intellectual assent to theological truth claims).[45]

4. Melanchthon as "Intellectualist"

According to Pelikan, the recognition and appreciation of these themes in Luther's thought by Protestant theologians in the twentieth century constituted the rejection of a previous nineteenth and twentieth century approach to theology, which Pelikan calls "intellectualist." As Pelikan used the term, "intellectualism" is the attempted transformation or reduction of Christian faith from the sort of existential response to God characterized above into one of merely intellectual assent to a set of doctrines or propositions about God.   As Pelikan explained:

> Since, according to Melanchthon, the reason and the intellect were the
> distinguishing characteristics of man, it naturally followed that divine revelation
> addresses itself to them primarily rather than to the total person. The task of the
> Christian Church and of its functionaries thus becomes of providing men with the

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http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/stephens-luther.shtml ; for an important rejection of this interpetation of Luther see Paul Hinlicky, "Luther's New Language of the Spirit: Trinitarian Theology as Critical Dogmatics," in Bielfeldt, Hinlicky, and Mattox, 131-190, esp. 168-174.

[45]   In the words of some of the headings in Pelikan's chapter in *From Luther to Kierkegaard* on Luther's theology, "The Total Man" (16-17) confronts God through "The Living Word" (18-19), which confrontation is characterized by "The Element of Crisis" (19-21). Note that Pelikan also identifies Emil Brunner's *The Divine Human Encounter* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1943) and Gustaf Aulen's *The Faith of the Christian Church,* tr. Eric Wahstrom and G. Everett Arden, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948) as exemplars of an existentialist interpretation of Luther's theology. See 126, notes 79-80.

need information about God and His will…The contrast between this intellectualism and Luther's interpretation of the nature of faith is obvious; it was to have serious consequences in theology, in the practical and educational life of the Church, and, as we shall see, in the development of the relationship between Lutheranism and philosophy.[46]

A central concern of Pelikan's book was to answer the question of how Lutheranism after Luther could have forsaken Luther's lively proto-existentialism for any such form of "intellectualism."[47]

Nor was Pelikan alone in finding that Luther's lively faith was somehow intellectualized by subsequent Lutherans; it was an important motif for Luther studies throughout the middle of the century.   For example, as George Lindbeck noted about perhaps the most influential Lutheran existentialist of the twentieth century, "Paul Tillich thought that when the Reformation principle of fiducia (trust) was transformed into assensus (assent to the right doctrine), then Luther's theology was dealt a serious blow."[48] According to Pelikan and others, once the conception of faith was intellectualized by Protestant theologians it was inevitable that they would attempt to capture the rest of Luther's thought within various dogmatic systems, thus vitiating its existentialist heart.

Pelikan found that much of the fault for this development lies with Melanchthon. He suggested that Melanchthon failed to understand the essence of Luther's faith, or at least that he failed to preserve it for or convey it to subsequent generations. For as Pelikan claimed, unlike in Luther:

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[46]   Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard,* 28, citing Melancthon's *Liber de anima*, CR 13:16; and Frederick Paulson, *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts* (2nd ed., Leipzig: Verlag von Viet & Comp., 1896), I, 437 ff.

[47]   Ibid*.,* 24-28, 114-116.

[48]   George Lindbeck, "An Assessment Reassessed: Paul Tillich on the Reformation*," The Journal of Religion* 63, no. 4 (Oct. 1983): 376-393, here 384.

> The constitutive aspect of faith in the theology of Melanchthon is assent—not the response of the total individual to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but agreement with a set of revealed truths.[49]

Pelikan and others disapproved of this sort of "intellectualism," found the Lutheranism of his time to be badly affected by it, and placed the blame for this situation squarely on Melanchthon's shoulders.

Another proponent of the view of Melanchthon presented by Pelikan was Richard Caemerer, who claimed that that on account of this "intellectualizing," Melanchthon "stands at the head of the abridgment of the essential vitality of Luther's thought."[50] While Caemerer wrote that one might not wish to "make a scapegoat out of one man,"[51] in accounting for the alleged loss of the essential character of Luther's thought within Protestant theology, Caemerer's essay "The Melanchthon Blight," presents perhaps the most dramatic example of a twentieth century Lutheran doing just that. As Caemerer leveled the accusation:

> [Melanchthon's] Humanistic heritage and his educational preoccupation combined to produce the un-Lutheran but potent oversimplification of Christian knowledge as information, apprehended by a mind which is to all intents and purposes identical to the natural mind.[52]

And this intellectualism, according to Caemerer, has proven to be a blight threatening Lutheran theology ever since.

Melanchthon was thus depicted by some through much of the twentieth century as not merely having had an insufficient understanding of Luther's conception of faith, but as being the father of perhaps the greatest error in the development of Protestantism

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[49]   Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard,* 33.
[50]   Richard Caemerer, "The Melanchthon Blight," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 25, no. 5 (May 1947): 322.
[51]   Ibid.
[52]   Ibid., 328.

thought.[53] This suspicion of Melanchthon can be traced to the twentieth century "Luther

Renaissance" which began in Germany after World War I. While this movement shared

with Protestant Neo-Orthodoxy a rejection of nineteenth century liberal theology, it was

more narrowly focussed on revitalizing specifically Lutheran theology. This movement

was thus, as Günter Gassman writes, "a new effort to understand the 'real' Luther, to free

him from the distorting interpretations of the past."[54]

The Luther Renaissance has been especially associated with Karl Holl since, as

Hans Hillerbrand has recently noted, "Holl laid the groundwork for theological appraisals

of Luther in the twentieth century."[55] According to Holl, a rebirth of Luther's pure

theology within Lutheranism would require the death of the "Melanchthonian." As

Pelikan put it,

> One of the major conclusions to which the researches of Karl Holl have led is the
> thesis that much Lutheranism after Luther is not Lutheran at all but
> Melanchthonian, and that later Lutheranism filled Luther's words with
> Melanchthon's meanings and then put Luther's words into Melanchthon's
> categories…[This thesis] can be supported by a great deal of evidence in the field
> of philosophy. Contemporary research in the theology of Luther has taken it as its
> aim to get behind Melanchthon to the real Luther and to rediscover Luther's
> relevance for the present theological crisis.[56]

Thus as Wengert suggests, the Luther Renaissance's existentialistically inspired

hagiography of Luther went hand-in-glove with a villainizing of Melanchthon:

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[53]   See however the much more nuanced treatment of Melanchthon's legacy in Theodore Tappert,
"Melanchthon in America," in *Luther und Melanchthon: Referate und Berichte des zweiten Internationalen
Kongress für Lutherforschung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 189-198.

[54]   Günter Gassmann, "Luther in the Worldwide Church Today," in McKim, 289-303, here 294.

[55]   As Hillerbrand writes, "The Luther picture of Neo-Orthodoxy essentially echoed the themes of
Holl," in "The Legacy of Martin Luther," in McKim, 227-239, here 236.

[56]   Pelikan *From Luther to Kierkegaard,* 26, citing Karl Holl, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre in Luthers
Vorlesung über den Romerbrief mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Frage der Heilsgewiszheit," in
Gesammelte aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte, I, Luther, (7th ed., Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck) 1948), 126-129;
see also Edgar M. Carlson, *The Reinterpretation of Luther* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948).

> With neo-orthodox scholars convinced that the Renaissance's humanism was a precursor of the Enlightenment's rationalism, it was a short step to blaming Melanchthon for liberalism's betrayal of the Reformation."[57]

And as if to provide a case supporting this point, in an essay accompanying Wengert's in a volume observing the 500th anniversary of Melanchthon's death, Walter Bouman took the "short step" Wengert pointed to. For in his essay "Melanchthon's Significance for the Church Today" Bouman wrote:

> Melanchthon bears a large share of the responsibility for the fact that after two hundred years of Lutheran theology, the result was the Enlightenment and the devastating critique of Immanuel Kant.[58]

According to Bouman this Kantian critique included the claims that Christian faith is to be accounted for within the bounds of reason alone (rather than being independent of reason, as in Luther), that revelation thus merely supplements philosophy (rather than determining its limits, as in Luther), and that knowledge of the substance of the Christian faith, if not its historical accidents, is achievable by humans without the need to appeal to divine intervention.[59] All of these, according to Bouman, are somehow consistent with Melanchthon's thought and contrary to Luther's, though Bouman did not explain just how Melanchthon exhibited any of these supposed characteristics.

While the claim that Melanchthon lacked qualities Luther shared with existentialist thought was widespread throughout the later part of the twentieth century, it has been called into question. According to Michael Aune, for example, Melanchthon

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[57] Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes," 11; see also Heinz Scheible, "Das Melanchthonbild Karl Holls," in Günter Frank and Ulrich Kopf, eds., *Melanchthon und die Neuzeit,* Melanchthon-Schriften der Stadt Bretten 7 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2003), 223-238.

[58] Walter Bouman, "Melanchthon's Significance for the Church Today," in Hendrix and Wengert, 33-56, here 39.

[59] Ibid., 39-41.

exemplifies Renaissance theologians for whom "Faith is a movement not only of the intellect but also of the heart and will."[60] Accordingly, Aune writes:

> [Faith] is *assensus* ('assent'), as Melanchthon was fond of pointing out. But it is also a psychologically existential reality in which intellect and emotion are not separate but interwoven.[61]

And furthermore, Aune writes, according to Melanchthon:

> Christian teaching and preaching were to be enunciated so clearly and powerfully that the message communicated could be existentially, personally appropriated by the human being.[62]

Aune concluded that Melanchthon's theology is thus "an existential theology that is both doctrinal and psychological."[63]

5. Melanchthon as Systematizer

Accompanying the standard charge that, unlike the existentialist Luther, Melanchthon was an intellectualist, has been the criticism that, unlike Luther, who responded to diverse concrete situations in a lively manner, Melanchthon was a systematizer. That is, to use Wriedt's language, Melanchthon *was* said to be one who "pressed" his thought "into a Procrustean bed of orthodox confessional and doctrinal writings." To be sure, there cannot there be much doubt that Melanchthon was systematic at least in the sense that he attempted to develop and present his teachings in concise treatises of well organized clearly stated propositions. His *Loci communes* as well as the

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[60] Michael Aune, 'A Heart Moved': Philip Melanchthon's Forgotten Truth about Worship" in Hendrix and Wengert, 75-98, here 93; quoting Debora Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 68.

[61] Aune, 93.

[62] Ibid., 83.

[63] Aune also attributes this claim about Melanchthon to Siegfried Wiedenhoffer's "Humanismus und Reformation: Zur ökumenischen Bedeutung eines historischesn Zusammenhangs," in *Werden und Wirkung der Reformation,* ed. Lothar Graf zu Dohna and Reinhold Mokrosch (Darmstadt: Technische Hochscule, 1986); Aune 83, n. 20.

Augsburg Confession stand as testimony to this gift. But there are reasons for thinking it strange that the claim that Melanchthon was "systematic" in this sense has born with it a certain reproach by those who have admired Luther's thought.

To begin with, it would seem quite wrong to portray Luther himself as "anti-systematic" if this were taken to mean that Luther objected to stating the principles of faith in clear terms, or that he claimed that assenting to such statements played no role in faith. As Wriedt points out for example, in Luther's famous dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam over the question of the will's freedom, Luther reacted quite negatively to Erasmus's claim that he (Erasmus) "does not like to make assertions," Luther responding in part to Erasmus:

> Let Skeptics and Academics keep well away from us Christians, but let there be among us "assertors" twice as unyielding as the Stoics themselves...Nothing is better known among Christians than assertion. Take away assertion and you take away Christianity. What Christian would agree that assertions are to be despised? That would be nothing but a denial of all religion and piety, or an assertion that neither nor piety, nor any dogma is of the slightest importance."[64]

Second, contrary to Pelikan,[65] Luther was himself quite capable of stating his theological position in a concise, well arranged treatise. The *Smallkald Articles* of 1537 are just such an attempt at seeing his thought "tied down to specific doctrinal formulations."[66] To be sure, as Wriedt notes, such a writing does not represent Luther's customary mode of expression, and these articles may not express Luther's thought as powerfully as some of his less systematic writing. But Luther's effort here does indicate that he had no principled objection to "intellectualizing," or "systematizing," at least not

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[64]   LW 33: 20-21 cf. Wriedt 115, n. 6.
[65]   Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard* 14-15, but cf. 13.
[66]   Kolb-Wengert, 295-28; cf. Pelikan's denial of this characterization, *From Luther to Kierkegaard,* 14-15.

in this sense.   Indeed, William Russell has referred to the Smallkald Articles as Luther's

last "theological testament."[67]

It is perhaps not surprising that those who value Luther's ability to respond in

lively and creative ways to theological and ecclesiological crises, each in their own

unique context, would find Melanchthon's generalized, carefully organized formulations

of doctrine unappealing. But, third, Luther himself was not such a one. In fact, Luther

praised Melanchthon most highly for his ability to present organized expositions of

Christian faith. As Wengert notes for example, in 1529 Luther wrote about

Melanchthon's commentary on Colossians:

> I was born for this purpose: to fight with the rebels and the devils and to lead the
> charge. Therefore, my books are very stormy and warlike. I have to uproot
> trunks and stumps, hack at thorns and hedges, and fill in the potholes. So I am the
> crude woodsman, who has to clear and make the path. But Master Philip comes
> after me meticulously and quietly, builds and plants, sows and waters happily,
> according to the talents God has richly given him.[68]

More concise is the passage from Luther's *Table Talk* in which Luther is said to have

scribbled on his breakfast table:

> Substance and words—Philip. Words without substance—Erasmus. Substance
> without words—Luther. Neither substance nor words—Karlstadt.[69]

It is thus one of the great ironies of Melanchthon's legacy that some who have striven

hardest to be partisans for Luther's theology have at times denigrated Melanchthon for

doing just that which Luther admired most in the praeceptor.

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[67]   William Russel, *Luther's Theological Testament: The Schmalkald Articles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

[68]   Quoted in Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes," 10, from WA 30.2: 68:12-69.1.

[69]   Quoted in Bouman, 36, from WA 3:460, 39-40: "Res et verba Philippus; verba sine re Erasmus; res sine verbis Lutherus; nec res nec verba Carolostadius," no. 3619; cf. LW 54: 245;. Andreas Carlstadt was a sometime colleague of Luther and Melanchthon at Wittenberg who came to embrace more radical reforms and who abandoned his academic position at Wittenberg. See Manshreck 113-130 and David Steinmetz, "Andreas Bodenstein von Carldstadt (1480-1541), Reformation without 'Tarrying for Anie," in *Reformers in the Wings: From Geiler von Kaysersberg to Theodore Beza* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 123-130.

Luther both achieved some success as a systematizer and admired Melanchthon for his greater success in such endeavors. Contrary to Pelikan et al.,then, it does not seem Melanchthon can be said to be a *bête' noir* of Luther in this sense. But the identification of Melanchthon as a "systematizer," whether or not as a reproach, seems to have entailed somewhat more from several Melanchthon scholars of the twentieth and now twenty-first century. For example, in placing Melanchthon at the head of a rogues' gallery of intellectualist systematic betrayers of Luther, Pelikan wrote:

> Melanchthonianism, Orthodoxy, Rationalism, and Hegelianism all sought a comprehensive rational system. To that extent they all constitute a misrepresentation of Luther.[70]

Unfortunately, Pelikan did not explain just what he meant by the claim that Melanchthon sought a "comprehensive rational system."

The use of the word "system" to signify the product of philosophizing in a certain mode seems to have arisen with German Idealism; in any case it was widely and prominently used within that tradition with a certain meaning. Thus Rolf-Peter Horstman has noted that Hegel and the German Idealists sought "a unified theory of reality…which can systematically explain all forms of reality, starting from a single principle or a single subject."[71] That the word "system" was widely used by German Idealists to designate such a unified theory is reflected in the names of numerous works within that tradition, including for example Shelling's *System der transcendental Idealismus,* "System of Transcendental Idealism," *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie, "*First

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[70]   Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard,* 115. He further notes, "The hymnody and preaching of Lutheranism…maintained the existential approach that was sometimes lost in the Church's theology," 165, n. 101.

[71]   Rolf-Peter Horstman, "Hegel, George Wilhelm Friedrich," in E. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge 1998, 2004). http://0-www.rep.routledge.com.libus.csd.mu.edu/article/DC036. Accessed April 01, 2012,

Plan of a System of the Philosophy of Nature", G. W. F. Hegel's early *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie,* "The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy," or most familiarly, *System der Wissenschaft. Erster Teil, die Phänomenologie des Geistes,* "System of Knowledge. First Part of the Phenomenology of Spirit".[72]

The word "system" to refer to a comprehensive and unitary philosophy based in one or a few principle concepts has, however, since been applied to the thought of numerous figures well outside of the tradition of German Idealism. Thus for example, in the middle of the twentieth century one Vergilius Ferm could include in his *History of Philosophical Systems* not only essays on German Idealism and Kant's philosophy, but on Platoniam, Aristotelianism, rationalism, empiricism, and many others.[73] Much more recently Lutheran theologian Christine Helmer has broadened the conception further, claiming "System is a distinctive feature of Western thought." [74] But though she may claim ubiquity for this feature, her explanation of the concept of "system" reveals that her expansive claim is in fact rooted in her appreciation for the tradition of German Idealism. For as she writes:

> Whether representing a cosmology or a religious worldview, a system of thought aims to grasp the whole. System also locates particulars within a whole that is

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[72]   Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) translated by Peter Heath (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978). Schelling, *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie (First Plan of a System of the Philosophy of Nature)*, in *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1861), 5–268. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie*, (Jena: Seidler, 1801; repr. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010); trans and ed. H.S. Harris and W. Cerf as *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1977). Hegel, *System der Wissenschaft. Erster Teil, die Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Bamberg & Würzburg: Goebhardt, 1807); trans. by A.V. Miller as *Phenomenology of Spirit,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

[73]   See the various essays in Vergilius Ferm, ed., *History of Philosophical Systems* (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1950).

[74]   Christine Helmer, ed., *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2004), 1.

more than their sum total. The conceptualization of this totality and the particulars related to this totality, furthermore, is accompanied by the question regarding the explanation for the existence of the whole….Hence the search for, and in some cases even the rational exhaustion of, the Absolute is a constitutive feature of Western systems."[75]

Though Pelikan does not clarify just what he means in accusing Melanchthon of "systematizing," his use of the term does not seem to be far from Helmer's. In any case, the notion that Melanchthon was a systematizer in this stronger Hegelian sense has been an important claim in research on Melanchthon throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Perhaps most significantly, it is central to the work of Günter Frank, who can rightly be called the twenty-first century's "preminent specialist"[76] on Melanchthon's philosophy. Frank's *Die theologische Philosophie Philipp Melanchthons (1498-1560)* is perhaps the most comprehensive and thorough work on Melanchthon's philosophy ever produced.[77] What is more, Frank has in the last several decades edited numerous volumes of studies on Melanchthon's philosophy, including *Melanchthon und die Naturwissenschaft seiner Zeit*[78], *Der Theologe Melanchthon,*[79] *Melanchthon und die Neuzeit,*[80] and *Der Aristotelismus der frühen Neuzeit—Kontinuität oder Weideraneignung?*[81] As director of the *Europaische Melanchthon-Akademie* in Bretten Germany, the town of Melanchthon's birth, he has edited an extremely helpful website which contains direct access to a great amount of primary and secondary material on the

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[75]   Ibid., 2.
[76]   Hinlicky, *Paths Not Taken,* 215.
[77]   See the Introduction above, 15, n. 45.
[78]   Günter Frank and Stephan Rhein eds., *Melanchthon und die Naturwissenschaften seiner Zeit,* Melanchthon-Schriften der Stadt Bretten MSB 4, (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke 1998).
[79]   Günter Frank, ed., *Der Theologe Melanchthon,* MSB 5, (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke, 2000).
[80]   Günter Frank and U. Köpf, eds., *Melanchthon und die Neuzeit,* MSB 7, (Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2003).
[81]   Günter Frank and A. Speer, eds*., Der Aristotelismus in der Frühen Neuzeit – Kontinuität oder Wiederaneignung?* Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, Bd. 115 (Wiesbaden:Harrasowitz, 2007).

praeceptor.[82] He has written essays on Melanchthon's rhetoric and logic, ethics, natural

philosophy, psychology, theology, and humanism.[83] The sheer volume of Frank's output

is sufficient to assure that the turn of the twenty-first century will henceforth be

considered an age of abundance with respect to Melanchthon scholarship.

Frank asserts that Melanchthon's philosophy can be characterized as a "theo-

rationalismus," grounded in a philosophy of mind, capable of knowing both God and

nature, thus constituting the sort of system Pelikan abhorred and Helmer appreciates.[84]

As Paul Hinlicky summarizes Frank's account,

> Melanchthon's confidence in a renewed human reason is breathtaking…The
> astonishing capacity of human reason to know the world …is based upon the
> supposition of an 'original coherence," in Frank's words, of mind and being in
> God, what Leibniz will later develop into the doctrine of the "pre-established
> harmony."[85]

But not all have claimed Melanchthon was a systematizer in this sense. Most

notably, Frank stands in opposition to Peter Peterson, who claimed in his *Geschichte der*

aristotelischen Philosophie im protestantischen Deutschland, that Melanchthon did not

intend to build any system at all. According to Peterson, while Melanchthon was

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[82]   Online at http://www.melanchthon.com/Melanchthon-
Akademie/Wissenschaft_und_Forschung/Wissenschaft_und_Forschung.php as of April 4th, 2012.

[83]   A single example of each must suffice here: Günter Frank, "Melanchthons Dialektik und die
Geschichte der Logik," in J. Leonhardt, ed., *Melanchthon und das Lehrbuch des 16. Jahrhunderts,*
Rostocker Studien zur Kulturwissenschaft 1, (Rostock: Universitätsbibliothek, 1997), 125-145; "Die
Vernunft des Handelns. Melanchthons Konzept der praktischen Philosophie und die Frage nach der Einheit
und Einheitlichkeit seiner Philosophie," in Günter Frank and Sebastian Lalla, eds., *Fragmenta*
Melanchthoniana zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit, Bd. 1 (Heidelberg: Verlag
Heidelberg Regionalkultur, 2003), 163-178; "Philipp Melanchthons *Liber de anima* und die Etablierung der
frühneuzeitlichen Anthropologie," in Michael Beyer and Günther Wartenberg, eds., *Humanismus und*
Wittenberger Reformation (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1996), 313-326; "Philipp Melanchthons
Gottesbegriff und sein humanistischer Kontext, " in H. Kerner, ed., *Humanismus und Theologie in der*
frühen Neuzeit (Nürnberg 1993), 181-202; "Gott und Natur – Zur Transformation der Naturphilosophie in
Melanchthons humanistischer Philosophie," in Frank and Rein, 43-58.

[84]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 337; cf. Friedrich Kaulbach "Erkenntnis/Erkenntnistheorie,"
in Gerhard Kraus and Gerhard Müller, eds., *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* Band X (Berlin: DeGruyter,
1982), 152-159. Note that Kaulbach attributes *Theorationalismus* to the rationalist philosophies of
Descartes, Malebranch, Spinoza, and Leibniz, 152.

[85]   Paul Hinlicky, *Paths not Taken: Fates of Theology from Luther through Leibniz* (Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 2009), 219.

Aristotelian in an important sense, he did not follow the Stagirite in proposing a metaphysical system. Rather, his appropriation of Aristotle was mediated by an appreciation for Cicero's general approach to philosophy. Like the Roman orator, according to Peterson, Melanchthon was content to have distinct sciences or realms within philosophy and learning generally, each of which sciences were internally coherent, but without endeavoring to find knowledge helpful for daily living.[86]

Two questions have already emerged from this review of literature. The first of these is whether or to what extent Melanchthon was an "intellectualist" who lacked the qualities that made Luther a forerunner of existentialism. And while there can be no doubt that Melanchthon was systematic in the milder sense of presenting his thought in clearly and well organized works, the second question has to do with what kind of systematizer Melanchthon was, of whether or not Melanchthon intended to produce a comprehensive philosophical system of the sort Pelikan or Frank or Helmer point to. Finally, if the answer to the latter is affirmative, a third question will arise: if Melanchthon was systematic in the stronger sense, what sort of philosophical system did he produce? That is, upon what principles—or upon *whose* principles—is Melanchthon supposed to have built his system?

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[86] Peter Peterson, *Geschichte der aristotelischen Philosophie im protestantischen Deutschland* (Stuttgrt-Bad Annstatt: Friedrich Fromman, 1964), 102. "Da sich jedoch kein einziges System aufzeigen läßt, das nur Wahres vortrüge, geschweige denn die gesämte Wahrheit beßäse, die nur Gott vorbehalten ist, so wird es aufgabe eines jeden Menschen, die Hauptrichtungen mindestens zu prüfen und sich für solche Prüfung bestens vorzubereiten, d. h. nun, sich die Beherrschung der Dialektik, der Wissenschaft von der wahren Beweisführung, zu sichern." See also by Peterson, "Aristotlelisches in der Theologie Melanchthons*," Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* Band 164, heft 2 (1917): 149-158.

D. Melanchthon as Philosopher

1. Melanchthon as Aristotelian

Melanchthon himself claimed that his philosophy was Aristotelian.[87] For

example in the dedicatory letter to his *Initia doctrinae physicae* he refers to his physics as

"initia Aristotelica,"[88] and for hundreds of years most historians have agreed with

Melanchthon's self-assessment. "Indeed," as Günter Frank writes,

> Since he proclaimed himself "homo peripateticus" and since Jacob Brucker, the
> first historian of Germany in the eighteenth century, celebrated him as the greatest
> Aristotelian at the time of the Reformation, Melanchthon has been considered
> nothing other than an Aristotelian philosopher.[89]

In particular Frank cites, in addition to Pelikan,[90] the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, Ernst

Troeltsch, H. E. Weber, and Enno Rudolph among those who regarded Melanchthon as

an Aristotelian.[91] There has, however, been considerable disagreement however about

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[87]   See the Introduction above, 14. The standard critical edition of Aristotle's works is *Aristotelis Opera,* 5 vols.. edited by Immanuel (Bekker. Berlin: Reime, 1831-70). This dissertation will generally use translations from Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* 2 volumes. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[88]   CR 13: 911. "Illis vero iam respondebo, qui haec aristotelica initia derident tamquam tenuia ieiuna." Note also however his qualification two columns below in the same letter: "Nec vero aut defendo, aut nimium amare volo omnis Aristotelis arguitas," ("neither in fact do I wish to defend, or much less to love, all the claims of Aristotle"). Note his similar caution in stating his method in the introduction to the *Commentarius de anima*, "I preserve several opinions accepted in the schools, as well as the customary form of teaching, and, since we have to say some things slightly differently in the Church than are said by Aristotle, I ask to be granted forgiveness if now and then I depart from an Aristotelian phrase, " tr. Sachiko Kusukawa, *Orations,* 144-150, here 148.

[89]   Günter Frank, "Neoplatonism," 3-18, here 3, referencing J. J. Brucker, *Historia critica Philosophiae* 4 (Lipsiae, 1743), 102-116, and a letter Melanchthon wrote to a friend in 1537, CR 3: 338: "Mihi tamen concedant homini Peripatetico, et amanti modiocritem, minus Stoice alicubi loqui." See also by Frank, "Die zweite Welle der Wiederaneignung des Corpus Aristotelicum in der frühen Neuzeit: die Christiliche und politische tradition: ein Forschungsbericht." *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 26 (2003), 89-100.

[90]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 16, n. 20 citing Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard* 24-75.

[91]   Frank, "Neoplatonism," 3, citing Wilhelm Dilthey, "Das natürliche System der Geisesgewisenschaften im 17. Jahrhundert," in Wilhelm Dilthey, *Aufsätze zur Philosophie,* ed. by M. Marquardt (Berlin: W. Dausien 1986); Ernst Troeltsch, *Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Johann Gerhard un Philipp Melanchthon* (Göttingen: E. A. Huth, 1891); Hans Weber, *Reformation, Orthodoxie, und Rationalismus, 1/1: Von der Reformation zur Orthodoxie* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1937), and Enno Rudolph, *Zeit und Gott bei Aristotleles aus der Perspektive der protestantischen Wirkungsgeschichte*

just what the praeceptor meant in so identifying himself. Several answers to this question have been entertained in the secondary literature: that Melanchthon was a metaphysical realist of the *via antiqua*, that he was a nominalist following the *via moderna*, and that his Aristotelianism was eclectic and idiosyncratic.[92]

a. As Adherent of the *Via antiqua*

It is well known that Melanchthon was trained both by those who identified themselves as belonging to the *via antiqua* and to the *via moderna*.[93] A number of scholars have claimed that one or the other of these *viae* provided the foundation for the philosophy he produced later in his career. Some, as John Schneider notes in *Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority: Oratio Sacra*, have claimed that Melanchthon's philosophy is built upon an adherence to the *via antiqua*. This group has

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(Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1986). See also Frank, *Die theologische Philos ophie,* 16-23; and Richard Muller, "Scholasticism, Reformation, Orthodoxy, and the Persistence of Christian Aristotelianism." *Trinity Journal* (Spring 1998), http://www.galaxie.com/volume/1720 (accessed May 20, 2012); and Jan Rohls, "Aristotelische Methodik und protestantische Theologie, Von Melanchthon zu Zabarella," in Günter Frank and Herman Selderhuis, eds., *Melanchthon und der Calvinismus,* Melanchthon-Schriften der Stadt Bretten volume 9 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2003), 75-106.

[92] For a helpful introduction to these *viae* and to the so-called *Wegestreit* between them, see Heiko Obermann, "Via Antiqua and Via Moderna: Late Medieval Prolegomena to Early Reformation Thought," *Journal of the Histroy of* Ideas 48, 1 (Jan-March 1987): 23-40; also "*Via moderna--devotio momerna*: Tendenzen in Tübinger Geistesleben 1477-1516," in *Theologen und Theologie an der Universität Tübingen*, edited by M. Brecht, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977), 1-64. More recetly, see William J. Courtenay, "*Antiqui* and *Moderni* in Late Medieval Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1987): 3-10; John Farthing, *Thomas Aquinas and Gabriel Biel: Interpretations of St. Thomas Aquinas in German Nominalism on the Eve of the Reformation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988); J. F. M. Maarten "*Via Antiqua* and *Via Moderna* in the Fifteenth Century: Doctrinal, Institutional, and Church Political Factors in the *Wegestreit*," in Russell L. Friedman and Lauge O. Nielson, eds., *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400-1700*. Texts and Studies in the History of Philosophy Volume 53 (Dordrecht: Kluwer 2003), 9-36; and Steven Marrone, "Medieval Philosophy in Context," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy,* 10-50.

[93] See for example Stupperich, *Melanchthon,* 26-31; Manshreck, 27-42; Scheible, *Melanchthon,* 12-27; Hartfelder 12-61.

included Otto Clemen, Heinrich Hermelink, Reinhold Rau, and Wilbert Rosin.[94] And yet

the evidence that Melanchthon was a realist in this sense is circumstantial at best.

Schneider reports just two pieces of evidence in support of this claim. First,

Clemen and Müller together tried to make a case that Melanchthon adhered to the *via

antiqua* on the basis of a letter Melanchthon wrote while a student at Tübingen and

discovered by while they were preparing the *Supplementa Melanchthonia*. In this letter

Melanchthon praised the piety of certain realists studying at Tübingen.[95] Clemen and

Müller seem to have assumed that such a kindness was unheard of between members of

differing philosophical factions. Second, Wiedenhofer more recently argued that

Melanchthon would not have had time to graduate with his Master's degree under the *via

moderna* at Tübingen merely two years after he had received his bachelor's degree under

the masters of the *via antiqua* at Heidelberg, and so he must have studied under the

masters of the *via antiqua* at both schools.[96]

Schneider finds that this evidence falls short. He follows Maurer in asserting that,

given Melanchthon's stereotypical desire to make peace, it should not be surprising to

find him praising personal qualities of scholars of a rival philosophical party. Nor, given

Melanchthon's renowned precociousness,[97] should it be shocking that Melanchthon

would be able to finish his Master's degree within two years.[98] In fact, it has been

suggested that the Melanchthon had gone to Tübingen for his master's degree precisely

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[94]   Schneider cites the following in *Oratio Sacra* 26, n. 13: Clemen,   SM 1, 18-20; Heinrich
Hermelink, *Die Theologische Falkultät in Tübingen vor der Refomation 1477-1535* (Ph.D. dissertation:
Tübingen, 1906) 133 ff.; Reinhold Rau, "Philipp Melanchthons Tübinger Jahre," in *Tübinger Blatter*, 47,
1960, 16 ff ; Wilbert Rosin, "In Response to Bengt Hägglund: The Importance of Epistemology in Luther's
and Melanchthon's Theology," *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 44, 2-3 (July, 1980): 134. Schneider
also lists Wiedenhoffer as making this claim (citing Wiedenhoffer, 1, 104 ff.), but see below, 85-93.
[95]   SM 6/1 18ff; cf. Schneider 27.
[96]   Wiedenhoffer, 1, 219; cf. Schneider 28; Frank 33-34.
[97]   Manschreck 31-37, esp. 35; Schneider 19-20; Scheible, Melanchthon 16-20; Hartfelder, 12-34.
[98]   Schneider, *Oratio Sacra,* 26.

because the faculty at Heidelberg, where he had received his bachelor's, had refused to issue Melanchthon a master's degree in 1512 on account of his youth.[99] In any case, there does not seem to be any textual evidence showing Melanchthon to be actually philosophizing in the realist mode of the *via antiqua,* and so Schneider's conclusion, "None of these arguments seems either valid or strong,"[100] seems correct.

b. As Adherent of the *Via moderna*

Much more common is the claim that Melanchthon belonged to the nominalist camp, at least by the time he graduated with his master's degree from Tübingen in 1517.[101] As Frank has pointed out there are both biographical and textual-philosophical evidence in support of this position.[102] Among the most important of the former is a passage from the biography of Melanchthon written by Camerarius, who reported of Melanchthon's days in Tübingen:

> At the time the study of philosophy, by which theology was enveloped, was divided into two parties. One of these defended the Platonic opinion on ideas or forms, [i.e.,] as abstract and separate from those things, whose physical mass is subject to the senses...These were named realists [*Reales isti sunt nominati*]. The other party, more following Aristotle, was teaching that the species [or idea] is inferred from the whole group of things, which have their own nature, and that this notion, existing as drawn from individual instances, is conceived by the

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[99]   Stupperich, *Melanchthon*, 27.
[100]   Schneider, Oratio Sacra, 28.
[101]   Schneider, *Oratio Sacra*, 27; Hartfelder, 42: "Obgleich er in Heidelberg das Baccalaureatsexamen ' nach dem alten Wege,' d.h. nach der Art der Realisten bestanden hatte, so gehört er in Tübingen als Anhänger des Aristoteles zu den Moderni, d. h. den Nominalisten"; cf. Wilhelm Dilthey, "Das Natürliche System der Geisteswissenschaften im 17. Jahrhunderdt," in Dilthey, *Aufsätze zur Philosophie*), 241: "Melanchthon so gut als *Luther* war Nominalist," quoted in Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 33; Scheible, *Melanchthon,* 20 (but cf. 16-17); see also Heiko Obermann, *Masters of the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 15-22. For Introductions to the thought of William of Ockham, see Marilyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, Publication in Medieval Studies, Vol. 26, 2 parts (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); Amand Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham in the Light of Its Principles* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1999); and Paul Vincent Spade, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Ockham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[102]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 33.

understanding. [They taught] that these natures preceded neither the individuals nor the thing, but consisted in name only: They were called nominalists and modernists [*Nominales appellati fuere et moderni*].[103]

It may be surprising to find that Camerarius identified the *nominales* as more faithful to Aristotle's thought than the *reales.* But this being so, and since Camerarius went on to note "Philip approved a sure method of teaching and arguing, and he perceived that Aristotle held the first rank in matters of this sort,"[104] the conclusion followed, so it was thought, that Melanchthon belonged to the nominalists, at least during his days at Tübingen.

On the basis of such texts Schneider places Melanchthon within what he calls, following Heiko Obermann, "South German nominalist Humanism." [105] Unfortunately, it was not Schneider's task to explore the contours of Melanchthon's supposed nominalism further. Most disappointingly, he does not look for signs of nominalist principles as guiding factors in Melanchthon's own philosophical works. Schneider's conclusions are thus rather themselves largely based on circumstantial evidence and so remain unsubstantiated.

Evidence supporting the claim that Melanchthon held some ideas in common with the nominalists is present in the praeceptor's own writings, however. Most notably, as Frank acknowledges, Melanchthon often and consistently denied the existence of extra-mental universals. As an example Frank quotes Melanchthon's statement from his *Erotemata dialectices*:

> There are things outside of the mind, but the general image of horse, called the species, is not something outside of the intellect, but is in fact an act of the

103   Camerarius *op. cit.,* 22, tr. in Schneider, *Oratio Sacra,* 34.
104   Ibid.
105   Ibid*.,* 20; cf. Obermann, *Reformation,* 16.

understanding painting that image in the mind, which is thus called common because it can be applied to many individuals."[106]

As Frank further notes:

> Melanchthon explained that Plato as well as Aristotle proposed this nominalistic solution to the problem of universals, when [Melanchthon] identified the "images of the mind" with the Platonic concept of ideas and with the Aristotelian concept of species.[107]

But while Melanchthon repeated his denial of extra-mental universals several times in his career,[108] neither of the two most important studies written during the last generation dealing with Melanchthon's philosophy find in these passages enough evidence to conclude that he can be considered a nominalist. One of these studies is perhaps the most extensive treatments ever produced on Melanchthon's theology and philosophy, Siegfried Wiedenhoffer's two volume *Formalstrukturen humanistischer und reformatorischer Theologie bei Philipp Melanchthon*. Wiedenhoffer is clear on this point: "In fact, [Melanchthon's] teaching on universals is nominalistic."[109] But according to Wiedenhoffer, the rejection of extra-mental universals only shows "that Melanchthon is

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[106]   CR 13: 520. "Res sunt extra intellectionem, *hic servus, hic homo, hic equus.* Sed communis illa imago cervi, quae vocatur species, non est quidam extra intellectionem, *nec est, ut Graeci loquuntur υφιττάμενον, seu hypostasis.* Sed est revera actus intelligendi, pingens illam imaginem in mente, quae ideo dicitur communis, quia applicari ad multa individua potest." cf. Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 35, n. 117, where Frank has omitted the words quoted above in italics.

[107]   Frank 35, "Zu Gewährsleuten dieser nominalistischen Lösung der Universalienfrage erklärt Melanchthon schließlich *Platon* wie auch *Aristoteles,* indem er jene "Abbilder des Geistes" mit dem platonischen Ideen- und dem Airistotelischen Eidos- Begriff identifiziert," referencing CR 13: 520: "Nec aliud Plato vocat Ideas, quam quod Aristoteles nominat species seu eide. Et uterque tantum de illis imaginibus in mente loquitur…Haec sententia et vera est et intellectu facilis." Note however the text Frank ommitted in the elision he marked: "...Haec dicunt esse perpetuas, quia rosae noticia seu definitio manet in mente, etiam in hyeme, cum nullae usquam florent rosae, et una est vera ac pepetua definitio. Sic dicit in mente pictoris, formam seu ideam pulcri coproris humani inclusam esse. Haec forma non est res extra intellectionem, sed ipse actus intelligendi, pingens haenc imaginem…"

[108]   See for example CR 13:423, tr. in Kusukawa, *Orations,* as "Oration on Plato," 200-201. "The uneducated have pretended that [Plato's] ideas were ravings, as they did not understand the type of greater discourse in Plato, and did not see that he himself called the ideas images and notions which the learned conceive in their minds, that is the definitions or demonstrations."

[109]   Wiedenhoffer, 416. "In der Tat ist seine *Universalienlehre* nominalistische."

not interested in the questions about metaphysics and epistemological posed by medieval

philosophy."[110]

The other most important critique of the identification of Melanchthon as a

nominalist comes from Frank, who agrees with Wiedenhoffer to the extent of asserting,

"In this rejection of metaphysics—or to be precise—in refusing Aristotle's doctrine of the

'prime mover' and the world of substances presented in the twelve books of Metaphysics,

Melanchthon completely agreed with Luther."[111] Frank also agrees with Peterson[112] as

well as Wiedenhoffer[113] that Melanchthon's debt to Aristotle was primarily in the use of

the Stagirite's dialectics, and that he was not willing to engage in metaphysical

speculation from within the framework of any form of medieval Aristotelianism.[114]

Frank then agrees with Wiedenhoffer when the former states:

> That [Melanchthon's thought] stands in a certain proximity to the nominalist
> teaching of universals can also be grounded in the nature of humanism and in its
> guiding motifs in relation to the philosophical tradition."[115]

Frank further supports the claim that Melanchthon cannot be regarded as either a

nominalist nor as a realist by pointing to research by Obermann suggesting that by the

sixteenth century the *Wegestrife* between the *reales* and the *nominales* was over,[116] "that

Gabriel Biel himself in no case taught the radical Nominalism of W. Ockham," and that

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[110]   Ibid. "Dieser befund zeigt aber zugleich auch, daß Melanchthon an der metaphysicschen und erkenntnistheoretischen Fagestellen der mittelalterichen Philosophie nicht interesiert sie."
[111]   Frank, "Neoplatonism," 5. For More on Melanchthon's use and abuse of Aristotle, see Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 15-30.
[112]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie* 19; cf. Peter Peterson, 101 ff.
[113]   Ibid., 35; cf. Wiedenhoffer, 102-106.
[114]   Frank, "Neoplatonism," 5.
[115]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 36-37. "Daß eine gewisse Nähe zur nominalistischen Universalienlehre gibt, kann auch im Wesen des Humismus und dessen leitenden Motiven im Umgang mit der philosophischen Tradition begründet sein."
[116]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 35; cf. Heiko Obermann, *Werden und Wirkung der Refomation: Vom Wegestreit zum Glaubenskampf* (Tübingen: Möhr, 1977), 53ff. (or *Masters of the Refomation: The Emergence of a New Intellectual Climate in Europe,* tr. by Dennis Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 42ff.

there was so little difference between the *viae* at the time Melanchthon studied at
Tübingen and Heidelberg that it makes little sense to identify Melanchthon's thought
with either the *via antiqua* or the *via moderna*.[117] Frank concludes, "[T]he judgment of
the possibility of a nominalistic base in Melanchthon's thought from a few statements out
of his entire work must be held off."[118]

2. Melanchthon as Philosophical Eclectic

As Frank correctly points out, it has been widely claimed that in some way
Melanchthon combined ideas from Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and others, and that his
philosophy should be characterized as some form of Aristotelian eclecticism.[119] This
claim has not been more clearly stated than by Hartfelder when he wrote, "Here is the
expression of [Melanchthon's] philosophical standpoint: He is an Aristotelian, but his
method is eclectic."[120] Unfortunately, as Pierluigi Donini has pointed out, merely to
identify a philosopher as eclectic does little to explicate the contours of his or her
philosophy, since most of history's most notable philosophers, including Aristotle, St.
Augustine, and St. Thomas, have been eclectic in some sense.[121] There has been little
agreement as to just what the claim that Melanchthon was eclectic signifies, beyond the

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[117]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 34-35.
[118]   Ibid., 36. "Einerseits muß man aufgrund des nicht eindeutigen biographischen Befundes und des
im Vergliech zum Gesamt –Opus doch relativ geringen Stellenwertes der Universalienfrage mit dem Urteil
über einen möglicherweise nominalistischen Ansatz in Melanchthons Denken eher zurückhaltend sein;
anderseits läßt sich von der von der nominalistischen Universalenlehre aus kaum ein befriedigendes Urteil
über Möglichkeit oder Unmöglichkeit einer philosophischen Theologie überhaupt fallen."
[119]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 16, n. 25: citing, among others in support Hartfelder, 246;
Pelikan, *From Luther to kierkegaard,* 24-75; Troeltsch, op. cit., 67, 163; Peterson 101-108, et alia.
[120]   Hartfelder 181: "Damit ist das Programm seines philosophischen Standpunktes ausgesprochen: er
ist Aristoteliker; aber er verfährt eklektisch."
[121]   For a general discussion of this issue, see Pierluigi Donini, "The History of the Concept of
Eclecticism," in J. M. Dillon & A. A. Long, eds., *The Question of Eclecticism: Studies in Later Greek
Philosophy* (Berkely: Univesity of California Press, 1988), 15-33; See also Chapter Four below, 231-245.

recognition that Praeceptor critically appropriated a wide range of the philosophical

sources available to him.

The most helpful questions here may then be: "What were the ideals or interests

which served as the criteria for accepting or rejecting the various claims or methods of

the various philosophical authorities Melanchthon studied?" If neither the fundamental

commitments of the *via antiqua* nor of the *via moderna* served this purpose, what did?

Wiedenhoffer has answered that Melanchthon's philosophy reflected his lifelong

dedication to humanism and was centered in four concerns:

> 1. In the linguistic-humanistic concern for the arts (better, for *the artes semonicales*, namely grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic) and the authors (that is for the intellectual tradition of the West), 2. in the aforementioned (sic) concern for the genuine philosophy (better, for the Aristotelian philosophy) as instrument for mentally dealing with the exigencies of the civil realm and as an aid for theology, 3. in the aforementioned (sic) concern for a "scientific" ("wissenschaftliche") method of learning and for a theological method, and 4. in the rejection of metaphysics.[122]

Accordingly, Melanchthon not only shared a rejection of universals with the nominalists,

but also their dedication to language as a fundamental concern for philosophy. But

unlike the nominalists, according to Wiedenhoffer, Melanchthon's approach to language

was pragmatic. Rather than being the centerpiece of a supposed philosophical

nominalism on Melanchthon's part, Melanchthon's rejection of universals was then

merely a consequence of his humanistic approach to life, learning, and language. In

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[122]   Wiedenhoffer., 347. "(Mehr systematisch ausgedrückt könnte man die eigentümliche Positionen Melanchthon in der *Verbindung von folgenden vier Sachverhalten* sehen:) 1. im sprachhumanistischen Interesse für die artes (bes. für die artes sermocinales, nämlich Grammatik, Rhetorik, und Dialektik) und die auctores (d.h. für die maßgebliche geisige überlieferung des Abendlandes), 2. im zunehmenden Interesse für die eigentliche Philosophie (bes. fur die aristotelische Philosophie), als Instrument für die geistige Bewältigung der probleme des zivilen Berieches und als Hilfsmittel für die Theologie, 3. im zunehmenden Interesse für eine 'wissenschaftliche' Methodenlehre und für eine theologische Methode, und 4. in der Ablehnung der Metaphysik."

making these claims Weidenhoffer provides an important corrective to a predominant image of Melanchthon as a humanist, soon to be discussed.[123]

4. Melanchthon as Platonist and Rationalist

Frank acknowledges the importance of the rhetorical tradition for Melanchthon's thought, and especially for his reception of Aristotle's work.[124] But Frank believes he has discerned a different organizing principle for Melanchthon's philosophy, reflecting a quite different picture of Melanchthon as a philosopher. In the absence of the medieval-scholastic *Wesenmetaphysic* which he rejected, Frank claims, Melanchthon organized his philosophy around a *regulativ Wahrheitsideal*, "a regulative idea of truth."[125] This notion is for Frank closely tied to his claim that Melanchthon was a theo-rationalist, mentioned above,[126] and must be understood in connection with Frank's claim that the praeceptor's philosophy was fundamentally Platonic.

Frank points out that while throughout his career Melanchthon refused to provide commentaries on Aristotle's metaphysics and while he rejected the scholastic-Aristotelian *Wesenmetaphysic* (metaphysics of being), this is not to say that Melanchthon absolutely rejected metaphysics. Indeed a central claim of Frank's research on Melanchthon is that while he may have attempted or intended to found his philosophy on theology based in revealed scripture, in the end the praeceptor at least prepared the way for subsequent philosophical systems grounded in human reason alone. Thus, as Frank writes,

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[123]   Below, 85-93.
[124]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 71-82.
[125]   Ibid., 55-58
[126]   See above, 25-26.

The Enlightenment represents in the first case for philosophical theology that crucial event in consequence of which the requirements of "natural theology" are reversed: theology of nature no longer stands in service to theology and subject to it, but is rather grounded in philosophical knowledge which can refrain from faith, which is plausible for all persons, or which can indeed replace faith…Melanchthon decidedly prepared the way for later rationalism and the philosophy of the Enlightenment…[127]

A central concern of Frank's book *Die theologische Philosophie Philipp Melanchthons* as well as much of Frank's subsequent work has been an attempt to answer the question how Melanchthon could have so prepared this way. And a key to finding this answer, according to Frank, is in the recognition that elements of Platonic metaphysics were fundamental to Melanchthon's philosophy. These elements are, Frank claims, clear enough. For as he writes:

[T]here are important indications in the way Melanchthon discussed significant theological questions such as the notion of God, the creation of the world and the worldview itself, and the idea of the immortality of the human soul which belong without any doubt to the Neoplatonic legacy.[128]

Though a minority position, the claim that Melanchthon's thought was fundamentally Platonic is an idea with considerable support elsewhere in the secondary literature.[129] Most notably, it was one of the most important claims of Wilhelm Mauerer's two volume work on the young Melanchthon, *Der junge Melanchthon zwischen*

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127   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 14-15."Für die philosophische Theologie bedeutete also erst die Aufklärung jener wichtiger Einschnitt, in dessen Folge die 'theologia naturalis' stand nun nicht mehr im Dienst der Offenbarung und in Zuordnung zu ihr, sondern gründete in der philosophischen Erkenntnis, die vom Glauben absehen kann, also für alle Menschen plausibel ist, order gar den Galuben ersetzen kann…Diese Entwicklung zum späteren Rationalismus und zur Aufklärungsphilosophie…habe Melanchthon entscheidend eingelietet…

128   Frank, "Neoplatonism," 4.

129   Cf. Frank. *Die theologische Philosophie*, 25-29.

Humanismus und Reformation.[130] Maurer claimed that Melanchthon's Platonism was

woven into his early education. As he wrote:

> We should regard as certain the conclusion that the decidedly philosophical
> excitement from his youth began with the Platonism of the Renaissance and was
> mediated through Reuchlin and Ficino. And we should accept that a deeply
> Platonic view remained firm in him, all later philosophical and theological claims
> built upon this notwithstanding.[131]

In asserting that both humanism and Platonism are keys to Melanchthon's thought then,

Frank is in accord with Maurer.

What is more, Frank joins Maurer and others in claiming that Melanchthon's

Platonism is closely tied to the praeceptor's appreciation for astrology. That

Melanchthon was an enthusiastic student of astrology has been well established at least

since Melanchthon published his essay "On the Dignity of Astrology" in 1535.[132] Much

of the research on Melanchthon has not regarded this interest as a novel or unusual

element in his thought. In the sixteenth century astrology was widely regarded as

revealing "evidence of an intelligent master-builder of the world."[133]

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[130]   Wilhelm Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon zwischen Humanismus und Refomation* 2 vols.
(Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967); see also *Melanchthon-Studien* (Gutersloh: Verlaghaus Gerd
Mohn, 1964).

[131]   Maurer, *Der junge melanchthon* I:98. "Wir dürfen den Beweiß als schlüssig ansehen, daß die
entscheidenden philosophsichen Anregungnen seiner Jugendjahre vom Platonismus der Renaissance
ausgegangen und ihm hauptsächlich durch Reuchlin und Ficino vermittelt worden sind.Und wir dürfen bei
ihm eine platonische Tiefensicht annehmen, die sein Denken, allen späteren philosophischen und
theologischen Überlagerungen zum Trotz, daurernd bestimmt haben."

[132]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 301-315; Ralph Keen, "Naturwissenschaft und Frömmigheit
bei Philipp Melanchthon" in Frank and Rhein, 73-84, esp. 81-83; Kusukawa, *Transformation,* 124-144, and
"*Aspectio divinorum operum*: Melanchthon and Astrology for Lutheran Medics," in *Medicine and the
Refomation,* edited by Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (London: Routledge, 1993), 33-57;
Charlotte *Methuen,* "The Role of the Heavens in the Thought of Philip Melanchthon." *Journal of the
History of Ideas* 57, no. 3 (1996): 385-403, and *Science and Theology in the Reformation: Studies in
Theological Interpretation and Astronomical Observation in Sixteenthy-Century Germany* (New York: T &
T Clark, 2008); Stephan Rhein, "Italia magistra orbis terrarum," in *Humanismus und Wittenberger
Reformation,* 367-388; Wolf-Dieter Müller-Jahnke, "Melanchthon und die Astrologie—Theoretisches und
Mantisches," in Frank and Rhein, 123-136.

[133]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 305. "([D]enn die kunstvolle Bewegung der Gestirne ist (für
Melanchthon)) nicht nur ein deutlicher Hinweis auf einen intelligenten Baumeister der Welt (und Quelle

In his essay "Melanchthon und die Naturwissenschaft seiner Zeit," Maurer claimed that Melanchthon's interest in astrology reflected a marked rejection of the received medieval teaching on astronomy in favor of a Renaissance reappropriation of Neoplatonism mediated via Marcilius Ficino.[134] But while Frank agrees with Maurer that Melanchthon's astrological interest is tied to his Platonism, he denies both that Ficino is the probable the source of Melanchthon's Platonism,[135] and that his interest in astrology should be understood as an *Erbe seine humanismus*, "an ineritance of his humanism." Rather, Frank claims, it came about through a desire to return to the fonts of ancient Christian Platonism.[136]

More importantly, Frank claims that the key to understanding Melanchthon's Platonism lies not in his fondness for astrology as such, but that it was his Neoplatonic and thus anthropocentric cosmology which made the pursuit of astrology worthwhile for him. According to Frank, then, there were three main aspects to Melanchthon's Neoplatonic worldview:

> 1. The idea of a general causal connection which explains nature and which can be perceived by the human mind; 2. The idea of the world machine (*machini mundi, universa machina*) designed through an ordering and intelligent reason, the idea of an architectural mind who created the world according to mathematical-geometrical principles which are the ideas of his own mind and which can be realized by the human mind "more geometrico"; 3. The idea of a theological anthropocentrism insofar as nature in its entirety is created for the use of human beings.[137]

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versheidener Wissenschaften, sondern wirkt unmittelbar auf das Leben der mesch ein.)." See also Müller-Jahnke, 123.

[134]   Wilhelm Maurer, Melanchthon Studien (Gütersloh:Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, 1964), 22-25; see also, *Der junge Melanchthon* 1, 84-98.

[135]   Frank, "Neoplatonism," 4, 17-18.

[136]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 304-305: "Blickt auf die lange und verzweigte Tradition von Astronomie und Astrologie in der Geschichte der Philosophie und Naturwissenschaft, wird deutlich, daß Melanchthons Interesse an diesen Wissenschaften nicht einfach als Erbe seines Humanismus gesehen werden muß…sondern daß dieses Interesse seine Voraussetzung in der tradition antik-christlichen Denkens besitzt."

[137]   Frank, "Neoplatonism," 17.

According to Frank it is consistent with this Platonic cosmology that in Melanchthon's

philosophy "[M]ann findet keine spur" of late medieval nominalism,

> characterized by a dwindling of the rationality of the cosmos, in which humans in
> the powerlessness of their reason are pushed in a flight toward a not investigable
> transcendence, and in the humble abandonment of the freedom of their will.[138]

Far from any such de-rationalization, according to Frank, Melanchthon's "understanding

of nature is a metaphysical-optimistic worldview" according to which "Melanchthon

acknowledges the rationality and intelligibility of the world."[139]

What is more, according to Frank, the Platonism fundamental to Melanchthon's

thought is most definitively revealed in the praeceptor's theological-psychology.

Accordingly:

> The philosophical side of Melanchthon's idea of God is the Neoplatonic concept
> of the essential relationship of the divine mind and the human mind
> (exemplarism, μέθεξις). In their mind, human beings participate in the divine
> mind. In particular his concept of 'natural notions (*notitiae naturales*) is the main
> expression of his exemplarism. According to Melanchthon "natural notions" are
> speculative, practical and mathematical-geometrical principles which God
> implanted in the human mind during creation and which cannot be completely
> destroyed by the fall of mankind. In these principles the human mind participates
> in the mind of God."[140]

The importance of Melanchthon's doctrine of innate ideas for Frank's account of the

praeceptor's thought can scarcely be overestimated.[141] On the one hand Frank claims that

these ideas are the key to recognizing the unity of Melanchthon's philosophy in that, as

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[138]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 314. "(H. Blumenberg hatte den nominalistischen Ausgang
des Mittelalters) gekennenzeichnet als einen Rationalitätsschwund des Kosmos, der den Menschen in der
ohmacht seiner Vernunft in die Flucht in eine nicht hinterfragbare Tranzendenz und in die demütige
Preisgabe seinen Willensfreiheit drängte"; citing Hans Blumenberg, *Säkularisierung und Selbstbehautung,*
(Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 241-252.
[139]   Frank, "Neoplatonism," 16-17.
[140]   Ibid., 14.
[141]   For recent treatments of the thematization of innate ideas in Western thought, see Ralph Doty,
"Enoēmata, Prolēpsis, and Common Notions." *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 3 (1976) 143-
148; and Mary Cline Horowitz, "The Stoic Synthesis of the Idea of Natural law in Man: Four
Themes." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1974): 3-16.

he understands Melanchthon, the praeceptor claims that all human thought must be constructed upon them.[142] On the other hand, according to Frank, Melanchthon's *notitia naturales* play the key role in the reversal from the theological philosophy Melanchthon may have intended to the development of a philosophical theology independent of divine revelation. They do this because they represent *ein bleibenden Figkeit zur Gotteserkenntnis*, "an enduring ability to know God" which original sin has not erased.[143]

According to Frank, this ability to know God entails, within a Neoplatonic framework, a unity with God. Thus, as Frank writes, according to Melanchthon,

> The human soul is an image of the divine mind in which natural notions implanted in the human soul serve as an expression of the similarity or essential relationship between the human and divine mind.[144]

And when the human mind was understood as capable of knowing God without revelation, according to Frank, the abandonment of revelation as a foundation for philosophy naturally followed. As indicated above, according to Frank, a philosophy established upon reason alone would inevitably become, in the Enlightenment, the

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[142]   See Günter Frank, "The Reason of Acting: Melanchthon's Concept of Practical Philosophy and the Question of the Unity and Consistency of His Philosophy," in Jill Kraye and Risto Saarinen, eds., *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 217-234; originally published as Die Vernunft des Handels: Melanchthons Konzept der praktischen Philosophie und die Frage nach der Einheitlichkeit seiner Philosophie," in Frank and Sebastian Lalla, eds., *Fragmenta Melanchthoniana: Zur Zeitgeschichte des Mittelalters under der Frühen Neuzeit* (Heidelberg: Verlag Regionalkultur, 2003), 163-178.

[143]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 335: "Obwohl Melanchthon der luthrisch-reformatorischen Synonymität von 'imago' und 'similitudo' folgt, die durch den Sündenfall verloren gingen, findet er durch seine Theorie der 'notitia naturales" im menschlichen Geist, durch die dieser Geist an göttlichen Weseneigenschaften partizipiert, faktisch Anschluß an die patristisch-scholastische Postion einer strukturellen Gottenbildlichkeit des menschen als Voraussetzung einer bleibenden Fähigkeit zur Gotteserkenntnis."

[144]   Frank, "Neoplatonism," 16. See also on Melanchthon's conception on notitiae naturales Hans Engellund, *Die Frage der Gotteserkenntnis bei Melanchthon* (München: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1931). See also Dino Belucci, "Gott als Mens," in Frank and Rhein, 59-72.

reasonable foundation for theology. Thus, according to Frank, Melanchthon's account of

innate ideas prepared the way for later forms of rationalism leading to Kant.

Because Frank has perhaps paid more attention to Melanchthon's philosophy than

any scholar alive, perhaps even more than any in the history of Melanchthon scholarship,

his work deserves to be taken with great seriousness. Any definitive verdict on Frank's

claims would almost certainly require a careful examination of his treatment of

Melanchthon's psychological works, the *Commentarius de anima* and the *Liber de

anima*, as well of his *Initia doctrina physices*. But there are those who disagree with

Frank's attribution of Platonism to Melanchthon.

As Frank himself has acknowledged, both Heinz Scheible and Stephan Rhein

have denied that Melanchthon's thought can be characterized as Platonic or as

Neoplatonic in any meaningful sense.[145] And Frank's view of the praeceptor's

philosophy—entailing that it is grounded after all in metaphysics—is clearly at odds with

the picture presented by Peterson, Wiedenhoffer, and others who have regarded

Melanchthon's theology as determined by the praeceptor's humanistic interest in the

language arts.

4. Melanchthon as Turning Toward Empiricism

What is more, Frank's claims are at odds with the findings of Sachiko Kusukawa

and of Andrew Cunningham, both of whom have researched Melanchthon's natural

philosophy. For both of the latter two scholars suggest both that Melanchthon's thought is

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[145]   Frank, Neoplatonism, 4-5, citing Heinz Scheible, "Reuchlins Einfluß auf Melanchthon," in *Melanchthon und die Reformation,* eds. Gerhard May, Rolf Decot (Mainz: Instituts für Europäische Geschichte, 1996), 71-97; Stephan Rhein, "Melanchthon and Greek Literature," in *Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560) and the Commentary,* Timothy Wengert and M. Patrick Graham, eds., (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 149-170.

much more empirically oriented than Frank admits, and both find that Melanchthon's

thought, in particular his philosophy of nature, remains firmly rooted in his Biblical

theology.

      Given the low esteem with which one might expect Platonists to regard sense data

as a means of attaining genuine knowledge,[146] it should not be surprising to find that

those who claim Melanchthon's philosophy is fundamentally Platonic have also

suggested that Melanchthon did not have a particularly high regard for the role of

empirical evidence in human understanding of the natural world.   Frank claims that in

rejecting scholastic Aristotelianism in favor of some form of Platonism Melanchthon

took a decisive step away from empiricism. As he puts it:

> The change in perspective of Melanchthon's humanistic philosophy ultimately led
> to an alteration of the view of knowledge in his philosophy….For with the
> acceptance of "notitia naturales" in the human soul…the question of the origin of
> human knowledge (erkenntnispsychologisch-noetischer Aspect) is changed. All
> knowledge has its origin in these "notitia naturales" innately placed in the human
> soul. As a consequence of this epistemological change in persepctive
> Melanchthon thus parts with the experience-born epistemological realism of the
> Aristotelian tradition.[147]

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[146]   See for example C. C. W. Taylor, "Plato's Epistemoplogy," and Charles Brittain, *"Plato and Platonism,"* both in Gail Fine, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 165-190, and 526-552, respectively; Richard Kraut, "Plato", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed online at http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/plato/ May 2012, especially section 1: "Plato's Central Doctrines."

[147]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 338: "Der Perspektivenwechsel der humanistischen Philosophie Melanchthons führt schließlich zu einer fundamentalen Veränderung der Erkenntnisperspektive seiner Philosophie…Denn mit der Ahnnahme von "notitia naturales" im menschlichen Geist in Verbindung der Theroie von "lumen anturale" verändert sich zunächst die Frage nach der ursprung der menschlichen Erkenntnis (erkenntnispsychologisch-noetischer Aspekt). Jede Erkenntnis besitzt ihre Voraussetzung in diesen erkenntnispsychologischen Perpektivenwechsels gibt Melanchthon dann auch folgerichtig den ehfahrungsbezogenes Erkenntnisrealismus der aristotelischen Tradition preis."

Likewise and rather more succinctly, Maurer concluded that for Melanchthon

"Knowledge of nature is thus not knowledge from experience."[148]

And yet contrary to Frank and Maurer, Andrew Cunningham has claimed that in

Melanchthon's natural philosophy there is decided turn toward the empirical even

relative to Medieval Aristotelianism. According to Cunningham, one sees this turn quite

clearly in Melanchthon's explicitly psychological works—the *Commentarius de anima* of

1540, and the *Liber de anima* of 1553. And this turn on Melanchthon's part, he claims,

reveals a more general fundamental affinity between Renaissance humanism and

Reformation Protestantism, in particular over the question of the role of philosophical

authorities in philosophising.[149]

Cunningham notes that Melanchthon's psychology, especially that of his later

Liber de anima reflects "the anatomizing approach of the reformer of sixteenth-century

anatomy, Andreas Vesalius."[150] Cunningham writes of this anatomist that "in an exactly

similar way" as Luther "rejected all forms of authority other than 'the Word'" of God, in

his anatomical work "Vesalius rejected all forms of authority other than the body,"[151]

i.e., other than direct observation of the body gained through anatomical dissection. To

illustrate this point Cunningham recounts and describes a conflict Vesalius had in 1540

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[148]   Maurer , *Der junge Melanchthon* 129: "Die Naturwissenschaft ist also keine Erfahrungswissenschaft."

[149]   Andrew Cunningham, *The Anatomincal Renaissance: The Resurrection of the Anatomical Projects of the Ancients* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997); "Protestant Anatomy," in Helm and Winkelmann, 44-50. See also, on Melanchthon's reception of Galen and Vesal and the role of observation in natural philosophy, Jürgen Helm, "Die Galenrezeption in Philipp Melanchthons De anima (1540/1552)," in *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 31 (1996): 298–321; also by Helm, "Religion and Medicine," in Helm and Annette Winkelmann, 51-70; also Vivian Nutton, "Wittenberg Anatomy," in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham, eds., *Medicine and the Refomation* (London: Routledge, 1993) , 11-32, and "Logic, Learning, and Experimental Medicine." *Science* 295, issue 5556 (Feb 2002): 800-801; Hans-Theodor Koch, "Melanchthon und die Vesal-Rezeption in Wittenberg," in Frank Rhein, (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1998), 203-218.

[150]   Cunningham, "Protestant Anatomy," 47.

[151]   Ibid., 48.

with a Professor of Galenic medicine, Mathaeus Curtius. This conflict arose as Vesalius

attempted to demonstrate through a human dissection that Galen had erroneously

reported the presence of certain blood vessels in the chest. Cunningham recounts:

> "I am no 'anatomista," says Curtius to Vesalius in the middle of their very public
> quarrel in front of the students at Bologna as Vesalius pointed to a particular vein,
> 'but there can well still be other veins nourishing the ribs and the muscles beyond
> these.' 'Where,' I ask, Vesalius demanded. 'Show them to me.' The body is the
> sole authority for Vesalius, whereas for Curtius the authority of Galen was
> superior and not to be challenged merely by what is visible in the body to the eyes
> of the anatomist. In the *Fabrica too, Vesalius* refers to the human body explicitly
> as a book from which one can directly read the truth.[152]

Likewise, Cunningahm notes, Melanchthon reflects "a new philosophical interest in

anatomy." He claims "the bringing of the philosophical role of anatomical knowledge to

the center of student teaching was a Protestant innovation" initiated in Wittenberg by

Melanchthon.[153]

A second challenge to the notion that Melanchthon's philosophy was anti-

empirical or non-empirical comes through the work of Sachiko Kusukawa. Her book *The*

Transformation of Natural Philosophy provides fullest treatment of Melanchthon's

natural philosophy ever printed in English. It is centered in the claim that Melanchthon's

works in natural philosophy were not attempts at creating a revised Aristotelianism,

Platonism, or Galenism, but rather a distinctively Lutheran natural philosophy. "Thus,"

as she writes of Melanchthon's first work in natural philosophy, "in its aim, the kind of

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[152]   Ibid., citing Ruben Eriksson, ed., *Andreas Vesalius' first Public Anatomy at Bologna 1540, an*
Eyewitness Report by Baldasar Heseler, Together with His Notes on Mathaeus Curtius' Lectures on
Anatomical Mundini (Uppsala: Almquist & Wiksells Boktrykkeri, 1959) 272ff; cf. Andreus Vesalius, *De*
humani corporis fabrica libris septem (Basilae, 1543).
[153]   Cunningham, "Protestant Anatomy," 47.

knowledge and the premise on which it rested, the *Commentarius de anima* was a

Lutheran natural philosophy of the soul."[154]

This Lutheran natural philosophy was, according to Kusukawa, ultimately

founded not upon *a priori* or innate notions but in scripture, or more precisely in the

reception of scriptural claims of divine providence, that it provided an important role for

observation, and that it had as its goal the founding of a basis for a Protestant ethics. As

she describes it:

> Melanchthon's natural philosophy offered *a posteriori* arguments in order to
> confirm a single point about the divinity, that God created and sustains everything
> in this physical universe with Providential design. Yet, for Melanchthon, natural
> philosophy was a strong defense for Luther's cause in that it provided a powerful
> argument against civil disobedience, an issue which Melanchthon believed with
> personal conviction to be jeopardizing their quest for Reform.[155]

Thus she finds that Melanchthon's philosophy was motivated and regulated by purely

theological concerns rather than by prior or overriding Aristotelian or Platonic

metaphysical commitments.

The picture Kusukawa paints is thus rather different from Frank's conception of a

supposed theo-rationalism on Melanchthon's part, based in a supposed *bleibenden

Fahigkeit zur Gotteserkenntnis*. Indeed, far from making any such claim, according to

Kusukawa, Melanchthon "taught the spiritual incapacity of Fallen man and the greatness

of the almighty Creator."[156] In fact she finds that, according to Melanchthon, while there

is in the human being a power for knowing in general, and while such a power must have

[154]   Kusukawa, *Transformation*, 107; see also by Kusukawa, "The Natural Philosophy of Melanchthon
and His Followers," in *Sciences et Religions de Copernic à Galilée (*Rome: Ecole Francais de Rome*, 1999),
443-453.
[155]   Kusukawa, *Transformation*, 202.
[156]   Ibid., 107.

come from God, the knowledge about God or nature must proceed by reasoning *a posteriori* from experience.[157]

With respect to the question of the role of the empirical in Melanchthon's philosophy, Kusukawa's account is then consistent with Cunningham's. She claims that empirical observation plays an important role both Melanchthon's psychology and his astrology. For in Melanchthon's view, she writes,

> Nature was a theater in which God's providence unfolded, but this Providence was only discernible through Lutheran faith, not through Roman Catholic or Zwinglian faith…That this providence of God was visible through this creation was due to the Lutheran conviction that spirituality lay in material things.[158]

And it is on the basis of this "knowledge of material things" rather than on *a priori* knowledge, Kusukawa explains, that Melanchthon is able to provide proofs for God's existence.[159]

In addition to undermining Frank's claims that Melanchthon was a theo-rationalist, the work of Kusukawa and Cunningham would also present a challenge to a charge considered in an earlier section of this chapter, a charge consistent with the claim that Melanchthon's philosophy was fundamentally Platonic. This is the claim that, contrary to Luther, Melanchthon was an "intellectualist" in the sense of thinking that the human is essentially an immaterial or purely intellectual being.[160] Instead, Kusukawa writes, "Following Luther's view of 'the whole man' as an object of salvation, Melanchthon pursued, as much as he could, the discussion of the nature of the whole man in his *Commentarius de anima.*" She continues, "As knowledge of the 'whole nature of man', Melanchthon's commentary contains discussions on both the human body and the

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[157]   Ibid., 150, 202.
[158]   Ibid., 107.
[159]   Ibid.,
[160]   See above, 15-19.

rational soul…[Human anatomy]formed quite an important part of Melanchthon's commentary on the soul."[161] Likewise, according to Cunningham, for Melanchthon, "it is not possible to understand the soul without understanding its operation, i.e., its instrument, the body."[162] And so, as Kusukawa writes, "The upshot was…a commentary about the soul which can only be made full sense of in terms of Lutheran theology."[163]

As helpful as the work of Kusukawa and Cunningham are, however, their shared primary concern is unfortunately not to discover or establish the contours of Melanchthons philosophical works *qua* philosophy, but to describe the historical conditions in which they arose, and then to consider the effect they had on church and society society in the sixteenth century in Kusukawa's case, or on the development of natural science in the sixteenth century in Cunningham's case. And while they are both interested in the relationship in Melanchthon's thought between his theology and his natural philosophy, neither Kusukawa nor Cunningham, nor, for that matter, Frank, are concerned to treat of the primary interest of Melanchthon as a humanist.

E. Melanchthon as a Renaissance Humanist

1. Renaissance Philosophy and Humanism

In addition to all that has been discussed so far, Melanchthon's reputation as a philosopher has finally no doubt suffered from a general lack of understanding of the currents of philosophy during the Renaissance itself and of the relationship between Renaissance humanism and philosophy. And the confusion here begins with the very

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[161] Kusukawa, *Transformation*, 88.
[162] Cunningham, "Protestant Anatomy," 46.
[163] Kusukawa, *Transformation*, 99.

designation "Renaissance." As Charles Schmitt explained, the widespread use of the term can be traced to the work of nineteenth century historian Jacob Burkhardt who used it to refer to developments in Northern Italian city states during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In coining the term, Schmitt notes, Burkhardt was not primarily interested in identifying developments in philosophy, but in those fields "which today we would call art history, intellectual history, and cultural history."[164]

While the Renaissance has thus been recognized as a time of great accomplishment in the development of what we now call the fine arts as well as the humanities, for a good part of the twentieth century few scholars were interested in philosophical developments unique to the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. Until relatively recently historians of philosophy have tended to view the Renaissance as either the prelude to or the postlude of an age of greater achievements. Thus as Schmitt notes:

> [M]ost nineteenth century historians were more interested in tracing the roots of 'modern' thought than in considering the ebb and flow of philosophical teaching and speculation at different times. Even when Renaisssance writers were discussed, they were generally treated as pawns in the philosophical battles of later centuries, not as thinkers of their own age and in their own right.[165]

And so, as Günter Frank stated:

> For G. W. F Hegel the humanistic philosophy (of the Renaissance) represented a "popular philosophy" which was not capable of rising to the height of pure, conceptual rational thought. This thesis of the "philosophical vacuity" of Renaissance humanism continued almost without interruption in the twentieth century.[166]

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[164] Schmidt and Copenhaver, 18-19; cf. Jacob Burkhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Basel, 1860), tr. by S. Middlemore as *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy,* Peter Burke, ed., (London: Penguin, 1990).

[165] See Charles Schmidt, "Introduction," in Schmitt, Skinner, and Kessler, 1.

[166] Gunter Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 38: "Für G. W. F. Hegel stellte die humanistische Philosophie eine 'Popularphilosophie' dar, die unfähig gewesen sei, sich auf die Höhe des rein, begrifflich, rationellen Denken zu erheben. Diese These von der "philosophischen Leere" des Renaissancehumanismus setze sich auch im 20. Jahrhundert fast ungebrochen fort," citing Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie XVII,* ed. by H. Glochner (Stuttgart: F. Frommann 1959), 59.

 Perhaps the most influential work on Renaissance philosophy in the early twentieth

century, Ernst Cassirer's *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*

(1927)[167], provides a case supporting Frank's claim. Cassirer looked to this period,

especially in the work of Nicholas of Cusa, merely as the seedbed of modern thought "on

the grounds," as James Hankins writes, "that it was Cusanus who first foregrounded the

problem of knowledge and who understood the proper role of mathematics in

understanding nature."[168]

On the other hand, "For their part," wrote the Paul Oskar Kristeller and John

Randall,

> the admirers and followers of medieval philosophy are often inclined to think that
> the impressive development which culminated in the thirteenth century with
> Thomas Aquinas was followed by a period of complete decay and
> disintegration."[169]

Thus, the Renaissance of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries have been seen by

historians of medieval philosophy as a period of philosophical degeneracy by authorities

such as Etienne Gilson[170] and David Knowles.[171]

What has been worse for the reputation of philosophy during this period, from the

beginning specialists in Renaissance philosophy have lent support to the notion that these

centuries were not particularly philosophically interesting in their own right. Thus even

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[167]   Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Cosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1927), tr. by
Mario Domandi as *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Italy* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2000).
[168]   James Hankins, "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy,* 3.
Moran, Dermot. "Nicholas of Cusa and Modern Philosophy." In *The Cambridge Companion to
Renaissance Philosophy,* ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 173-
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[169]   Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, eds., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 1.
[170]   Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, where developments leading
to the *via moderna* are marked as "Disintegration of Scholastic Theology"(xv) culminating in "The
Journey's End" in Nicholas of Cusa (xvi).
[171]   David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (London: Longman, 1962), vi, where the
highpoint of the Thomist synthesis of Augustine and Aristotle is followed by the "breakdown" beginning
with Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus.

Kristeller and Randall could claim that the Renaissance "produced no philosopher of the very first importance."[172] More recently Hankins has written, "The humanist movement greatly enriched the study of philosophy in the Renaissance as it did many other aspects of European culture…But it did not produce any great philosophers."[173]

Perhaps worst of all for Melanchthon's reputation as a philosopher, Hartfelder relied upon just this idea in explaining what he regarded as Melanchthon's inability to measure up to the great philosophers of either the medieval or the modern periods:

> For a person of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries there would have been no doubt that a new philosophical system must replace the old. However the time of humanism and the first years of the Reformation brought forth no creative genius. Nor was Melanchthon such a one.[174]

That Hartfelder could thus in the nineteenth century so harshly criticize Melanchthon on the grounds that the praeceptor was not a philosophical systematizer, while so many in the twentieth century criticized him precisely because they regarded him as too systematic in his thought[175] points yet again to the characteristic confusion about just what kind of a philosopher Melanchthon was.

Further complicating things, what little attention has been given to philosophy in the Renaissance has until relatively recently been distorted by a misunderstanding of Renaissance humanism and of its contribution to philosophy. One source of confusion here has been a certain ambiguity about the term "humanism" itself. As James Hankins notes, by the end of the nineteenth century the word "humanism" and its cognates "eventually embraced two broad families of meaning." He explains:

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[172]   Cassirer, Kristeller and Randall, 1.
[173]   Hankins, "Introduction," in Hankins, 46.
[174]   Hartfelder, 178. "Für einen Menschen des 18. oder 19. Jahrhunderts wäre in diesem Falle kein Zweifel mehr gewesen, das ein neues System das alte ersetzen müsse. Aber die Zeit des Humanismus und die erste Zeit der Reformation hat in Deutschland kein schöpferischen Genius hervorgebracht. Auch Melanchthon war kein solcher."
[175]   See above, 14-36.

> The first family understood humanism in the sense of classical education: the study of ancient literature in the original languages. It was in this sense that George Voigt in his seminal work, *Wiederbelebung des classischen Altertums oder das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus (1859)* retrofitted the word to signify the Renaissance movement to revive classical studies."[176]

This family of meaning may be said to include those who have stressed the renewal during the Renaissance of the pursuit of eloquence as found in the literature of classical antiquity,[177] appreciation for literature produced in Latin by Petrarch or others dedicated to this classical revival,[178] and a renewed interest in the concerns of greatest interest to classical authors.[179] With respect to this last tendency, Renaissance humanists have been recognized as having been primarily dedicated to the language arts, in particular to the renewal of rhetoric.

On the other hand, as Aune has written, Burkhardt's view of the Renaissance "as a clear break from the middle ages and, hence, as the birth of modern consciousness" at the turn of the twentieth century led to the notion that "the Renaissance was marked by individualism, secularism, and moral autonomy."[180] It has thus since Burkhardt been mistakenly thought "that the [Renaissance] movement labeled humanism was marked by a common philosophy that gloried in the beauty of human nature and in the capacity of

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[176] James Hankins, "Humanism, Scholasticism, and Renaissance Philosophy," in Hankins, 30-48, here 30, citing George Voigt, *Wiederbelebung des classischen Altertums oder das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus* (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1859).

[177] See for example Oskar Kristeller, "Humanism," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 113-136, and "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance," in Robert Black *Renaissance Thought: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 47-59; Copenhaver and Schmitt, 4 and *passim*; also Hanna Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," in Black Peter Mack, Peter. "Humanism, Rhetoric, Education," in Donna B. Hamilton, ed., *A Concise Companion to English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 94-113.

[178] See for example Hans Nachod, "Petrarcha: Introduction" in Cassirer, Kristeller, and Randall, 23-33; Cesare Vasoli, "The Renaissance Concept of Philosophy," in Schmitt, Skinner, and Eckhard, 55-74.

[179] See for example Brian Vickers, "Rhetoric and Poetics," 713-745, in Schmitt, Skinner, and Eckhard. See also Robert Black, "Humanism," in Robert Black, *Renaissance Thought: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 68-93; and Günter Frank, *Philosophy and the Arts in Central Europe, 1500-1700.* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate/Variorum), 1999.

[180] Aune, 78.

the human spirit, that assumed freedom of the will…"[181] And so from the onset of the use

of the term until relatively recently, as Hankins notes, it has been tempting to see

Renaissance humanists as early pioneers of the philosophical humanism associated in the

twentieth century with thinkers as diverse as Ludwig Feuerbach[182] and Jean Paul

Sartre.[183] Humanism in this more contemporary sense, as Hankins summarizes,

> reduced the divine to the human, was opposed to any sort of religious dogma or
> revelation, and based philosophical reflection on the conception of the human
> being as a purely biological entity formed as the result of an evolutionary process,
> without an immaterial spiritual nature…Thus a "humanist philosophy of man"
> was imposed upon writers from Petrarcha to Castiglione by means of selective
> quotation, hermeneutical *forzatura*, and by adding professional philosophers like
> Marsilio Ficino and even Pietro Pompanazzi to the ranks of the "humanists."[184]

As Hankins reports, the work of the last fifty years of Renaissance scholarship has both

uncovered this confusion about humanism and has shown that the humanism of this latter

sort had little to do with the humanism of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries.

What is more, if some have identified Renaissance humanism with the

eponymous nineteenth and twentieth century movement, others have tended to identify it

with the renewal of Platonism and the rejection of medieval Aristotelianism.[185] Cassirer,

for one, went as far as to claim that during the late fifteenth century "the Platonism of the

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[181]   Ibid., 79.
[182]   Introductions to Feuerbach's existentialist interpretation of faith and life are in Ludwig Feuerbach, *Abelard and Heloise, or the Writer and the Human: A Series of Humorous Philosophical Aphorisms (1834)*, tr. by Eric Luft (North Syracuse, NY: Gegensatz Press, 2012), and *The Essence of Christianity,* tr. by George Eliot (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).
[183]   Two *Loci classici* for Sartre's existentialism are Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* tr. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Kensington, 1956), and *Existentialism is A Humanism,* tr. by Carol Macomber, ed. by John Kulka (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
[184]   Hankins in Hankins, 31; also Miguel Granada, "Humanism, Scholasticism, and Renaissance Philosophy," in Hankins, 270-286. This view of Renaissance humanism can also be seen in Wilhelm Dilthey, for examlple in "The Interpretation and Analysis of Man in the 15th and 16th Centuries," in Spitz, ed., *The Reformation: Basic Interpretations* 11-24.
[185]   See for example Luca Bianchi, "Continuity and Change in the Aristotelian Tradition," in Hankins, 49-71, here 49; also Charles Schmitt, "Towards a Reassessment of Renaissance Aristotelianism," in Black, ed., *Renaissance Thought,* 240-254..

Florentine Academy transformed the philosophical thought of the Renaissance."[186]

Likewise, according to Cassirer, Kristeller and Randall, for the humanists of the

Renaissance "Platonism was the most imposing alternative to the Aristotelian schools, the

one best adapted to a religious revival and best combining the imaginative values of

religion with the values of human life."[187] And it has been recognized that the Platonism

of St. Augustine was particularly attractive to Francesco Petrarcha for these reasons.[188]

Studies of scholars like Kristeller, Schmidt, Copenhaven, and Hankins at the turn

of the twenty-first century have shown that Renaissance philosophy can be identified

neither with later-day secular humanism nor merely with the revival of Platonic

philosophy, however. It is now widely accepted that the dedication of the humanists of

the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries to classical antiquity did not entail

allegiance to any particular philosophy. In fact, the industry with which Renaissance

humanists uncovered and published philosophical works by Plato as well as by ancient

Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics opened up panoply of philosophical options during this

period.[189] Thus, Schmitt has claimed that far from being *eine Zeit der philosopsche Leer*,

"the period of the Renaissance was one of intense philosophical activity."[190] Nor did the

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[186] Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos*, 83; the thesis that Platonism was also central to Renaissance thought is also important to Cassirer's *the Platonic Renaissance in England* tr. by J. P. Pettigrove (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1953).

[187] Cassirer, Kristeller and Randall, 6; cf. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Volume 3 Late Medival and Renaissance Philosophy, Part 2: The Revival of Platonism to Suarez* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1963), 14-21.

[188] For example, Nachod in Cassirer, Kristeller, and Randall, 27; Robert Black, "The Philosopher and Renaissance Culture," in Hankins, 29, esp. 26; Caesare Vasoli, "The Renaissance Concept of Philosophy," in Schmitt, Skinner, and Eckhard, 57-74, here 60-64; Erkika Rummel, *the Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 30-35.

[189] See Copenahaver and Smith, *passim*; as well as Christopher Celenza, "The Revivial of Platonic Philosophy, " in Hankins, 72-96; Jill Kraye, "The Revivial of Hellenistic Philosophies," in Hankins, 97-112; Anthony Grafton, "The Availability of Ancient Works," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 767-791; that a variety of new philosophical options opened up during this period is also reflected in Charles Lohr, "Metaphysics," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 537-638.

[190] Schmitt in Schmitt, Skinner, and Eckhard, 1.

recovery of the philosophical writings of the variety of Hellenistic sects result in the

decline of interest in Aristotle. For as Luca Bianchi has written,

> [I]f the greatest intellectual novelty of the Renaissance was the recovery of little-known and forgotten philosophical traditions, Aristotelianism nevertheless remained the predominant one through the end of the sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries.[191]

2. Melanchthon As Torn Between Humanism and Evangelical Theology

Unfortunately, until rather recently, treatments of Melanchthon's relationship to

Renaissance humanism have been based upon the confusion about humanism to which

Hankins points, and so have tended to distort, or at best has failed to shed light on,

Melanchthon's scholarship. Maurer saw Melanchthon's supposed Platonism as "*Erbe*

seine humanismus."[192] Melanchthon's reputation has suffered even more under the notion

that the assertion of human free will before God as well as before other humans was a

fundamental commitment of Renaissance humanism.   In particular, important and widely

received claims about Melanchthon as a humanist have been tied to his response to the

controversy between Luther and Erasmus over the question of free will in the 1520's in

the *Hyperaspistes I* and *II*[193] of Eramus and Luther's *Bondage of the Will*.[194]

Now, in objecting to Melanchthon's response to the controversy between Erasmus

and Luther, latter-day proponents of Luther's theology became part of a centuries-long

tradition. Timothy Wengert has pointed out that since the sixteenth century Melanchthon

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[191]   Luca Bianchi, "Continuity and Change in the Aristotelian Tradition," in Hankins, 49-71, here 49.

[192]   See especially Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon* I:84-98, and *Melanchthon Studien* 20-25 and 39-67.

[193]   Erasmus of Rotterdam , *Opera Omnia*, 10 vols. (Leiden: Peter Vander, 1703-6), *Hyperaspistes I* vol. 10: 1249-1336, *Hyperaspistes II* vol 10: 1337-1536. English translations are in Charles Trinkhaus, ed., *The Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), vols. 76 and 77 respectively.

[194]   WA 18; Luther's Works, vol. 33, Philip S. Watson, trans. (Fortress: Philadelphia, 1972).

has been faulted by Protestants for his role in this controversy for a variety of reasons.

One sixteenth century Lutheran critic, Nicholas Gallus, wrote that Melanchthon's

position on the freedom of the will, "having been gathered from the works of Lombard

and Erasmus, is worse than both,"[195] and even John Calvin accused the praeceptor of

failing to take a clear position at all on this controversy.[196] But in the last century

Melanchthon's alleged failure to respond helpfully to this disagreement has been

attributed to his attraction to the Renaissance humanism of Erasmus which, it came to be

believed, was in fact centered upon the assertion of human freedom before (or perhaps

even from) God.[197]

The standard bearer in the middle of the twentieth century for the claim that

humanism thus pulled Melanchthon away from Evangelical theology was Wilhelm

Mauerer's two volume work, *Der junge Melanchthon zwischen Humanismus und*

Reformation.[198]   In this work Maurer relied upon a number of problematic theses about

Melanchthon: first, that the humanism which Melanchthon was attracted to was

identifiable with Erasmus in Melanchthon's thought,[199] second, that the humanism to

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[195]   *MelanchthonsBriefwechsel* 8017 (CR 8:895-902, here 897) dated November 9, 1556; quoted in Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes," 12.

[196]   Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes," 12-13.

[197]   Thus Wengert notes of post-war German Lutheran scholars, "Ernst Wolff spoke for many of his generation when he wrote that Luther's statement in *De servo arbitrio* 'proclaimed his unequivocal 'No!' to the humanistic understanding of God, the human race and the Holy scriptures,'" *Human Freedom,* 8, quoting Ernst Wolf, "Reformatorische Botschaft und Humanismus," in *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie der Reformation,* Luis Abramowski and J. F. Herhard Goeters, eds., (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 1969), 97-119, here 100. On the relationship between Melanchthon and Erasmus, see alsoWilhelm Schenk, "Erasmus and Melanchthon," *The Heythrop Journal: A Quarterly Review of Philosophy and Theology* 8, no. 3 (Jul 1967): 249-259

[198]   See also byMauerer, "Melanchthons Anteil zwischen Luther un Erasmus," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* (1958): 89-114; and "Melanchthon als Humanist," in *Philipp Melanchthon: Forschungsbeiträge zur vierhundertsten Wiederkehr seines Todestages dargeboten in Wittenberg, 1960),* ed. Walter Elliger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 116-132.

[199]   Thus Maurer, *Der Junge Melanchthon*, 2:227, writes of the sixteenth century, "The Christian humanism of the second decade of the century stood and fell with Erasmus" ("Mit Erasmus steht und fällt der christliche Humanismus der zwanziger Jahre des Jahrhunderts), cf. Wengert, *Human Freedom,* 8: "An even more difficult obstacle to obtaining a balanced assesment of the relation between Erasmus and

which Melanchthon was attracted was inimical to Luther's theology[200] because, third, it was both Platonic[201] and because it asserted human freedom before God,[202] and fourth that praise for Erasmus on Melanchthon's part must indicate that Melanchthon was in agreement with the philosophical humanism, so construed, of Erasmus.[203] In short, Maurer took Melanchthon's praise for Erasmus's philological work as tantamount to a statement of approval for the sort of "humanist philosophy of man" which Maurer attributed to Erasmus, but which would not in fact emerge until several hundred years after Melanchthon's death.

Maurer added this account of Melanchthon's supposed attraction to Erasmus' humanism to the long-standing stereotype of Melanchthon as weak-willed and vacillating. The result, as Wengert describes it, was a far from positive picture of the praeceptor in Maurer's account:

> [Maurer] depicted Melanchthon as hopelessly torn between two giants, Luther and Erasmus. Thus he insists—in language worthy of von Ranke—that Melanchthon 'was swept up by the powerful movement of the time that put the two heroes inexorably on a collision course."[204]

Melanchthon arises from the inability of researchers to define humanism apart from Erasmus's own peculiar theological and philosophical platform."

[200]   Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon,* 2:229. "This desire would never depart from him his whole life long. His wish is to express that he perdured with difficulty under the tension under which his his entire life is established, namely to bind both Christian humanism and Lutheran reformation together within himself" ("Sein Wunsch ist der Ausdruck dafür, daß er Schwer unter der Spannung trägt, unter die sein leben gestellet ist, nämlich beides, christliche Humanismus und lutherische Reformation, in seinem Innern zu einer Einheit zu verbinded."). Cf. Wengert, *Human Freedom,* 9.

[201]   Above 30; cf. Frank, *Theologische philosophie* 24 ff.

[202]   Wengert *Human Freedom* 8, citing Hans Martin Müller, "Humanismus und reformatorisches Christentum," *Kerygma und Dogma* 21 (1975): 257-276; cf. *Maurer, Der junge Melanchthon* 2:481-489.

[203]   Wengert 7-8.

[204]   Wengert, "Beyond Stereotypes," 11.

And as Wengert notes, Maurer was influential for a number of the most important

scholars of the following generation including Robert Stupperich, Ernst Wolff and

Ekkehard Mühlenberg.[205]

Wengert's *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness* now stands as the

definitive response to Maurer's treatment of Melanchthon's place in the confrontation

between Luther and Erasmus.[206] Wengert there demonstrates that Melanchthon's

humanism could not be identified with the thought or work of Erasmus.   While

Melanchthon's literary and epistolary exchanges with Erasmus were indeed characterized

by all the beauty, subtlety, and mutual flattery masters of the Latin language could

muster, Wengert has made quite clear the praeceptor's rejection of Erasmus's position on

freedom of the will.[207]   What is more, Wengert concludes, while Melanchthon's final

position on free will and on philosophy was not the same as Luther's there is no evidence

that Melanchthon ever meant to abandon principles of Evangelical theology in favor of

Erasmus's conception of freedom.   In this Wengert is in agreement with both Scheible,

who has denied that Melanchthon was either theologically or ethically "Erasmian,"[208]

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[205]   Wengert, Human Freedom, 8-9, citing Robert Stupperich, "Erasmus und Melanchthon in Ihren gemeinsamen Bestreibungen," in Joel Lefebvre and Jean-Claude Margolin, eds., *L'Humanisme Allemand (1480-1540)*, 405-26*, XVIIe Colloque international de Tours* (Limogens: Fink Verlag & Librairie Vrin,1979); Ernst Wolff, "Reformatorische Botschaft und Humanismus, " in *Studien der Geschicht und Theologie der Refomation* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 97-119 ; and Ekkehard Mühlenberg, "Humanistisches Bildungsprogramm und Reformatorische Lehre beim jungen Melanchthon, " *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 65 (1968): 431-44. See also, most recently, Gregory Graybill, *Evangelical Freewill: Philipp Melanchthon's Doctrinal Journey on the Origins of Faith,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), esp. 132 ff.

[206]   A project which had for some time been anticipated; cf. Pellikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard*, 27.

[207]   Wengert, *Human Freedom*, 7.

[208]   Ibid., 11, citing Scheible, "Melanchthon zwischen Luther und Erasmus," in *Renaissance Reformation: Gegensätze und Gemeinsamkeiten,* ed. August Buck (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1984) 155-180. See also by Manfred Hoffman, *Rhetoric and Theology: The Hermeneutic of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); and "Rhetoric and Dialectic in Erasmus's and Melanchthon's Interpretation of the Gospel of John," in *Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and the Commentary,* edited by Timothy J. Wengert and Patrick Graham, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 48-78.

Wiedenhofer, who is keen to uncover the unique aspects of the humanisms of Erasmus

and of Melanchthon,[209] and Adolph Sperl, Lewis Spitz and others, who have shown that,

far from rejecting calls for Church reform in and around the sixteenth century in Northern

Europe, humanism and humanists were instrumental in preparing the way for and

inaugurating it, if not in confessionalizing it.[210]

3. Melanchthon as Rhetorician

Wengert sheds light on the relationship of Erasmus' thought to Melanchthon's

through a close examination of one of the praeceptor's many Biblical commentaries, the

Scholia on Colossians. In this and other work Dr. Wengert has explored Melanchthon's

conceptualization of and use of dialectic and rhetoric in the praeceptor's Biblical

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[209] Wiedenhoffer, *passim*. See also Martin Jung, "Philipp Melanchthon: Humanist im Dienste der Reformation, in Martin Jung and Peter Walter, eds., *Theologen des 16. Jahrhunderts: Humanismus-Reformation-katholische Erneuerung: eine Einführung,* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchesgesellschaft, 2002), 154-171; and Edwin Leverenz, "Philipp Melanchton, Beyond Humanism : The Development of Humanism from Petrarch to Erasmus and Culminating in the Educator of the Reformation," (Ph. D. dissertation. (Theology), Marquette University, 1971).

[210] Adolph Sperl, *Melanchthon zwischen Humanismus und Reformation: Eine Untersuchung über den Wandel des Traditionsverständnisses bei Melanchthon und die damit zusammenhängenden Grundfragen seiner Theologie,* Forschung zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus, 10, no. 15 (München: Christian Kaiser Verlag), 1959. Lewis Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); "The Third Generation of German Renaissance Humanists," in Spitz, ed., *The Reformation: Basic Interpretations*, 44-59; "The Course of German Humanism," in Heiko Oberman and Thomas Brady, eds. *Itinerarium Italicum: The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations,* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 371-436; and *Luther and German Humanism* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum/Ashgate), 1996. Also Maria Grossman, *Humanism in Wittenberg 1485-1517.,* Bibliteca humanistica et reformatorica II (Nieuwkoop: M. De Graaf, 1975); James H. Overfield, *Humanism and Scholasticism in Late Medieval Germany (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Martin Treu, "Hutten, Melanchthon, und der nationale Humanismus," in and Wartenberg, 353-366. Also, all by Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance & Reformation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); *The Confessionalization of Humanism in Reformation Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); "The Renaissance Humanists," in edited by Alan Hauser and Duane Watson, eds., *A History of Biblical Interpretation, Volume 2: The Medieval through Reformation Periods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 280-298; and Markus Wriedt, "New Wine in Old Wineskins? Some Remarks Concerning 'Luther and Humanism,'" guest Lecture to UCB and Theological Seminary San Anselmo, CA, October 13, 2003.

exegesis.[211] Wengert's work suggests that since Melanchthon's theology is based in

Biblical interpretation, and Biblical interpretation is for Melanchthon guided by rhetoric,

rhetoric provides an important key to understanding all of Melanchthon's theology.

Wengert has thus contributed a most helpful insight into the relationship between

Reformation theology and Renaissance humanism, at least for the *praeceptor Germaniae.*

John Schneider has in effect extended Wengert's insights to Melanchthon's

philosophy. Schneider has noted that Melanchthon had an early and enduring concern to

reform and correct the world's understanding of Aristotle's by showing that the

Stagirite's philosophy was grounded in his rhetoric. Schneider thus writes of

Melanchthon:

> In his inaugural address at Wittenberg in 1518, [Melanchthon] proclaimed, in
> contrast to the common understanding, that Aristotle's interest was not really in
> metaphysics at all, nor in abstract analytics and logic. On the contrary, his
> metaphysics, analytics, logic, politics—everything he wrote—served the aim of
> his rhetoric, which was to put the truth in literary forms that would at last shape
> individuals and societies in the image of wisdom and virtue.[212]

Melanchthon's desire to reform the picture scholars had held of Aristotle since the

eleventh century, Schneider writes, helps explain the often noted but little explored fact

that even prior to coming to Wittenberg Melanchthon had begun to organize the

development of a new edition of Aristotle's works, purified of what he regarded as

scholastic distortions.[213]

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[211]   Wengert, *Human Freedom,* 48-64; *In Ioannum,* 170-212; "Biblical interpretation in the Works of
Philip Melanchthon," in Alan J. hauser and Duane F. Watsom, eds., A History of Biblical Interpretation,
Volume 2: The Medieval through the Reformation Periods (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 319-340, esp.
320-326.

[212]   John Schneider, "Melanchthon's Rhetoric as a Context for Understanding his Theology," in Karin
Maag, ed., *Melanchthon in Europe: His Works and Influence Beyond* Wittenberg (Grand Rapids: Baker,
1999), 141-159, here, 149.

[213]   Schneider, *Oratio Sacra,* 29-30.

More significantly, Schneider notes that Melanchthon meant to follow Aristotle by re-establishing philosophy on much the same grounds as Melanchthon believed Aristotle had—that is, upon Aristotle's conception of and use of rhetoric. According to Schneider, for Melanchthon as well as for Aristotle as Melanchthon interpreted him, logic, ethics, and natural philosophy should all be based in his rhetorical theory and method. Schneider's claim suggests then that for Melanchthon almost all areas of human intellectual endeavor are related to one another through their common subordination to rhetoric. In claiming that philosophy is subordinated to rhetoric according to Melanchthon, Schneider's interpretation of the praeceptor is thus very much in line with Wiedenhoffer's.

Schneider hints, moreover, that Melanchthon's work may reflect an important conception of philosophy not merely as founded upon or as concerned with rhetoric, but *as itself rhetoric*. Here Schneider refers to the work of the Italian philosopher Ernesto Grassi, who has noted that the Humanists of the Italian Renaissance who sought to ground all of learning upon rhetoric and did so on the basis of an important distinction between rational and topical thought.[214] Rational thought, according to this approach, is concerned only with deducing a system from first principles.[215] But any rational system is, according to Grassi, dependent upon the discovery or *inventio* of its foundational principles. To discover such principles, on this account, is a task belonging to rhetoric.

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[214] Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1980), esp. 24-34. See the references to Grassi's work in Schneider, *Oratio Sacra,* 42, 62, 65, 89, & 91; also in Schneider's explication of rhetorical *inventio*, 70-73.

[215] Grassi, 41-46.

Philosophy so founded upon rhetoric, according to Grassi, will be organized, yet cannot be systematic in the sense that rationalistic philosophical systems have been.[216]

Perhaps it is because Melanchthon has sometimes been regarded as a forerunner of rationalism or German Idealism that his rhetorical and dialectical works themselves have been little studied for centuries. But if Melanchthon's philosophy is in some sense bound up with his rhetoric, a few more questions arise. First, just how did Melanchthon conceive of rhetoric, and what contributions, if any, did he make to the study of this art? While it has been widely recognized within the emerging field of Renaissance studies that Melanchthon contributed significantly to the re-appropriation of rhetoric, especially north of the Alps, it's not been clear just wherein this contribution consisted, beyond noting that Melanchthon's rhetorical and dialectical publications were widely studied into the eighteenth century. There have been few works in English which have more carefully explored his contributions to Renaissance developments in rhetoric and philosophy.[217]

But this, too, has changed recently. At the turn of the twenty-first century a number of studies have begun to help us understand the contours of Melanchthon's rhetoric and dialectics. In particular Peter Mack has examined the development of Melanchthon's dialectics in relation to that of Aristotle, Rudolf Agricola, Lorenzo Valla,

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[216]   Ibid., 18-35.

[217]   See however the two pages Neal Gilbert dedicates to Melanchthon as "Artifex Methodi" in *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 125-128, and the scattered references to him throughout Chrales B. Schmidt and Quentin Skinner. Fuller treatments are in Peter Mack, *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 320-334; and see the following in Karen Maag, ed., *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999); Deszo Buzogany, "Melanchthon As a Humanist and a Reformer," 87-102, and Nicole Kuropka, "Melanchthon between Renaissance and Reformation: from Exegesis to Political Action," 161-172. Also Daniel M. Gross, "Melanchthon's Rhetoric and the Practical Origins of Reformation Human Science," *History of the Human Sciences* 13 (2000): 5-22; K. Meerhoff, "The Significance of Melanchthon's Rhetoric in the Renaissance," in Peter Mack, ed., *Renaissance Rhetoric* (London: Macmillan,1994)*,* 46-62; Peter Walter, "Melanchthon und die Tradition der 'Studia humanitatis.'" *Zeitschrift für Kirkengeschichte* 110, heft 2 (1999): 191-208; and Gerhard Binder, ed., *Philipp Melanchthon : exemplarische Aspekte seines Humanismus* (Trier : WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1998).

and a number of other humansists.[218] In parallel with Mack, Joachim Knape has

examined the development of Melanchthon's rhetorical theory through its three distinct

stages in his *Philipp Melanchthons 'Rhetoric.'*[219] Oswald Berwal's, *Philipp

Melanchthons Sicht der Rhetoric* discusses Melanchthon's rhetoric as an organon for

developing students into civic leaders.[220] Most recently, as the subtitle of her book *Philip

Melanchthon: Wissenschaft und Gesselschaft: Ein Gelehrter im Dienst der Kirche (1526-

1532)* suggests, Nicole Kuropka takes Berwal's work a step further, asserting that while

Melanchthon's rhetorical dialectical works may indeed have been successful in

developing leaders in the civic realm, their primary value lie in contributing to Christian

life and the church. As she has written,

> The linguistic disciplines tend (according to Melanchthon) on the one hand to a
> fundamental knowledge of the interpretation of texts, on the other hand they stand
> as the foundation for preaching—and in preaching people not only hear God's
> word, but are also formed for Christian life.[221]

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[218]   Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, esp. 320-333. See also Johan Monfasani, "Lorenzo Valla and
Rudolph Agricola," Black, ed., 255-261; R. J. Schroeck, "Agricola and Erasmus: Erasmus' Inheritance of
Northern Humanism," in F. Akkermann, F., and A. J. Vanderjagt, eds., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius 1444-
1485: Proceedings of the International Conference at the University of Groningen, 18.-30. October 1985*,
(Leiden: Brill, 1985), 181-188; Riemer Faber, "The Humanism of Melanchthon and Calvin," in
Melanchthon und der Calvinismus, Melanchthon-Schriften der Stadt bretten volume 9, edited by Günter
Frank and Herman Selderhuis, (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2003), 11-28; Joseph
Freedman, "Melanchthon's Opinion of Ramus and the Utilization of their Writings in Central Europa," in
Mordechai Feingold, ed., *The Influence of Petrus Ramus: Studies in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century
Philosophy and Sciences,* (Basel: Schwabe, 2001), 68-91; and Günter Frank, "Einleitung: Humanismus und
Europäische Identität. Der Fall Siebenbürgen: die erste verbiefte Religionsfreiheit," in *Fragmenta
Melanchthoniana: Humanismus und Europäische Identität* Band 4, edited by Günter Frank (Ubstadt-
Weiher: Verlag Regionalkultur, 2009), 5-10.
[219]   Joachim Knape, *Philipp Melanchthons 'Rhetorik'* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993).
[220]   Olaf Berwald, *Philipp Melanchthons sicht der Rhetorik* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1994).
[221]   Nicole Kuropka, *Philipp Melanchthon: Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft: Ein Gelehrter im Dienst
der Kirch (1526-1532)* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2002), here 253: "Die sprachlichen Disziplinen werden
zum einen zur Grundlage wissenschaftlicher Schriftauslegung, zum anderen stellen sie die Grundregeln der
Predigtlehre bereit—und in der Predigt sollen die Menschen nicht nur Gottes Wort hören, sondern auch
bewegt werden zum einem christlichen Leben."

If it is the case that rhetoric is in some sense foundational for Melanchthon's philosophy, a close examination of several of his works in the language arts would surely be helpful in clarifying how Melanchthon conceived of and used philosophy.

Or would it? A second question arises from the work of Wiedenhoffer, Schneider, and Wengert: How *could* rhetoric provide a foundational role for any philosophy, and how did it do so for Melanchthon? While the studies listed just above may help explicate the way Melanchthon conceived of rhetoric and its method, none of them are concerned to highlight the relationship between the language arts, theology, ethics, and natural philosophy in Melanchthon's thought and works.

A third question which cannot be answered by the secondary literature, or rather as has been shown above, to which the secondary literature gives conflicting answers, is: "Was rhetoric indeed fundamental to Melanchthon's philosophy?"

F. Summary

For long centuries Melanchthon's philosophical work has lingered in the shadow of Luther's reputation as a theologian and personality as well as in the darkness surrounding Renaissance humanism and philosophy. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Melanchthon has received relatively little attention, and has suffered under the prejudices of some of those who did study him. By the end of the twentieth century work by Scheible, Wengert, Schneider, Frank, Kusukawa, and others have finally begun to make Melanchthon known by examining his work in its own light. Much of the rest of this dissertation will depend upon or respond to the sharp and insightful historical,

theological and philosophical work of these and other contemporary Melanchthon scholars.

But in spite of this most recent flowering of scholarship on Melanchthon he continues to be an enigmatic figure. I believe this is largely due to the lack of a generally agreed upon understanding of the concerns directing the development of his philosophy, of the relationship between philosophy and theology in his thought, and of his method in philosophy. Up to this point research into Melanchthon has failed to provide satisfactory or convincing answers to several important questions fundamental to understanding his philosophy.

Foremost among these is the question of the unity or coherence of Melanchthon's thought. In fact, there are several questions which the secondary literature raises about the unity of Melanchthon's thought for which there is no clear answer. Perhaps most of interest to most of those who have written on Melanchthon, the question of theological unity or consistency between Luther and Melanchthon, must be set aside in this dissertation on Melanchthon's philosophy. To be sure, the following pages will be much concerned to understand claims basic to Melanchthon's theology, since the question of the relationship between philosophy and theology within Melanchthon's thought is a central concern to this dissertation. But even if this dissertation is able to help clarify aspects of Melanchthon's theology, it must be left to historians of Reformation theology to finally determine whether or to what extent it is harmonious with Luther's.

Second, there is the question which Maurer raised of the coherence of Melanchthon's thought, especially of his view of and use of philosophy, across time. While one should surely expect to find development in Melanchthon's philosophy

through the many years of his career, the question here is whether Melanchthon was, as Maurer suggests, torn between two inimical views of philosophy, first adhering to one, then breaking with it for the other, or whether there is better support for the view of Wengert, Wiedenhofer, and others, which suggests there was much greater continuity in Melanchthon's understanding of and development of philosophy.

A third question, perhaps most important of all, is of the coherence of Melanchthon's thought across disciplines or across the different parts of philosophy. Were there any guiding concerns or principles through which one can see unity in his treatment of the logical arts, ethics, and natural philosophy, and through which one can see unity between his own philosophy and theology? If so, what were these concerns or principles? Were they principles of Aristotelian metaphysics or, as Frank suggests, of a Platonic or theo-rationalist *Ideenmetaphysic*? Is there support for Frank's claim that a regulative idea of truth governed Melanchthon's use of philosophical authorities? Is the praeceptor's thought rather based, as Kusukawa suggests, in theological principles, or as Schneider, Peterson, and Wiedenhoffer have claimed, does Melanchthon's view of and use of rhetoric and/or dialectic somehow play this role? Is Melanchthon's philosophy systematic in the strong sense that Frank, Maurer, and Pelikan have claimed, or as Peterson and others have claimed, did Melanchthon reject systematizing in that sense?

Yet another set of questions arises regarding the method, goals, and scope of philosophy for Melanchthon. If there are basic values and claims upon which Melanchthon's philosophy was built, *how* do they guide Melanchthon's philosophizing, his approach to natural philosophy, ethics, and logic? What is the expected and desired product of such philosophical work, according to Melanchthon? What good, if any, does

he think can come of philosophy? Does he in fact seek to create a system in which all knowledge is contained? Does he seek knowledge for its own sake? Is philosophy the dutiful handmaiden of theology, or is it to be rejected entirely?

Finally there is the question of whether Melanchthon, like Luther, can in any sense be regarded as bearing any of the qualities of philosophical existentialism. Does Melanchthon's way of philosophizing indeed tend to reduce the human being to an intellect assenting to propositions? To what extent does Melanchthon's philosophy concern itself with a "whole person" standing before her ultimate reality facing daily existential crisis?

Since the secondary literature has not been able to provide satisfactory or consistent answers to the above clusters of questions, Melanchthon's philosophy is not well understood.   And answering the above question about his philosophy will require taking a long and broad look at the way Melanchthon's philosophy developed in relation to, or perhaps in flight from, the humanistic and theological commitments he held earlier in his career. In order to proceed further it will be necessary to review Melanchthon's philosophical development leading to his mature account of and method of philosophizing with the above clusters of questions in mind. This will be the matter of Chapter Three of this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO:
MELANCHTHON'S PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Introduction

The review of the secondary literature in the last chapter revealed no consensus about Melanchthon's basic philosophical commitments and aims. Indeed, this literature not only presents conflicting claims about the fundamental basis of Melanchthon's philosophy, but it has raised an important question about the overall unity of Melanchthon's philosophy over the course of his career. Of particular importance has been the claim of Wilhelm Maurer that Melanchthon was torn between humanism and a theology of reform to a mediating position between the two,[1] Frank's claim that Melanchthon should be understood as a Platonist,[2] and Wiedenhofer's claim that Melanchthon's philosophy was determined by his rhetorical theory.[3]

In the absence of any consensus on these questions in the secondary literature, one who would understand Melanchthon's philosophical work must return *ad fontes*, to Melanchthon's own writings, to form at least a provisional understanding. What does a review of the development of Melanchthon's philosophical work over the course of his career indeed indicate about any shifts in his dedication to his humanist, Evangelical, or philosophical principles? Did his scholarship proceed according to a single plan or program, with consistent principles or values throughout, or as Maurer suggested was he torn first in one direction and then in another? If his philosophical thought continued to develop according to a single program, what can be said of this plan?

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[1]   See Chapter One above, 80-85.
[2]   Ibid., 62-68.
[3]   Ibid., 85-89.

To develop a helpful basic understanding of the development of Melanchthon's philosophy throughout his career will be the task of this chapter. I propose that Melanchthon's philosophical thought can best be understood as having progressed through several stages, each identifiable by the scholarly and/or philosophical endeavors Melanchthon took on for the first time during each of these. This examination will reveal that through each of these stages Melanchthon continued to develop his philosophy upon the groundwork laid in each previous stage, never rejecting his view of philosophy from any previous of the stages.

The starting point for this examination will be his inaugural lecture to Wittenberg University in 1518.[4] This speech reveals that by the time Melanchthon had completed the first stage of his life, signaled by his reception of a Master's degree from Tübingen in 1517, he had developed an approach to learning strongly based in the language arts. During the second stage here considered, roughly from 1518 until 1526, Melanchthon became committed and dedicated to the cause of Evangelical reform of theology. The third stage, from the middle of the 1520's into the early 1530's saw the praeceptor occupying himself for the first time in developing a substantive moral philosophy. During the final stage, from the 1530's through 1552, Melanchthon developed his natural philosophy. This last stage progressed in two parts. The first part took up most of the 1530's, during which time Melanchthon prepared several writings on the mathematical arts. This work served as a sort of prelude for the second part of the final stage, which may be said to have begun around 1540. It was during this final period that Melanchthon

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[4]   Philipp Melanchthon, *De corrigendis adolescentiae studentiis 1518* , MWA 3, 30-42, also CR 11: 15-25. Translated into English by Ralph Keen as "On Correcting the Studies of Youth," in Keen, *Melanchthon Reader*, 47-57.

published his most important works in natural philosophy, his two psychological works,

the *Commentarius de anima* of 1540 and the *Liber de Anima* of 1552, as well as his

Initia doctrina physices in 1549. This chapter shall follow these stages chronologically.

B. Melanchthon in 1518: Early Humanism in His *De corrigendis asolescentiae studiis*

This chapter takes as its starting point Melanchthon's inaugural address at

Wittenberg in 1518. Biographers have well recorded Melanchthon's early educational

influences: his exposure to both the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna* in Heidelberg and

Tübingen, as well as his earlier affinity for philology, for Greek literature and his

relationship to his uncle the Hebraist and Neo-Platonist Johannes Reuchlin.[5] But in the

absence of substantive philosophical writings from Melanchthon's own pen from this

stage, scholars have been forced to speculate about his thought on the basis of hints and

circumstantial evidence.[6] Because claims about these earliest commitments seem

incapable of thorough substantiation, this essay will not attempt to make any.

In 1518 Melanchthon received his Master of Arts degree from Tübingen, and

within a few months he had accepted the offer to become professor of Greek at

Wittenberg. Among his first duties in this position was to deliver an inaugural lecture,

recorded as *De corrigendis asolescentiae studiis*, "On correcting the Studies of Youth."

This lecture not only won for him the admiration of his audience (including Luther, who

had initially supported hiring a different candidate for the position),[7] but it also, as this

chapter will show, laid the foundation for the labor which would take up much of the rest

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[5]   See for example Heinz, *Melanchthon: Eine Biographie* , 12-20 and Manschreck, *Quiet Reformer,* 27-42.

[6]   Schneider, *Oratio Sacra*, *25*-29; Chapter One above, 53-60.

[7]   Manshrek, *Quiet Reformer,* 21-24.

of his life.   Occurring as close as it did to his reception of the Master's degree, this

lecture may also be said to represent the fruit of his formal education up to that point.

Because it is the first substantive glimpse history provides of Melanchthon's general

conception of philosophy, it will serve as the point of departure for this chapter's

investigation of Melanchthon's philosophical development.

In this inaugural lecture Melanchthon presented a plan for liberal studies in the

university based in the study of classical literature, as he proclaimed to the audience, "to

see that sound learning and the rebirth of the Muses be commended to you in the

strongest terms possible."[8] As previously mentioned, there remains some question about

whether by the time he arrived at Wittenberg Melanchthon was a confirmed adherent of

either of the medieval *viae.*[9] As has been pointed out by both Knape and Schneider,

Maurer claimed that as of his 1517 oration *De artibus liberalibus*, "On the Liberal Arts,"

Melanchthon remained in an import regard "vollig unhumanistische," that is, "wholly un-

humanistic."[10] His inaugural lecture makes it clear however that by the time

Melanchthon arrived at Wittenberg he sought to ground the entire university curriculum

in the language arts.   And this task entailed for Melanchthon a clear rejection of the

scholastic approach to education. Whether or not this is sufficient to make Melanchthon's

thought *vollig humanistische* at this stage*,* he seemed keen to present himself as *wholly*

unscholastic, or even *wholly anti-scholastic.*

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[8]   Melanchthon, "On Correcting," In Keen, 48.

[9]   Chapter One above, 53-60.

[10]   Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon* 1, 56. "Daß freilich die Rhetorik, nur mit einem Sätze erwähnt…, ganz der Dialektik eingeordinet wird, ist völlig unhumanistisch und beweißt, daß jenes Gefühl seiner selbst noch nicht bewußt und jenes Wirklichkeitsbewußtein noch nicht in sich selbst geklärt ist." Cf. CR 11:5-14; Knape, 6; Schneider, "The Hermeneutics of Commentary: Origins of Melanchthon's Integration of Dialectic into Rhetoric," in Timothy Wengert and M. Patricia Graham, eds., *Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and the Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 20-47, here 28 and n. 33.

Melanchthon begins his inaugural address by claiming that the "barbarous" studies" of the scholastic form of education must be replaced with one centered on "bringing literature out of decay and squalor."[11] He laments that under the current "barbarous" form of learning, "literature perishes from lack of genuine cultivation, and philosophy is abandoned by those who turn to contentions about other things."[12] During this period, he notes, "not one of our men, it seems, gave any distinguished book to posterity."[13] "This program of studies," he continues, "ruled for about 300 years in England, France, and Germany...and I hope I may say nothing more alarming than that."[14]

Melanchthon's rejection of the scholastic form of education in this lecture went hand in hand with a rejection of a scholastic form of philosophy. He laments that the improper use of or pursuit of philosophy has indeed always been a source of great harm since, "there is no age strong enough, including that of the Greeks and Romans, ancients and moderns, that it is not egregiously trivialized by philosophizing."[15] And because the "barbarian" scholastics up through Melanchthon's time had ignored Greek and Latin literature, philosophy had become a useless enterprise. Indeed, it "was not possible, when the Greeks were held in contempt, for a single philosopher to be of any use to human studies, and concern for sacred things as well slowly died."[16]

At the same time Melanchthon shows no desire to minimize the importance of philosophy properly pursued. He laments that under the scholastics in its genuine form

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[11]   Melanchthon, "On Correcting," in Keen, 48.
[12]   Ibid.
[13]   Ibid., 49.
[14]   Ibid.
[15]   Ibid., 52.
[16]   Ibid., 50.

"philosophy is abandoned by those who turn to contentions about other things."[17] But as he writes, "I do not want anyone to make light of philosophizing...for without it even common sense is forgotten in the end."[18] Indeed it was because Melanchthon here regarded philosophy as vitally important for human life that he insisted that the mishandling of it by these barbarians had to be corrected. But his derogation is targeted not upon philosophy itself, but rather upon what he took to be that specifically scholastic form of philosophizing which was not properly founded in the language arts.

Far from rejecting philosophy outright, Melanchthon here proposes that the reformed university curriculum must support each of philosophy's three parts: the logical, the physical and the protreptic (or hortatory—i.e., ethics).[19] Most important of all for Melanchthon was the renewal of the first of these, the logical. While Melanchthon noted here that logic had always been of fundamental importance for scholasticism, he criticizes "some men," among the scholastics who, "led either by lust for subtleties or love of dispute, fell to Aristotle" in an unwholesome way, eventually yielding "Thomases, Scotuses, seraphic doctors, cherubic doctors, and the rest of their followers, more numerous than the offspring of Cadmus."[20] While these scholastics may have claimed highly to value logic, Melanchthon concludes here that the product of their work, "is not dialectic, which as a rule is what these masters of ignorance profess."[21]

In fact, Melanchthon's description of logic properly understood seems to reveal an art rather broader and so quite different in character from the discipline so important to

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[17]   Ibid., 48.
[18]   Ibid., 50.
[19]   Ibid., 50.
[20]   Ibid., 49.
[21]   Ibid., 51.

the "Thomists" and "Ockhamists" he derides. For as he wrote, far from being merely a

matter of analytics:

> The logical treats of the force and refinement of language, and since it is a better
> way to approach language, it is the first rudiment of developing youth; it teaches
> literature, or prescribes the propriety of language with rules, or the collected
> figures of the authors; it indicates what to observe, something that grammar
> almost presents. And then when you have gotten a little farther, it connects
> mental judgments, by which you may recognize measures of things, origins,
> limits, routes, so that, whatever happens, you may deal with it precisely.[22]

Logic as here described thus encompasses for the praeceptor grammar and style as well

as dialactics.

A primary complaint here of Melanchthon's about the scholastics is that they have

not respected the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic. But unlike these scholastics,

who in Melanchthon's mind mistakenly considered rhetoric as merely a matter of

superfluous ornamentation of speech, Melanchthon here holds eloquence in highest

regard, and rhetoric and dialectic are here closely related. For while he notes that the

logical part of philosophy "connects mental judgments for the recognition of measures,

origins, limits, and routes of things,"[23] these tasks "are the parts which we call dialectic

and others call rhetoric: for the authorities differ in the terminology, even though the

subject is the same."[24]

While it is not Melanchthon's purpose in this speech to provide a detailed account

of dialectics, he does provide this definition for the art, writing:

> First of all, dialectics is a certain short method for all inquiries, both managerial
> and judgmental: in which consists the order and judgment of each matter to be
> treated, so that we may also see what, how much, of what kind, why, how, if
> something is simple; but if it is comlex whether it be true or false.[25]

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[22]   Ibid., 50.
[23]   Ibid., 50.
[24]   Ibid., 50.
[25]   Ibid., 51.

Whether or not Melanchthon's view of the relationship between dialectics and rhetoric

changed in the course of his career then,[26] in his inaugural lecture he claimed that the

rules of reasoning can legitimately be said to fall under the discipline of rhetoric. Thus,

contrary to scholastic conceptions of logic and rhetoric, the latter was to be understood as

the superordinate art of the logical part of philosophy.[27]

Also of great significance for understanding both Melanchthon's thought in this

speech is his claim that a true understanding of both dialectics and rhetoric is consistent

with a corrected reading both of Aristotle's *Categories* and *Posterior Analytics*.

Melanchthon is careful to note that scholastic commentaries and uses of these books of

Aristotle are to be avoided because they confuse rather than instruct the reader. He writes

that the *Posterior Analytics,* for example, "is not by itself a very difficult text, and

marvelously useful in dealing profitably with studies, but [the scholastics] have made it

difficult and useless." [28]

At this point in his lecture Melanchthon digresses into a brief discussion of a

project he had almost undertaken while at Tübingen, that of producing an edition of

Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* "liberated from the barbarians."[29] This project, inspired

by his former teacher of dialectics and then friend Francis Stadian, would have been

based in the observation that "at the top of the book Aristotle had taught Rhetoric."[30]

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[26]   On this question, see John Schneider, "Melanchthon's Rhetoric as a Context for Understanding his Theology," in Karin Maag, ed., *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence Beyond Europe* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 141-157; also Chapter Three below, 169-174.

[27]   For medieval conceptions of rhetoric, see Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Presen*t (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001) 434-438, and Craig Smith, *Rhetoric & Human Consciousness: A History* (Waveland: Prospect Heights, 2003), 155-194.

[28]   Melanchthon, "On Correcting," in Keen, 51.

[29]   Ibid., 51-52.

[30]   Ibid, 52.

But, Melanchthon now proclaimed, as important as this corrected edition of Aristotle would have been for philosophy, it was even more vital to turn first to the renewal of the entire educational system because, as he put it, "The studies of the first elements [of philosophy] could not have been gotten from the filth unless the rudimentary training of the youth had been cleansed."[31]

According to Melanchthon, the *artes logicales* properly understood (i.e., "the youthful studies which they call *progymnasmata*: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric,")[32] are of vital importance because they are the necessary foundation for the other parts of philosophy. And so, he writes, "Greek literature is to be joined to Roman so that you may read philosophers, theologians, historians, orators, poets, to pursue, wherever you turn, the real thing and not the shadow of the thing..."[33] Among the most important of these "real things" to be pursued are those treated of in moral and natural philosophy, which are themselves closely bound together. As he writes here, "Greek learning is especially necessary for this, for it embraces the universal knowledge of nature, so that you may speak fittingly and fluently about morals."[34]

But while here at the outset of his career Melanchthon clearly seemed to regard Aristotle as a particularly valuable source for ancient learning, he clearly did not revere the philosopher as having a unique or inerrant grasp of the truth. The inaugural lecture contains praise for numerous others Melanchthon considers important as philosophers including Plato and, rather more surprisingly, Homer, Virgil, and Horace.[35] His plan for studies indeed suggests that students should read widely from these and others so that in

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[31]   Ibid..
[32]   Ibid., 54.
[33]   Ibid.
[34]   Ibid.
[35]   Ibid.

their own studies the young will be able to "select the best things from the best sources, both those things that pertain to the knowledge of nature and to the forming of manners."[36] Melanchthon's approach to philosophy from 1518 is thus explicitly eclectic rather than dogmatically Aristotelian, though the criteria by which ideas are to be selected from his philosophical authorities had not yet become explicit.

Melanchthon shows a heartfelt concern for matters religious and theological as well as philological and philosophical in his inaugural lecture. He laments that the same contempt of Greek literature which had maimed philosophy in his day had also caused the concern for "sacred things" to die. "This situation," he wrote, "has crippled the true rites and customs of the Church..."[37] And so Melanchthon proclaims that all in his day could see "that the Church is destitute in its use of literature, and that true and proper piety is everywhere changed into human traditions."[38]

Because, as Melanchthon continues, "as a class of studies the sacred things are most powerful for the mind,"[39] it is especially important to reform this area of learning. And the reforms he proposed for education generally were, he insisted, directly applicable to the study of the sacred things. After all, since theology is based in the study of the scriptures, theology itself "is partly Hebrew and partly Greek."[40] And since the reforms here proposed are centered on the correct reading of texts, this reform is bound to effect a renewal of a theology based in a return to the texts of sacred scripture. "And when we apply our minds to the sources," he concludes, "let us begin to understand

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36   Ibid.
37   Ibid., 50.
38   Ibid., 55.
39   Ibid., 55.
40   Ibid., 55.

Christ, who made his clear mandate to us, and we shall pour forth the nectar of divine wisdom."[41]

In sum, Melanchthon revealed himself in his inaugural lecture at Wittenberg as a scholar who was dedicated to classical studies and to a reform of the educational curriculum. He was at this stage pointedly critical of "barbarous" scholastic philosophy but enthusiastic about a view of philosophy which, he believed, would arise from a critical appropriation of the classical sources. This better philosophy contains logic, physics, and ethics. The *artes logicales* were for him the foundation not only for natural and moral philosophy, but inasmuch as they provide the way for a better reading of scripture, for theology itself. And logic as here conceived is the comprehensive language art containing dialectic, rhetoric, grammar, literature, and even history.

It is on this basis that Melanchthon can be considered a dedicated humanist as of 1518. The question to be asked through the following examination of the subsequent stages of his career is whether his dedication to the basic principles laid out here ever wavered, or whether in fact he ever rejected them. Was the vision of philosophy Melanchthon here presented—as containing logic, physics and ethics, and of being based in rhetoric as the all encompassing logical art—thus the very basis of Melanchthon's further development as a theologian and as a philosopher? Was rhetoric the intellectual foundation of all that would to follow, through all the changes and developments of his understandings of and valuations of theology, philosophical ethics, and natural philosophy? Or did he reject these humanistic commitments as a result of his becoming an Evangelical theologian through his association with Luther at Wittenberg?

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[41] Ibid.

C. 1518-26: The Beginning of Melanchthon's Evangelical Theology

If the first stage of his life concluded with Melanchthon's development into a humanist, the decade or so beginning with his arrival at Wittenberg may be said to represent his development into, if not his maturation as, an Evangelical theologian.[42] Included among Melanchthon's writings during this period is the first (and what would remain perhaps the most influential) edition of his best known theological work, the *Loci communes theologici*, in 1521. Also of great significance for understanding his view of philosophy during this stage were his oration *Declamatiuncula in divi Pauli docrtrinam,* "A Short Declamation on the Doctrine of Saint Paul" in 1520[43] and his decretum against the faculty of the Sorbonne of 1521, *Adversus furiosum Parriensium Theologastorum decretum Philippi Melanchthonis pro Luthero apologia,"* "Philipp Melanchthon's Apology in behalf of Martin Luther Against the Frantic Decree of the Parisian Theologastors." [44]

The first fruit of this period can be said to have been his Baccalaureate theses of 1519.[45] While Melanchthon had clearly acknowledged and honored the power of religious studies by the time he arrived at Wittenberg, he also later admitted that it was

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[42]   In addition to the biographies listed in Chapter One, which are generally concerned with Melanchthon's development as a theologian, see also Robert Stupperich, "The Development of Melanchthon's Theological-Philosophical World View." *Lutheran World* 7 (1960): 168-180; and Alfons Brüls, *Die Entwicklung der Gotteslehre beim jungen Melanchthon 1518-1535* (Bielfeld: Luther Verlag, 1975).

[43]   *Declamatiuncula in divi Pauli docrtrinam. Epistola ad Johannem Hessum Theologum. 1520,* MWA I, 26-43, translated as "Paul and the Scholastics, 1520" in Hill, 31-56.

[44]   *Adversus furiosum parriensium theologastorum decretum Philippi Melanchthonis pro Luthero apologia.* 1521. CR I: 366-388, and MWA I: 141-162. Translated in Hill as "Luther and the Parish Theologians, 1521," 69-87.

[45]   *R. P. Petrus Font. Theolog. Decanus disseret de subiectic propositionibus, respondete Philippo Mel.,* MWA I: 24-25; translated in Hill as "Baccalaureate Theses," 1519, 17-18.

during his first months at Wittenberg that he truly learned the Gospel from Luther.[46]   The

twenty-four theses which Melanchthon defended as a requirement for the *Baccalaureus*

Biblicus voiced objections to Scholastic teachings for which he could not find support in

the Bible. For example, theses sixteen through eighteen state:

> 16. It is not necessary for a Catholic to believe any other articles of faith than those to which Scripture is a witness.
> 17. The authority of councils is below the authority of Scripture.
> 18. Therefore, not to believe in the "character indelibilis," transubstantiation, and the like is not open to the charge of heresy.[47]

In so upholding the principle of *sola scriptura* Melanchthon shows himself to have

closely aligned his thought with, or to have anticipated an element of, Luther's

Evangelical theology.

Of even greater significance to Melanchthon's philosophical thought are the

anthropological claims contained within these theses. Most notable in this regard are the

first six, which together show a fundamental lack of trust in the reliability of the powers

of human nature. These theses are:

> 1. Human nature loves itself chiefly for its own sake.
> 2. It cannot love God for his own sake.
> 3. Both divine law and natural law have decreed that God must be loved for his own sake.
> 4. Since we cannot do this, the Law is the reason we fear God in a servile manner.
> 5. We must hate what we fear.
> 6. The law, therefore, causes us to hate even God.[48]

Such claims might be taken to signal a clear rejection of humanism on the praeceptor's

part, if one were to suppose that the humanism of the Renaissance was founded upon or

entails the notion that the human spirit is in complete control of its own desires, or that

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[46]   See John Schofield, *Philipp Melanchthon and the English Reformation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 15-16; also Robert Stupperich, *Melanchthon*, 33-40.
[47]   Melanchthon, "Baccalaureate," in Hill, 17-18.
[48]   Ibid., 18.

human nature is its own end. Indeed, the tone of these theses with their negative assessment of human powers might seem to be contrary to the anthropological optimism of Melanchthon's inaugural lecture of just two years earlier.

One might further wonder whether this change might indicate that the praecepter had experienced an intellectual or spiritual crisis upon his discovery of the Evangel, causing him to utterly despair of that which he had previously trusted. Luther himself famously reported an overwhelming emotional and spiritual conversion upon his own first apprehension of the Gospel.[49] Melanchthon's own career and faith was destined to be influenced not only by Luther, but by others who as well claimed to have had very powerful and regular spiritual experiences.[50] But there does not seem to be evidence that Melanchthon's turn toward Evangelical theology entailed any destruction of the spiritual or intellectual foundation evidenced in 1518.[51] Whether Melanchthon's new apprehension of the Gospel decimated whatever confidence Melanchthon had once had in the human's power to love God, or whether Melanchthon had not in 1518 believed humans had this power, Melanchthon's theological turn did not seem to shake his own soul to the core.

Noting Melanchthon's apparent lack of the sort of emotional *anfechtung* Luther and many other Evangelicals reported, Manshrek's summary of Melanchthon's situation after becoming an Evangelical ("Reason he did not trust; revelation he did not have")[52] seems just, when understood correctly. For while, as will become evident below,

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[49]   For Luther's own account, see Jaroslav Pellikan and Helmut Lehman, eds., *Luther's Works,* vol. 43 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 336-337.

[50]   See Sachiko Kusukawa's account of Melanchthon's encounter with the Zwickau prophets and other enthusiasts in *Transformation of Natural Philosophy*), 49-72.

[51]   Schofield, 15-16.

[52]   Manshrek, *Quiet Reformer,* 79.

Melanchthon never claimed to have received a personal revelation from God, he came to the Gospel by means of the revelation provided in Holy Writ. And this written revelation he kept, cherished, studied, and trusted above all throughout his life. Furthermore, while it does seem that at least from his Baccalureate these of 1519 on he never fully trusted reason, neither did he ever regard the abandonment of reason as an option for the Christian. Indeed, in his treatment of philosophy even at this point one may regard him as having striven for a middle way—or better, a faithful way—between what he would soon regard as the anti-intellectualism of Carlstadt and the anabaptists[53] on the one hand and the over-confidence in reason which he believed was a fundamental error of scholasticism.

What is more, it would be wrong to claim that Melanchthon neither had nor appreciated the importance of passionate faith, especially during the early Wittenberg stage of his career. Melanchthon's better known works from this period generally have a more obviously stalwart style than either his inaugural address or his later work. It was in this stage for example that he criticized the "frantic theologastors of Paris" for engaging in "trifling logicalia,"[54] and it was during this period that he claimed:

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[53]   See Stupperich, *Melanchthon*, 55-58; Manshrek, *Quiet Reformer,* 71-81; Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 82-85.

[54]   Melanchthon, "Paris Theologians," in Hill, 70-71: "Although the school of paris indeed for so many years up to the present has pursued philosophy, in these times she has ceased to philosophize and only talks nonsense about their trifling *logicalia."* For a more recent assesment, see Catarina Dutilh Novaes, "Logic in the 14th Century after Ockham,'" in Dov. M Gabbay and John Woods, eds., *Handbook of the History of Logic, Volume 2: Medieval and Renaissance Logic* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2008), 433-504. For humanistic developments of late-medieval logic, see Alan Perreiah, "Humanistic Critique of Scholastic Dialectic," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 3-22; Brian Copenhaven, "Translation, Terminology, and Style in Philosophical Discourse," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 77-110; and Lodi Nauta, "Lorenzo Valla and the Rise of Humanist Dialectici" in Hankins, 197-203*;* Jennifer Ashworth, "The Eclipse of Medieval Logic," in Kretzman, Kenny, and Pinborg, 787-796; Lisa Jardine, "Humanism and the Teaching of Logic," in Kretzman, Kenny, A., andPinborg, 797-807; and W. K. Percival, "Changes in the Approach to Language," in Kretzman, Kenny, and Pinborg, 808-817.; and Jennifer Ashworth, "Developments in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in Gabbay and Woods, 609-644.

As a boy I did some damage to my mind in preoccupation with the literature of the philosophers which, I hope, the doctrine of Paul will someday repair. For according to my judgment, those who think that the affairs of Christian life are aided by philosophical literature are entirely mistaken."[55]

Indeed, it was in the fervor characteristic of this stage and of these writings that Melanchthon made remarks which may have led some to the conclusion that with his newfound understanding of the Gospel Melanchthon had adopted a uniformly and absolutely negative attitude toward philosophy and reason itself.

His Baccalaureate theses make it clear that by 1519 Melanchthon believed that the Word of God placed greater limits upon the power of reason and the scope of philosophy than the scholastics recognized. For by that time the praeceptor rejected what he took to be the scholastic teaching that humans are capable of loving God by their own powers,[56] adhering instead to contrary thesis which he took as central to Paul's theology: "Human nature can only love itself for its own sake," and "It cannot love God for God's own sake." Similarly, in the *Loci communes* of 1521, Melanchthon states as a rule that among human beings in the fallen state "nothing is loved except what is advantageous for us."[57]

But any claim that Melanchthon in this early Wittenberg stage completely rejected or fundamentally changed the understanding of philosophy he had displayed in his inaugural lecture of 1518 would clearly go too far. Most significantly, such a claim would fail to recognize that Melanchthon was enthusiastically engaged throughout his first years at Wittenberg in writing works on what he had earlier called the "first part" of philosophy—the logical arts. He published his first textbook in dialectics, *Compendiaria*

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[55]   Melanchthon, "Paul and the Scholastics," in Hill, 38.
[56]   Ibid., 40.
[57]   Melanchthon, *Loci Communes,* in Pauck, 42; see also Arno Schirmer, *Das Paulus Verständnis Melanchthons 1518-1522* (Wiesbaden: Arno Friedrich Wilhelm Schirmer, 1967).

dialectices ratio, "A Short Account of Dialectics," in 1520.[58] This was accompanied by

two textbooks on rhetoric, *De rhetorica libri tres, "*Three Books About Rhetoric," in

1519 and *Institutiones rhetoricae instructio,* "Instruction Prepared for Rhetoric," in

1521,[59] and *Encomium eloquentiae,* "Praise of Eloquence," in 1523.[60]

Nor did Melanchthon simply reject natural philosophy as having no value during

this period. To be sure, writing as a theologian in his essay comparing Paul with the

scholastics he exhorted theologians to focus their attention on interpreting the scriptures

and to let others "discourse about the stations of the winds, about the forms of things,

about motions, about thunderbolts," because "Paul discusses the only things in which true

and absolute happiness clearly consists." [61] Still, even here he upheld his earlier quite

humanistic proposal that "philosophy should be sought—and by this term all antiquity

especially has been included."[62] Thus, while Melanchthon believed the theologian

should not be overly concerned with philosophy, he regarded the philosopher as playing

both a legitimate and an indeed an important role in education and society.

Then again, while Melanchthon did not reject philosophy entirely during this

stage, it should be stressed that his over-riding concern and passion were for his new

understanding of the Gospel. But far from pointing to the rejection of the humanistic

program he had proposed in 1518, his developing passion for the Gospel can be seen as a

result of it. For by 1519 he had begun to achieve that for which he had earlier called: the

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[58]   CR 20: 709-763.
[59]   See reviews of these works in Knape, 23-35; Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 323-325; and
Kuropka, *Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft,* 11-22.
[60]   CR 11: 5-66; MWA 3, 44-62; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations,* as "Praise of Eloquence," 60-78.
[61]   Melanchthon, "Paul and the Scholastics" in Hill, 44; STA I: 41.
[62]   Ibid., 34; STA I: 29-30.

application of humanistic philological training, particularly in Greek, to the interpretation

of the New Testament.

Without a doubt Melanchthon's new understanding of the Gospel did in some

sense transform his overall intellectual project. He seems to have discovered rather more

in the scriptures than he had earlier expected, good beyond that which he had pointed to

in1518. As Schofield writes of Melanchthon's first years at Wittenberg,

> Very soon, Philip, like Luther had identified St. Paul's epistle to the Romans as
> the key to the understanding of Scripture and consequently salvation. Romans he
> called the 'chief epistle', a *scopus,* an 'Attic mercury,' the 'route to all the other
> books' in Holy Writ. 'What use is it,' Philip asked, 'to know that God is the
> Creator of all, unless you know that the Creator is merciful to all? And what
> profit is there to know even in general terms that he is merciful, unless you also
> know that he is merciful, just, and wise to you? This is the true Christian
> knowledge of God, which philosophy has not followed.'[63]

Melanchthon thus came to believe through his reading of Paul that philosophy could not

provide that knowledge essential to the greatest good for humans—the knowledge of

God's favor uniquely revealed through Christ, and available only through faith in Christ.

Given all of this, it should not be surprising that Melanchthon's view of

philosophy during this stage can only be understood in light of his view of the Word of

God. And given that Melanchthon's work during this stage focused on the New

Testament epistles of Paul, one should expect to find Paul's thought crucial to an

understanding of Melanchthon's view of the message of the Holy Scriptures. And as

Scheible and others have shown, the interpretive key for Melanchthon's understanding all

of scripture, a key which he found in Paul, is the distinction between Law and Gospel.[64]

In the *Loci communes* Melanchthon explains this distinction between Law and

Gospel thus:

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[63]   Schofeld, 16.
[64]   Scheible, *Melanchthon,* 138-140.

> Generally speaking, there are two parts of Scripture, the law and the gospel. The law shows sin, the gospel grace. The law indicates disease, the gospel points out the remedy. To use Paul's words, the law is the minister of death, the gospel is the minister of life and peace: "The power of sin is the Law" (I Cor. 15:56), but the gospel is the power of salvation to everyone who has faith (Rom. 1:16).[65]

Thus, according to Melanchthon, the Gospel, which is available exclusively via divine revelation in scripture, "is the promise of the grace or mercy of God, especially the forgiveness of sins and the testimony of God's goodwill toward us."[66] The Law, on the other hand, "is a judgment by which the good is commanded and the bad forbidden."[67] And the Word of God must be understood as containing or revealing both Law and Gospel.

Now the Gospel, as Melanchthon would later write, "is not philosophy, nor is it any part of philosophy."[68] On the contrary philosophy, or at least moral philosophy, as the praeceptor writes in the *Loci communes* , is a part—though only one part--of the Law of God. And the Law of God is one of several kinds of law. Melanchthon notes here that some laws are established by humans, and that among these are civil laws "which magistrates, princes, kings, and cities sanction in the state."[69] And while divine revelation does not prescribe the particular laws by which a state is ruled, obedience to duly appointed leaders is commanded by scripture, Melanchthon writes, quoting Paul's exhortation of Romans 13:1-3:

> Let every person be subjected to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God; and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed; and

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[65]   Melanchthon, *Loci communes,* in Pauck 71.
[66]   Ibid., 71.
[67]   Ibid., 49.
[68]   Melanchthon, "The Distinction Between the Gospel and Philosophy*,"* in Kusukawa, *Orations,* 24.
[69]   Melanchthon, *Loci communes,* in Pauck, 62.

those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad.[70]

Melanchthon thus recognized the importance of civil authority and the role of philosophy of establishing it even in 1521, though it would be several years before he would turn to concentrate his energy on works in ethics and politics.

Melanchthon's primary concern at this first stage of his life as an Evangelical theologian was not to consider laws established by humans, but those established by God. And of these, he wrote, there are two types. First there are divine laws, "established by God in the canonical scriptures," and which can be further divided into the moral, the judicial, and the ceremonial."[71] Melanchthon indicates that Christians have not been and need not be subject to either the divine judicial or the ceremonial laws of scripture, since they commanded liturgical, legal, and administrative practices exclusively for the Hebrew people of the Old Testament times. Their primary interest to Christians, he writes, is that when one of these is treated allegorically, "It is remarkable how clearly it puts Christ before our eyes."[72]

The divine laws of far greater interest to Melanchthon here are "those which are prescribed in the Decalogue," that is, the Ten Commandments. Melanchthon was primarily concerned in the *Loci communes* to explain the first thee commandments, those pertaining to "the true worship of God." The law of this first table, according to Melanchthon, is summarized and expressed in Christ's commandment "You shall love

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[70]   Quoted by Melanchthon in the thirty first of the *Loci communes*, Pauck, 62.
[71]   Ibid., 71.
[72]   Ibid., 61.

the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind (Mark 12:30)."[73]

In treating the first table of the Decalogue Melanchthon would thus seem to be far from a theological "intellectualist" for whom assent to propositions is the primary concern of Christian faith. Indeed, he here writes, "While the Scholastics taught that to love God is the same as to wish that God exists, to believe that he hears, not to begrudge him the Kingdom, and many things like this,"[74] truly loving God requires more than is within the power of the human mind. "For unless the Spirit teaches," he warns, "you cannot know what it is to love God, that is, unless you actually experience it inflamed by the Spirit himself."[75]

In contrast to his rather full treatment of the first table of the decalogue, Melanchthon treats of the second table, containing the fourth through tenth commandments, quite briefly in the *Loci communes* of 1521. In one short paragraph he simply makes two claims about these commandments. First, he writes, they are all summarized and contained in Christ's second great commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," (Mark 12:31).[76] Second, contrary to the teaching of the "sophists" (i.e., the scholastics), these commandments are not to be understood as dealing merely with publicly observable acts. The scholastics, he claims, were only concerned with outward observance, but "Christ, on the contrary, explains the laws as concerned with the affections, and deals with it affirmatively."[77] Thus, "In the commandment 'You shall not kill,'(Christ) commands us to have hearts that are upright, clean, free, and open to all men

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[73]   Ibid., 55.
[74]   Ibid., 54.
[75]   Ibid.
[76]   Ibid., 56.
[77]   Ibid.

in all things...In a word, we are not to resist evil, but we are to love even our enemies, and to do so freely and openly."[78] And through the sixth commandment 'You shall not commit adultery,' "Chastity and purity of heart are demanded so that we do not even desire shameful things."[79]

Melanchthon thus distinguished between outward and inward observances of law. One could, according to this distinction, obey the law outwardly and yet fail to satisfy the law *coram deo*, that is, before God. Accordingly, outward observance of the law had little theological significance for the praeceptor. This distinction between outward and inward obedience would however prove to be of monumental importance for understanding the relationship between theology and philosophy, in particular moral philosophy, for Melanchthon.[80]

A final type of law which Melanchthon considers in the *Loci communes* is the most interesting philosophically. In addition to the divine moral law as known by humans through scripture, he asserts here the existence of a natural moral law.[81] While natural law is like divine law in scripture in that both are established by God, natural law is for Melanchthon distinct from divine law in that only the former is discoverable by human reason, and is a matter for philosophical investigation and treatment. "For when

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[78]   Ibid., 56-57.
[79]   Ibid., 57.
[80]   See below, 121-136.
[81]   On natural law in Melanchthon and other reformers, see Clemens Bauer, "Melanchthons Naturrechtslehre" *Archiv fürReformationsgeschichte* (1951): 64-95, and "Die Naturrechtsvorstellungen des jungeren Melanchthon," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 42 (1951): 64-100. Christoph Strom, "Naturrecht und Naturgesetze bei Luther und Melanchthon," *Lutherjahrbuch* 66 (1999): 265-266; Knud Haakonssen, Knud. "Protestant Natural Law Theory: A General Interpretation," in Natatlie Brender and Larry Krasnoff , eds., *New Essays on the History of Autonomy: A Collection Honoring J. B. Schneewind*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 92-110.

natural laws are being proclaimed," he wrote, "it is proper that their formulas be collected by the method of human reason through the natural syllogism."[82]

Melanchthon based his treatment of natural law upon an anthropological claim with a long history. He writes here that natural laws, both in moral philosophy and in "theoretical branches of learning" could be discovered because "certain common axioms and *a priori* principles in the realm of morals" have been "implanted in us by God," and "together they constitute the ground rule for all human activity."[83] As an example of one such axiom from the theoretical realm, Melanchthon notes that fundamental mathematical claim, "the whole is greater than the parts."[84] In moral law, the fundamental axioms he lists in the *Loci communes* are:

> 1. God must be worshipped.
> 2. Since we are born into a life that is social, no one must be harmed.
> 3. Human society demands that we make common use of all things.[85]

Through these innate common notions or *koine ennoiai*, Melanchthon suggests, it is possible to have real knowledge both in natural and in moral philosophy.

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, it has been claimed that Melanchthon's doctrine of innate ideas at least led him to develop the fundaments of some sort of non-empirical rationalism, or that he himself became a sort of "theo-rationalist."[86] And indeed some sort of claim about innatism seems to be fundamental both to Platonism and to the rationalisms of the seventeenth century.[87] But it is of crucial importance to note that in the *Loci communes* of 1521, within a just few lines of

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[82]   Ibid., 50.
[83]   Ibid.
[84]   Ibid., 51.
[85]   Ibid.
[86]   Chapter One above, 58-64.
[87]   On this point, see Günter Frank, *Die Theologische Philosophie,* 10-12.

establishing the existence of these *koine ennoiai* in the human soul, Melanchthon made a move which would seem to forestall the establishment of any such rationalism.

While it may be, according to the praeceptor, that humans in our original state were given these ideas by God, our intellects are now unavoidably impeded by the darkness brought about by sin. "For in general," he wrote, "the judgment of human comprehension is fallacious because of our innate blindness, so that even if certain patterns have been engraved in our minds, they can scarcely be apprehended."[88] That is, he explicitly and strongly denies that in our present state humans have unhindered access to whatever innate ideas God had implanted in us. The consequences of the relationship between Melanchthon's conception of innate ideas and "innate blindness" are quite significant, as will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five below.

But several important points should be noted regarding Melanchthon's treatment of law at this point. First, while he acknowledged that natural moral law is the basis upon which humans form society, he was not primarily concerned during this stage of his career to work as a moral philosopher, nor did he desire further to explicate the philosophical basis of civil law. His primary concern at this stage seems rather to have been purely theological. Without denying the legitimacy of moral philosophy, he was content at this stage of his career to leave its pursuit to those called to be moral philosophers. In a similar way, he was not denying the legitimacy of natural philosophy in 1520 when he wrote "Let others discourse about the stations of the winds, about the forms of things, about motions, about thunderbolts…"[89] Rather, he was merely exhorting theologians to focus on scripture, leaving examination of the world to philosophers.

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88   Melanchthon, *Loci communes,* in Pauck, 51.
89   Melanchthon, "Paul and the Scholastics" in Hill, 44.

Second, Melanchthon treated under two headings the normative rules under which humans must live: the first of these was divine moral law (i.e., the Decalogue), and natural law was the second. He was confident that both natural and divine law would direct humans to the same types of behavior, for he wrote that even in the absence of the scriptures, "The law which God has engraved on the mind of each is suitable for the shaping of morals." [90] But he did not view these two types of law as distinct only with respect to the context of their discovery. Rather, Melanchthon indicated that there are quite distinct criteria by which one could be said to be in conformity with each of these. According to Melanchthon, obedience to natural law demands only a certain set of behaviors, or as Melanchthon might put it, natural law calls merely for outward obedience. Obedience to divine law on the other hand depends not merely upon one's actions, but upon the affection which motivates them, since as the praeceptor wrote, "Christ, on the contrary, explains the laws as concerned with the affection."[91] That is, one could only be said to obey divine law, according to Melanchthon, when one is motivated to act by a genuine love for God and for neighbor.

Third, in so making obedience to the divine moral law dependent upon affections rather than actions, it should be clear that Melanchthon had here already taken a position which placed him at odds with Erasmus and in agreement with Luther on the question of the will's freedom. The primary issue in the free will controversy between Luther and Erasmus in 1524-27 was the question of whether the human being in the fallen state retains the freedom to obey the law in a way which would justify one in God's eyes.[92]

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[90]   Melanchthon, *Loci communes,* in Pauck, 50.
[91]   Ibid., 56.
[92]   See Wengert's treatment both of this issue and the treatment in the secondary literature of Melanchthon's response to it in Wengert, *Human Freedom,* 67-79.

Since Melanchthon stated both in his Baccalaureate theses of 1518 and in the *Loci*

communes of 1521 that obedience to divine moral law requires true love for God, while

fallen human nature is only able to love itself, it follows that even in this earliest

Wittenberg period Melanchthon must have believed that humans lacked the freedom

necessary to obey the law in a way which could justify themselves *coram deo*.[93]

All of this should help explain Melanchthon's expanded critique of scholasticism

in these early Wittenberg days.[94] In his inaugural lecture of 1518 Melanchthon's primary

complaint was simply that by neglecting literary studies, scholasticism was not able to

understand and appropriate the ancient philosophers, thus obscuring the good available

through philosophy properly pursued. But during his earliest years at Wittenberg

Melanchthon saw an even more serious problem, rooted in the above. As in 1518, he still

regarded the scholastics as having a "mutilated Aristotle." But by 1521 he had come to

believe that, what was far worse, the scholastics based their *theology* on their

misapprehension of Aristotle. It was on the basis of their mangled deformity of

Aristotelian philosophy, Melanchthon had come to believe, that the Scholastics then

approached Paul's writings. This explained, according to the praeceptor, why the

scholastics completely obscured the greatest of goods offered by the Gospel through the

scriptures and through Paul's writings in particular.

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[93] On this issue, see Karl Heinz zur-Mühlen, "Melanchthons Auffassung vom Affekt in den Loci communes von 1521," in Beyer and Wartenberg, 327-336; alsoWolfgang Matz, *Der befreite Mensch : die Willenslehre in der Theologie Philipp Melanchthons* (Gottingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2001).

[94] Not explained, however, and a topic worthy of a closer look is the possible debt Melanchthon's account of ethics owes to the doctrine of two affections of the will in Duns Scots. Good reviews of this Scotistic doctrine can be found in Thomas Williams, "From Metaethics to Action Theory," in Thomas Williams, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 332-351, and John Boler, "Transcending the Natural: Duns Scotus on the Two Affections of the Will," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (Win 93): 109-126.

It is in the context of this critique that one should regard Melanchthon's rhetoric deriding Aristotle and Aristotelians which one finds peppering his prose from these days, such as when he fumes "For what is it to us, what that dirty man has contrived?"[95] or when he states that a goal of the *Loci communes* is to show "how corrupt are the teachings of those who have offered us the subtleties of Aristotle instead of the teachings of Christ."[96] To be sure, Melanchthon's estimation of Aristotle's philosophy may be said to have declined sharply during this period in that he no longer believed that a corrected interpretation of Aristotle would sufficiently amend scholastic theology. But this is because in these early days at Wittenberg Melanchthon came to believe that whatever value even the work of the greatest of philosophers may have, it is far surpassed by the immeasurable value of the Gospel, knowledge of which is far beyond the ability of any philosophy to provide. Schofield summarizes the situation by stating that as Melanchthon now believed,

> Philosophers lacked Christ, had no knowledge of Him or His salvation, and therefore Paul surpassed Socrates and even Homer. Philosophy, Philip came to believe, had no remedy for the inherent sickness of the soul."[97]

Accordingly, Melanchthon had come to believe that philosophy must be rejected wherever it obscures or confuses *Christiania cognitio*, "Christian knowledge,"[98] knowledge of the benefits of faith in Christ.

In the first half of the 1520's Melanchthon thus developed a deeper criticism of the scholastic Aristotle than he previously had. This new criticism arose from a new understanding of, or a new emphasis on, the limits of philosophy with respect to the

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[95]   Melanchthon, "Paris Theologians," in Hill, 75.
[96]   Melanchthon, *Loci communes*, in Pauck, 19.
[97]   Schofield, 16.
[98]   Melanchthon, *Loci communes,* in Pauck, 22; CR 21: 85.

greatest good available to humans, a good available solely through the Gospel. One should therefore not suppose that Melanchthon meant to replace the scholastic Aristotelian theology with a theology founded upon the metaphysics of Plato, or upon any other philosopher's work. In fact, by the time Melanchthon wrote the first edition of the *Loci*, he regarded the scholastics as exemplifying a more general problem which had far predated the scholastics.

Melanchthon reported that even the Greek and Latin Fathers of the first centuries of the Church had attempted to base the teaching of the Church on philosophy, the product of darkened human understanding, rather than on the message revealed in the scriptures. As he wrote, "For just as we in these latter times of the Church have embraced Aristotle instead of Christ, so immediately after the beginnings of the Church Christian doctrine was weakened by Platonic philosophy."[99] The causes of this problem both in the ancient Church and among the scholastics, according to Melanchthon, was a failure to recognize a truth which Paul reveals: that sin has so weakened human powers that the human mind is fallible generally and absolutely incapable of establishing the most important truths about God, which are the most important truths upon which human life can be founded.

In summarizing the early Wittenberg stage of his career, it seems that Melanchthon's humanism of 1518 compelled him to return *ad fontes scripturae*, and that by 1519 his studies of scripture revealed to him the inestimable and incomparable value of the Gospel. His Evangelical conversion indeed altered the character of his thought, broadened his criticism of scholasticism, and minimized in his eyes—at least for a time— the importance of natural and moral philosophy. Melanchthon's understanding of the

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[99]   Melanchthon, *Loci communes*, Pauck, 23.

scope of philosophy and his commitment to humanist educational formation based in the language arts remained solid throughout this period.   But because during this early Wittenberg period the eternal good available through the Gospel so overshadowed any other good available to humans, his estimation of the contribution philosophy could make to total human well-being was at the low ebb of his career.   Melanchthon came to a renewed recognition of the legitimacy and need of goods other than the highest good of the gospel, and thus to a renewed appreciation for the value of philosophy for Christian life, beginning around 1525.

D. 1525-1535: Melanchthon's First Work in Moral Philosophy

Melanchthon's treatment of philosophy took a significant turn in the middle of the 1520's. From his first days at Wittenberg he had been writting works on the logical arts as well as theology, but he had produced no substantial work in either physics or ethics, the other parts of philosophy as he had described it since 1518. Beginning in 1525 this changed with the publication of his *Argumentum et scholia in officia Ciceronis*, a commentary on one of Cicero's most important ethical works, *On Duties*.[100] Soon thereafter Melanchthon began to publish and then to revise numerous works in ethics which reflected a renewed appreciation for Aristotle. These include *Enarrationes aliquot librorum ethicorum Aristotelis*, "Some Expositions of the Ethical books of Aristotle," published in 1529,[101] *Commentariie in aliquot politicos libros Aristotelis,* "Notes on some Politcal Books of Aristotle," in 1530,[102] his *Epitome ethices,* "Summary of Ethics,"

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[100]   CR 16:615-680; cf. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De officiis*, tr. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
[101]   CR 16:277-416.
[102]   CR 16:417-452.

in 1532.[103] On account of these and other works to follow, Melanchthon has been called the ethicist of the reformation.[104]

The shift in Melanchthon's attention toward Aristotle's ethics raises two important questions, given the claims made in the secondary literature about Melanchthon's philosophical development. The first of these is whether or in what sense this turning toward Aristotle points to an important development in Melanchthon's understanding of and valuation of philosophy; the second is whether this development points to a turning away from his commitments either to his humanistic or Evangelical principles. Both questions are closely related to the question of the overall unity of Melanchthon's philosophical thought.

As Timothy Wengert has shown, key texts for understanding the way Melanchthon's view of and treatment of philosophy was being transformed during this period are his commentaries on St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians, in particular his treatment of Colossians 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ."[105] Melanchthon produced and then revised

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[103]   Philipp Melanchthon, *Epitome ethices,* tr. in Keen, 203-238, from Herman Heineck, *Die alteste Fassung von Melanchthons Ethik* (Berlin: R. Salinger, 1893). See also CR 3: 359-361, translated in Kusukawa, orations, as "Dedicatory Letter to Melanchthon's *Epitome of Moral Philosophy,"* 139-143.
[104]   Cf. Scheible, *Melanchthon,* 90. For general accounts of humanist developments in moral philosophy, see David Lines, "Humanistic and Scholastic Ethics," in Hankins, 304-318; and Jill Kraye, "Moral Philosophy," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 303-386.
[105]   Wengert describes the history of Melanchthon's publications on Colossians in *Human Freedom,* 14-20; see also Kusukawa, 65-69. Melanchthon produced a short *Dissertatio* on this epistle in 1527 *Philipi Melanchthonis in locum Colossenes, videte ne quis vos decipiat per philosophiam inanem dissertatio*, CR 12:691-6. Cf. Stupperich, *Der Unbekannte Melanchthon*, 146-152. Also in 1527 Melanchthon published a portion of a disputation on Colossians, *De descrimine Evangelii et Philosophiae,* CR 12:689-91, translated in Kusukawa, *Orations*, as "The Distinction Between the Gospel and Philosophy," 23-25. Melanchthon produced editions of his fuller *Scholia in Epistolamn Pauli ad Colossenes*, in 1528, 1529, and 1534. The earliest edition is available in MWA 4: 209-303; translated into English by D. C. Parker as *Paul's Letter to the Colossians* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989).

several commentaries on Colossians from 1527 to 1534. In this series of works

Melanchthon clarified his understanding of the limits of human powers of understanding

and will, and thus of both natural and moral philosophy.

Wengert's immediate concern in treating of Melanchthon's *Scholia* on Colossians

has been "to uncover the contours of Melanchthon's opposition to Erasmus of

Rotterdam," especially in response to the conflict between Luther and Erasmus over the

question of the will's freedom.[106] In the previous chapter of this dissertation I noted that

Melanchthon has been widely criticized for his response to this controversy.[107] But in

order to understand Melanchthon's response, it will be helpful to quickly outline just

what this controversy was.

"By freedom of the will," Erasmus famously wrote, "we understand in this

connection the power of the human will whereby man can apply to or turn away from that

which leads to salvation."[108] And in *Hyperaspistes I and II*, Erasmus argued on both

Biblical/theological and on philosophical grounds that one must understand the will as

free. In short, he claimed that neither humans nor God could with justice hold agents

responsible for their actions unless those agents are freely able to choose their actions.

Erasmus understood morally good acts to be just those acts which are commanded by

God and freely chosen. And, Erasmus reasoned, since God does indeed hold humans

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Melanchthon published a "completely new *Enarratio* on Colossians" in 1559, according to Wengert, *Human Freedom,* 20.

[106]   Wengert, 13.

[107]   Chapter one above, 34-36, 80-84; see also Frank Foster, "Melanchthon's 'Synergism': A Study in the History of Psychological Dogmatics." *Papers of the American Society of Church History* 1 (1888), 185-204.

[108]   Erasmus, *Diatribe seu collatio de libero arbitrio*, Basel, 1525. Quoted in Ernst Winter's introduction to *Erasmus-Luther: Discourse on Free Will,* Ernst Winter, tr. and ed. (New York: Continuum, 1990), x.

responsible for their actions, it must be possible for them to perform good actions in

society before humans, as well as actions before God which lead to salvation.

Wengert summarizes Erasmus's position on the will's freedom thus:

> After a look at the evidence pro and con, Erasmus decided in favor of some
> freedom of the will for, among other things, three reasons. First, it protected God
> from the charge of injustice. Second, it allowed for human merit in the process of
> justification. Third, and most important for a moral philosopher like Erasmus, it
> helped undergird the human quest for virtue.[109]

But Wengert found that, in accord with Luther and consistent with his Baccalaureate

theses, Melanchthon claimed that the New Testament and St. Paul in particular denied

that it is within human power to obey the Divine Law and thus to be righteous in God's

sight.[110]

As Wengert explains, in the course of presenting his own position on the will's

freedom in the Colossians commentary, Melanchthon claimed that "concerning God

philosophy errs in three ways."[111] First, the praeceptor wrote, philosophy may deny

divine providence and governance. While philosophy may be able to ascertain that God

created the world, it could not conclude that God was presently governing the world.

Thus, as Wengert summarizes Melancthon's position, "Only through God's Word could

God's will be known."[112] The second error philosophy makes, according to Melanchthon,

is in assuming that ethically commanded works, that is works of "civil righteousness" are

sufficient for winning God's approval. As Melanchthon put it, "reason and the gospel are

opposed in that the gospel denies that civil righteousness suffices before God."[113] The

third error of philosophy is to suppose that the human spirit can of its own power truly

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[109] Wengert, *Human Freedom,* 68.
[110] Ibid., 104-109.
[111] Ibid., 82-87.
[112] Ibid., 84.
[113] Ibid.

love God.[114] As was shown above, Melanchthon had denied the latter claim since his

Baccalaureate theses. And as Wengert shows, Melanchthon believed that Erasmus fell

victim to all three errors in the latter's treatment of the will's freedom.[115]

Given such clear statement of profound errors on the part of philosophy in 1527,

it cannot be said that Melanchthon had by this time developed a greater confidence in

philosophy's powers than he had shown in his earlier Wittenberg period. Indeed in the

Colossians commentaries Melanchthon seems to present philosophy as even *more* prone

to err, and he is clearer about just how it errs, than he had ever done previously. And yet

during the mid 1520's, both in these commentaries and in his explicitly ethical works,

Melanchthon began to present a clearer, positive, and substantive statement of the proper

scope and product of philosophy for the Christian than he had yet provided.

In the Colossians commentary, for example, he described the scope of philosophy

in comparison with the Gospel thus:

> The Gospel is the teaching of the spiritual life and of justification in the eyes of
> God; but philosophy is the teaching of the corporeal life (*doctrina vitae
> corporalis),* just as you see that medicine serves health, the turning points of
> storms serve navigators, civil conduct serve the common peace of all men. The
> use of philosophy in this way is very necessary and approved of by God; as Paul
> says in many places, that creatures of God may use it with thanksgiving [I
> Timothy 4.4][116]

In spite of the enumeration of the errors to which it is subject, the account of philosophy

Melanchthon developed here in the Colossians commentaries can be seen as positive in

two senses. First, while the praeceptor had earlier only grudgingly admitted that if one

had not been called to be a theologian one might legitimately concern oneself with moral

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[114]   Ibid.
[115]   Ibid., 85.
[116]   CR 12: 692; translated in Kusukawa, *Transformation,* 66.

and natural philosophy,[117] beginning with the Colossians commentaries he encouraged and promoted the general pursuit of philosophy by Christians generally, stating, "Just as the Christian makes pious use of the law of God, he can make pious use of philosophy, too."[118] That is, whereas in his first period as an Evangelical Melanchthon presented philosophy as an allowable but not particularly important matter for the Christian, by 1527 he asserted that Paul "does not reject philosophy but its abuse,"[119] and in fact the praeceptor now regarded philosophy as "a good creation of God, and the principal among all natural gifts."[120]

Second, his description of the role of what he had called "the logical part" of philosophy becomes unambiguosly positive during mid 1520's. As described above, Melanchthon had consistently published substantive work on this part of philosophy from 1518 on. But some of his work during the early Wittenberg stage revealed a certain unresolved tension between his recognition of the importance of the *artes logicales* for the theologian on the one hand, and his desire to criticize the logic of the scholastics on the other. In his letter to the theologians of Paris for example he both lamented that at that among the Parisian academics "it has been openly decreed that philosophical disciplines are necessary for piety,"[121] and he complained that the theologians in Paris "have not even learned correctly their own little *Logicalia*."[122] At points it seems unclear whether Melanchthon meant to criticize the very attempt to use logic to further

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117   Melanchthon, "Paul and the Scholastics," in Hill, 44.
118   Melanchthon, "On the distinction," 24.
119   Ibid., 23.
120   Ibid.
121   Melanchthon, "Paris Theologians," in Hill, 70.
122   Ibid., 71.

theological discourse, or merely the failure to pursue this project according to the correct method.

In either case, by 1527 Melanchthon had clarified his position on the relationship between the first part of philosophy and theology by stating that rhetoric is not only helpful for theology (as he had stated in his inaugural lecture of 1518), but is indeed required for the proper pursuit of theology. Noting that in I Timothy 3:2 Paul had taught that a bishop should be *didaktikon* or "learned," Melanchthon now asked rhetorically, "Now, how could anybody teach, who had no prior dialectical or rhetorical knowledge?"[123] He now describes the logical part of philosophy as necessary for the theologian, since, "Without this knowledge, the sacred text can in no way be understood."[124]

It appears then that while Melanchthon's conception of the *value* of philosophy, especially for the Christian theologian, had reached its low ebb in the early Wittenberg period, by the later part of the 1520's its reputation in Melanchthon's estimation was waxing again. But that this higher valuation of philosophy did not entail a departure from Luther's thought is suggested by remarks Luther himself had written in 1523, remarks which seem to echo the praeceptor's inaugural lecture of 1518:

> I myself am convinced that without the knowledge of the [Humanistic] studies, pure theology can by no means exist, as has been the case until now; when the [Humanistic] studies were miserably ruined and prostrate [theology] declined and lay neglected. I realize that there has never been a great revelation of God's word unless God has first prepared the way by the rise and flourishing of languages and learning, as though these were forerunners, a sort of [John] the Baptist.[125]

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[123]   Melanchthon in Parker 51;cf. Wengert 93.
[124]   Melanchthon in Parker, 53.
[125]   Luther to Eobanus Hessus, 29 March 1523, translated by G. G. Krodel in LW 40, 34; cited in Kusukawa, *Transformation,* 57.

In any case, from this point on in his career Melanchthon remains clear: the logical part of philosophy is to be regarded as fundamental not only for ethics and natural philosophy, but even for theology.[126]

The account of philosophy Melanchthon developed during this stage is also positive in the sense that he began here more fully to describe the contents and product of the other parts of philosophy, as well as their relationship to theology. As in his inaugural lecture, philosophy is said in his disputation on Colossians 2:8 to contain logic, physics, and ethics, or rather, "the art of rhetoric, physiology, and precepts on civic morals."[127] And as indicated above he had come to an initial position on the relationship between ethics and theology in the *Loci communes* of 1521, in which he placed moral law within the scope of the Law of God as one of its two parts. But during that earlier stage of his career he had done little to develop the content of moral philosophy from an Evangelical point of view.

The beginning of Melanchthon's turn toward Aritstotle's ethics was signaled, as Kusukawa notes, by his stated intention to teach from Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* in 1527.[128] But while, as Kusukawa further notes, it is not clear what these lectures consisted of, it is clear that by 1532 Melanchthon was lecturing on the fifth book of this work.[129] Given Melanchthon's harsh words about Aristotle from earlier in his career, it might seem surprising that Melanchthon would in any way base his own ethical thought in the Stagirite's, unless one supposed that at this point Melanchthon was rejecting his earlier stance. And given that the earlier rejection of Aristotle was consistent with

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[126]   Cf. Kusukawa, *Transformation* 69.
[127]   Melanchthon, "On the distinction," 23.
[128]   Kusukawa, *Transformation,* 69.
[129]   Ibid.

Luther's famous claim from his *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*: "Aristotle is to

the Gospel as darkness is to light,"[130] one might suppose that the most notable previous

commitment Melanchthon here rejected was to Evangelical theology.   Some have

attempted to further claim that Melanchthon's turn to ethics came in the wake of a

supposed vocational crisis.[131]

Whether or not Melanchthon's developing ethical thought was consistent with

Luther's is a not matter for this dissertation to determine. But that Melanchthon intended

his work in ethics to be consistent with his own earlier Evangelical theology is made

clear by a reading of his *Epitome ethices* of 1532. At the outset of this work he answers

the question "How do philosophy and gospel differ?" by making two important

distinctions:

> First of all, it is important to know here that law is a very different thing from
> gospel. For the law of God teaches what sorts of things we must do and what
> works stand out before God and men, but the gospel teaches us to please God
> freely on account of Christ; it is neither law nor does it add a condition to the law
> whereby God is propitiated by us. Philosophy is neither gospel nor any part of it,
> but it is part of divine law.[132]

Noting that philosophy is "the law of nature itself divinely written in men's minds," he

further distinguished between philosophy and the law of God revealed in scripture as the

parts of divine law:

> The rest stands between the law of God and philosophy, since the law of God
> teaches about spiritual matters before God, while philosophy truly teaches those
> works which can be judged by reason. To oversimplify, philosophy is the law of
> God as far as reason understands law; or if one wishes to leave out the first table

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[130]   Thesis 50 in Martin Luther, "Disputation Against Scholastic Theology 1517," *Luther's Works* 31, 5-16.

[131]   The most important in this regard is perhaps Wilhelm Maurer, *Der Junge Melanchthon* 2, 153-229, also Kusukawa, 51-69. For contrary claims, see Manschrek, 79 ff and Wengert, *Human Freedom*, 8-9.

[132]   Melanchthon, "Summary of Ethics," in Keen, 203-204.

of [the Decalogue], while philosophy affirms nothing of the will of God, it does belong to the second table of the divine law insofar as reason understands law.[133]

It thus remained fundamental for Melanchthon that "ethical teaching is a part of the divine law of civil behavior."[134]

Melanchthon remains clear in this work that a human being's greatest good lay in righteousness before God, which good is available entirely and exclusively through the Gospel, for as he writes, "the Christian must realize that he must be pronounced justified freely through Christ, not through law or philosophy."[135] But Melanchthon's ethical work from the 1520's and into the 1530's was based in a clarification or thematization of a conception of two distinct kinds of righteousness required of humans. To be sure, Melanchthon did not first conceptualize this distinction here, since one can find its beginning in the *Loci* of 1521.[136] In the earlier Wittenberg stage however Melanchthon was almost entirely concerned with treating of the human being's need to become righteous before God through Christ, who is "the author of happiness (*euthemia*), and, what is more, of absolute happiness."[137]

Melanchthon's treatment of natural law and of civil law in his initial Evangelical stage suggests that at that time he believed that civil or outer righteousness is matter of little consequence for Christians. Beginning in the middle of the 1520's however, Melanchthon returned in a sense to the picture of the human he'd shown in 1518—as a being whose full flourishing *requires* not only righteousness before God, but also before

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[133]   Ibid, 204.
[134]   Melanchthon, "Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics, BK. I (1546)," in Keen, 179. See also Timothy Wengert, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melanchthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia.* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997).
[135]   Melanchthon, "Summary of Ethics," in Keen, 204.
[136]   For Melanchthon's distinction between Law and Gospel in the *Loci communes* of 1521, see Pauck 49-77.
[137]   Melanchthon, "Paul and the Scholastics," in Hill, 36.

other humans in civil society. But unlike the enthusiastic advocacy he showed for moral

philosophy prior to his arrival in Wittenberg, his attempt to re-establish philosophical

ethics in the 1520's was built upon his new-found distinction between law and gospel.

The reasons for Melanchthon's return to ethical philosophy may well have to do,

as Kusukawa argues, with the civil unrest and moral laxity he experienced among the

people in and around Wittenberg during his tenure as the leader of the Reformation

during Luther's exile in the Wartburg from 1521 through 1527.[138] Kusukawa's account

suggests that by the latter part of the 1520's the praeceptor came to see that a new church

needed a stable society, that this required a grounding in moral philosophy, and that as a

professor in the philosophy faculty at Wittenberg Melanchthon believed it was

appropriate for him to develop a philosophy consistent with Evangelical theology.

There are some clearly Aristotelian elements in the moral philosophy

Melanchthon constructed.[139] To begin with, he commended Aristotle for recognizing that

"moral philosophy is involved completely with the investigation of man's goal."[140]

Melanchthon also accepted that the human must pursue this goal using reason, and that

"reason judges the performance of virtue in all good things to be that which it

understands to be the highest [aim] and one to be sought for its own sake."[141] There is

then a sense in which for the praeceptor as well as for the Stagirite ethics is teleological,

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[138]   Kusukawa, *Transformation,* 51-69. For a differing account, of the effect of this unrest on
Melanchthon's philosophy,see Franz Hübner, *Natürliche Theologie und theokratische Schwärmerei bei
Melanchthon* (Guttersloh: Bertelsmann, 1936).

[139]   The standard English translation of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* is W. D. Ross's, revised by J.
O. Urmson in *The Complete Works of Arsitotle: The Revised Oxford Translation,* ed. by Jonathan Barnes
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Volume II: 1729-1867. For an excellent summary, see D. S.
Hutchinson, "Ethics," in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1995), 195-232; also, Roger Crisp, "Aristotle: Ethics," and Trevor Saunders,
"The Politics," both in *The Routledge History of Philosophy, Volume II: From Aristotle to Augustine*
(London: Routledge, 1999), 109-124 and 125-146, respectively.

[140]   Melanchthon, "Summary of Ethics," in Keen, 205.

[141]   Ibid., 205.

rational, and directed toward virtue.[142] Melanchthon's portrayal of ethics is also consistent with Aristotle's claim that politics is the highest science, and that man is by nature a social and political being.[143]

And yet Melanchthon is careful to correct Aristotle on a matter of central importance to the latter's ethics. For while Melanchthon seems to have agreed with Aristotle that the ultimate goal of the human is happiness, he did not believe with the Stagirite that reason reveals this to be the case. Rather, according to the praeceptor, "reason demonstrates that the performance of virtue is man's end."[144] While Melanchthon agreed that reason can lead us to moral virtue and that moral virtue is a great good, he rejected Aristotle's claim that reason can reveal the human's true end. And this is because, according to Melanchthon, "reason can affirm nothing of God's will."[145] It is accordingly only by the gospel that one could see that "man's end is to recognize and accept the mercy offered through Christ and in turn be grateful for that gift and obey God."[146]

If Melanchthon's moral philosophy is Aristotelian, it is thus a peculiar moral Aristotelianism. The extent to which Melanchthon adhered to and departed from Aristotele's ethical thought is furthermore hinted at in the definition of moral philosophy he gives in the praeceptor's *Summary of Ethics*, where he writes, "It is the complete awareness of the precepts and duties of all the virtues, which the reason understands agree with man's nature and which are necessary for the conduct of this civil life."[147]

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[142]   Crisp, 113-122.
[143]   Saunders, 125-129.
[144]   Melanchthon, "Summary of Ethics," in Keen, 205.
[145]   Ibid.
[146]   Ibid.
[147]   Ibid., 203.

The qualifying phrase which here made it possible in Melanchthon's mind to be both

Evangelical and (to an extent) Aristotelian is "which the reason understands." For, in

accord with Melanchthon's Pauline skepticism, while moral philosophy may be helpful

and even necessary for everyday life in society, it is still limited by human reason's

inability to penetrate truth beyond what is observable, useful and necessary for producing

external good.

According to Melanchthon the visible, useful, and necessary in human life

together is the scope of ethics. As such, it is concerned with establish rules of behavior.

Thus in the Colossians commentary the praeceptor had noted that this essential branch of

philosophy "deals with moral rules (*morum praecepta*), and produces laws for ruling

states."[148] In his *Summary of Ethics*, moreover, Melanchthon concluded that "Aristotle...

cautions us that this very ethics is really politics, or 'practics,' which principally rules

private manners and public responsibilities..."[149] And as Kusukawa describes

Melanchthon's view of the moral philosophy of the fifth book of the *Nichomachean*

Ethics, it "deals with the ideal of civic justice and with human excellence as consisting of

abiding by civil law."[150]

But, Melanchthon cautioned, moral philosophy is not merely an examination of

which laws are decreed by rulers. While the laws of magistrates merely state precepts,

moral philosophy "seeks the sources and the necessary reasons, set in nature herself, for

those precepts."[151] For Melanchthon moral philosophy derives an understanding of

human social nature from an examination of the laws by which society actually operates.

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[148]   Melanchthon in Parker, 49.
[149]   Melanchthon, "Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics," in Keen, 183.
[150]   Kusukawa, *Transformation,* 69.
[151]   Melanchthon, "Summary of Ethics," in Keen, 205.

Based in the examination of law, this philosophy is to be pursued for the sake of yielding

practical knowledge which can be applied to the further improvement of human life by

establishing a peaceful society. And so, the praeceptor wrote, while ethics is primarily

concerned with politics, "politics" is not be "understood just as the administration of

magistrates." For, the praeceptor writes:

> Here [Aristotle] truly speaks in Plato's sense, who basically calls politics a certain
> common teaching, which elsewhere is called by the general name '*praktika*,'
> namely that which creates honest men, good citizens, and leaders."[152]

In short, while Melanchthon came to recognize the need for elements of

Aristotle's ethics during this stage of his development, his Pauline anthropology strictly

determined which elements he would accept and which must be rejected. Melanchthon

read Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* in a way consistent with, or rather dependent upon,

the theological groundwork he had laid in his *Loci communes* of 1521. In sharp contrast

to scholastic Aristotelianism, Melanchthon's "Aristotelian" ethics were limited in scope

to the achievement of social order. Consistent with his Pauline limitation of the power of

human reason, Melanchthon shows no hint of a metaphysical grounding for his moral

philosophy.

While Melanchthon did not publish any works in natural philosophy during the

period from 1525-1531, he did write about this subject in the Colossians commentary.

But he wrote there that natural philosophy is just as powerless to reveal the will of God as

is moral philosophy. Any yet in spite of this inability Melanchthon here presented

natural philosophy as in some sense revealing the Word of God, or rather as revealing

some aspect of the Word of God. As previously for Melanchthon, natural philosophy is

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[152] Ibid.

to be regarded as the "knowledge of natural causes and effects."[153] But in the Colossians commentary for the first time Melanchthon acknowledged the value and reliability of natural philosophy as an auxiliary to theology. For as he explained, since natural causes and effects "are things arranged by God, it follows that philosophy is the law of God, which is the teaching of that divine order."[154]

As with his moral philosophy there is an unmistakably pragmatic character to natural philosophy as Melanchthon described it during this stage. The philosophy Melanchthon envisions here is not the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, but is among those goods "necessary in this corporal and civic life, such as food, drink, or such as public laws, etc."[155] Furthermore, there is a decidedly non-speculative, even empirical tone to his description of natural philosophy, in that it is concerned exclusively with that which could in the first case be known only through observation, from physiology to the motions of the heavenly bodies. There is no hint here of Platonic, Neoplatonic, or Aristotelian essentialist realism in Melanchthon's treatment of natural philosophy in his Colossians commentary.[156] According to Melanchthon, mathematicians, physicians, and lawyers, but not, it seems, metaphysicians, build upon the study of natural philosophy, with a special respect for Aristotle, "as if on foundations."[157]

It bears restating that the change in attitude Melanchthon displays toward philosophy during this stage indicates no withdrawal of any kind from his previous theological commitments. On the contrary, he was able to integrate—or rather to

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[153]   Melanchthon, "The Gospel and Philosophy," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 24.
[154]   Ibid.
[155]   Ibid.
[156]   For a contrary account, see Günter Frank, "Praktische Philosophie unter den Bedingungen reformatorischer Theologie: die Intellektlehre als Begründung der Willenfreiheit in Philipp Melanchthons Kommentaren zur praktischen Philosophie des Aristoteles Philosophie," in Günter Frank and Sebastian Lalla, eds., *Fragmenta Melanchthoniana,* Band 1(Heidelberg: Verlad Regionalkultur, 2003), 243-254.
[157]   Ibid., 25.

continue to subordinate—his understanding of philosophy under his conceptualization of the Word of God. For Melanchthon human reasoning could reveal only limited aspects of the Law of God; by no means could it reveal the Gospel. As Melanchthon put it, "Since, therefore, the Gospel teaches about God's will towards us, but philosophy teaches about matters subject to reason and does not assert anything about the will of God, it is sufficiently clear that the Gospel is not philosophy."[158] Moreover, according to Melanchthon, philosophy as also limited and determined by the epistemological pessimism contained within in St. Paul's anthropology.

Having subordinated philosophy to the Word of God in this way, the praeceptor was able to see the value of developing a more substantive account of philosophy during this stage of his career. One could then state his conception of the proper limits of philosophy by juxtaposing them to the aforementioned three errors to which philosophy is otherwise prone as follows: First, while it is true that from this point on for Melanchthon philosophy unfounded in faith is prone to err by denying divine providence, he regarded even philosophy founded in human reason as capable of establishing the need for and basis of *moral order*, including allegiance to civil authorities, among human beings. Second, while Melanchthon continued to deny that outwardly performing works prescribed by the law make one righteous before God, obedience to works commanded by natural law do have the benefit of making one righteous *before other humans*. What is more, inasmuch as this obedience conduces to the establishment of a just society, obeying civil law and living the moral life have practical benefit to the individual. Third, Melanchthon continued to believe that it is impossible for philosophy to help a person to become truly righteous before God, since this righteousness requires truly loving God,

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[158]   Ibid., 24.

and such love is beyond the power of fallen humanity, which can only love itself. Still, as he now stressed, humans *can* build up a strong civil society and gain the knowledge of nature necessary to do so purely on the basis of philosophy motivated by self-love.

E. 1531-1540: Melanchthon's Turn to the *Ars Mathematica*

Throughout the 1530's Melanchthon continued to produce philosophical as well as theological writings. In 1531 he published his final textbook on rhetoric, the *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*, "The Elements of Rhetoric in Two Books."[159] An oration on the importance of the study of languages followed in 1533.[160] He also during this period produced numerous commentaries on the works of classical authors.[161] His continuing interest in philosophical ethics is signaled by the publication of his *Philosophiae moralis epitomes libri duo* "Summary of Moral Philosophy in Two Books," in 1538.[162] This was, moreover, a time during which he was much occupied as an ambassador for and a mediator within the Evangelical reform movement and in which he worked on doctrinal material such as a revision of the *Loci communes theologici* in 1533,[163] an account of the Wittenberg Concord in 1536,[164] and *On the Power and Primacy of the Pope* in 1540.[165] During this stage Melanchthon was embroiled in theological controversy, especially over issues of the mode of Christ's presence in the

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[159]   CR 13:507-758.
[160]   CR 11:231-239; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations*, as "On the Study of Languges," 29-37.
[161]   Over half of CR 16 as well as a portion of volume 17 are filled with these works.
[162]   CR 16:21-164.
[163]   CR 21:229-559.
[164]   CR 3:75-81: "Concordia inter Doctores Wittebergenses et Doctores civitatem Imperii in Germania superiori. De praesentia corporis et sanguinis Christi in Coeni Dominica," Cf. Manshrek 229-248.
[165]   CR 23:721-725; cf. introduction above, 10, n. 30.

Holy Communion, the legitimacy of the papal office, the question of non-essentials of the faith, and of the role of the human will in conversion.[166]

Melanchthon was dedicated to the university, to teaching, and to the reform of both, and his publications during this stage reflect his ever expanding concern and competence. He had first focused his energies on establishing and publishing works in the *artes logicales* of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. Upon his arrival at Wittenberg he began to apply his philological skills to the Holy Scriptures, yielding his Evangelical theology. From the mid 1520's through the mid 1530's Melanchthon produced numerous works in ethics. His work in moral philosophy was based upon a clear distinction between Law and Gospel, a centerpiece of his Evangelical theology, and presented divinely implanted innate ideas as a foundation for moral philosophy, and moral philosophy as the foundation of civil law.

In the mid 1530's Melanchthon began to publish works on physics or natural philosophy, the remaining main division of philosophy as he divided it. Melanchthon would have regarded this part of philosophy as the central concern of the medical faculty of the university since, as Ralph Keen has pointed out, for Melanchthon natural philosophy consisted of astronomy and medicine. Keen also notes that for the praeceptor "astronomy is a pure science, a revelation of the cosmic ordering; medicine is the highest practical science."[167] Given the methodical progression in Melanchthon's philosophical

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[166]   For his work as a churchman during this stage see Stupperich 76-106; also Manshrek's accounts of Melanchthon's role in controversies over the presence of Christ in Holy Communion, 229-248; on the power of the Pope, 249-260; on the bigamy of Philip of Hesse, 261-276; on adiaphora, 278-292; and on synergism, 293-202.

[167]   Ralph Keen, "Naturwissenschaft unf Frömigkeit bei Melanchthon," in Frank and Rhein, 73-83, here74: "Es ist bedeutsam, daß die Naturwissenschaften für Melanchthon auf Astronomie und Medizin beschränkten." See also Wilhelm Dilthey, Dilthey, Wilhelm. "Melanchthon und die erste Ausbildung des natürlichen Systems in Deutschland, 1892/1893," in Marion Marquardt , ed., *Aufsätze zur Philosophie,* (Berlin: W. Dausien 1986) 226-326. For Melanchthon on natural philosophy and medicine, see in Frank

development up to this point in his career, it may not be surprising to find that his

publications on physics can be said to have proceeded in two rather distinct stages,

corresponding to these two parts. The first was a brief two-year stage from 1535-36,

during which he produced several orations in mathematics and astrology. Thus in 1535 he

published *Dignitas astrologiae,* "On the Dignity of Astrology,"[168] *De astronomia et*

geographia, "On Astronomy and Geography,"[169] and *De philosophia,* "On

Philosophy,"[170] the last of these presenting his conception of both physics and ethics as of

that date. Prefaces to texts written by others on geometry[171] and arithmetic[172] followed in

1536.

That Melanchthon had been interested in astrology from his earliest years has,

again, been well documented.[173] But in August of 1531 Melanchthon witnessed a comet,

and this event seems to have impressed him deeply. He corresponded with his close

friend Camerarius, as well as the astrologer Johann Carion about it.[174] In the wake of this

experience he published a preface to his friend Simon Grynaeus's *Liber Ioannis de Sacro*

Busto de Sphaera, "The Book of John on the Sacred Tomb, On the Sphere," late in

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and Rhein, eds., Ricardo Pozzo,"Die Etablierung des naturwissenschaftlichen Unterrichts unter dem Einfluss Melanchthons," 273-287; and Wolfgang Eckhardt,"Philipp Melanchthon und die Medizin," 183-202. See also Morton Fink-Jensen, "Medicine, Natural Philosophy, and the Influence of Melanchthon in Reformation Denmark and Norway," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* 80, no. 3 (2006): 439-464. For the medieval background, William Wallace, "Traditional Natural Philosophy," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 201-235; and for changes in the conception of natural philosophy during this period, Alfonso Ingeno, "The New Philosophy of Nature," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 236-263.

[168] CR 11: 261-6; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations,* as "The dignity of astrology," 120-125.
[169] CR 11: 292-8; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations,* as "On astronomy and geography*,"* 113-119.
[170] CR 11:278-84; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations,* as "On philosophy," 126-132.
[171] *Praefatio geometricam (i.e. in Iohannis Vogelini labellum de geometricis elementis),* CR 3:107-14; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations,* as "Preface to geometry," 98-105.
[172] *In arithmeticen praefatio Georgii Ioachimi Rhetici,* CR 11: 284-92; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations,* as "Preface to arithmetic," 90-97.
[173] See Kusukawa, *Transformation,*124-128; Chapter One above, 62-74.
[174] Ibid., 125.

1531,[175] several years before the flurry of activity in which he published his main work in mathematics and astronomy.

In this brief introduction Melanchthon seemed primarily concerned to provide a justification for studying astronomy. And the justification he provides indicates that his turn to natural philosophy by no means entailed a turning away from his theological commitments, for the first point he made in this regard was that astronomy is enjoined by holy writ. He noted that whoever doubts that the authority of scripture commends this study ought to consider the "most weighty testimony in Genesis where it is written 'Let them [i.e., the heavenly bodies] be for signs and seasons, and for days and years' [Genesis 1:14]."[176]

Second, Melanchthon stated that astronomy is not only commanded by God, but also provides proof for the belief that there is a God. "For it is not possible," he wrote, "for the human mind not to conclude that there is a mind that rules and governs everything, if it contemplates [the] established courses and laws of the great circuits and stars."[177] He accordingly associated the refusal to study astronomy with those "deliberate atheists" who had denied divine providence and had "undermined the immortality of our souls." Melanchthon wrote of such atheists:

> If they had reached this knowledge, they would have perceived the manifold traces of God in nature, and, having noticed them, they would have been forced to acknowledge that the universe is made and governed by a mind.[178]

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[175]   CR 2:530-7; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations,* as "On the sphere," 105-112.
[176]   Melanchthon, "On the sphere," 107.
[177]   Ibid.*,* 106.
[178]   Ibid., 106-107.

Far from constituting a rejection of the centrality of revelation then, the praeceptor claims

here that the study of astrology is a pious duty, both commanded by God in the revealed

scriptures and revealing the existence of God as creator.

Finally, Melanchthon suggests here that the study of the stars is closely related to

ethics. He mocks "certain Epircurean theologians" who erroneously claimed "that the

stars have no effect on the elements and on the bodies of animated beings and, besides,

no import in this lower nature."[179] Melanchthon asserted on the contrary that astrology

deals with one of the three kinds of actions, which, he claimed, befall humans. Two of

these are supernatural: those actions which "exist in man by divine providence, above

nature,"[180] and the "unnatural desires" whereby "minds are driven against nature by the

devil."[181] The third kind of action, neither supernatural nor unnatural in origin, are that

kind which "springs from man's nature, by emotion and by reason."[182] Such actions

included for Melanchthon those which arise as it were from one's internal spiritual nature

via "education, habit, custom, laws, and advice."[183]   But they also include those

inclinations "which follow the mixtures of qualities"[184] both within the human body itself

and outside the body.

Since, as Melanchthon here wrote, Aristotle is correct that "the higher things are

the cause of motion in the lower ones," it follows that "the motion of the heavens is also

the cause of motion in everything else."[185] And since that the stars do so affect human

behavior, he explained, knowledge of astronomy must conduce to understanding some of

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[179]   Ibid., 108.
[180]   Ibid., 110.
[181]   Ibid., 111.
[182]   Ibid., 109.
[183]   Ibid., 110.
[184]   Ibid., 109.
[185]   Ibid., 109.

the factors influencing human actions and inclinations, which are the primary concern of ethics. In so dealing with the effects of the movements of the celestial bodies on human behavior Melanchthon's preface to "On the sphere" attempted to present a justification for astrology as a means for understanding, in part, human thought and action on the basis of a general theory of physics. Melanchthon's work in astronomy thus paved the way for the praeceptor's turn toward psychology. But his concern to understand the movements of the stars also pointed to the necessity of developing a good understanding of mathematics. For as he wrote, "there is no access to the science of celestial things except through arithmetic and geometry."[186]

Several characteristics of Melanchthon's treatment of the mathematical arts during this period are consistent with what he had written about natural philosophy years earlier. First, Melanchthon primarily praised these arts for their manifest utility. He writes, for example, that mathematics "is necessary not only on the market and for metals and coining money, but in many other public and private computations."[187] In a similar vein he observes that no navigation can be undertaken without the art of astronomy. [188] Mathematics is particularly important for Melanchthon in that the "elements of numbers and measure" provide "access to the other parts of philosophy."[189] But since, as we've seen, these other parts of philosophy are in turn to be pursued for the benefits they provide to the human in society, the good ultimately derived from the mathematical arts is also utilitarian for Melanchthon.

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[186]   Melanchthon, "Preface to arithmetic," in Kusukawa, *Orations,* 92.
[187]   Ibid.
[188]   Melanchthon, "On astronomy and geography," in Kusukawa, *Orations,* 117.
[189]   Melanchthon, "Preface to arithmetic," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 92.

To be sure, Melanchthon acknowledged that it is not only the usefulness of these arts which delighted him. He writes that noble minds would indeed seek in these arts "a genuine science of universal nature," and that these would be drawn by love and admiration for mathematics, "this perfect science,"[190] as if this study were an end in itself. In a poetical flourish he even likens arithmetic and geometry to "wings of the human mind," through which one is carried up to heaven and by which one is able to see "the entire nature of things, discern the intervals and boundaries of the greatest bodies, see the fatal meetings of the stars, and then understand the causes of the greatest things that happen in the life of man."[191]

Maurer finds in this flourish evidence that Melanchthon's natural philosophy was grounded in Pythagorean Neoplatonism.[192] But the dearth of actual mathematical accomplishment on the praeceptor's part would seem to argue against such a conclusion. While Melanchthon praised these arts on account of their importance in establishing philosophy, his substantive mathematical work was quite a small portion of his total scholarly output. He published numerous voluminous works in dialectics, rhetoric, and ethics. The collection of his work in the second part of physics, the part which deals with natural causes and effects within and between terrestrial bodies, i.e., the physiological part, amounts to a modest portion of Volume 13 of the *Corpus Refomatorum*. His treatments of the *artes mathimaticae* are limited to a handful of laudatory orations commending the study rather than engaging in it. This is hardly what one would expect of a thoroughgoing Pythagorean.

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[190]   Ibid., 91.
[191]   Ibid., 93. Methuen, Charlotte. "Zur Bedeutung der Mathematik für die Theologie Philipp Melanchthons," in Frank and Rhein, 85-104.
[192]   See especially Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon* I:84-98, and *Melanchthon Studien* 20-25 and 39-67.

Third, Melanchthon's treatment of the mathematical arts confirms Kusukawa's thesis that the goal of Melanchthon's natural philosophy was to corroborate and support his ethics and theology.[193] Perhaps the most important justification for pursuing the mathematical arts, according to Melanchthon, is that they confirm the existence of God. As he writes in *On Astronomy and Geography*, the laws of the motions of the stars "are evidence that the world was not created by chance, but that it was created by an eternal mind, and that this creator cares about human nature."[194]

Melanchthon writes of this part of philosophy "None of this contradicts revelation."[195] He summarizes the benefits obtainable by "the science of the heavenly movements" by noting that it "is full of knowledge, is useful in life for the distinction of seasons and regions...is most agreeable, (and) strengthens in the mind the worthy notions of God."[196] But it should not be thought that he presented philosophy as even in principle capable of taking the place of the scriptures in revealing, conveying, or establishing the will of God or faith in God.[197] While he encourages his readers to look for confirmation of the existence of God in this study, he is just as keen to remind them to begin their studies with a firm grounding in the faith. And so he writes, "As it is most befitting in all

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[193]   "Melanchthon's natural philosophy was designed to demonstrate the basic principoes of moral philosophy, which in turn demonstrated civil obedience," Kusukawa, *Transformation*, 166.
[194]   Melanchthon, "On astronomy and geography," in Kusukawa, *Orations,* 118.
[195]   Ibid.
[196]   Ibid., 119. See also Raymond Angelo Belliotti, "Natural Philosophy and Ethics in Melanchthon," in Jill Kraye and Risto Saarinen, eds., *Moral Philosophy on the Threshhold of Modernity,* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2001), 235-254; and Kathleen Crowther-Heyck, "Wonderful Secrets of Nature: Natural Knowledge and Religious Piety in Reformation Germany," *Isis* 94 (2003): 253-273.
[197]   For this charge, see for example Engelland's introduction in Clyde L.Manschrek, tr. and ed., *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci communes 1555* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), xxx: "From this naturalistic approach of Melanchthon's theology it follows that the revelation of God as attested in the Holy Scriptures can have only supplementary significance."

things to start with God, so, in this consideration of studies, we should be reminded of the Architect when we contemplate heaven itself."[198]

Fourth, Melanchthon's treatment of astrology shows the same marked empirical character of his earlier description of natural science. "Indeed," he writes, "this art itself, like medicine and politics, first consists of certain observations, and then many interpretations proceed from these."[199] As he furthermore claimed, "It is demonstrated by continuous experience that remarkable conjunctions [of heavenly bodies] have remarkable effects."[200] Elsewhere Melanchthon finds that Copernicus has amassed sufficient data by observation as to make it necessary to correct Ptolemy.[201] And in the same work he expressed his admiration for Galen, the greatest of ancient medics, for recognizing that "it is sophistry to deny manifest experience."[202]

Such claims would seem to falsify Frank's contention that "Melanchthon thus parts with the experience-born epistemological realism of the Aristotelian tradition."[203] But perhaps Frank is in a sense half correct here. For while Melanchthon pursued observation for the sake of developing understanding of the world, it may have been just this desire which caused him to reject Aristotle's *Physics*. Kusukawa notes that in his correspondence of 1533-1534 Melanchthon reported that he was having some difficulty completing a commentary on the soul, and that he requested help for this project from several of his friends.[204] This correspondence reflects Melanchthon's frustration with Aristotle's *Physics* as well for his appreciation for Galen's. In one such letter he wrote:

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[198] Melanchthon, "On astronomy and geography, in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 115.
[199] Melanchthon, "On the dignity of astrology," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 121.
[200] Ibid., 122.
[201] Kusukawa, *Transformation,* 148.
[202] Ibid., 122.
[203] See chapter one above, 42.
[204] Kusukawa, *Transformation*, 83.

> You know that in the schools natural philosophy (*Physica*) which is called Aristotelian or tartaric or the like, is crammed with cold and stupid discussions. Therefore we have begun to write a natural philosophy (*Physicam*) and we have finished some part of the work…When we reach the nature of man and of the soul, I especially wish to include anatomy (ανατομιαν), natures of the parts, varieties of the temperaments, namely of mixtures, causes and species of human beings, none of which gets mentioned in common natural philosophy (*in vulgaribus Physicis)*…I desire a well-founded work (*iustitium opus)* to be constructed from the anatomical writings of Galen…[205]

Thus, while Melanchthon shows high admiration for the Stagirite's works in two of the three cardinal areas of philosophy (logic and ethics), Aristotle's natural philosophy was for the praeceptor an obstacle rather than a help to learning.[206]

F. 1540 and following: Natural Philosophy and the *Res Romana*

In the final stage of Melanchthon's philosophical development he began to publish works in the physiological part of physics. While acknowledging the false start he made at a commentary on the soul around 1533, this stage can be said to have begun in 1540, when he published the first edition of his *Commentarius de anima*[207] as well as an oration entitled *De vita Galeni, "On the Life of Galen,"*[208] upon whose work Melanchthon's psychology heavily relies.[209] An oration entitled *De physica*, "On

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[205]   Ibid., Letter to Leonard Fuchs, 30 April, 1534, CR 2:718 ff., quoted in Kusukawa, *Transformation*, 83-84.

[206]   Thus "the transformation of natural philosophy," which is the eponymous matter of Kusukawa's book. See Charles Lohr, "The Sixteenth-Century Transformation of the Aristotelian Natural Philosophy," in Kessler, Lohr, and Sparn, 89-100 for an account of other transformations.

[207]   Melanchthon, *Commentarius de anima. (*Argentorati, 1540; reprinted Whitefish Montana: Kessinger, 2010). The present chapter will quote from the final edition of this work, *Commentarius de anima* (Viterbergae, 1548).

[208]   Melanchthon, "On the ife of Galen" in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 204-211.

[209]   The fullest exposition of Melanchthon's psychology has been Rump, Johann Rump, *Melanchthons Psychologie, seiner Schrift de anima, in ihrer Abhängigkeit von Aristoteles und Galenos dargestellt,* (Ph.D. dissertation, Kiel: Marquordson, 1897). Much more recently very helpful shorter treatments have been provided by Jürgen Helm: "Die Galenrezeption in Philipp Melanchthons De anima (1540/1552)," in *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 31 (1996): 298–321; "Religion and Medicine," Helm and Winkelmann, 51-70; "Die spiritus in der medizinhistorischen Tradition und in Melanchthons 'Liber de anima,'" in Frank and

Natural Philosophy," appeared in 1542;[210] *De dignitate artis medicinae,* "On the Dignity of the Art of Medicine" was published in 1547.[211] Further publications in this area included *Initia doctrina physicae,* "Introduction to the Principles of Physics," in 1549,[212] *De studio doctrinae anatomicae,* "On the Study of the Doctrine of Anatomy" in 1550,[213] and a revised psychology, the *Liber de anima*, in 1552.[214]

By now it will come as no surprise to the reader that from 1540 on in addition to his work in theology and natural philosophy Melanchthon continued to produce works in the other parts of philosophy. Thus his *De dignitate legem,* "On the Laws," was completed in in 1543,[215] and *Ethicae doctrinae elementa et ennaratio libri quinti Ethicorum,* "First Principles of the Teachings of Ethics and Commentary on the Five Books of Ethics," was published in 1550.[216] Works in the language arts included his final accounts of both rhetoric and dialectics, the *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* 1540[217] and *Erotemata dialectices* of 1547.[218] He continued as well during this period to produce numerous commentaries on Greek and Roman tragedians, historians, and orators including Cicero, Demosthenes, and Homer.[219] But for the present purpose of understanding Melanchthon's general view of philosophy, perhaps his most significant

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Rhein, 219-238. Cf. Hartfelder, 238-242, and Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 88-95. See also Chapter Four below, 243-246.

[210]   CR 11: 555-560; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations*, as "On natural philosophy," 133-138.
[211]   CR 11:806-11; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations*, as *"*On the merit of the art of medicine," 169-174.
[212]   CR 13: 179-412.
[213]   CR 11:939-46; translated in Kusukawa, *Orations* as "On anatomy," 158-166.
[214]   CR 13: 88ff; the introduction to this work is translated in Kusumawa, *Orations,* 152-158.
[215]   CR 11: 630-636.
[216]   CR 16:165-276.
[217]   CR 13: 413-507.
[218]   CR 13: 507-752.
[219]   These works fill CR 16 and 17. See also the list of lectures he gave during this stage of his career in Hartfelder, 560-620; also Peter Mack, "Melanchthon's Commentaries on Latin Literature," in Günter Frank Kees Meerhoff, eds., *Melanchthon und Europa* Teilband 2: Westeuropa (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbeke, 2002), 29-52.

work was a letter he wrote to Pico della Mirandola in 1558,[220] just two years prior to the praeceptor's death, and two generations after the addressee's death in 1494. Since this letter appears as a sort of philosophical last testament on Melanchthon's part, it will be worthwhile to consider it before briefly reviewing his other work during the final stage of his philosophical development.

1. The *Reply of Philip Melanchthon in behalf of Ermolao Barbaro*

Melanchthon wrote his letter to Pico in behalf of Ermola Barbaro, a Venetian humanist best known as a translator of Aristotle's Ethics, Politics, and Rhetoric, with whom Pico had had a disagreement about the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy.[221] As Quirinius Breen explained, Pico in his letter "had wanted to divorce rhetoric from wisdom."[222] Melanchthon's reply to Pico constitutes a defense of the claim that true philosophy must be founded upon rhetorical eloquence. Melanchthon begins to argue his case by claiming that no human capacities are more important than wisdom and eloquence. For as he explains:

> These are the two peculiar and highest virtues of man, to see and behold good things with the mind, then to be able to explain and show them to others by means of speech…For clearly there is no use for wisdom unless we can communicate to others the things we have with wisdom deliberated and thought upon.[223]

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[220] CR 9:678-687, 687-703 for the letter from Pico and then for Melanchthon's reply, respectively. The latter is translated by Quirinius Breen as "Melanchthon's Reply to G. pico Della Mirandola" *Journal of the History of Ideas.,* Vol. 13, No. 3 (June 1952) 413-426. For an excellent examination of Melanchthon's letter and its significance for Melanchthon's thought see Breen, "The Subordination of Philosophy to Rhetoric in Melanchthon: A Study of his Reply to Pico della Mirandola," *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* Jahrgang 43 (1952) 1, 12-28. "The Correspondence of G. Pico della Mirandola and Ermolao Barbaro Concerning the Relation of Philosophy and Rhetoric," translated by Quirinus Breen, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 13 (1952), 392–412. Reprinted in: *Christianity and Humanism: Studies in the History of Ideas*, edited by Nelson Peter Ross (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 11–38. Reprinted in: *The Renaissance: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies. Volume IV: Anti-Humanism and Anti-Renaissance*, ed. Robert Black (London: Routledge, 2006), 164–84.

[221] Breen, "Melanchthon's Reply," 413.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid., 414.

Wisdom and eloquence are thus not most the valuable virtues because they are the rarest

of virtues, according to Melanchthon, nor simply because they conduce to finding truth,

but because they are the most practically useful qualities a human can possess.

Melanchthon here again reveals the pragmatic or utilitarian bent in his estimation of

philosophy. Philosophy is of no value for him if it is of no practical benefit, and if it is

not understood, it cannot be of use. Thus he agrees with those philosophers who say

"What is incomprehensible is false."[224]

To be sure, according to Melanchthon, one may mistake eloquence for mere

verbal ostentation. Pico had done just this, "For," as the praeceptor writes to him, "you

argue that eloquence is a forced sort of adornment, something like rouge on a face, to be

used only for pleasure, or even to deceive men."[225] But if Melanchthon's ever-present

concern for utility entailed that he could not regard philosophical knowledge as an

autotelic good, neither could he abide ornamentation in speech for its own sake, or

merely for the sake of pleasure. Rather, as he writes,

> [E]loquence is a peculiar power and virtue given to men for a certain utility…it is
> the faculty for proper and clear exposition of mental sense and thought…So the
> object of the rhetorician, or of eloquence (if you prefer that word), is to paint, as it
> were, and to represent the mind's thoughts themselves in appropriate and clear
> language…""[226]

Melanchthon is thus concerned to highlight the practical benefit of eloquence even as he

clarifies his conception of it.

And so, contrary to Pico, eloquence is necessary for philosophy, according to

Melanchthon, "For men cannot be taught about great subjects unless they are presented in

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[224]   Ibid., 417.
[225]   Ibid., 415.
[226]   Ibid., 416.

pure speech,and by some method and system of exposition, as well as other principles taught in the arts."[227] And since Rhetoric is the art of stating oneself clearly, rhetoric is a prerequisite for philosophy as well as for theology, according to Melanchthon. For as he claims:

> Without eloquence and without those arts which are comprised in eloquence [i.e., dialectic and rhetoric] it is in no wise possible to search out and illustrate the other disciplines, the subject matter of physics, ethics, and theology.[228]

And so while theology is not subordinated to either of the other parts of philosophy, physics or ethics, theology is in a sense dependent upon rhetoric, or rather upon good and effective use of language, of which rhetoric is the art.

By way of contrast, Melanchthon pointed out that the failure to be able to express themselves clearly is just what made the scholastics Barbaric, "For since they did not understand good discourse and did not put the arts to any use, they failed in judgment and brought forth many absurd opinions by which they have completely oppressed almost the whole philosophy of Aristotle."[229] And if the scholastics represented the worst deformation of philosophy in that they sought for knowledge apart from eloquence, another sort of person represented for Melanchthon the highest expression of the true lover of wisdom. As he explains:

> We indeed call that man an orator who teaches men accurately, clearly, and with a certain dignity concerning good and necessary things; whom you would call a philosopher I do not yet understand satisfactorily. As a matter of fact I call a philosopher one who when he has learned and knows things good and useful for mankind, takes a theory (doctrina) out of academic obscurity and makes it practically useful in public affairs, and instructs men about natural phenomena, or religions, or about government.[230]

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227   Ibid., 420.
228   Ibid., 418.
229   Ibid., 424.
230   Ibid., 417-418.

In fact, according to Melanchthon, history's greatest philosophers were among the most eloquent orators. He thus praises here, as he had in 1518, figures such as Homer, Virgil, Demosthenes, Cicero, Herodotus and Livy for their ability to "transfer philosophy aptly to use and to common life."[231]

Breen claimed that Melanchthon had desired to write a response to the Letter of Pico to Barbaro since the praeceptor wrote his *Encomium eloquentia* in 1523.[232] But one can see that the conception of philosophy Melanchthon presents in his letter to Pico is quite consistent with the view of philosophy he presented all the way back to his inaugural lecture of 1518. Both that lecture and his letter to Pico display a utilitarian criterion for the value of eloquence for philosophy, a high valuation of philosophy for the sake of utility, an identification of scholasticism with barbarism on account of its inattention to eloquence, the claim that due to their lack of eloquence the scholastics could neither understand the philosophy of Aristotle nor produce true philosophy themselves, and the claim that the scholastics thereby wind up harming both philosophy and theology. In that his letter to Pico appeared a mere two years before his death, and in that its focus is on the proper role of and method of philosophy within the sphere of human learning, this document could be considered Melanchthon's last testament both on philosophy and on the importance of the language arts for them.

2. Melanchthon's Psychological Works

If Melanchthon's letter to Pico literally presents his *final* word on philosophy, Frank claims that the praeceptor's psychological works contain his *definitive* word on the

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[231] Ibid., 423.
[232] Ibid., 413, n. 2

subject.[233] According to Frank, the centerpiece of Melanchthon's philosophy is the

latter's conception of innate ideas. Furthermore, according to Frank, the praeceptor

believed both that one could have intimate knowledge of the soul through introspection

and that through knowledge of the soul one could gain intimate knowledge of God. As

Frank writes:

> The fact that the doctrine of the soul is the center of [Melanchthon's] anthropology has several theological implications…Like most of the Latin writers of the Patristic age and the Scholastics, Melanchthon did in fact teach that the human person is the image of God in an abiding, structural sense—and this means that he does not at all agree with Luther that the consequences of the fall were so far reaching that a philosophical knowledge of God was impossible. It is obvious that Melanchthon's anthropology takes an unambiguously optimistic view of the human ability to acquire knowledge, not only achieving knowledge of the existence of God, but penetrating to the predicates of God's being, which are already contained in the Platonic concept of God.[234]

What is more, according to Frank, this knowledge gained through introspection was the

sole foundation of all knowledge for Melanchthon, and in trying to establish introspection

as the sole basis of knowledge the praeceptor's philosophy was fundamentally Platonic.

Thus, as pointed out before, Frank regards Melanchthon's philosophy as a sort of anti-

empiricist theo-rationalism.[235]

The difficulty with such claims should by now be clear. Such a view of

philosophy on the part of the praeceptor would be quite at odds with the pragmatic and

rhetorically based approach which he had on display from his inaugural lecture through

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[233]   See Günter Frank, "The Reason of Acting: Melanchthon's Concept of Practical Philosophy and the Question of the Unity and Consistency of His Philosophy," in Jill Kraye and Risto Saarinen, eds., *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005) 217-234, esp. 219 ff.; also by Frank, "Die menschliche Seele in philosophischer und theologischer Perspektive—Aristotles zwischen Luther und Melanchthon," in Günter Frank, ed., *Fragmenta Melanchthoniana: Humanismus und Europäische Identität* Band 4, (Ubstadt-Weiher: Verlag Regionalkultur, 2009), 153-176.

[234]   Günter Frank, "Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560): Reformer and Philosopher," in Paul Richard Blum, ed., *Philosophers of the Renaissance* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 148-162, here 158, citing CR 21:60.

[235]   See again Chapter One, 62-68.

his letter to Pico. And while a complete and fulsome review of *the Commentarius de anima* and the *Liber de anima* would be required in order to come to a firm conclusion about the accuracy of Frank's claims, even the following somewhat superficial examination of these works reveals, contrary to Frank, a real consistency between Melanchthon's approach to philosophy within his psychology and the rhetorically-based and pragmatic view of philosophy the praeceptor presented from his letter inaugural lecture through his letter to Pico.

To begin with, the praeceptor justified his psychological work by claiming that understanding the soul would be of great utility. Melanchthon began his dedicatory letter to the *Commentarius De anima* by noting that there are those who would level a dual charge against such works in natural philosophy, to wit, "that these textbooks contain wholly trifling and trivial knowledge, and that they barely represent a shadow of these greatest things."[236] Melanchthon denies the first of these charges, stating that on the contrary that "this knowledge [of natural philosophy] is necessary for life." As he explains,

> It is profitable to know the disposition of bodies, the causes of diseases and some remedies. It is useful to comprehend the size of the earth in one's mind, and to have a sequence of the seasons, so that we grasp the distance of places from each other and the sequence of time…"[237]

In writing these works, Melanchthon says that he wishes "to bestow utmost care on this matter of the greatest usefulness for life."[238] This utilitarian valuation of psychology is echoed in the *Liber de anima*, where he writes that the benefits of studying the soul

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[236]   Melanchthon, "Preface to the *Commentary on the Soul* (1540)," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 144-151, here 144.

[237]   Ibid.

[238]   Ibid., 145; for other references to the usefulness of psychology in the same preface, see 150, 151, 153.

are mentioned frequently in this book, although no one has sufficient eloquence to set forth the greatness of the benefits provided by this knowledge of the soul, which I do not say is a perfect knowledge of the soul, but a beginning which beholds it from afar."[239]

Second, Melanchthon does not believe, as Frank suggests, that one may grasp the nature of the soul—let alone anything like the nature of God—via introspection. While Melanchthon denies the charge that psychology is a trifling matter, he does *not* deny that as a philosophical work his *Commentarius de anima* "barely represents a shadow" of the truth about the soul. Likewise, as he writes in the introductory letter to the *Liber de anima*, "I acknowledge by all means that this knowledge is very thin and within narrow limits, and that it shows only a shadow of divine wisdom from afar."[240] Melanchthon thus finds himself philosophizing not so much in the metaphysical vein of Aristotle or Plato here, but rather with the skepticism of Plato's teacher, for as the praeceptor writes, "Socrates used to say that men know either nothing or little. I therefore have to admit that the subject that I relate [i.e., knowledge about the soul] is extremely uncertain."[241] Melanchthon thus expects that his psychology will only to be able to "say commonplace things, which can be grasped without writings: namely, how many senses there are, which are the organs, which are the objects, and where the seats of the organs are."[242]

While knowledge of the soul itself must remain uncertain for the philosopher, according to Melanchthon, the reason for our inability to know the soul is clear. It is not that the human being is by nature incapable of gaining knowledge about such lofty matters. Indeed, he explicitly claims that humanity's "first ancestors" (i.e., Adam and

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[239] Melanchthon, "Preface to the *Book on the Soul* (1553)," in Kusukawa, *Orations,* 152-157, here 154.

[240] Ibid., 153.

[241] Melanchthon, "Preface to the *Commentary*," 144.

[242] Ibid., 145.

Eve) "had seen the earlier light and harmony of nature and were endowed with the

greatest excellence of intellect," so that if the human soul were still like theirs, "it would

examine its nature by its own sharpness of vision."[243] What is more, Melanchthon

believes that the blessed will be able to know much more not only of the soul but of God

in the next life, where

> God will be all for all, and will impart His wisdom and justice to us, where we
> shall see Him in person, and in the Son, the Word (logoi), we shall behold not
> only the ideas and causes of the workings of the world, but also the wonderful
> joining of divine and human nature, and the plan for the restoration of mankind.
> there we shall behold the maker and contemplate the causes of things, and we
> shall have complete insight into nature.[244]

In our current state, however, sin has compromised the powers of the soul, according to

Melanchthon. After the Fall the soul is "bespattered with mud" and it lies "buried in

hideaous darkness,"[245] so that certain knowledge of the soul and of the world is not

presently attainable.

But while Melanchthon affirms with those who denigrate the pursuit of

psychology that our darkened intellects can achieve only a "shadow" of the truth, he also

notes that God desires us to pursue such philosophical studies. "And we advance as far

as we can," he thus writes, "for God, too, has commanded us to contemplate His work,

and he assists us in our study, for he has repeatedly disclosed many things that are useful

for life."[246] And by leading students to acknowledge *a posteriori* that such a miraculous

creation must have a divine creator, "This knowledge of the soul leads to piety."[247] Not

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[243]   Ibid., 146.
[244]   Melanchthon, "Preface to the *Book of the Soul*," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 153.
[245]   Melanchthon, "Preface to the *Commentary*," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 146.
[246]   Ibid., 144.
[247]   Ibid., 146.

only then is the study of psychology, limited though it is, useful; it is for Melanchthon a pious duty, just as astrology had been.

From all of this it is clear that Melanchthon's study of the soul is limited by claims about human nature he first wrote of in 1519 in pursuit of his theological degree. His seemingly unshakable confidence that the scriptures reveal truth about God and humanity, while philosophy can only provide more or less useful information, is consistent with the view of philosophy and theology he had in his early days at Wittenberg. His scriptural anthropology thus continued to limit the power of human reasoning as he conceives of it. And while in 1540 and following the praeceptor encouraged the study of philosophy more than he had in the early 1520's due to his increased estimation of the usefulness of even uncertain knowledge for life, he continued to remind the reader of both the uncertainty of the product of human reasoning and of the reliability of scripture. "For," as he wrote in the *Commentarius de anima*,

> I have expounded some passages [of scripture] against many subjects which are beyond human comprehension, and often suggests to moderate minds that, despite the great darkness of the human mind, they should desire to be ruled by heavenly doctrine and should embrace with all their heart the saying: 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet' [Psalm 119:105]]"[248]

The "moderate mind" of Melanchthon is characterized, it seems, both by theological dogmatism and by a level of philosophical skepticism.

But by what method shall one attain the murky but useful knowledge philosophy can provide of the soul? Consistent with his approach to the study of the stars[249] as well as the claims of Cunningham and Kusukawa,[250] Melanchthon notes that one must derive

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[248]   Ibid., 148.
[249]   See above, 143.
[250]   See Chapter One above, 68-74.

an understanding of it on the basis of experience of and observation of the movements of the living human. As he writes in the *Commentarius de anima*:

> For even though the substance of the soul is not able to be clear enough, its actions provide the way to knowledge about it. Thus, when something is said about (the soul's) actions, its potencies or powers are discerned and organs are described, through which at the same time the *res* for the whole body and the nature of humanity is clearly explicated.[251]

In the *Liber de anima* Melanchthon also underlines the importance of such empirical observations for psychology noting, "The part (of this work) which lists organs and qualities, alterations, acts, and injuries of organs is less obscure, and contains the greatest teachings of physics."[252]

Contrary then to Frank and Maurer, who agree that Melanchthon rejected Aristotle's empiricism in favor of Platonic rationalism, Melanchthon at least claimed to rely quite heavily on empirical data in his psychology. And a superificial view of Melanchthon's psychological works corroborates his claim. In fact, the greatest part— around eighty percent—of the text of his psychological works is taken up in the description of the body's parts and actions.[253] What is more, it seems reasonable to suppose prior to a fuller examination of these works that Melanchthon's reliance upon empirical data became more marked over time. Given that Melanchthon appears to have written his later psychology, the *Liber de anima*, in order to include insights gained from

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[251]   Melanchthon, *Commentarius de anima 1548*, 1 recto: "Esti enim substancia Animae non satis perspici potest, tamen uiam ad eius agnitionem monstrant actiones. Itaque, cum actionibus dicendum erit, potenciae seu uires discernentur, describentur organa, qua in re simul tota corporis, ac praecipue humani, natura explicanda est."

[252]   CR 13:5: "Et pars illa qaue recitat organa et qualitates, alterationes, effectiones, et lesiones organorum, minus est obscura, et amplissimam doctrinam physicam continent."

[253]   That is, 120 out of 148 pages of the *Commentarius de anima* (Viterbergae, 1548), and 142 out of 178 columns (i.e., columns 142-177) in the *Liber de anima* as printed in CR 13 are dedicated to a description of human anatomy and physiology.

AndreasVesalius,[254] for whom direct observation of the body through anatomical

dissection had greater authority than the writings of Galen or any other medic,[255] it would

be surprising to find that Melanchthon's later psychology was *less* dependent upon the

role of empirical evidence than his earlier psychology was.

In fact, one well known feature of Melanchthon's psychology, a feature which has

been a source of great curiosity, points to the very important role of empirical observation

within his psychological works. For central to both the *Commentarius de anima* and the

Liber de anima is the claim that Aristotle gave a true definition of soul, but that the

Stagirite did not mean to claim that the soul is an *entelechy*—a final cause or

metaphysical perfection of the human. Rather, according to Melanchthon, Aristotle

meant to state that soul is *endelechy,* that is, the movement of the body.[256] As

Melanchthon explained, in the *De anima* Aristotle meant to give a most general definition

of the soul, a definition applicable to plants and animals as well as to humans.[257]

Accordingly, Melanchthon writes, for Aristotle

> Soul is *Endelechia*, that is, the agitation or the life itself of the physical body. This
> is said to differentiate it from artificial works, as of a statue, which do not arise
> from its own nature… If you ask, 'what is the soul of a beast, he responds, 'It is
> the very agitation itself, by which the beast lives, or the life itself. [258]

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[254]   On this point see Wolfgang Eckhart, "Philipp Melanchthon und die Medizin," in Frank and Rhein, 183-202, esp. 192-198; Hans-Theodore Koch, "Melanchthon und die Vesal-Rezeption in Wittenberg," in Frank and Rhein, 203-218, esp. 210-218; and Cunningham, "Religion and Medicine," 58.
[255]   See Chapter 4 below for a discussion of the importance of Galen in Melanchthon's philosophy; Rump passim; Hartfelder 240-246.
[256]   See the discussion of the editors in CR 13:1-4; Günter Frank, "Philipp Melanchthons 'Liber de anima' und die Etablierung der frühneuzeitlichen Anthropologie," in Beyer and Wartenberg, 313-326, esp. 321, Kusukawa, *Transformation, 108.*
[257]   Melanchthon, *Commentarius* 1548, 5 verso: "Primum hoc constituendum est, eam definitionem conuenire non tantum hominis animae, seu rationali animae, sed etiam Brutorum & plantariae animabus."
[258]   Ibid., 5 verso-6 recto: "Anima est Endelechia, id est, agitatio, seu uita ipsa corporis physici, id dicitur ad differentiam artificialium operum, ut statuarum, quae non agitantur sua natura. Deinde addit organici, nam lapides non viuunt, quia vitae organa, hoc est, instrumenta eis desunt...Si quaeras quid est anima Bouis, respondet, est illa ipsa agitatio, qua Bos uiuit, seu ipsa uita. "

To say that the soul is enedlechy, Melanchthon further explains, is to say that it is the

continuous motion of a living organism. And so in response to the question "But what is

it [i.e., soul] like?" Melanchthon responds, "An agitation, by which a living thing is

such."[259]

In making such a claim, Melanchthon reveals the extent of his own empiricism,

for the soul as *endelechy* is known through observation of the movements of the parts of

the body.   But Melanchthon's claim that Aristotle meant to claim that the soul is an

endelechy also reveals the strangeness of the relation of the praeceptor's psychology to

the Stagirite's. For while Melanchthon claimed to follow Aristotle as closely as possible,

pleading "I ask to be granted forgiveness if now and then I depart from an Aristotelian

phrase,"[260] his psychology profoundly diverges from the Stagirite's, if only in rejecting

the soul as final cause of the living being. Here we can see what a mistake it is to

consider Melanchthon a straightforward Aristotelian, or to regard Melanchthon's

psychological works as commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima*.[261] Rather, consistent

with Cunningham, the *Commentarius de anima* and the *Liber de anima* appear to be

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[259]   Ibid., 7 recto: "Qualem uero? Agitationem, qua uiuens est tale."

[260]   Melanchthon, "Preface to the *Commentary on the Soul*," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 148.

[261]   Cf. for example Kusukawa's claim of the *Commentarius*: "It was a Christian and indeed a Lutheran reading of Aristotle's *De anima*," *Transformation*, 99. For other transformations of Aristotelian psychology in the Renaissance, see Herman Schüling, *Bibliographie der Psychologischen Litertur des 16. Jahrhunderts.* Studien und Materialen zur Geschichte der Philosophie, Band 14, ed. by Heinz Heimsoeth, Dieter Henrich, and Giorgio Tonelli (Heldesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967). Secondary accounts include Katherine Park, and Eckhard Kessler, "The Concept of Psychology," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 455-463; Vivian Nutton, "The Anatomy of the Soul in Early Renaissance Medicine," in *The Human Embryo: Aristotle and the Arabic and European Traditions,* edited by G. R. Dunstan (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 43-59; and Sascha Salatowski, *De Anima: Die Rezeption der aristotelischen Psychologie im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert,* Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie 43 (Amsterdam: B. R. Gruner, 2006). For subsequent developments, see the various essays in George Eckhardt, George and Wolfgang Holzapfel, "Psychologisches Denkem im Spannungfeld zwischen Humanismus, Reformation und empirischer Orientierung: Philipp Melanchthon und seiner Schüller," in Georg Eckhardt, ed., *Psychologie vor Ort: ein Rückblick auf vier Jahrhunderte* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2003).

commentaries on the soul itself, and the soul as *endelechy* is known, according to Melanchthon, largely through empirical observation of the body.

Then too, it must be noted that Melanchthon did not regard *all* human soul as *endelechy*. Another obvious and striking feature of both of his psychological works is Melanchthon's insistence within them that human soul is somehow at least two. For in these works soul as *endelechy*, as the movement of the body is corporeal. But according to Melanchthon humans also posses rational soul, which is immaterial[262] But as if to forestall any claim like Frank's that Melanchthon's treatment of rational soul is fundamentally Platonic, Melanchthon is keen to state that neither Plato nor any other philosopher could reveal any truth about this immaterial rational soul. The source for such knowledge, according to Melanchthon, is rather indicated by the title of the locus in which rational soul first appears in the *Commentarius*: "What therefore can the pious say about the soul?" And in answering this question, Melanchthon becomes clear just how limited human reasoning is in providing an understanding of the soul, and how fundamental revelation is. For as he writes:

> The rational soul is an intelligent spirit, which is another part of the human substance, nor is it extinguished when it departs from the body, but is immortal. This definition does not have a rationale from physics, but is taken up from sacred literature, for in Genesis it is said, he breathed into his face the breath of life. And in the Gospel, bodies are able to pass away, the soul however is not able to pass away. Thus, "Today you will be with me in paradise."[263]

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[262]   Melanchthon, *Commentarius de anima*, 128 recto-verso: "De Potentia Rationali seu de Mente: Hactenus tractatae sunt organicae potentiae, id est, de iis animae viribus diximus, quae non possunt suas actiones exercere, nisi per organa. Nunc de potentia rationali dicendum est, quae dicitur inorganica, quia etsi sensus interiores ei seruiunt, et objecta offereunt, tamen suam quandam habet actionem, sicut etiam discedens anima a corpore sine organis intelligit & habet suos motus.
    Dividitur autem haec potentia in duas, intellectus & voluntatem. Retineo enim usitatas appelationes & distributiones, etsi alii aliter distribuunt."

[263]   Ibid., 11 recto : "Anima rationalis est spiritus intelligens, qui est altera pars substantiae hominis, nec extinguitur cum a corpore disceßit, sed immortalis est. Haec definition non habet Physica rationes, sed sumpta est ex Sacris literis, Nam in Genesi dicitur, Inspirauit in faciem eius spiraculum uitae. Et in

Thus, where Melanchthon cannot rely upon observation of the body to reveal the nature of the soul, he must appeal not to bare reason, nor to introspection, but to inspection of the scriptures.

G. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there are at least two important aspects in which Melanchthon's conception of philosophy were consistent throughout his career. First he always divided philosophy into logic, physics, and ethics. This division represents in itself an important development away from the philosophy of the scholastics. As Frank has noted, Melanchthon never commented upon the twelve books of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, nor did he ever write any works of his own on this topic.[264]

Second, contrary to the claims of Maurer that Melanchthon was torn throughout his career between humanism and Evangelical theology or from Evangelical theology to philosophy, Melanchthon was consistently humanistic throughout his career in that he treated the language arts of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric as the foundation, both for the other two parts of philosophy, and for theology. From 1518 through to the end of his life he conceived of eloquence, of which rhetoric is the art, as providing the means properly to express one's own ideas. Melanchthon also consistently claimed that the scholastics' ignorance of rhetoric and their lack of eloquence were a primary cause of their inability to understand Aristotle. From his inaugural lecture at Wittenberg through the letter to Pico just a few years before his death, Melanchthon thus claimed that

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Euangelio, Corpus possunt occidere, animam autem non possunt occidere. Item, Hodie mecum eris in paradiso."
[264]   Frank, *Neoplatonism,* 6.

eloquence, the capacity for expressing oneself clearly and well, is a prerequisite for proceeding to study either of philosophy's other two branches.

Key to overturning Maurer's thesis about the lack of unity in Melanchthon's thought over time is the recognition that from the beginning of his career Melanchthon regarded eloquence and the study of rhetoric as requirements for properly understanding the Holy Scriptures, and thus as requirements for anyone who would become a theologian. As if to demonstrate this claim, upon coming to Wittenberg in 1518, the young humanist applied his own rhetorically developed eloquence to the study of the scriptures in close association with Luther. The yield was Melanchthon's Evangelical theology, clearly expressed in both his *Baccalaureus Biblicus* in 1519 and in his *Loci communes* of 1521. Far from being in conflict with his theology then, Melanchthon's early humanism provided him with the very tools through which his Evangelical theology was developed.

Melanchthon understood the Gospel as the revelation of God's gift of righteousness before God offered freely to humanity through faith in Christ. Throughout his career he maintained an understanding both about what the Gospel is, and that the Gospel can only be found in the Holy Scriptures. To discover God's good will in any other way than through the scriptures, Melanchthon consistently stated, is beyond human ability. And so while according to the praeceptor rhetoric and logic provide the means for gaining this knowledge from scriptures, the truth which the scriptures contain about God's will for humanity could only be gained through the scriptures.

Knowledge of the Gospel is the most important thing humans can posses, according to Melanchthon. But he also found in Paul's writing claims about human

nature, claims not available to the ancient philosophers, which would further determine the character of the praeceptor's philosophy. First and foremost of these is the assertion that humans cannot love God by their natural powers. Second is the claim that sin has darkened human understanding so that knowledge of God and of the world remains uncertain and that in our present fallen state. But third, according to Melanchthon, Paul taught that human beings have divinely given innate ideas, and that through these humans have the ability to derive much useful, if fallible, understanding of the nature of the world, the needs of human society, and the existence and attributes of God.

In his early days at Wittenberg, Melanchthon's writings about philosophy are either addressed to or react against medieval scholasticism, and in these writings the praeceptor insisted that philosophy is both less important and less reliable than the scholastics supposed. For his first few years at Wittenberg, having found and having recognized the ultimate importance of the Gospel, Melanchthon seemed to see little need for or use for philosophy, at times almost sounding as if he believed that philosophy itself is scarcely worthwhile at all. But while his early period in Wittenberg represents the low water mark of his estimation of the *value* of philosophy, there is no sign even during this period that he ever rejected the *legitimacy* of the pursuit of philosophy as properly understood from within his humanistic, Evangelical framework. That is, even in the early 1520's Melanchthon recognized the legitimate need of natural philosophy for the sailor, for the farmer, and for the medic, but he did not see it as particularly valuable at this time for the Christian *qua* Christian.

Through to the end of his career Melanchthon never claimed more power on the part of the human mind nor more reliability for philosophy than he had during these early

Wittenberg days. Beginning in the mid 1520's, however, Melanchthon did come to have an increasing regard for philosophy's usefulness for all Christians, for Christian theology, and for Christian society. Kusukawa seems correct that within a decade of his conversion to Evangelical faith, social unrest in Wittenberg led him to see the need for an ethics consistent with his Evangelical theology and which could serve as a foundation for society. The goal of the moral philosophy Melanchthon envisioned and developed was to find and establish laws which, through their outward observance, would conduce to establishing public peace and order. That is, the praeceptor sought and developed an account of ethics consistent with the account of natural law he as conceived of it as early as the *Loci communes* of 1521. In contrast to the divine law which can only be obeyed when the human truly loves God (an impossibility for humans after the Fall), ethics and obedience to natural law, according to Melanchthon, merely require outwardly obeying rules which promote peace and common good.

From the beginning of his career Melanchthon believed that humanistic eloquence made true theology possible by providing tools for interpreting the scriptures. By the middle of the 1520s he came to believe that moral philosophy could provide the basis for the external conditions within which the Evangelical church and individuals within society could thrive. Beginning in the 1530's he came to recognize as well that natural philosophy pursued according to the principles and methods he had thus far developed could also serve Church, society, and individuals. Thus, while even in the 1520's Melanchthon had acknowledged the utilitarian value of understanding the natural world for the sake of farming, navigation, applying medical cures, and so forth, ten years later

he had come to recognize the importance of developing a fuller account of natural philosophy for the sake of society and Church.

Melanchthon had shown interest in topics related to philosophical anthropology throughout his career. From his inaugural lecture on he saw the human as a social being, and his humanism was oriented toward helping establish a society in which human beings could flourish. The theology he developed in his earliest years at Wittenberg contained anthropological claims about the limits of the powers of human intellect and will. His ethics subsequently called for an account of human nature which could help explain how human beings could be expected to behave in different circumstances. The psychology he sought to develop beginning in 1533 was both based in pious duty and had the goal of leading the student to acknowledge that the creator of human beings must be glorified. It sought to study the entire human being—body, movements of the body, intellect, and will—by reasoning from observations of the activities of human beings, while also appealing to what he considered innate ideas of speculative thought.

The young Evangelical of the 1520's may never have anticipated that he would devote so much attention to the development of moral and natural philosophy later in his career. But then, perhaps the young humanist of 1518 could not have anticipated dedicating his entire career to the reform of theology and Church. That Melanchthon in fact wound up dedicating his career to the cause of Evangelical reform in no way suggests that he ever rejected his early humanism, nor does his eventually developing moral and natural philosophy suggest he ever abandoned his Evangelical principles. On the contrary, Melanchthon's humanism made his Evangelicalism possible, he developed

ethics for the sake of establishing a society in which the evangelical church could grow, and he pursued natural philosophy for the sake of encouraging ethics and piety.

Melanchthon never wavered from his fundamental commitment to the language arts. Melanchthon believed that each of the major fields of learning—theology, ethics, and physics—require the highest degree of eloquence which only rhetoric could teach. All of this suggests strong support for the thesis shared by Wiedenhofer, Wengert, Breen, and Schneider that rhetoric was basic to all of Melanchthon's philosophy. At the same time, it presents a challenge to Frank's thesis that Melanchthon was a sort of theo-rationalist. Respect for the great volume of Frank's research requires a thorough search through Melanchthon's works in natural philosophy in order to determine whether this claim that all of Melanchthon's philosophy was rhetorically based can be maintained. While a more thorough examination of Melanchthon's psychology and physics is thus called for, the rather brief examination of Melanchthon's psychological works in the present chapter found nothing in them indicating anything other than the rhetorical and faith-based approach one sees through the praeceptor's other writings.

In the absence of the in-depth study of Melanchthon's natural philosophy required to test Frank's thesis, it thus seems right to conclude for now that Melanchthon's thought is unified by a conception of philosophy as subordinated to rhetoric and following a rhetorical method. If one wishes to understand Melanchthon as a philosopher then, it will be necessary to examine his account of the language arts, in particular dialectics and rhetoric, with an eye on the way these could enable, direct, or limit his philosophical work. Chapter three will be dedicated to this task.

CHAPTER 3:
MELANCHTHON'S RHETORIC AND DIALECTICS

A. Introduction

Through the examination of Melanchthon's philosophical development in Chapter Two, I concluded that the part of philosophy which the praeceptor treated of first in his career, the "logical part" containing of rhetoric and dialectic, provided the foundation for the development of his theology and philosophy. In this chapter I will examine this foundation in the expectation that an understanding of Melanchthon's rhetoric and dialectical method will be a necessary prelude to forming an account of his general understanding of philosophy as well as of his method in philosophy.

This chapter will proceed in two main parts. In the first section I will to uncover the way that rhetoric provided the framework within which Melanchthon believed natural and moral philosophy should be studied. In order to do this I will provide a review of the last textbook Melanchthon completed on rhetoric, the *Rhetorices libri duo* of 1531, as revised in 1542.[1] In the second section I'll examine the last of his major works on dialectics, the *Erotemata dialectices*, completed in 1547.[2] The goal of this part will be to provide a basic understanding of the dialectical method through which Melanchthon pursued questions in natural and moral philosophy. I'll conclude with a few summary observations.

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[1]   CR 13:417-506
[2]   CR 13: 513-752.

B. Rhetoric

Melanchthon produced handbooks in rhetoric three times during his career.[3] The first of these was his *De rhetorica libri tres*, "Three Books on Rhetoric," in 1519.[4] The *Institutiones rhetoricae* "Instruction in Rhetoric," followed in 1521,[5] and he completed his final work on the subject, the *Elementum rhetorices libri duo*, "Two Book of the Elements of Rhetoric," in 1531.[6] Melanchthon's rhetorical works have received considerable attention in recent years. In addition to the venerable and useful matter presented in Hartfelder, more recent work by Timothy Wengert, Nicole Kuropka, John Schneider, Knape, Sister Mary Jane Lafontaine, and Lawrence Green have all contributed significantly to our understanding of these works.[7]

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[3] Helpful recent general introductions to rhetorical theory and history include George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Thomas M. Conlee, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition,* (New York: Longman, 1990); Alan G. Gross and Walzer, Arthur E., editors, *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric,* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000). James Murphy and Richard Katula , editors, *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric,* third edition (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003); Craig R. Smith, *Rhetoric and Human Cosciousness,* second edition (Prospect Heights IL: Waveland Press, 2003). For an excellent anthology of primary source readings, see Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, Bruce, ed., *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (Boston: Bedford-St. Martins, 2001).

[4] *De rhetorica libri tres* (Wittenberg, 1519). On this work see Schneider, *Oratio sacra*, 65-96, also "The Hermeneutics of Commentary, 29-43; Knape, 23-28; Kuropka, *Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft, 13-16;* Mack 323-326; Harfelder, 183-187; and Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 186-190.

[5] For the contents of *Institutiones rhetoricae* (Melchior Lotter, 1521) see in addition to the above Knape, 29-32; Kuropka, 16-21; Sr. Mary Joan LaFontaine, *A Critical Translation of Philip Melanchthon's* Elementorum Rhetorices Libri Duo (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1968).

[6] CR 13:417-506; Knape 36-41; Kurpoka 41-50.

[7] In addition to the works cited in Chapter One above, 85-89, see Wengert, *Annotationes in Ioannem,* 171-212; also *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness,* 48-56; Lawrence Green, "Melanchthon, Rhetoric, and the Soul," in Günter Frank and Meerhoff, 11-28; see also Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 55-56 and 171-214.

1. On the Relationship Between Rhetoric and Dialectics
in Melanchthon's Works

The secondary literature has been especially interested in the question of the

development of Melanchthon's understanding of the relationship of dialectics to

rhetoric.[8] Scholars have questioned whether or not Melanchthon subordinated one of

these arts to the other, whether this ordering of one art over the other changed throughout

his career, and presuming this ordering did change, about whether any such change

reflects a change in his commitment to humanism versus scholasticism versus

Evangelical theology.[9]

The question of the significance of Melanchthon's understanding of the

relationship of these arts to one another for his theology and philosophy appears, perhaps

not surprisingly, in the work of Wilhelm Maurer. Maurer recognized that Melanchthon

had subordinated rhetoric to dialectics in his declamation of 1517, *De aribus liberalibus*,

"On the Liberal Arts," in which work the praecpetor asked, "What then is rhetoric?" and

immediately provided the answer, "it is a part of dialectics, putting together, in everyday

language, various parts of arguments."[10] According to Maurer, this explicit subordination

of rhetoric to dialectics demonstrates that at this early point Melanchthon's thought was

"*vollig unhumanistisch*," that is, "completely un-humanistic."[11] This claim played well

into Maurer's notion that Melanchthon was hopelessly inconstant throughout his career,

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[8]   See especially Knape, 5-21 and Schneider, "The Hermeneutics of Commentary," 20-47.

[9]   On these questions in the secondary literature see especially Schneider, "Melanchthon's Rhetoric as A Context for Understanding His Theology," in Karin Maag, ed., *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and influence Beyond Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1999), 141-160, esp. 146-153; also Schneider, "The Hermeneutics of Commentary," 20-47.

[10]   CR 11:5-14, here 9-11: Quid vero illa?...Pars Dialecticae, quosdam argumentorum locos populariter instruens," quoted in Knape, 5-6.

[11]   Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon,* 55-56: "Daß freilich die Rhetorik, nur mit einem Satze erwähnt, ganz der Dialektik eingeordinet wird, is völlig unhumanistisch und beweist, daß jenes Gefühl seiner selbst noch nicht bewußt und jenes Wirklichkeitsbewußtein noch nict in sich selbst geklärt ist."

thus allegedly vacillating in identity from this *vollig unhumanistisch* scholastic in 1517, to the clearly humanistic new hire at Wittenberg in 1518, to the anti-humanistic Evangelical beginning around 1519, returning to the humanism of Erasmus in the middle of the 1520's.[12]

Joachim Knape raised a crucial objection to this thesis of Maurer's, finding that while it is true that Melanchthon's 1517 declamation subordinated rhetoric to dialectic, this does not constitute any type of scholasticism or anti-humanism on Melanchthon's part. Rather, Knape notes, the whole sense of *De artibus liberalibus* is laudatory of the liberal arts and of an educational system based upon the work of the historians and poets--an approach quiet distinct from that of the scholastic system.[13] What is more, he writes of Melanchthon's appreciation for the liberal arts, "In any case all these fields of knowledge are only tools ("organa, quasi praeludia") of that godly and sublime wisdom, theology."[14] Contra Maurer, then, Knape recognized that even as of 1517 Melanchthon was dedicated to the language arts as foundational for any learning, that in this sense Melanchthon was even then a humanist, and that he even then regarded theology as the highest learning attainable by humanity.

But this consistent dedication to the liberal arts as preparing the way for theological wisdom does not entail, according to Knape, that Melanchthon did not develop in his understanding of the relationship between the langauge arts of rhetoric and dialectic. Thus while, according to Knape, Maurer correctly claimed that Melanchthon subordinated rhetoric to dialectic in 1517, "With his transition to Wittenberg and the

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[12]   See Chapter two above, 80-85.
[13]   Knape, 5-6.
[14]   Ibid., 6: "Allerdings sind alle diese Wissenschaften nur Werkzeuge ("organa, quasi praeludia") jener göttlichen und erhabenen Weisheit, der Theologie," quoting CR 11:13.

appearance of the Tübingen Rhetoric of 1519, Melanchthon altered his position" on the

relationship between these arts.[15] At this point, according to Knape:

> [Melanchthon] no longer saw rhetoric and dialectic in a dominance-subordinantion relationship, but they are rather for him in an overarching *ars logica* equal-in-standing, indivisbly bound twin fields.[16]

And, Knape continues, Melanchthon did not change in his understanding of this point in

his final account of Rhetoric in 1531. "For," he writes of the *Elementum rhetorices libri*

duo, in this work, "dialectic and rhetoric are kindred disciplines ("vicinae artes").[17]

John Schneider has agreed with Knape that however Melanchthon conceived of

the relationship between the two arts in Melanchthon's *De artibus liberalibus* in 1517,

the young Melanchthon's regard for the language arts as foundational for the liberal arts,

and for the liberal arts as foundational for philosophy and theology, is clear in that

declamation. According to Schneider, Maurer's claim "completely begs the question of

what Melanchthon's own humanism was."[18] But, contrary to Knape, Schneider objects to

the notion, shared by Maurer and Knape, that Melanchthon changed his position on the

relationship between dialectics and rhetoric in 1519. Rather, Schneider writes, the

praeceptor's humanism "was from the start predicated upon the integration of dialectic

into rhetoric."[19]

Knape errs in claiming that Schneider based his understanding of Melanchthon's

view of this relationship on the basis of an examination of Melanchthon's 1531 rhetoric

in Schneider's book, *Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority:*

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[15]   Ibid.: "Mit seiner Wechsel nach Wittenberg und dem Erscheinen der Tübinger Rhetoric im Jahre 1519 änderte Melanchthon seine Auffassung."

[16]   Ibid. "Dialektik und Rhetoric sieht er jetzt nicht mehr in einem Dominanz- bzw. Subordinationsverhältnis, sondern sie sind für ihn in einer übergreifenden ars logia gleichberechtige, untrennbar verbundene Zwillingsfächer."

[17]   Ibid., 7: "Dialektik und Rhetoric sind als Disciplinen verwandt ("vicinae artes")…"

[18]   Schneider, "The Hermeneutics of Commentary," 28, n. 33.

[19]   Ibid.

Oratio Sacra.[20] Rather, both in that book and in his essay "The Hermeneutics of Commentary: Origins of Melanchthon's Integration of Dialectic into Rhetoric," Schneider works almost exclusively through the praecptor's 1519 *De rhetorica libri tres*. But Schneider seems strangely confused about the relationship between these arts for Melanchthon. On the one hand, his statement that "(t)he foundation of Melanchthon's entire philosophical system was the integration of a particular sort of dialectic into his freshly crafted rhetoric,"[21] along with the title of his essay, clearly suggest a view of Melanchthon as placing dialectic within, and thus subordinating it to, rhetoric. On the other hand, Schneider echoes Knape's claim that in the 1519 rhetoric Melanchthon saw dialectic and rhetoric as "equal-in-standing, indivisbly bound twin fields," as when Schneider writes of Melanchthon, " the fundamental idea of his program" is that "rhetoric and dialectic must be conjoined because, while they are distinct, they are made of the same stuff."[22] It is perhaps not surprising that, since he tries to claim that Melanchthon held at once two rather inconsistent views of this relationship, Schneider must confess, "It is difficult to find quite the right metaphor for integrating dialectic into rhetoric," in Melanchthon's thought[23]

I propose that Schneider finds it impossible to provide a simple characterization Melanchthon's understanding of the relationship between dialectics and rhetoric because the praecpetor did not have one such understanding of the relationship, but at least three, and that his understanding of this relationship changed as his understanding of the language arts developed. Knape is clearly correct that Melanchthon's explicit statements

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[20]   Knape, 7.
[21]   Ibid., 28.
[22]   Ibid., 31.
[23]   Ibid., 32.

about this relationship in 1517 and then in 1519 show, contra Schneider, that there was a change in Melanchthon's understanding of this relationship within this time span. On the other hand, as will be shown presently, Schneider correctly characterized Melanchthon's mature understanding of the relationship between these arts as "integration of dialectic into rhetoric." But again contra Schneider, this represents a change from the "equal-in-standing, indivisbly bound twin fields," view Melanchthon held in 1519. Melanchthon did not seem to arrive at the view of dialectic as subordinate to rhetoric until his 1531 *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*.

Having said all of this, the questions of whether, how, or when Melanchthon changed his position on the relationship of rhetoric to dialectic is not of primary importance to the present dissertation, since this project is primarily interested in Melanchthon's understanding of the *artes logicales* around or as of the time that he produced his most important work in the other areas of philosophy—ethics and natural philosophy.   And since his work in these fields (as well as much of his most significant and controversial theological work) began around or well after the time that he produced his final textbook in rhetoric—the *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* of 1531,[24] I will be only be concerned here to explicate his account of rhetoric in this, his most mature treatment of rhetoric.

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[24]   See Chapter Two above, 115-131.

2. *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo,* 1531

a. What is Rhetoric, and What Good is Rhetoric?

In the *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* Melanchthon identifies rhetoric as the art through which one develops eloquence, "the faculty for speaking wisely and elegantly," echoing the words and sense of the Roman orator and schoolmaster Quintillian's definition of rhetoric as ""the art of speaking well."[25] But while eloquence of speech is for Melanchthon the ultimate goal of rhetoric, he states at the outset of the *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* that there is a much more widespread usefulness for this art. He opens the work by noting that the fundamentals of rhetoric would indeed be eagerly learned by students "when they know how useful these principles are to them,"[26] and that this art is to be taught primarily in order to "prepare young people not so much for speaking correctly but for prudently evaluating and understanding the writings of others."[27]

Melanchthon insists that without this art no one "can understand long arguments and disputations perplexing to the mind,"[28] and thus without it good authors "can in no way be understood."[29] Rhetoric is then for Melanchthon not only the art of giving

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[25]   CR 13:418. "Eloquentia facultas est sapienter et ornati dicendi.*"* Tr. LaFontaine, 78. Cf. Quintillian, *Institutes of Oratory* 2, 15, 37, tr. by John Shelby Watson in Patricia Bizell and Bruce Herzberg, eds., *The Rhetorical tradition : Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (Boston : Bedford/St. Martins, 2001), 364-428, here 389 ; the editors comment: "(Quintillian) defines rhetoric as 'the art of speaking well,' punning on 'well' to mean both effectively and virtuously,*"* 362.

[26]   CR 13:26. "Legent enim libentius, ubi cognoverint, quam inde auferre debeant utilitatem." Tr. LaFontaine, 73.

[27]   CR 13:418. "Haec utilitas movit homines prudentes, ad excogitanda praecepta, ut in commune consulerunt omnibus, et adolescentes, non tam ad recte dicendum quam ad prudenter intelligenda aliena scripta, praeparent." Tr. LaFontaine, 76-77.

[28]   CR 13 :417. " Nemo enim potest longas contentiones et perplexas disputationes animo complecti..." Tr. LaFontaine, 76.

[29]   CR 13 :418. "Quare et nos ad hunc usum tradimus Rhetoricen, ut adolescentes idiuvent in bonis auctoribus legenids, qui quidem sine hac via, nullo modo intelligi possunt." Tr. LaFontaine, 77.

speeches; it is in the first place that "definite art which shows [the student] the inter-relation of parts and sections and the layout of speeches, and gives him a method of explaining and bringing to light certain matters"[30] contained in the speeches and writings of others. The study of rhetoric should therefore be of nearly universal interest since rhetoricians seek to "aid all men"[31] who "wish to judge important matters such as religious controversies or legal affairs,"[32] by providing "a certain defined system and method for understanding long disputes."[33]

Still, if the ability to understand the speeches of others is the most widespread good to be gained from teaching rhetoric, the ultimate and highest good is the attainment of eloquence. As revealed in the previous chapter of this dissertation, Melanchthon had considered eloquence the highest attainment for the educated since his inaugural lecture of 1518. He affirmed this in his oration *De eloquentia* in 1523 in which he proclaimed, "[T]he authority of the best and most sagacious men… with one voice summon the young with a universal trumpet-call"[34] to strive for this quality. Melanchthon's definition of eloquence as "the faculty of speaking wisely and elegantly" provides an organizing principle for *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*, the first book of which will deal with the means of gaining wisdom, the second to the means of speaking pleasingly.

But before discussing what it is to speak either wisely or elegantly in *Elementorum rhetorices*, the praeceptor considers a number of general questions about rhetoric. First, while noting that eloquence is the highest and most important goal for the

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[30]   CR 13:417-418. "(Nemo enim potest longas contentiones et perplexas disputationes animo complecti, nisi) arte aliqu adiuvitur, quae ostendat serium partium, et intervalla, et diecendum consilia, et viam tradat, res obscuras explicandi ac patefaciendi." Tr. LaFontaine, 76.

[31]   CR 13:417. "…sed in commune voluerunt autores artis consulere omnibus." Tr. LaFontaine 75.

[32]   Ibid. "qui…velint legere aut iudicare res magnas, ut relionum controversias, aut forensia negotia," tr. Lafontaine, 75.

[33]   Ibid. "via quadam atque ratione opus…ad intelligendas longis controverisias." Tr. LaFontaine 76.

[34]   CR 11:50-66, here 52; in Kusukawa, *Orations,* 60-78, here 62.

student, he suggests that not all are capable of attaining this goal. This is because in order

to become truly eloquent two other elements besides training in rhetoric must be present

in the student, and not all can be expected to have or to be capable of obtaining these.

"Eloquence requires in the first place," he explains, "great natural ability."[35] For while

"nature itself teaches a certain way and method of explaining great and obscure

problems,"[36] only a few have the potential to become great orators because, as he would

later write, "such a swift intelligence" as eloquence requires "is not common to all."[37]

The second additional element required of those who would be truly eloquent may

be the rarest of all. This is erudition, which Melanchthon defines as "a sound knowledge

of a great many things."[38] Erudition is a prerequisite for eloquence because "in order to

speak well, a complete knowledge of the subjects to be dealt with is required."[39] For as

he writes, "It would not be eloquence, but insanity, to speak about things about which one

is ignorant."[40] And so if one is to be eloquent one should strive for a broad knowledge of

the subjects most important to one's life. In particular, an educated citizen should strive

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[35]   CR13: 417: "Nam eloquentia primum vim naturae maximam ad dicendum…requirit." Tr. LaFontaine, 74.

[36]   Ibid. "Docet enim natura homines viam quandam atque rationem, magnas et obscuras causas explicandi." Tr. LaFontaine 75.

[37]   CR 6: 653-58, here 653; tr. in Kusukawa, Orations, as "Dedicatory Letter to the *Questions on Dialectics*," 84-89, here 84.

[38]   CR 13: 417: "multarum bonarum rerum scientiam," tr. LaFontaine 74. For the importance of erudition for the orator according to Cicero, see for example *De oratore* III, 20, tr. by H. Rackham in *Cicero: De oratore Book III, De fato, Paradoxa Stoicorum, De Partitione Oratoria,* Loeb Classic Library 349 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) 1-185, here 61-63; see also Quintillian, *Institutes*, 12, 2-4, in Bizzell and Herzberg, 418-424 for the importance for the orator of broad learning in moral and natural philosophy.

[39]   CR 13: 418. "Nam ad bene dicendum in primis requiritur perfecta earum cognitio, de quibus oratio institutitur,"tr. LaFontaine 78.

[40]   Ibid. "Insania est enim, non eloquentia, de rebus ignotis et incompereitis docere."

to have sufficient erudition about theology, natural philosophy, or moral philosophy, or as he puts it "about religion, or the nature of things, or the law."[41]

b. The Speeches and the Duties of the Orator

Melanchthon is clear that the study of rhetoric will help one to understand, and presumably compose, persuasive writing, and his *Elementorum rhetorices* is thus a textbook following the rhetorical tradition for training students about speeches, both in understanding and in constructing them. And he taught in accord with this tradition that speeches can be distinguished and categorized according to their purposes.[42] An orator may desire to bring an audience to conclude that a certain type of action is to be either praised and taken up or derided and rejected in the present. A speech made with this end in mind, he writes, will belong to the *genus demonstrativum*. With regard to the past, an orator may speak in order to move the audience to decide that an agent's actions were laudable (and so that the agent should be rewarded), or detestable, (and so that she should be punished). Such a speech will belong to the *genus iudicale*. Finally, the orator may entreat that a certain course of action must be taken, constructing a speech of the *genus deliberativum*, which is future oriented.

The three distinct genera of speeches in Melanchthon's *Elementorum rhetorices* are rooted in Arsitotle's *Rhetoric* and share a common ultimate goal of persuading an audience to take some action or other, thus reflecting Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as

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[41]   CR 13: 419: "de religione, de natura rerum, de iure, denique do ulla vitae parte," tr. LaFontaine, 79.

[42]   CR 13: 421-422; as Lafontaine notes, 88, Melanchthon's description of the *genera causarum* closely follows follows Cicero's *De inventione* 8; I. 5. 7., and Quintillian's *Institutio Oratoria* III. 3.

"the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."[43]

According to the Stagirite, the orator persuades by employing any of, or a combination

of, three artistic modes of persuasion: *logos* (appeal to reason through a deduction),

pathos (appeal to the emotions) or *ethos* (appeal to the affinity between speaker and

audience).[44] Cicero transformed these modes of persuasion into three *officia oratoris,*

that is, three duties of oratory: to prove (*probare*) the point one wishes to make, to delight

(*delectare*) the audience, and to persuade (*flectere*) them to take some action. As Cicero

wrote in his De Oratore:

> Under my whole oratorical system and that very readiness in speaking…lie three
> principles, as I said before, first the winning of men's favour, secondly their
> enlightenment, thirdly their excitement. Of these three the first calls for gentleness
> of style, the second for acuteness, the third for energy. For, of necessity, the
> arbitrator who is to decide in our favour must either lean to our side by natural
> inclination, or be won over by the arguments for the defence, or constrained by
> stirring his feelings. [45]

Cicero furthermore associated each of these three duties with a style of speaking: "plain

for proof, middle for pleasure, and grand for emotion."[46]

The three *officia* of the orator in Cicero's work are of fundamental importance to

Melanchthon's *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*, even though they undergo a significant

transformation in the praeceptor's rhetoric. Melanchthon follows both Aristotle and

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[43]   Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I, 2 [1355b 28-29]; tr. in Jonathan Barnes *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Princeton University Press, 1984), 2155.

[44]   Ibid., 1358a 2-21; in Barnes, 2155. See also Jonathan Barness, Jonathan, "Rhetoric and Poetics," in Barnes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 259-286.

[45]   Cicero *De Oratore* 2, 128-129: "Meae totius orationis et istius ipsius in dicendo facultatis, quam modo Crassus in caelum verbis extulit, tres sunt rationes, ut ante dixi : una conciliandorum hominum, altera docendorum, tertia concitandorum. Harum trium partium prima lenitatem orationis, secunda acu-men, tertia vim desiderat. Nam hoc necesse est, ut is, qui nobis causam adiudicaturus sit, aut inclinatione voluntatis propendeat in nos, aut defensionis argumentis adducatur, aut animi permotione cogatur." Tr. by E.W. Sutton in *Cicero III:* De oratore*, I, II,* ed. by E. W. Warmington, Loeb Claasic Library 348 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 290-291. Accessed on-line at http://archive.org/stream/cicerodeoratore01ciceuoft/cicerodeoratore01ciceuoft_djvu.txt on July 23, 2012.

[46]   Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric,* 114.

Cicero in declaring that the ultimate goal of this art is to persuade an audience, or as the

praeceptor puts it, "to move and stimulate minds and thus to affect a person. [47]   But

whereas Cicero associates each duty with a separate style of speaking, Melanchthon

stresses in *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* that all effective speeches of all three

classical genera must, as will be shown below, perform all three duties of teaching,

delighting, and moving.

In addition to listing the *officia oratoris*, the praeceptor follows Cicero in

descibing a second set of *officia,* these related to the constructon of a speech. In this set of

officia there are five: *inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, and pronunciatio,* that is,

in order, invention, arrangement, ornamentation, memorization, and delivery.[48]

Melanchthon does not find it worthwhile to treat of all of these in his 1531 rhetoric,

however. Of the latter two *officia*, memory and delivery, he has little or nothing to say.

Memory, he writes, "is scarcely assisted at all by art,"[49] while "what is most becoming in

delivery has to be [learned] in the forum through imitation."[50] Invention, arrangement,

and ornamentation remain for him as the matter of *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*

since "almost the whole of rhetoric is taken up with these."[51] It is in attending to these

officia that the orator is able to please, to teach, and ultimately to move an audience.

And so again following Cicero, Melanchthon's final work on rhetoric treated of

three *officia* for the orator: invention, arrangement, and ornamentation. What is more, as

Melanchthon presents them in *Elementorum rhetorices*, invention, arrangement, and

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[47]   CR 13:420. "(Finis est) rhetoricae autem permovere atque impellere animos," tr. LaFontaine 85.
[48]   CR 13: 419: "Quinque igitur numerantur officia oratoris: Inventio, Dispositio, Elocutio, Memoria, Pronunciatio." Tr. LaFontaine 81.
[49]   Ibid.: "memoria parum admodum ab arte adiuvatur, "tr. LaFontaine 82.
[50]   Ibid.: "Et quid maxime in agendo deceat, in foro discendum est imiatione."
[51]   Ibid.: "Et in his tribus partibus fere tota ars consumitur."

ornamentation are all learned through some art. But while it is not the case, according to

Melanchthon here, that invention and arrangement have their own specific arts, elocution

does.

c. *Elocutio*

Elocutio is the art of ornamentation, according to Melanchthon. In contrast to the

several tasks undertaken in the first book of *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*, the

entirety of the second book is dedicated to what Cicero had called *delectare*, the orator's

power to delight an audience, that is, as Melanchthon put it, to speak *ornate,* or

"ornately." The praeceptor here presents *elocutio* as the art of setting forth the matter of

a speech "in a lucid and clear manner."[52] Speaking lucidly in turn requires for him

mastering three elements, each of which Melanchthon treats in some depth. These three

are grammar, tropes and figures, "For," he explains,

> the essence of speaking in Latin and with clarity is handed down by the rules of
> grammar. Speaking with embellishments is divided by two aspects into Cicero,
> viz., the use of figurative expressions and of amplifications. To speak to the
> purpose means to observe the proper manners."[53]

Reflecting his account of the history of the degeneration of learning under

scholasticism in his inaugural lecture to Wittenberg University in 1518,[54] Melanchthon

writes in the *Elementorum rhetorices* that when *elocutio* was being neglected, "all arts

and subjects began to be handed down in an obscure way, because things cannot be

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[52]   CR 13: 459: "Est itaque elocutio, quae dilucida et perspicua orationes res exponit, " tr.
LaFontaine, 218.

[53]   CR 13: 461: "Nam latinate et dilucide loquendi ratio in grammatica traditur. Ornate vero loquendi
duas habet partes apud Ciceronem, Figuras et amplificationes. Apte loqui est decorum observare." Tr.
LaFontaine, 224, citing Cicero, *Orator* 18, 61; De oratore 27, 149-154.

[54]   CR 11: 15-17; Chapter Two above, 90-99.

understood if they are not explained in words which are meaningful and well known."[55]

In contrast to such uncultured barbarity, the ability to speak pleasingly seems to

Melanchthon definitively human. "For," he writes, "no art, no form of culture more

distinguishes a man than a pleasant way of speaking."[56] "Therefore," he writes "if there

is anyone to whom such a speech does not give any pleasure, he has degenerated a long

way from human nature."[57] "For this reason, at the very beginning of this work," he

furthermore writes, "we must censure the mistake of those who despise the precepts of

style and falsely believe that the rules of proper speech have been contrived, not out of

necessity, but for empty ostentation."[58]

All of this is such high praise for *elocutio* that one might wonder whether this is

for Melanchthon the most important part of rhetoric. Melanchthon in fact writes of

elocutio that it is "especially proper to rhetoric itself,"[59] and that it is "the very word from

which rhetoric gets its name."[60] What is more, the second book of the *Elementorum*

rhetorices libri duo, the book in which he explains *elocutio*, is the longer of the two.

Lawrence Green has gone so far as to suggest that rhetoric was more or less identified

with *elocutio* by Melanchthon, since there is a sense in which both rhetoric and *elocutio*

as the praeceptor describe them both have the common goal of "moving" an audience.[61]

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[55]   CR 13: 459: "Postquam enim dicendi ratio neglecta est, artes confuse et obscure tradi ceperunt."Tr. LaFontaine, 219.

[56]   CR 13:460:"Nulla res enim, nulla cultus, magis ornat hominem, quam suavis oratio." Tr. LaFontaine, 221

[57]   Ibid. "Quare si quem nulla voluptate talis oratio afficit, is longe a natura hominis degeneravit."

[58]   CR 13:459: "quare initio huius operis error illorum reprehendum est, qui quem contemnunt elocutionis praecepta, et falso arbitrantur eloquendi rationem non necessitatis causa, sed ad inanem ostentationem excogitatem esse." Tr. LaFontaine 218.

[59]   CR 13:420 : "quid rhetorica maxime proprium habeat," tr. LaFontaine 83.

[60]   Ibid., "elocutionem, a qua ipsum rhetorices nomen factum est…"

[61]   See Lawrence Green, "Melanchthon, Rhetoric, and the Soul," in Günter Frank und Johanna Lohr, hrsgs., *Melanchthon-Schriften der Stadt Bretten,* Band 6: Melanchthon und Europa 2, Teilband Westeuropa (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbeck Verlag, 2002), 11-28.

But this is not in fact Melanchthon's view, since for him rhetoric is more than *elocutio*. For while the praeceptor writes that *"only pleasure is desired from this study"* of *elocutio*,[62] rhetoric applies the art of *elocutio* not merely to moving individuals in the sense of stirring their emotions. Rather, the task of rhetoric is "to move the soul (*impellere animos*), and thus to bring about the movement of a person."[63] That is, the task of moving the emotions is for Melanchthon an important means of moving the individual to act, and elocution is worthwhile to the extent that it conduces to bringing about action.

Melanchthon is clear that *elocutio* is not to be identified with rhetoric because it is but a part of rhetoric. And in fact, *elocutio* is not even for Melanchthon the most important part of rhetoric. For at the beginning of the first book of the *Elementorum rhetorices* Melanchthon notes that rhetoric must be concerned with two things, of which *elocutio* is in fact the less important. He writes:

> Since every speech consists of subject matter and words, the first concern should be with the matter, then with the words...First of all in this matter of preparing a speech, the subject matter should be determined and selected, and when this has been determined, the subject matter must be set out in an orderly manner. Therefore, the choosing of the subject matter and the arrangement of the material revolve around the content; style is concerned with words.[64]

Elocutio, the praeceptor goes on to note in the second book, is merely concerned with the *verba*, "words," or the proper ornamentation of a speech. But before one can even consider the *verba*, according to Melanchthon, one must firmly establish something more important, namely, the matter or *res,* the "matter" or "substance," of a speech. Thus

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[62]   CR 13:460: "tantum voluptas captaretur ex hoc studio," tr. LaFontaine 221.
[63]   CR 13:420: "(Finis est) rhetoricae autem permovere atque impellere animos, et ad adfectum aliquem traducere. " Tr. LaFontaine, 85.
[64]   CR 13:419: "Cum oratio omnis rebus ac verbis constet, rerum prior esse cura debet, posterior verborum. ..Primum enim dicturo, res seu inveniendae, seu eligendae sunt, et cum sint inquisitae, ordine explicandae. Versantur igitur inventio et dispositio circa res, elocutio vero circa verba," tr. LaFontaine, 81.

elocutio first requires some other art to provide it raw material for it to work on. The art of rhetoric can then be thought of, as Melanchthon here conceives of it, as the product of applying *elocutio,* the most effective *verba*, to that which is more fundamental to a speech—the matter or *res* of an oration.

But while the entire larger second book of the *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* is taken up in matters specifically related to *elocutio*, Melanchthon leaves himself relatively little room to treat of the *verba* of a speech, for the first—and shorter—book of this work covers several general topics as well. First, it presents some of the issues discussed above: Melanchthon's rationale for learning rhetoric, his definition and general description of rhetoric as the art of moving or persuading an audience, the discussion of the traditional classification of speeches, and the duties of the orator.[65] It also examines the parts of and the proper construction of speeches,[66] as well as the method for crafting a speech. In addition to all of this he explicates the duties involved in preparing the *res* of a speech, namely the duties of *dispositio* and *inventio*, arrangement and invention.[67] In order to understand Melanchthon's account of these *officia,* it will be helpful to consider his presentation in Book One of *Elementorum Rhetorices* of the proper way to construct a speech.

d. Constructing a Speech: *Inventio, Dispositio, Elocutio*

The praeceptor writes that the first step to take in constructing a persuasive speech will be to determine what the oration is to be about, "that is, the principal intent and main

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[65]   CR 13: 417-419.
[66]   CR 13: 419 ff.
[67]   CR 13: 419-454.

arguments, or as they say the scope (*scopus)* of the speech."[68] Having determined the

scopus to be addressed, one determines the claim one wishes to make about that issue, the

central point one wishes to make. Contemporary readers may think of this as the thesis;

Melanchthon follows Quintillian in referring to it as the *status* or *status causa.*[69] Third,

according to the praeceptor, one establishes the grounds upon which one wishes to

persuade the audience that the status is correct or true or reliable. This will normally

consist of "some one main syllogism which best supports the status,"[70] in other words, he

writes, one presents an *argumentum* for which the *status causae* is the conclusion.

Melanchthon provides the following example: One might write a speech on the

general issue or *scopus* of the Christian's ownership of goods. Melanchthon's position

on the issue, the *status causa* of the speech he would construct, is "The Christian need not

divest or live in absolute poverty." He notes that one may come to this conclusion via the

the following argument:

> The Gospel is not concerned with civil matters.
> The disposition of property is a civil matter.
> Therefore, the Gospel does not require divestiture.[71]

Having proposed this argument with its conclusion, the *scopus* and *status causa*

respectively, the next step as would be to examine the argument carefully, making sure

that it is sound and does not contain any logical fallacies. Upon judging that it is a sound

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[68]   CR13:422, : "hoc est, praecipua intentio, et summa consilii, seu ut vocant, scopus orationis." Tr. LaFontaine 93-94.

[69]   CR 13:429: "Nulla pars artis magis necessaria est, quam praecepta de statibus, hoc est, quae sit principalis quaestio, seu propositio, quae continet summam negocii, ad quam omnia argumentum referenda sunt, velut ad principalem consclusionem." Tr. LaFontaine, 115. Cf. Quintillian *Institutes* III. 6.21, where the status is "the strongest point in (an oration) and on which the whole matter chiefly turns."

[70]   CR 13: 430 : "aliquem praecipuum syllogismum continet, qui maxime munit statum," tr. LaFontaine, 117.

[71]   Ibid.: "Evangelium non abolet politias.
     Tenerer proprium, est res politica.
     Igitur Evangelium non vetat tenere propprium." Tr. LaFontaine, 118.

argument, Melanchthon writes, the orator has fully determined the matter or *res* of the speech, and now turns the speech over to the art of ornamentation, that is *elocutio,* in order to properly vest the *res* with engaging, pleasing, or otherwise moving *verba.* Through *ornamentatio*, one seeks to assure that this argument will make the maximal impact upon the audience, thus increasing the likelihood that the audience will be moved to act in accordance with the conclusion.

Now, the above summary of the establishment of the *res* of the speech requires two separable tasks which correspond to the first two *officiae* relevant to speech construction: *inventio* and *dispositio*. First, an argument must be proposed, and second it must be tested in order to confirm the validity of its form. The second of these is in rhetoric the task of arrangement, and the power for arranging arguments in Melanchthon's rhetoric is *dispositio*. The first task is then of "finding" or "coming upon" the argument and its parts in the first place: finding the *scopus*, then the *status causa* one wishes to maintain, and finally finding an argument for which the *status causa* is the conclusion. All these are the work of the power, according to the *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*, of *inventio.* Together these two powers, *inventio* and *dispostio* or arrangement and disposition, make up the orator's power to speak wisely or teach, that is, to fulfill what Cicero referred to as the orator's *officium* of *docere*.

Thus it is that in all the classical genera of speeches, according to Melanchthon, *elocutio*, the power to speak pleasingly, is joined to *docere*, the power to teach, or to speak wisely. But to what end? To the end, the praeceptor suggests, for which the entire rhetorical tradition from Aristotle on has assigned to the art of rhetoric itself: to move an audience into action, for as noted previously here "the function of rhetoric is to move and

stimulate minds and thus to affect a person." According to Melanchthon, then, Cicero's

movere is the ultimate goal of all three classical genera of speeches and is the primary

officia of the orator as such; the other two duties, to teach and to delight, are employed as

means to this final end. All of this means that for Melanchthon the power to teach as

well as the power to please are subordinated to the power to move within rhetoric as the

ancients regarded this art.

e. The *Genus didaskalikon*

And yet Melanchthon is not entirely satisfied with the traditional treatment of

speeches, for the praeceptor does not believe the tradition has recognized all legitimate

forms of speech. As he writes, "I myself recommend adding a didactic kind of speech

(*didaskalikon genus)*, although it pertains to dialectics."[72] As he explains,

> the purpose of the didactic kind (*genus didascalici*) of instruction is to produce
> knowledge in individuals, as for example when one teaches what the Gospel is,
> how we can bring it about that God should think and pronounce us righteous,
> what faith is, ...(D)idactic oratory differs from that which tells people how to put
> teaching into practice."[73]

Thus, in addition to the classical *genera demonstrativum*, *iudicium*, and *deliberativum*,

Melanchthon claims that the product of *inventio* and *iudicium* even without adornment

should be considered a kind of speech in its own right. Such a speech would simply strive

to teach and would thus consist solely of "matter" without ornamentation.

But did Melanchthon consider this "fourth kind" of speech, the *genus*

didascalikon, to be properly speaking a *rhetorical* genus? It appears not. For while he is

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[72]   CR 13: 421 : "Ego addendum censeo διδασκαλικὸν genus, quod etsi ad dialecticam pertinent," tr. LaFontaine, 88.

[73]   CR 13: 423 : "Ita generis didascalici finis est proprius cognitio, ut si quis doceat, quid sit Evangelium, quomodo consequamur ut Deus reputet ac pronunciet nos iustos, quid sit fides," CR 13: 423; tr. LaFontaine, 95.

clear that the goal of rhetoric is to "move souls" (*permovere animos*), he writes of the

knowledge gained through the *genus didaskalikon* that "even if later the knowledge can

be put to use, yet didactic oratory differs from that which tells people how to put teaching

into practice."[74] Thus while the *genus didaskalikon* is a form of speech which orators

should recognize, value, and use, it is not full-fledged rhetorical speech. On the other

hand, the *genus didaskalikon* "pertains to dialectics"[75] in that it is the final product of

dialectics, and so could be considered dialectical speech.

In concluding this section, two final questions must be addressed about the

relationship of teaching, pleasing, and moving an audience *mover*e, *docere, and

delectare,* within Melanchthon's *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*. First, if to move an

audience is the ultimate duty of an orator, and if to teach is a prerequisite for moving an

audience, why does the *Elementorum rhetorices* treat *delectare* or *elocutio* in greater

depth than either *movere* or *docere*—indeed, more than the other two combined? With

respect to his treatment of *movere* the answer should be clear by now. For Melanchthon

rhetoric just is the *ars movendi*, and for him the art of moving an audience consists

entirely of effectively joining the art of delighting such an audience to the art of teaching

it. Since the entirety of *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* is dedicated to explaining this

fact as well as to explaining the method of teaching (*docere*) and the method of pleasing

an audience with words (*delectare*), the entirety of this rhetorical textbook is in fact

dedicated to explaining how to move an audience.

The second and final question then is: Does Melanchthon in fact adequately

explain how to teach in the short space dedicated to this task—perhaps half of the first

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[74]   Ibid. : "etsi cognitio postea ad usum transferri potest, diversum tamen orationis genus est, quod docet, ab illo, quod deinde doctrinam ad usum transferri iubet."

[75]   CR 13: 421: "(Ego addendum censeo didaskalikon genus, quod etsi) ad dialecikam pertinet…"

book of *Elementorum rhetorices*? Melanchthon is explicit in his answer: No, he has not.

He in fact acknowledges that he has merely presented some rudiments of, but has not

fully explained, *inventio* and *dispositio*, the activities of which teaching consists. But the

reason for this is certainly not that he denies that it is important for him to do so. On the

contrary he writes that fully explaining the activities involved in teaching or of speaking

wisely is *too complex* and *too important* to be treated in merely a part of this work. In

fact, he indicates that properly treating of *inventio* and *dispositio* have required his

writing whole other works solely dedicated to the task. Thus, he writes:

> If anyone would desire in this matter more lengthy principles, he should return to
> dialectics, which science alone spells out the method for teaching. For dialectics
> is, properly speaking, the very art of good teaching."[76]

Since at least some of these "more lengthy principles" must be understood if one is to

understand the relationship between rhetoric and dialectics and between dialectics and

philosophy in Melanchthon's thought, it is appropriate now to turn to consider

Melanchthon's dialectics in greater depth.

C.   Melanchthon's Dialectics: *Erotemata dialectices,* 1547

As with his rhetoric, Melanchthon's dialectical work developed in three stages.[77]

His first textbook on this subject, the *Compendia dialectices ratio*, "Summary of the

Method of Dialectics," was published in 1520. Next came set of revised dialectical

manuals, *Dialectices libri quatuor,* "Four Book on Dialectics," in 1528 and "On the Four

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[76]   CR 13: 423-424 : "Si quis de hoc genere longiora praecepta desiderat, is ad dialecticam redeat, quae sola tradit perfecte docendi rationem. Nam dialectica propria ars est recte docendi," tr. LaFontaine 97-98

[77]   CR 13: 507-510; see also Mack, 323-325and Kuropka, 11-51 .

Books on Dialectics" in 1529.[78] Finally, his last word on the subject, the *Erotemata*

dialectices, "Main themes of dialectics" appeared in 1547, in the midst of the final stage

of his philosophical development. Since the *Erotemata dialectices* represents his final

word on the subject, the present examination will be concerned almost exclusively with

understanding the *Erotemata dialectices*.

It has been widely agreed that as was the case with his rhetoric, Melanchthon's

dialectical works were rooted in those of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintillian. Wengert has

also pointed out that while it has sometimes been claimed that the *De inventione dialectia*

of Rudolph Agricola[79] was the greatest influence on Melanchthon's dialectic, in

particular on his conception of and use of *loci*, this has more recently been called into

question.[80] Thus, while Mack finds that even the praeceptor's latest work in this area is

"recognizably like Agricola, in the goals it sets for dialectics and in its emphasis on

teaching," Kuropka finds a "Rückkehr zu Aristoteles," a "turning back to Aristotle" in

Melanchthon's dialectics beginning in 1529.[81]

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[78]   For a close examination of these works, see especially Kuropka, 21-40; also Mack, 323-333.

[79]   Rudolph Agricola, "De inventione dialectica*,"* in *Rodolphus Agricola, Lucubrationes,* ed.
Alardus (Cologne, 1539; reprinted Nieuwkoop: de Graf 1967). See Mack's *Renaissance Argument* for a
throrough treatment of the sources, content, and reception of Agricola's work, 117-375; Frank, 159-161;
Hartfelder, 217-22.; also Lisa Jardine, "Distinctive Discipline: Rudolph Agricola's Influence on Methodical
Thinking in the Humanities," in F. Akkermann, and A. J. Vanderjagt, eds., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius
1444-1485: Proceedings of the International Conference at the University of Groningen, 18.-30. October
1985* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 38-57; and "Rudolph Agricola's *Topics*," also in Akkermann and Vanderjagt,
257-269.

[80]   Wengert notes that Paul Joachimson is particularly insistent on the importance of Agricola for
Melanchthon's dialectics in in "*Loci communes:* Eine Untersuchung zur Geisetesgeschichte des
Hymanismus und der Reformation," *Literaturwissenschäftliches Jahrnuch* 8:27-97; Wengert, "Biblical
Interpretation," 324. See also Schneider, Oratio Sacra, 76; Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 159-161*;*
Scheible, *Melanchthon*, 88.

[81]   Mack, 23-30.

1. *Quid est dialectices*?

One source of confusion for anyone desiring to understand Melanchthon's conception of dialectics and his dialectical method is that the very word "dialectics" had several uses among philosophers in Melanchthon's time. Jennifer Ashworth has noted that in the sixteenth century the distinction between the terms "dialectics" and "logic" was unclear. She writes that according to sixteenth century usage:

> If we now ask what counts as dialectic and whether it differs from logic, two main answers are possible. One can regard 'logic' and 'dialectic' as merely two names for one discipline, or one can regard dialectic as a sub-part of logic which studies dialectical syllogisms as presented in Aristotle's *Topics*. Both of these answers were generally recognized as acceptable in the medieval and post-medieval period, and one did not exclude the other.[82]

As I will show below, this equivocation on the term "dialectics" reflects Cicero's development of Aristotle's logical and rhetorical work. And since in his dialectical as well as in his rhetorical works Melanchthon drew deeply from the writings of both this Greek philosopher and this Roman orator, understanding the praeceptor's dialectics will require a brief examination of the accounts of dialectics in these ancient authorities.

In *Prior Analytics* Aristotle presented and explained the proper use of the syllogism, and in *Topics* he famously distinguished between the use (and/or misuse) of the syllogism in four types of reasoning, writing:

> Now a deduction is an argument in which, certain things being laid down, something other than these necessarily comes about through them. It is a demonstration, when the premises from which the deduction starts are true and primitive, or are such that our knowledge of them has originally come through

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[82]   E. Jennifer Ashworth, "Developments in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in Dov. M. Gabbay and John Woods, eds., *Handbook of the History of Logic, Volume 2: Mediaeval and Renaissance Logic* (Amsterdam: Elsevaer, 2004), 609-644; here 633. See also by Ashworth, "Language and Logic," in McGrade, 73-96; and "Changes in Logic Textbooks from 1500-1650: The New Aristotelianism," in Eckhard Kessler, Charles Lohr, and Walter Sparn, eds., *Aristotelismus und Renaissance* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1988), 75-88.

premises which are primitive and true; and it is a dialectical deduction , if it reasons from reputable opinions (*endoxa*)…Again, a deduction is contentious if it starts from opinions that seem to be reputable, but are not really such, or again if it merely seems to reason from opinions that are or seem to be reasonable… Further, besides all the deductions we have mentioned there are the fallacies…[83]

All four of the types of reasoning Aristotle here identifies—demonstration, dialectical, contentious, and fallacious—have in common at least the claim to the use of the syllogism. While fallacious reasoning is actually characterized by invalid deduction, the other types of reasoning all use valid syllogistic form but are distinguished by the type of premises they use.

According to Aristotle, demonstrations are required for science (*epistême*), and demonstrative reasoning is ultimately founded upon primitive and true premises or *archai*. Aristotle explained the necessity of *archai* in *Posterior Analytics*, writing:

If, then, understanding is as we posited, it is necessary for demonstrative understanding in particular to depend on things which are true and and primitive and immediate and more familiar than and prior to and explanatory of the conclusion (for in this way the principles will also be appropriate to what is proved). For there will be deduction even without these conditions, but there will not be demonstration; for it will not produce understanding.[84]

Aristotle believed that humans have access to these *archai* and that we thus are capable of demonstrative reasoning and science, and at the end of *Posterior Analytics* he attempts to give an account of how we come to have them.[85] Unfortunately, as Robin Smith has noted, this "brief account" is "one of the most perplexing in the entire (Aristotelian) corpus."[86] For while, according to Smith, Aristotle rejects the notion that the *archai* are innate and while he affirms that one comes to posses them through the use of natural

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[83]   Aristotle, *Topics,* 100a25-101a5; tr. by W. A. Pickard-Cambridge in Barnes, vol. 1, 167.
[84]   Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 70b20-24, tr. by Jonathan Barnes in Barnes, 115.
[85]   Ibid., Book II, 19, 99b15-100b15; Barnes 165-166.
[86]   Robin Smith, "Logic," in Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* , 49.

capacities, the Stagirite is in the end neither clear about just how they arise in the mind, nor about how they can be known to be true.

Dialectical deduction is distinct from demonstration in that the former relies, according to Aristotle, at least in part upon *endoxa*, which are premises that the speaker trusts will be widely accepted by her audience, though their truth is not certain. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric* such deductions are generally treated as a species of *enthymeme*, his general term for syllogisms which fail to meet the standards required of scientific demonstration.[87] Cicero valued Aristotle's account of dialectical reasoning, but he did not maintain, perhaps because he was not even aware of, Aristotle's distinction between dialectical and demonstrative syllogisms.[88] In any case, as the Roman orator makes clear in Book Two of his *Academica,* he himself retained the skepticism of his mentor Carneades in rejecting the claim that humans were capable of having access to indisputably true propositions, and therefore to what Aristotle called *arxai*.[89] With this rejection of *arxai* the possibility for Cicero of scientific demonstration in Aristotle's sense went by the board. And since deductive reasoning for Cicero was thus at best based in what Aristotle called *endoxa*, for Cicero deductive reasoning is at best "dialectical" in the Aristotelian sense that it can yield but probabilities.[90]

The question of how Melanchthon treated Aristotle's distinction between probabilitstic reasoning and scientific demonstration is important, since the answer will

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[87]   Jonathan Barnes, "Rhetoric and Poetics," ibid, 269-270.

[88]   Quirinius Breen, "The Terms 'Loci Communes' and 'Loci' in Melanchthon, *Church History,* Volume 6, number 4 (December 1947), 197-209, esp. here 199-201.

[89]   Cicero's defense of skepticism ranges over the last 28 chapters of book II of *Academica*. In this span he rejects claims that perceptions are reliable (xxiv, 76 to xxxviii, 90), that dialectics or logic can provide certainty (xxviii, 90-xxx, 98; xlvii, 142), that there is certainty in physics (xxxvi, 116-xxxix, 125), and ethics (xlii, 149-xlvii, 141); Cicero, *Academica*, tr. and ed. by Jeffrey Henderson for the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 549-659.

[90]   But note that for Cicero, probabilistic reasoning provided sufficient warrant for the activity and thought of the wise, cf. *Academica* II, xxxi, 98-xxxiv, 111, pages 593-611.

help us understand just what Melanchthon believed dialectics could provide for the enquirer. But to clarify whether dialectics as he understood it trades in probabilism or whether it is capable of producing demonstrations was not a fundamental concern of Melanchthon's. For in answer to the question, "What is dialectics?" at the outset of *Erotemata dialectices* Melanchthon identifies the art neither with the production of scientific demonstration nor with probable reasoning nor with correct inference through the syllogism. Rather, he writes:

> Dialectics is the art or way of teaching correctly, in order, and clearly that which is to be achieved by correctly defining, dividing, and properly connecting true arguments, and by correcting and refuting bad or false arguments.[91]

And Melanchthon immediately confirmed the didactic goal of this art by responding to the question: "What is the proper work or duty of dialectics?" with the answer "to teach correctly, clearly, and in an orderly manner." [92]

The identification of dialectics with the method of teaching is not new to Melanchthon's *Erotemata dialectices*. To begin with, as shown above, this definition is quite consistent with what Melanchthon had written of dialectics in his *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*, in which he claimed that the purpose of dialectics "is to judge whether in teaching everything is consonant with everything else and likewise with a particular path in teaching..."[93] Second, as with most concepts related to Melanchthon's

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[91] CR 13: 513 "Dialectica est ars seu via, recte, ordine, et perspicue docendi, quod sit recte definiendo, dividendo, argumenta vera connectendo, et male cohaerentia seu falsa retexendo et refutando." Note that in reference to this Gilbert underestimates the importance of teaching to dialectic in Melanchthon's thought. As will be clear below, there is not only a "teaching aspect" to dialectic; there is no aspect of dialectic which does not have teaching as its end. (cf. Gilbert 126).

[92] Ibid. : "Quod est proprium Dislectices opus seu officium? Recte, ordine, et perspicue docere. "

[93] CR 13: 419 : " Ut autem dialecticae finis est, iudicre, Utrum in docendo apte consentiant omnia, item, in docendo sequi certam viam." Tr. LafFontaine, 80.

rhetoric, Melanchthon's understanding here is in fact strongly influenced by both Cicero and Quintillian; Mack furthermore finds it consistent with Agricola's account.[94]

But how does this way of conceiving of the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic affect the method of Melanchthon's dialectic and thus of his philosophizing? Just what is the "particular path" or method of teaching which dialectic follows, according to Melanchthon?   In order to answer these questions, it is important to note that, as LaFontaine points out, in both the *Erotemata dialectices* and in *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo* Melanchthon remains true to the Roman expression of the rhetorical tradition in regarding dialectics as composed of two parts. For when he explains, "This is the ancient division: one part of dialectics is judgment, another is invention,"[95] he is quoting Cicero from *Topica* 1.6:

> Every systematic treatment of argumentation has two branches, one concerned with invention of arguments and the other with judgment of their validity; Aristotle was the founder of both in my opinion.)."[96]

It is also clear that fully to understand Melanchthon's mature account of this art will then require at least a brief examination of each of these subordinate parts.

2. *Iudicium*

In the secondary literature, Melanchthon's dialectical works have sometimes been regarded as containing merely a pared-down version of Aristotle's *Organon*. One

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[94]   Mack, *Renaissance Argument,* 326-327.

[95]   CR 13:641. "Vetus diviso haec est : Alia pars Dialectices est iudicatrix, alia inventrix…(Alter pars est Inventrix, quae monet, quomodo res investigandae sint, aut propositio rerum cumulo, docet eligere ea, quae presentem materiam illustrant..) "

[96]   Cicero, *Topica* 1.6: "Cum omnis ratio diligens disserendi duas habeat partis, unam inveniendi alteram iudicandi, utriusque princeps, ut mihi quidem videtur, Aristoteles fuit." Tr. H. M. Hubbell *Cicero: On Invention, Best Kind of Orator, Topics,* ed. Jeffrey Henderson, Loeb Classical Library 386, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 386-387; cf. LaFontaine 80.

commentator characterized the praeceptor's dialectic as presenting "largely the traditional Aristotelian corpus with a few medieval accretions,"[97] Another summarizes his alleged "simplified summaries of Aristotelian logic" thus:

> Melanchthon remained a convinced Aristotelian, who believed that students needed to be taught some formal logic…the formal techniques he used were those of the syllogistic, while his work included a discussion of the other standard Aristotelian subjects, including the categories and the square of opposition for propositions. At the same time, he purged Aristotle of medieval accretions, approaching him through new readings of the Greek text and the Greek commentators. Any references to the specifically medieval contributions to logic are most unfavourable, and he relegates supposition theory to grammar.[98]

Such historians of logic have then regarded Melanchthon's dialectic as symptomatic of a regrettable Renaissance tendency to reject the logical erudition of the Middle Ages.[99]

Indeed, Melanchthon might well be delighted with both the claim that his dialectics represents a simplified presentation of Aristotle, and that he had so simplified it by purging it of most of what the scholastics had added. As noted in the previous chapter, he reserved some of his harshest scorn for the little *logicalia* of the Paris theologians, which he believed had in fact obscured the Stagirite's work and dialectics generally.[100] Consistent with this attitude, in the introduction of the *Erotemata dialectices* the praeceptor found it necessary to justify publishing *any* such work on this subject, given the unusable and so worthless mess he found scholasticism had made of it. For as he there wrote:

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[97]   Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate,* 167-168.

[98]   Ashworth, "Developments in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," 627.

[99]   Ibid., 631. As an example of such a claim about Renaissance humanism, Ashworth points the reader to Lisa Jardine, "Humanism and the Teaching of Logic" in Norman Kretzmann et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosohy* (Cambridge University Press, 1982). See also Bonnie Kent, "Die transformation des aristoteilischen Organon durch Lorenzo Valla," in Lohr Kessler, and Sparn, 53-74; Lisa Jardine "Humanistic Logic," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 173-198; and Wilhelm Risse, *Die Logik der Neuzeit: I, 1500–1640* (Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1964).

[100]   See also Melanchthon's oration of 1523 "In Praise of Eloquence," CR 11:50-66; tr. in Kusukawa, *Orations,* 60-78, esp. 74-75.

> But it is plausible that before our times dialectic came to be scorned and hated, because what was taught was not the art itself but some vague shadow of the art, and indeed inextricable labrynths were displayed which not even the teachers understood. So far were they removed from being able to assist those engaged in other arts that they were corrupting them.[101]

In contrast, Melanchthon states his intention to present the "true uncorrupted and original" dialectic which he has learned from Aristotle and his commentators, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Boethius. This dialectic, truly useful for those engaged in Church life and other practical matters will be "erudite, respectful, serious and loving of truth, and…not garrulous, quarrelsome, or deceitful."[102]

Furthermore, a review of the *Erotemata dialectices* reveals that in fact it does parallel the works of Aristotle's *Organon* rather closely. Book One[103] deals with predication, predicables, and definitions, closely following Aristotle's *Categories*. Book Two treats of types and modes of propositions, including oppositions and conversions, following Aristotle's *On Interpretation*.[104] Book Three deals with syllogisms, following the *Prior Analyics* and *Posterior Analytics*.[105] Book Four deals in part with fallacies or unsound arguments, reflecting Aristotle's *Sophistic Refutations.*[106]

Space will not allow and the present project does not require a thorough examination of the contents of each of these portions of the *Erotemata dialectices* here. It will suffice to concede that while such an examination clearly warrants further study, Melanchthon's dialectics does seem to contain a rather straightforward summary of Aristotle's presentation in the *Organon* of the elements which make up formal

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[101]   Melanchthon, "Dedicatory letter to the *Questions on Dialectics,"* in Kusukawa *Orations,* 84-89, here 85; CR 6:654.

[102]   Ibid.

[103]   CR 13: 514-578.

[104]   CR 13: 577-594.

[105]   CR 13: 593-642.

[106]   CR 13: 641-752.

deductions. It is, however, a profound error to fail to recognize that this is far from all that the *Erotemata dialectics* contains. To suggest that Melanchthon conceived of dialectics merely as treating of syllogisms and their parts or elements is to fail to take half of Melanchthon's dialectics into account, thus to present a distorted view of it.

For Melanchthon, syllogistic deduction is the central concern of just one part of dialectics, or one power which is developed through dialectics, namely, *iudicium*. As Melanchthon describes *iudicium*:

> it separates expressions, judges which are correctly connected, and which are not. It further distinguishes between propositions and judges when the parts are correctly bound together in syllogisms and in other forms of arguments. [107]

Iudicium can thus be identified with the power for logical thinking, or with the task in rhetoric of arrangement or *dispositio*. And yet according to Melanchthon, the work and product of *iudicium* comprise only half of the matter with which dialectics deals.

3. *Inventio*

a. What is *inventio*?

Melanchthon writes at the outset of the fourth book of *Erotemata dialectices* that in addition to *iudicium*,

> another part [of dialectics] is *inventio*, which advises, in what way things ought to be investigated, either the case/image of things by/in aggregate, points to binding it, which things illuminate the material at hand. [108]

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[107]   CR 13: 641. "[Iudicatrix] discernit voces, iudicat, quae recte connectantur, quae non recte iungantur. Discernit et propositiones, et iudicat, quando recte cohaerunt membra in syllogismus, et caetris formis argumentorum..."

[108]   Ibid. "Alter pars est Inventrix, quae monet, quomodo res investigandae sint, aut propositio rerum cumulo, docet eligere ea, quae presentem materiam illustrant…"

Inventio is a Latin translation of the Greek *heurêsis*, a concept appearing in Aristotle's *Topics* as well as in his *Rhetoric*. Either word could be rendered into English as "finding," or "discovery," or "invention." *Heurêsis* is for Aristotle the activity of discovering or inventing new arguments, ideas, or concepts. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric* the discovery of arguments becomes one of the most important tasks of the orator, and as noted above for Melanchthon the task of finding the *scopus*, *status causa*, and arguments around which to construct a speech is a very important important *officia* of the orator.[109]

Aristotle's most complete treatment of *heurēsis* is in his *Topics,* in which he treats of dialectical syllogisms or where, as he puts it, he "proposes to find a line of inquiry whereby we shall be able to reason from reputable opinions about any subject presented to us…"[110] This task first requires his providing a very brief account of deductive reasoning. Having accomplished this, he quickly turns in the *Topics* to ask just how the inquirer is able to come up with the particular deductions which will conduce to further understanding of that which is being spoken about, or which will in any case further the case of the speaker. He thus writes:

> If we were to grasp with reference to how many, and what kind of, things arguments take place, and with what materials they start, and how we are to become well supplied with these, we should have sufficiently won our goal."[111]

Until one has done this, according to Aristotle, one has not given a complete account of how one constructs arguments, and much of the *Topics* is dedicated to Aristotle's process for pursuing this sort of discovery.

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[109] See Carolyn Miller, "The Aristotelian Topos: Hunting for Novelty," in Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer, eds., *Rereading Aristotle's* Rhetoric (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 130-148. On the question of whether Melanchthon's dialectics developed more of an emphasis on *inventio* over *iudicium* over time, see Richard Pozzo, "Melanchthon and the Paduan Aristotelians: The Shift from the Topics to the Analytics," in Frank and Meerhoff, 53-65.

[110] Aristotle, *Topics* 1.1 100a20; in Barnes, 167.

[111] Ibid., 101b11-13; 169.

At the turn of the twenty-first century scholars of rhetoric have suggested that Aristotle's *heurēsis* and Cicero's *inventio* should be understood as the power of imagination or creative thinking.[112] What is more, scholars have recognized that the rhetorical tradition regarded *inventio* as a power prior to and necessary for the exercise of deductive reasoning, and for the establishment of any system of scientific knowledge. This point has been expressed with particular eloquence, as Schneider has pointed out, by Ernesto Grassi in his book *Rhetoric as Philosophy: the Humanist Tradition.*[113]

Grassi claims that both the Roman humanistic tradition and what he refers to as "rationalist" traditions in philosophy have recognized that scientific knowledge consists of a system of inter-related deductions ultimately based in propositions regarded as fundamental truths. As both Roman humanism and such philosophical rationalisms have recognized, according to Grassi, "After discovering a first truth on which to build a system of sciences, *the entire scientific process necessarily consists of a strict rational deduction.*"[114] And yet unlike rationalist philosophies, whether of the medieval scholastics or of Descartes, Italian humanism recognized that "the thesis that philosophy must restrict itself to this process [i.e., of deduction] is untenable… mainly because deduction presupposes another activity, the very activity of 'finding.'"[115] That is, "the premises from which conclusions are drawn have to be 'perceived' to begin with."[116]

Grassi writes, following sixteenth century humanist Giambatista Vico, that this original perception requires *ingenium*, a power distinct from the deductive activity of

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[112]   See James Jasinski's entry "Invention," in *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001) 326-331.

[113]   Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition* (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), especially 18-67. John Schneider first drew attention to the importance of Grassi's insights for understanding Melanchthon in *Oratio Sacra,* 25-50.

[114]   Grassi, 41.

[115]   Ibid.

[116]   Ibid., 45.

ratio. "Ingenium," accordingly, "is the source of the creative activity of topics."[117] Melanchthon's, account of dialectics indeed seems to be based in the insight which Grassi highlights here, though the praeceptor expressed it in the vocabulary of Cicero and Quintillian, in that Melanchthon treats of *inventio* and *iudicium* rather than of *ingenium* and *ratio*.

b. Methods of *inventio*

But what can be said about how to discover or propose ideas or arguments? Philosophers and rhetoricians have historically suggested several ways.[118] Some have proposed that there can be no particular method for *inventio*, but that it operates by means of spontaneous inspiration. Inspiration has in turn been understood either as the discovery of something within the writer's own soul (as in Plato's conception of memory in the *Meno*), as the result of the communication of something within one's spirit by another, disembodied, spirit (as in the Homeric appeal to the muses), or as the unaided product of creative genius (a Romantic conception, perhaps one with which the contemporary reader will be most comfortable).[119] All of these have in common the notion that there is no art or techique for *inventio*, but rather that ideas come to one through artless inspiration.

Others have insisted that just as there is an externally applicable method for judging the validity of arguments, so must there be an external method applicable to the invention of ideas and arguments. Of these external methods two are of particular importance to Melanchthon. Some authors have suggested that *inventio* is spurred on by

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117   Ibid.
118   In addition to Jasinski, see George Kennedy, 100-108.
119   Jasinski 327.

imitating the example of other inventive minds.[120] Melanchthon believed that the

imitation of powerful speeches by eloquent orators is an essential aspect of the education

of an orator, "for if nature does not prevent, imitation makes men eloquent, just as it

makes men efficient in other fields."[121] And of course, the master of style, the author

most to be imitated was, for Melanchthon, Cicero. As the praeceptor urges:

> Why does the experienced teacher having found a student with a productive and
> rich mind not encourage and urge him to strive to master Cicero, to attend him
> with his whole heart and mind, not encourage him to write according to his
> example…[122]

And yet Melanchthon stressed the usefulness of imitation for the exercise of *elocutio* or

style rather than either *inventio* or *iudicium*; his treatment of immitation thus occurs in

Book Two of his *Elementorum rhetorices*.[123]

　　The rhetorical tradition generally, including works by Aristotle,[124] Cicero,[125] and

Quintillian[126] insisted that the proper method of *inventio* consisted of approaching a

matter at hand by asking a set of stock questions about it; this investigation would

suggest ideas or arguments, perhaps by means of verbal or conceptual association.   This

is the path that Melanchthon follows in his dialectics. At the outset of Book Four of

Erotemata dialectices, in a section entitled *De locis argumentorum,* Melanchthon

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[120]　　For the importance of imitation to Cicero, see Donovan Ochs "Cicero's Rhetorical Theory with Synopses of Cicero's Seven rhetorical Works," in James Murphy and Richard Katula, eds. *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric* (Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 157 ff. For imitation in Quintillian see James Murphy, "Roman Educational and Rhetorical Theory with a Synopsis of Quintillian's *Institutio Oratoria* in Murphy and Kutila, 209-210. For imitation in Augustine, see Craig Smith, *Rhetoric and Human Consciousness: A History* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 2003), 167.

[121]　　CR 13:492 "Nam imitatio, si natura non repugnet, sicut aliarum rerum artifices, ita et eloquentes efficit," tr. LaFontaine 301.

[122]　　CR 13:496-497: "Cur autem prudens praeceptor natum ingenium foecundum et copiosum, non hortetur, non incitet, ut complecti Ciceronem et in eum tota mente, totoque animo intueri et ad ipsium exemplum , totum se componere student…" tr. LaFontaine, 316-317.

[123]　　CR 13: 459 ff.

[124]　　 See Forbes I. Hill, "Arsitotle's Rhetorical Theory with a Synopsis of Aristotle's Rhetoric," in Murphy and Katula, 58-125, esp. 114-115; also Miller, op. cit.

[125]　　See Kennedy, 102-108.

[126]　　George Kennedy, *Quintillian* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), 59-77.

provides an example of *inventio* at work. He there likens the dialectician's engagement

with *inventio* to a physician examining a patient with an irregular or rapid heart rate:

> By relating external signs such as the speed or inequality of arterial pulses, the
> Medicus following the locus 'from effects' knows the cause of the sign inquired
> into. That is, he asks about the origin of the pulse, namely the heart, thence why
> the heart should be excited.[127]

In this case of attempting to understand why a patient's pulse rate may be so high,

according to Melanchthon the physician will ask a series of questions about it. "From

effects," or in interrogative form "What are the effects?" is an example of one such

question. "From effects" or "What are the effects?" is thus an example of a dialectical

topic or *locus*, according to Melanchthon. In the example given, the doctor would

exercise *inventio* by asking a series of such topical questions which would lead her to

propose a diagnosis of the patient's condition, as well as a prescription for treatment.

"This art," of examining phenomena through a stock set of questions, Melanchthon

explains, "is called *topikê*, that is, the teaching of *loci*, which are, as it were, indexes of

things, whether of investigating or of joining them together."[128]

c. *Loci* in Melanchthon's Dialectics

But what questions, *topoi*, or *loci* does this method include? It seems that there

are for Melanchthon somewhat different sets of *loci*, proper to differing objects of

inquiry. As Neal Gilbert reported, in book one of the *Erotemata dialectices* Melanchthon

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[127] CR 13:641: "Medicus propositio signo externo, ut velocitate, vel inequalitate pulsus arteriae, sequitur locum ab effectu, scit signi huius querendam esse causam, hoc est, fontem pulsus, scilicet cor quaerit deinde, unde cor incensum sit."

[128] Ibid. "Haec ars vocatur topike. id est, doctrina locorum, qui sunt velut indices rerum, vel investigandarum, vel eligendarum…"

presents the "questions of the method" (*methodi quaestiones*) applicable to words or

concepts (*voces*). The praeceptor explains:

> What are the questions of the method? When one is to speak of a particular expression, these ten questions show the way.   First, what does the word signify? Second, whether there is such a thing? Third, what is the thing? Fourth, what are its parts? Fifth, what are its species? Sixth, what are its causes? Seventh, what are its effects? Eighth, what things are adjacent to it? Ninth, what things are cognate to it? Tenth, what things are repugnant to it?[129]

As Gilbert notes, Melanchthon claims that this set of questions has its origin in

Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and *Topics*.[130] According to Melanchthon, having asked

all the appropriate topical questions about a word of phrase, one will have become, as

Aristotle might put it, "well supplied" with material which can form the basis of

arguments about any concept or *voce*.

But contrary to Gilbert, the above is not the only set of questions Melanchthon

presents in the *Erotemata dialectices* for the employment of *inventio*. For while the

above-listed *methodi quaestiones* presented in Book One are appropriate for coming to

understand words, these questions are not sufficient for helping one understand persons

and things, and so there are sets of questions appropriate for each of these. Melanchthon

lists the *loci* to be applied to persons as "native land, way of life, sex (male or female),

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[129]   CR 13:573: "**Quot sunt methodi quaestiones?**
Cum de una voce dicendum est, viam monstant hae decem quaestiones.
Prima, quid vocabulum significet.
Secunda, an sit res.
Terita, quid sit res.
Quarta, quae sint rei partes.
Quinta, quae sint species.
Sexta, quae causa.
Septima, qui effetcus.
Octava, quae adiecentia.
Nona, quae cognata.
Decima, quae pugnantia."
Cf. Neal Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 126-127.

[130]   Ibid.

parents, education, customs, social station, moral qualities, events, place in history, and death."[131] Having attempted to answer the questions relative to these *topoi*, one will have attained a sense of the significance of the life of the person. One who reads any of Melanchthon's orations on figures such as Plato can see the reflection of these *loci personarum*.[132]

Perhaps most important for Melanchthon's approach to natural philosophy, he presents a list of 28 questions for investigating things *(res)*:

1. Definition, 2. Genus, 3. Species, 4. Differentia or propria, 5. Etymology or name, 6. Things joined to it, 7. Whole and parts, 8. Division, 9. Causes, 10. Effects, 11. Antecedents, 12. Consequences, 13. Form the absurd, 14. From what is necessary, 15. From what is impossibie, 16. Adjuncts, 17. Circumstances or connections, 18. Common accidents, 19. Things similar, 20. Things comparable, 21. From the major, 22. From the minor, 23 From proportions, 24. Things repugnant to it, 25. Things separate from it, 26. Signs, 27. Exemplars, 28. Authorities and testimonies.[133]

All of these sets of loci are Melanchthon's means of engaging *inventio* through the systematic application of topical questions. Coming to understanding Melanchthon's use of these *topoi* or *loci* will be a final step essential to understanding his dialectic and its role in philosophy and in rhetoric. And this will require both a brief review of the several ways *topoi* or *loci* were conceived of up to Melanchthon's time, as well as a closer look into his claims about them in *Erotemata dialectices*.

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[131]   CR 13:659-662, where *Patria, Regula, Sexus, Parentes, Educatio, Mores, Vitae Genus, Res Gestae, Eventus, Aetas, Mors*, are sub-headings, under the topic "*Loci personarum*," each receiving their own explanation

[132]   Kusukawa, *Orations,* 189-264 provides a fine sample of translations of Melanchthon's examination of the lives of Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna, Galen, Rudolph Agricola, Regiomontanus, Erasmus, and Luther.

[133]   CR 13:663-642: "Sunt igitur hi loci (rerum): 1. Definitio et definitum. 2 Genus. 3 Species. 4 Differentia, Proprium. 5. Etymologia, Nomen. 6 Coniugata, Causus. 7 Totum, Partes. 8 Divisio. 9 Causae. 10 Effectus. 11 Antecedentia. 12 Consequentia. 13 Ab Absurdo. 14 A necessario. 15 Ab impossibili. 16 Adiuncta. 17 Connexa, Circumstantia. 18 Communiter accidentia. 19 Similia. 20 Paria. 21 Ex maiore. 22 Ex minore. 23 A proportione. 24 Pugnantia. 25 Disparata. 26 Signa. 27 Exempla. 28 Autoritas, Testimonia," CR 13: 663; Melanchthon explains only the first eight of these before transitioning to Book Four.

d. Melanchthon's Conception of and Use of *Loci*

Both the Greek word *topos* and the Latin equivalent *loci* literally translate as "place." There were at least four important stages of development of the use of *topics* or *loci* in the rhetorical tradition, and Melanchthon received, accepted, and adapted elements of each of these to some degree.[134] For the pre-Socratic Greeks, *topos* suggested, perhaps much as does the word "topic" for the twenty-first century reader, a theme, image, concept or idea about which one might wish to speak, and thus about which one might collect sayings, anecdotes, or figures of speech.[135] Thus the contemporary reader refers to a "topic of conversation" or searches a "topical index" in a scholarly or technical book. This most ancient sense of "topic" seems to have persisted through or to have been revived in the Renaissance in the practice of compiling "commonplace books," which were compilations of figures or illustrations associated with and listed under particular terms as under headings. Erasmus's *Copia* and *Adagia* have been widely recognized as the primary sixteenth century examples.[136]

The conception of *topoi* in Aristotle's *Topics* and *Rhetoric* shows an expansion of this most ancient idea. Rather than consisting of catchy or moving literary figures, for the Stagirite *topoi* "function as a 'process of inference'…or are used heuristically to assist in the 'discovery of inferential connections'"[137] as one commentator has put it. In

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[134] "Topos," in Jasinski, 578-581 is again especially helpful on this history. See also Richard McKeon, *Rhetoric: Essays in Invention and Discovery* (Woodbridge, CT: Oxbox, 1987), 37-55; also the references throughout Murphy and Katula, esp. 337, and Kennedy, 345.

[135] Jasinski, 578.

[136] Ibid., 580; also Kennedy, 244-245 .

[137] Jasinski 578, quoting, in part M. C. Leff, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention from Latin Rhetorical theory from Cicero to Boethius," *Rhetorica,* 1 (1983), 26, 29. See also Eleanor Stump, "Boethius and Peter of Spain on the Topics," in Michael Masi, Ed., *Boethius and the Liberal Arts: A Collection of Essays* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1981), 35, where she writes, "For Aristotle, a dialectical Topic is a

Aristotelian dialectical reasoning the use of these *topoi* would yield non-controversial but

other-than absolutely certain propositions, that is, *endoxa*. *Topoi* in this sense were thus

for the Stagirite the very kinds of propositions which, when used in a syllogism,

determined it to be dialectical syllogism rather than a demonstration. Thus the use of

topoi was limited by Aristotle to persuasive speech, that is, rhetoric, or, more specifically,

to probabilistic, that is, "dialectical" argumentation used within rhetoric.

Two further crucial turns in the conceptualizing of topics arose through the

Roman rhetorical tradition. For Cicero as for Aristotle *topoi* were used in the discovery

of claims to be used in arguing. But then, as pointed out above, for Cicero *endoxa*

provided the surest footing available for argument in philosophy, since he rejected any

dogmatic claim to possession of primary and certainly-true propositions such as Aristotle

claimed for his *archai*. This meant that for Cicero, contra Aristotle, loci provided the

most reliable basis for any form of argumentation. Furthermore, since Cicero agreed with

the Aristotelian claim that *topoi* were the province of rhetoric, Cicero, and following him

Quintillian, conceived of rhetoric as containing within it all valid inference, all deductive

reasoning. So it was that for Cicero and Quintillian rhetoric unambiguously

encompassed logic as well as all that could usefully be said of any subject, including

ethics and natural philosophy.[138]

Finally, Eleanor Stump has pointed out that Boethius, five hundred years after

Cicero, tended to identify dialectics with the art of finding or discovering arguments.[139]

That is, dialectics was for Boethius just that part of dialectics which Cicero, and a

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strategy of argumentation or a basic principle by means of which a number of particular arguments can be constructed."
[138] M. C. Leff, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention from Latin Rhetorical theory from Cicero to Boethius, *Rhetorica,* 1 (1983): 23-44; cf. Jasinski 580, 581.
[139] Stump, "Boethius and Peter of Spain," 35.

thousand years after Boethius, Melanchthon, referred to as *inventio*. As with Cicero,

dialectics was for Boethius largely concerned with *topics*. But unlike Cicero, Stump

notes, "Boethius recognizes two different sorts of things as Topics." On the one hand, he

included in this term "generalizations which are self-evidently true, not proved on the

basis of or derived from other propositions." Examples include propositions such as

"Things whose definitions are different are themselves also different,"[140] and "That to

which the definition of a genus does not belong is not a species of the genus defined."[141]

Being self-evident, this sort of Boethian topic would correspond not to Aristotle's

endoxa, as (as all topics did for Cicero), but rather to the Stagirites *archai*. Boethius

referred to topics in this sense as "maximal propositions."

But just as significantly, Boethius conceived of another sort of topic, which he

called "*differentia*." As Stump elsewhere explains, in this sense:

> Topics are [for Boethius] theoretically the differentiae dividing the genus *maximal
> proposition* into its subaltern genera and species, and in that capacity they do
> serve to classify maximal propositions into groups. Some maximal propositions
> have to do with definition, for example, and others with genus; so *from definition*
> and *from genus* are differentiae.[142]

Now, Melanchthon's treatment of *topoi* (though he generally seems to prefer the Latin

terms *loci* or *loci commune*) reflects to some extent each of the four accounts of given

above: the pre-Aristotelian, the Aristotelian, Cicero's and that of Boethius. To begin

with, Melanchthon explicitly cites Boethius as influential to his own dialectics.[143] When

the praeceptor identifies his *methodi quaestiones* with the *ars topikê* he seems to be

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[140]   Ibid 36, quoting Boethius' *De topicis differentiis* 11185, D2
[141]   Ibid, quoting *De topicis differentiis* 1187, A13
[142]   Stump, "Topics: Their Development and Absorption into Consequences," in Kretzman and
Pinborg, 274.
[143]   Thus Melanchthon writes in his "Dedicatory letter to *Questions on Dialectics*": "I, on the other
hand, profess the true uncorrupted and original dialectic, which we have received from Aristotle as well as
from some of his reliable commentators, Alexander of Aphrodisias and Boethius," Kusukawa, *Orations,*
86; CR 6:655.

following Boethius in conceiving of topics as differentiae; indeed, the praeceptor's

dialectical *loci rerum* include the Boethian *differentiae* "from definition" and "from

genus*."*

Second, perhaps most obvious to anyone who has perused Melanchthon's most

famous work, Melanchthon sometimes uses "*loci"* as equivalent to "headings," following

the pre-Aristotelian conception. For the material in his *Loci communes theologici* is

presented according to key-words or essential concepts.[144] Melanchthon organizes other

written works under headings presented as questions, as the *Erotemata dialectices* itself,

the first several headings of which are "Quid est dialectices?" "Quod est proprium

Dialectices opus seu officium?" and "Cicrca quas res versatur Dialectices?",[145]

corresponding to his *loci dialecticorum definitio, propria,* and *totum, partes.*

Third, Melanchthon approves of the pre-Aristotelian conception of *topoi* to the

extent of asserting that the orator will benefit from collecting and categorizing literary

figures, quotations, and so forth about given subjects. As he wrote in *Elementorum*

rhetorices libri duo:

> In the meanwhile, however, the business of collecting the sayings from various
> writers has some usefulness, particularly during adolescence. For they contain
> many embellishments of words and many figurative expressions….and the older
> sayings are cited not only because of their elegance, but also because of their
> authority; for, they have as it were the value of a testimony, since they have been
> drawn from great men.[146]

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[144]   As Melanchthon writes in the dedicatory letter to the *Loci communes theologici*, "The usual main
headings in theology are as follows: God, Unity, Trinity, Creation…" in Pauck, 20-21; CR 21: 83-84.
[145]   CR 13: 513-514.
[146]   CR 13: 453: "Interim tamen hoc studium colligendi dicta scriptorum, habet aliquam utilitatem,
praesertim in adolescentia. Habent enim multa lumina verborum et multas figuras…Neque solus propter
venustatem citantur, sed etiam autoritatem, habent enim velut pondus testimonii, quia a magnis viris
proditae sunt…" tr. LaFontaine, 196.

And yet, it must be stressed, Melanchthon objects to referring to these collections or their contents as *topoi*, *loci* or *loci communes* of those subjects. This is made explicit in *Erotemata dialectices* where he writes:

> Some believe they have commonplaces (*locos communes*) at their disposal, when they have amassed sentences which they have excerpted here and there from the poets and orators. And because they proclaim that the accumulation of notable sayings is the perfect learning, they have no other purpose in reading the writings except to pick from them—just like flowers—certain sayings. In the meanwhile, they learn no art perfectly, they do not understand any writing in its entirety, and they consider nowhere the entire character of rhetoric.[147]

In rejecting the notion that *topoi* as the contents contained within a heading were merely ornamental, Melanchthon thus fell in line with Aristotle, Cicero, and Boethius against the pre-Aristotelian conceptualization of *loci*.

Fourth, then, contrary to those who "proclaim that the mere accumulation of notable sayings is the perfect learning," Melanchthon reflects Cicero in also using the words *topoi* and *loci* to mean "the main points of doctrine"[148] or "the main point in all kinds of doctrine, which contain the font and summa of those arts."[149] *Loci* in this sense for Melanchthon, as Stump writes, "are the principles that give arguments their force and the generalizations on which arguments depend."[150] And so in this sense *loci* are at least reliable propositions equivalent to Ciceronian or Aristotelian *endoxa,* and perhaps to . Boethian maximal propositions or Aristotelian *arxai*.

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[147]   CR 13: 452: "Quidem putant se locos comunes tenere, cum de variis rebus coaservatas sententias habent, quas passim ex poetis et oratoribus excerpserunt. Et quia iudicant hanc coacervationem insignium dictorum, perfectam esse doctrinam, nihil habent consilii in legendis autoribus, nisi ut inde tanquam flores, dicta quaedam deceperant. Interim nullam artem perfecte discunt., nullum intellegunt, nusquam totum orationis genus considerant." Tr. LaFontaine, 194.

[148]   CR 13:542: "Sed sumamus exempla ab ecclesiasticus concionibus, quae prorsus ociosae erunt, nisi ad *praecipuos locos doctrinae* Christianae referantur," tr. LaFontaine, 191.

[149]   Ibid.: "in omni doctrinae genera praecipua capita, quae fontes et summa artis continent," tr. LaFontaine, 193.

[150]   Stump in Masi, 35.

Finally, Melanchthon writes, "*Locus dialecticus est sedes argumenti*," that is, "a dialectical locus is a basis of an argument."[151] The term "*sedes argumenti*" was coined by Cicero, who in turn believed it faithfully represented Aristotle's conception of and function of *topoi*. For, the Roman orator wrote in *Topica* 1. 7-8:

> It is easy to find things hidden if the hiding place (*locus*) is pointed out and marked; similarly, if we wish to track down some argument we ought to know the places or topics (*locos*). For that is the name given by Aristotle to the "regions" (*sedes*), as it were, from which arguments are drawn. Accordingly, we may define a topic (*locum*) as the region of an argument (*argumenti sedem*)…[152]

> But the term "*sedes argumentorum*" itself seems to have had several meanings, at least in Melanchthon's usage, corresponding to the conceptualization of *loci* as dialectical questions, as headings under which principles are listed, and as the principles contained within such headings. In examining a concept, a locus in the sense of a question such as "what is the definition?" is for Melanchthon the *sedes argumenti* in that it is the "seat," or "foundation" the origin of an examination of the topic, the starting point from which the argument will develop. Then too, understood as a heading containing claims about a subject, a *locus* is the *sedes* in the sense of being a "region" or heading under which or within which one could finds the principle points of teaching, or an index showing "whence the material is to be brought out by which a proposition in question is to be confirmed."[153]

Finally, whether Melanchthon understood *loci* as corresponding merely to *endoxa* or to *arxai*, they serve for him as those premises upon the truth of which the truth of the conclusion of a syllogism depends. That is, they serve as major propositions in

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[151]   CR 13: 659.
[152]   Cicero, Topica I, 7-8; tr. in Hubbell, 386-387.
[153]   CR 13: 659" (Locus dialecticus est sedes argumenti seu index, monstrans) ex quo confirmanda est propositio, de qua dubitas," tr. Breen, "Melanchthon's Reply," 205.

syllogisms, serving as well to spark the imagination. As Melanchthon, writes in the

Elementorum rhetorices, "In every proof, the major is begotten by some *locus*

communis."[154] As LaFontaine writes, for Melanchthon:

> The commonplace contains the major premise of the syllogism; it contains every
> plan for persuading and moving minds to virtue and away from vice; the places
> are fonts and ornaments of regions or arguments; the places contain not only the
> virtues and vices but the chief ideas in every kind of doctrine which are the font
> and summation of the art.[155]

With a bit of work one can see Melanchthon putting *loci communes* to work as

major premises in his discussion of *loci dialectici rerum* in Book Four of *Erotemata*

dialectices. Throughout this section he lists numerous enthymemes for which *loci*

communes as maximal propositions serve as major premises, though they are not

explicitly stated. Thus he provides as an example of the *regulam de specie* (with the

assumed maximal proposition inserted by the reader):

> This is a man.
> (Man is an animal.)
> Therefore, this is an animal.[156]

and as an example of the *locus proprium*:

> This stone attracts iron.
> (A magnet is a stone that attracts iron.)
> Therefore, this is a magnet.[157]

It is the mastery of the *loci* or maximal propositions of any area of expertise or

knowledge—such as natural philosophy—which make it possible to understand such

enthymenes, by providing the missing major premises, according to Melanchthon. Thus,

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[154]   CR 13: 452: "Etenim fere in omni probatione, maior nascitur ex aliquo communi loco," tr.
LaFontaine, 64.

[155]   In fact, LaFontaine, misattributes this to the *Elementorum rhetorices libri duo*, CR 13:454; tr.
LaFontaine, 64, n.1..

[156]   CR 13: 666 :   "Homo est,
                            igitur animal est,".

[157]   CR 13: 667   "Hic lapis trahit ferrum,
                            Est igitur Magnes".

he writes, "Each person must know the principle *loci* of his own art, so that when something is said within it, the proper *loci* will immediately present themselves."[158] Armed with these *loci* one will be able to apply syllogistic reasoning to advance one's understanding of the subject of the art in which one is working, including moral and natural philosophy.

D. Summary and Conclusion

For Melanchthon dialectics consists of the cooperation of *inventio* and *iudicium*. In dialectics one first uses the art of *topike*, that is, the *methodi questiones* to find, categorize, examine, and establish reliable propositions and arguments about that which one wishes to discuss. Second, one employs *iudicium* to test the syllogistic arguments produced, closely following Aristotle's analytical method. Through dialectics one can construct speech of the *genus didaskalikon*, but by dressing up the contents of it through *elocutio*, one can contsruct a properly rhetorical speech. Rhetoric consists of the two parts of dialectics plus the art of style or *elocutio*.

Understanding the two-fold nature of dialectics and three-fold nature of rhetoric in Melanchthon's mature account helps uncover several of the confusions and errors by which twentieth century interpretations of Melanchthon's method have gone wrong. The first of these is the aforementioned oversimplification of Melanchthon's dialectics to which historians of logic such as Ashworth and Jardine have fallen victim. This erroneous interpretation considers only Melanchthon's account of *iudicium* and ignores

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[158]   CR 13:452 "Sed unusquisque sciat de debere suae artis praecipuae locos tenere, ut cum aliqua de re discendum erit, statim offerent se idonei loci," tr. LaFontaine, 194.

the role of *inventio* in his dialectics. The method outlined in Melanchthon's *Erotemata dialectica* is more than a simplified Aristotelian analytics.

The second error is to regard Melanchthon's dialectics as merely the product of *inventio* and ignore the importance of *iudicium* and of syllogistic deduction for this art as the praeceptor conceives of it. This is the error to which Gilbert falls victim, for he erroneously reduced the praeceptor's entire dialectical method to his *methodus quaestiones*. Given this error, it is not hard to understand that Gilbert finds Melanchthon's dialectical method unsatisfactory and incomplete. Nor is it hard to see why he should be perplexed to find Melanchthon praised as the sixteenth century *artifex methodi* merely for presenting such a supposedly incomplete product.[159] Gilbert failed to see that for Melanchthon the *methodus questiones*, the method for exercising *inventio*, provided for Melanchthon raw material which could be used in syllogistic deductions to yield new knowledge, but that this topical method was only half of Melanchthon's dialectical method, the other half being the admittedly simplified version of Aristotle's syllogistic method.

Third, the present account of Melanchthon's mature treatments of rhetoric and dialectic helps clear up part of the confusion noted at the beginning of this chapter regarding the relation between these two arts in Melanchthon's thought. Whatever further studies may reveal about how Melanchthon's conception of the rhetoric-dialectic relationship developed over the course of his career, the above examination of Melanchthon's final textbooks on rhetoric and dialectics at least indicates that by the time he completed his most mature treatment of the language arts, his *Elementorum rhetorices*

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[159] Thus Gilbert puzzles, regarding the praeceptor and his *methodus quaestiones*, "This rather superficial doctrine is hardly sufficient to justify the reputation which Melanchthon himself soon gained as *artifex methodi.*" Gilbert, 127.

libri duo in 1531, his position on this relationship was clear. Since by this time he

primarily regarded dialectic as the art of teaching and the art of teaching as a constituent

part—along with the art of *elocutio*—of the art of rhetoric, dialectics was, in

Melanchthon's mature thought, understood to be a part of rhetoric.

Melanchthon indeed claimed in the *Elementorum rhetorices*, "Rhetoric is so

closely linked to dialectics that the two cannot be completely separated."[160] And yet he

pointed out that the two arts can be distinguished from one another in that "Dialectics

presents the bare matter, while rhetoric adds, so to speak, the vesture of words."[161] This

distinction has important implications for both arts. First, it means that contrary to

Aristotle, for whom appeals to *logos*, i.e., to dialectical reasoning, were but one means of

rhetorical persuasion, for Melanchthon all rhetoric is to have a sound dialectical argument

at its heart. As the praeceptor wrote, "the rhetoricians cannot do without a method of

teaching."[162]

But while no proper rhetorical speech can be without a dialectical argument at its

core, not all valuable speech is, according to the praeceptor, rhetorical. This is the

implication of Melanchthon's introduction of the *genus didaskalikon* in his *Elementorum*

rhetorices. The addition of this genus was a clear departure from the rhetorical tradition

on Melanchthon's part, even if he did believe that it was consistent with the general view

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[160]   CR 13:420: "Ita admixta dialectica rhetoricae, non potest ab ea prorsus divelli." Tr. LaFontaine 86
[161]   CR 13:420 : "Verum hoc interesse dicunt, quod dialectica res nudas proponit. Rhetorica vero addit elocutionem quasi vestitum." Tr. LaFontaine, 83.
[162]   Ibid.: "ratione docendi rhetores non poterat carere."

of Cicero and other more contemporary "learned and erudite men"[163] who follow "the principles of dialectics in teaching and then add elocution from rhetoric."[164]

Finally, while dialectical speech of the *genus didaskalikon* is, according to the *praeceptor*, extremely important even if it is not properly rhetorical, Melanchthon did not believe that knowledge should be sought through dialectics as an end in itself. Rather, dialectical speeches of the *genus didaskalikon* are to be prepared with the intention of providing matter for subsequent, properly rhetorical speeches, which are in turn prepared with the intention of moving human beings to the improvement of life. In fact, Melanchthon suggests that portions of speeches of the *genus didaskalikon* could almost be perceived within speeches of any of the proper rhetorical genera. For example, as he points out, the *genus demonstrativum*, that genus whereby the orator exhorts the audience to support a law is very close to the *genus didaskalikon*, since "it is based in the didactic method."[165] This is because in order to praise a law, one must first define and explain it, and one requires speech of the *genus didaskalikon* in order to do so.[166]

But what will be the *scopus* of speeches of the *genus didaskalikon*, as Melanchthon conceives of it? In the example just cited, some such speeches will explain laws. And as was made clear in Chapter Two above, Melanchthon conceives of ethics as dealing with the creation, correction, and explanation of laws and rules by which human society is to be ordered. Thus, according to Melanchthon, that field which deals with the

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[163]   Ibid.: "Et nostris temporibus idem faciunt homines eruditi et copiosi, cume docent homines de religione." Tr. Lafontaine, 84.

[164]   Ibid. "…Cicero in primo Officiorum, et in aliis multis dispuatationibus, praecepta dialectica sequitur in docendo, et addit elocutionem ex rhetorica.."

[165]   CR 13:421.:"Est autem *didaskalikon* genus, methodus illa docendi, quae traditur in dialectica, cuius particulam retinuerunt rhetores in statu finitivo. Est et demonstrativem genus, affine *didaskalikon* generi," tr. LaFontaine, 88-89.

[166]   Ibid."…ut si quis laudet leges, et de autoritate legum dicat, is definiet leges, et definitionem amplicficabit," tr. LaFontaine, 89.

consideration of laws and rules for human conduct, namely moral philosophy, is a dialectical enterprise. Likewise, as we saw exemplified just a few pages ago where Melanchthon syllogized about the magnet, natural philosophy was for him to be pursued through the application of dialectical method to observations about objects. Thus, according to this approach, natural and moral philosophy may be said to be dependent upon, and in this sense subordinated to dialectics

Moreover, if, according to Melanchthon's vision, these other parts of philosophy are importantly based upon dialectics, dialectics is pursued for the sake of rhetoric, and rhetoric is concerned with moving people to action, then both moral and natural philosophy will be pursued for the sake of moving people to action in some way. That is, philosophical understanding will not to be pursued for its own sake, as if the knowledge to be gained thereby were an autotelic good. To be sure, one could perhaps desire to be merely a dialectician or a seeker of knowledge, just as one might desire to be merely poetical, with no desire to use eloquence in order to affect some action. But in either case, to fail to strive to put one's knowledge or art to use for the good of others is to fall short of one's human ability. This is just why one must aspire to be neither merely eloquent nor merely a seeker after knowledge.

Instead, according to Melanchthon, the most highly developed human being will be one who is equal parts poet and philosopher, one who in the joint exercise of eloquence and philosophical erudition is capable not only of understanding the world and of speaking pleasingly, but is able to move people into action which will conduce to better life. Thus, in presenting his distinct view of philosophy, Melanchthon's account of the *artes logicales* points to an equally distinct understanding of human nature. To

provide a summary of Melanchthon's philosophy and anthropology will be the matter of the following chapter.

Chapter 4:
Melanchthon's Humanistic, Fideistic Philosophy

A. Introduction

In Chapter Two I found that the *artes logicales* were fundamental to the development of Melanchthon's thought. In Chapter Three I presented a basic understanding of Melanchthon's rhetoric and dialectic as well as their relation to one another in his most mature treatments of both arts. Having done so, it is now possible to step back to attempt an overall view of Melanchthon's philosophical principles and method. In order to do so the first part of this chapter will consider how dialectic and rhetoric determined and shaped Melanchthon's philosophy. The second part will consider the question of Melanchthon's philosophical "eclecticism" by examining how his dialectical, rhetorical philosophy guided or was guided by his appropriation of ideas from various authorities, including both what he calls the *sectae princupae philosophorum,* "the principle sects of philosophy," and Christian theology. The third section will consider the relationship between revelation and philosophy in Melanchthon's thought. More specifically, this third section will attempt to reveal how Melanchthon's reliance upon the authority of the Christian scriptures demanded both a measure of philosophical skepticism and the claim that there is at least some certainty available in and through revelation. The final section of this chapter will then attempt to characterize the foundation, scope, and goals of Melanchthon's philosophy.

B. Dialectics and Melanchthon's Philosophy

Throughout his career Melanchthon identified philosophy in two important ways. First, he consistently noted that it consists of three parts: logic, physics, and ethics.[1] Second, in his Colossians commentary, that work in which he first and most clearly delineated philosophy, he described philosophy in terms most useful for the classroom instructor: philosophy "teaches of matters subject to human reason,"[2] and is "the teaching of the divine law" insofar as "it is the knowledge of natural causes and effects."[3]

In ascribing to philosophy the task of teaching, however, Melanchthon closely identified philosophy with dialectics. For as the previous chapter revealed, Melanchthon primarily regarded *dialectics* as the very art of teaching.[4] At the beginning of *Erotemata dialectices*, for example, in answer to the question "About what things is dialectics concerned?" the praeceptor answered: "About all things about which humans are taught."[5] But just how does Melanchthon relate dialectics, the art of teaching to philosophy? Or rather, since in the last chapter we saw how Melanchthon portrayed the role and place of dialectics within the logical part of philosophy, the question remaining is: "What do the other two parts of philosophy as Melanchthon envisioned it, namely ethics and natural philosophy, have to do with dialectics, according to Melanchthon?"

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[1] CR 11:18. "Artium genera omnino tria sunt, λογικὸν, φυσικὸν, προτρεπτικόν." Cf. Keen, *Melanchthon Reader*, 50. In the portion of the Colossians commentary of 1527, labeled in CR 12: 689 as *De discrimine Euangelii et Philosophiae* (cf. Kusukawa, *Orations,* 23) Melanchthon writes "Philosophia continent artes dicendi, physiologiam et praecepta de civilibus moribus." Cf. also his oration of 1536 "De philosophia," CR 11: 278-84 (Kusukawa*, Orations,* esp. 128), and his letter to Pico CR 9: 687-703 (cf. Breen, "Melanchthon's Reply," esp. 418).

[2] Melanchthon, "On the distinction," in Kusukawa, Orations, 24.

[3] Ibid.

[4] See Chapter Three, above, 189.

[5] CR 13:514. "Circa quas res versatur Dialectices? Circa omnes materias seu questiones, de quibus docendi sunt homines."

In places it is not immediately clear that in Melanchthon's conception natural philosophy will have much if anything to do with dialectics. In an oration on natural philosophy in 1542 he described that discipline as "the knowledge of the physicians."[6] But in using this phrase Melanchthon almost appears to have meant to equate natural philosophy with a mere accumulation of observations: obsevations about the human body, about ways of treating illnesses of various kinds, and about the movements of the super luminaries. For he writes that the physicians, those who put natural philosophy to good use, are merely said to have "a general knowledge of the seeds of the body which we call the elements, of the temperaments, of the function and nature of the limbs and organs in humans, and…of the movements of the heavens and the various effects that accompany the motions."[7]

Furthermore, in his oration of 1540 praising the Hellenistic physician Galen, Melanchthon is content to speak of natural philosophy as "the examination and consideration of nature,"[8] where this examination is in the first place the "observation of separate things."[9] And it is at first hard for the reader to see how dialectics could be related to the gathering of or storing of such data. And so, while the above noted identifications of natural philosophy with the accumulation of observations of nature would be enough to falsify the claim that Melanchthon's natural philosophy is "no experiential science" within which there is no room for the empirical,[10] it leaves open a contrary objection that it consists merely of the accumulation of observations.

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6   Melanchthon, "On natural philosophy," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 134.
7   Ibid.
8   Melanchthon, "On the life of Galen," in Kusukawa, *Orations,* 212.
9   Ibid.
10   For Maurer and Frank on this claim, see Chapter One above, 68-69.

But natural philosophy is clearly more than the mere accumulation of observations for the praeceptor. For in addition to the need for "great and varied knowledge"[11] gained through observing the world, Melanchthon finds it both necessary and delightful that natural philosophy joins observations to one another into a coherent body of knowledge. As he wrote in his oration on Galen, "Furthermore, observing separate things, what is sweeter than to see the order and harmony of bodies in motion?"[12] But in order to join observations of particulars into what he elsewhere calls a "chain of concord"[13] the philosopher requires the right "method and style of discourse."[14]

It is the art of dialectics, including both of its parts, *inventio* and *iudicium*, that provides this method for Melanchthon. In the first place, in the *Erotemata dialectices* Melanchthon claims that individual observations made by the natural philosopher are bound together into something greater through the *iudicium*. As he writes:

> Now human cognition is always ordered in large part by sense, and the senses operate around singulars, and the progression from this first evidence is in experience; it is then clear enough then…that a syllogism portrays the relationship between these primary data (of sense). [15]

Natural philosophy is for Melanchthon "knowledge of causes and effects."[16] But understanding these causes and effects requires both the use of data collected by the senses and the organization of this data into a chain (*vinculum*) of syllogistic reasoning.

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[11]   Melanchthon, "On philosophy, " in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 128.

[12]   Melanchthon, "On the life of Galen," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 212.

[13]   Melanchthon, "Dedicatory letter to the *Questions on Dialectics*," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 84-89, here 86; CR 6:655. "Imo Dialectica opus est, non solum ut doctrina lucem habeat, sed etiam sit concordiae vinculum. Ut enim sit una et consentiens vox docentium, necesse est tenere doctrinae summam inclusam atrium septis, proprio sermone et ordine comprehensam."

[14]   Melanchthon, "On philosophy, " in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 128.

[15]   CR 13:620. "Cumque humana cognitio magna ex parte a sensu ordiatur, et sensus circa singularia versetur, hanc progressionem inter primas argumentationes esse in experientia, satis apparet, sicut supra diximus, syllogismum expositorium inter primas argumentationes esse."

[16]   Melanchthon, "On the distinction," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 24: "That philosophy is the law of God can also be understood from the fact that it is the knowledge of natural causes and effects, and since these are things arranged by God, it follows that philosophy is the law of God, which is the teaching of the divine order."

As he wrote in his Colossians commentary, "There is only one truth, as the philosophers say, therefore only one philosophy that is true, that is, the one that strays least from demonstrations,"[17] to wit, from the syllogistic reasoning taught in dialectics. "Thus," he wrote, "we call philosophy not all the beliefs of everyone, but only that teaching which has demonstrations."[18]

Dialectics is also an essential element of moral philosophy for Melanchthon. In the first place this is because, as just shown, dialectics is essential to natural philosophy, and, as he makes clear in numerous places, moral philosophy is based to an important degree in natural philosophy. In his Colossians commentary Melanchthon writes, for example, that the "natural causes and effects" which are the sole concern of natural philosophy are bases for moral philosophy as well. As he explains, these natural causes include not only "heavenly motions," but also those motions which take place in the human soul, that is, "the causes and effects which God has arranged in the mind of man,"[19] including the passions which move people to act.

Understanding such causes requires the application of *inventio* and *iudicium* to observations about the natural world, the former to discover or propose connections between events, the latter to arrange these connections into a string or chain of syllogistic reasoning. And since *inventio* and *iudicium* together comprise dialectics for Melanchthon, the development of a true and useful moral philosophy depends upon natural philosophy's use of dialectics. For this reason, as he writes in his *Philosophiae moralis epitome*, readers "should not reckon that anyone can become a master in this field [i.e.

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17   Ibid.
18   Ibid.
19   Ibid.

moral philosophy] without the other parts of philosophy."[20] And as he wrote in his

oration "On philosophy," here paraphrasing Cicero, "[O]ne who lacks a knowledge of

natural philosophy practices moral philosophy like a lame man holding a ball."[21]

But moral philosophy does not only use dialectics derivatively through its

dependence upon natural philosophy. It also uses *inventio* and *iudicium* more directly by

deriving particular moral laws from general practical principles implanted in the human

soul by God. The reader will recall that as early as his *Loci communes theologici* of 1521

Melanchthon believed he had discovered the most important of these innate ideas,

writing:

> The principle ones seem to be the following:
> 1. God must be worshipped.
> 2. Since we are born into a life that is social, nobody must be harmed.
> 3. Human society demands that we make common use of all things.[22]

But as he made clear then, he certainly did not believe that the above are all the laws to

be proposed within ethical philosophy. Rather, these are for Melanchthon merely the

foundation from which more specific laws are to be derived through dialectics. Years

later in the *Erotemata dialectices* Melanchthon provided a familiar example of the use of

a reliable principle in the syllogism to produce further knowledge:

> The end of any nature is the act specific to that nature.
> Pleasure is not the specifically human act, but the act of virtue (is).
> Pleasure is therefore not the end of the human.

"Upon this demonstration," Melanchthon writes, "Aristotle rightly built the teaching of

ethics."[23] Thus, Melanchthon believed that the development of ethics requires the use of

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[20]   Melanchthon, "Dedicatory letter to Melanchthon's *Epitome of Moral Philosophy,"* in Kusukawa *Orations,* 139-143, here 139; CR 3:359-61, 359.

[21]   Melanchthon, "On Philosophy," in Kusukawa, Orations, 129 (where Kusukawa attributes the saying to Cicero, *In Pisionem,* XVIII. 69).

[22]   Melanchthon, *Loci Communes*, in Pauck, 51; cf. Chapter Two above, 114-116.

the syllogism and the power of *iudicium*. "For when natural laws are being proclaimed," he wrote in the *Loci communes*, "it is proper that their formulas be collected by the method of human reason through the natural syllogism."[24]

But how, according to Melanchthon, is enquiry into natural and moral philosophy to be directed? How is one to know which observations to seek in these branches of philosophy, and in what order? As the previous chapter of this dissertation revealed, this is just where the *ars topikê*, the method of *inventio*, comes in for Melanchthon. And in fact an examination of the praeceptor's philosophical works from the *Philosophiae Moralis Epitomes libri duo*,[25] to the *Erotemata dialectices*,[26] to the *Liber de anima*,[27] or the *Initia doctrinae physicae*[28] reveals that Melanchthon pursues each of these subjects through a series of questions very much reflecting his *ars topikê*. For example he begins *Philosophiae Moralis Epitomes libri duo* by addressing the questions "What is moral philosophy?" "How are philosophy and the Gospel related?" and "What are the uses of this doctrine?"[29] In doing so it employs the *methodi quaestiones* "What is the thing?" "What things are adjacent to it?" and "what are its effects?"

As Melanchthon conceives of them, natural and moral philosophy thus have two things in common. First, they both require collection of data derivable from human experience, in the one case of singulars in nature, and in the other case of life in society.

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[23]   CR 13: 653-4.   ***Exemplum ethicarum demonstratonum.***
Finis cuislibet naturae est propriisima eius naturae actio,
Voluptas non est propria actio hominis, sed actio virtutis,
Non igitur finis est vuluptas.
Ex hac demonstratione Aristoteles recte extruxit doctrinam ethicen.
[24]   Melanchthon, *Loci Communes*, in Pauck, 50.
[25]   CR16:21-164.
[26]   CR 13:513-752.
[27]   CR 13:5-178.
[28]   CR 13:179-412.
[29]   CR 13:21-26.

One then employs the power of *inventio* to interrogate these collections of data, as directed by the *ars topikê*. Second, both natural and moral philosophy as Melanchthon envisions them seek to join observations together through the use of the syllogism into a "chain of concord." In both moral and natural philosophy then one employs *inventio* and *iudicium* to join observations with general principles into syllogisms, producing knowledge beyond both that which is known innately and beyond what is observed. Natural philosophy uses the two parts of dialectics to produce demonstrations about the natural world, while ethics applies syllogistic reasoning and innate ideas to observations about human behavior in order to produce laws conducive to building up human society.

According to Melanchthon, both parts of dialectic are needed in both moral and in natural philosophy. Without *inventio* one might indeed gather up "great and abundant knowledge," but all of this would amount to a mere disordered accumulation, rather than to a well-shaped discourse. [30] According to the praeceptor, even if one collected many observations through proper use of *inventio*, one could not yet call the product "philosophy," because as he writes, "the simple philosophy" which Melanchthon promotes "should first of all have the inclination not to assert anything without demonstration."[31] Demonstration requires syllogistic reasoning, which is taught in the other part of dialectics, *iudicium*. Dialectics is thus the art which, properly applied, can assure that one will collect observations in a manner which will produce coherent bodies of data, and which can then transform such a body or accumulation of knowledge into natural and moral philosophy.

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[30]   Melanchthon, "On philosophy," in Kusukawa, Orations, 128; CR 11:281. "Magna et copiosa doctrina ad alteram rem, scilicet, ad formandum orationem opus est, ut norunt omnes vel mediocriter versati in literis. Sed ut hanc ἕξιν methodi informandae nobis comparemus, non minore studio opus est."
[31]   Ibid., 131.

C. The *Res Romana*: Melanchthon's Rhetorical Philosophy

Dialectics is in one sense a foundation or starting point for natural and moral philosophy, along with the collection of observations, according to Melanchthon. But if dialectics is for him the starting point for philosophy, he believed that rhetoric can be said to be its end. This is because for Melanchthon the true orator's concern motivates the proper pursuit of philosophy and determines the extent to which it is worthwhile to pursue questions in moral or natural philosophy.   In order to understand how, it will be helpful to consider several millenia old debate between the orators and philosophers, a debate in which Melanchthon himself participated.

 Almost two thousand years prior to Melanchthon's time, Plato's *Gorgias* portrayed Socrates as roundly rejecting the claims of the eponymous orator that rhetoric produces the highest good for the citizen.[32] In this dialogue Socrates concluded to the contrary not only that "an orator is not a teacher of law courts and other gatherings about things that are just and unjust…but merely a persuader,"[33] but also that an orator is more persuasive among those without knowledge of the topic at hand than among those with such knowledge.[34] Oratory, Socrates concludes, is merely a "knack" "for producing a certain gratification and pleasure" through speech.[35]   Ever since this scathing critique some who have called themselves philosophers have regarded the rhetorician as something like the *bête noir* of the truth-seeking philosopher.[36]

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[32] Plato, "Gorgias," tr. by Donald J. Zeyl in John M. Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 791-869.

[33] Ibid., 455a, 800.

[34] Ibid., 459b, 803.

[35] Ibid., 462c, 806.

[36] For an excellent account of the history of this relationship, see Bruce Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1986), esp. 1-38. Also Grassi *passim*, esp. 18-35.

According to the vision of the *Gorgias*, a vision Plato's student Aristotle also promoted, the wisdom which is sought after and loved by philosopher is science or *epistêmê*, a body of inter-related and absolutely certain truths. Since, according to this view, *epistêmê* is the highest good attainable for humans, the pursuit of or contemplation of *epistêmê* is in this scheme the highest and best human activity.[37] For such philosophers the pursuit of *epistêmê* requires no justification, regardless of whether or not these philosophers believe that *epistêmê* is actually attainable.[38] It is in accordance with this vision of philosophy that both Plato and Aristotle have been praised for millennia for having created or for having sought philosophical-scientific systems within which some have sought to encompass and to explain all of reality.[39]

To be sure, neither Plato nor Aristotle finally derided or rejected rhetoric as entirely useless or harmful. In the *Phaedrus* Plato presented a more positive vision of rhetoric than is found in the *Gorgias*, according to which vision rhetoric is based on reliable teaching.[40] Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* which is probably the most influential treatment ever produced about this art, by no means presents it as illegitimate or useless.[41]

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[37] Kimball writes, "Notwithstanding certain differences, this commitment to philosophy as transmitted to Plato's students, most notably Aristotle (384-322), who argued in *Nichomachean Ethics* that highest happiness is achieved in the pursuit of theoretical knowledge or contemplation…for intelligence is the highest possession we have in us (Nich. Eth. 1177a11-1179a33), 17. Cf. Grassi, "According to the traditional interpretation Plato's attitude against rhetoric is a rejection of the *doxa,* or opinion…upon which the art of rhetoric relies; at the same time his attitude is considered as a defense of the theoretical, rational speech, that is, of *epistêmê*." 28.

[38] Kimball suggests that Plato, for example, is ambivalent about the possibility of actually attaining epistêmê, 17.

[39] Ibid., 15.

[40] Plato, "Phaedrus," tr. by Alexandr Nehamas and Paul Woodruff in Cooper, 506-556. Cf. Kimball, 21, Grassi 27-32.

[41] For an excellent overview of Aristotle's treatment of rhetoric, see Fobers I. Hill, "Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory. With a Synopsis of Aristotle's *Rhetoric,"* in James J. Murphy and Richard A. Katula, eds., *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 59-126. See also George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times (*Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 74-92, and the introduction to classical rhetoric in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzog, eds., *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2001), 1-41.

Nevertheless, Aristotle disqualified rhetoric as a means of producing the demonstrations which are required for *epistêmê*. And perhaps for this reason the negative view of rhetoric represented in the *Gorgias* has persisted among philosophers of an epistemic bent from medieval[42] through modern times[43] to the twentieth century.[44]

But the view of philosophy as the quest for *epistêmê*, this approach to philosophy which one might call "epistemic," "speculative," or "theoretical," is not the only view of philosophy which has remained vibrant since fourth century BCE Athens. As Quirinius Breen wrote, there have since Plato's time been at least two ways of regarding philosophy, reflecting "two views of knowledge, two views of the aim of education, two views of man."[45] For while the speculative way has since Plato held the view that the human is essentially a rational being who finds highest fulfillment in the attainment of certain knowledge and in the contemplation of truth,

> [Plato's] contemporary, Isocrates, had a different view, holding that the end of education is to turn out a well spoken man who through speech can further the noblest ideals for conduct in society. Knowledge is not an end in itself or an object of enjoyment through contemplation; it is an instrument to use socially. Man is not primarily a rational being; he is primarily a social being. Man achieves his highest development in the orator.[46]

On this Isocratean account, philosophy is closely associated with *artes liberales*, and it values the whole realm of learning to the extent this is useful for human life in society.[47] According to this view humans are regarded as fundamentally social or relational beings seeking fullness of life rather than as fundamentally rational or as metaphysical essences

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[42] See James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1974), pp. 7-42.

[43] See Grassi on exclusion of rhetoric by philosophy in Locke and Kant, 18-20.

[44] Grassi and Kimball, *passim*.

[45] Quirinius Breen, "The Terms '*Loci Communes*' and "*Loci*" in Melanchthon," *Church History* 16, no. 4 (Dec 1947): 200.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid; cf. Kimball, esp. 12-13, Grassi, 68 ff.; Kennedy, 93-97.

seeking or delighting in pure contemplation. Indeed, according to this rhetorical approach the ideal philosopher, the truly wise person, is the good, learned, and eloquent orator.

According to this rhetorical approach, the goal to be sought in philosophy is not the *epistêmê* of the speculator or the contemplative. The value of an idea or any intellectual pursuit such as natural or moral philosophy is rather in its usefulness to society or to individuals living their lives in society.[48] That is, for those holding this view philosophy, as the love of wisdom, is not the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, but is rather the pursuit of and use of ways of seeing and understanding the world which will enrich human life to the fullest extent possible. And since only clearly stated thoughts and arguments can be readily employed for the improvement of life or of society, and since rhetoric is the art of expressing one's ideas and arguments clearly and persuasively, rhetoric is for this tradition the all encompassing art which governs the pursuit of philosophy.

One can immediately see that the utilitarian nature of rhetoric according to this view requires that the orator be distinguished from two other figures. On the one hand, the orator is not the contemplative theoretician who regards knowledge or science as autotelic, who would thus seek knowledge without regard for its usefulness to society, or who would thus desire or value asocial self-sufficient contemplation. On the other hand, the true orator must also be distinguished from the sophist of the *Gorgias*, the merely clever disputant-for-hire, who would strive merely to be able to make the worse answer seem the better for the sake of accruing personal material gain.[49] If the true orator thus

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[48]   Grassi, 9.

[49]   Such an orator would also, one presumes, be distinguishable as well from Kierkegaard's aesthete whose desire is merely pleasure without regard for long-term personal or social consequences. Cf. Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, tr. Alastair Hannay (Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 1992),

denies that knowledge is a good in itself, he also denies that pleasant word-play or *poesis* is worthwhile if it does not conduce to the betterment of human life in society.[50]

One could call this second approach to philosophy "rhetorical" or "Isocratean" in order to distinguish it from the "Platonic" search for *epistêmê*. However, in Melanchthon's time and place and indeed through to the present Isocrates was not the best known exemplar of this rhetorical approach to philosophy. The two best known exemplars were not Greek at all, but were rather those Romans to whom the previous chapter made several references: the statesman Cicero and the schoolmaster Quintillian. To be sure, these two Romans themselves regarded Isocrates with highest regard. As Bruce Kimball points out, Cicero, the most famous of orators, referred to Isocrates as "the eminent father of eloquence" and "the master of all rhetoricians" and Quintillian, the schoolmaster of Roman civilization, concluded that Isocrates was "the most brilliant instructor" whose school had turned out the greatest orators.[51]

That these Romans were powerful influences on Melanchthon has been made clear in the previous chapter.[52] In addition to his explicit admiration for them, Melanchthon's continual rejection of the speculative metaphysics he found in scholasticism as useless or trivial,[53] his promotion of eloquence as the supreme good attainable through human powers, and his continual emphasis on the utility of true philosophy all suggest that he should be placed among the proponents of this second,

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and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* tr. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); also Andrew Cross, "Neither Either nor Or: the Perils of Reflexive Irony," in Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 125-153, esp. 141-151.

[50]   Kimball, 17-18.
[51]   Cicero, *De oratore* 2.10, 3.94; Quintillian, *Institutio oratoria* 2.7.11, 2.14.1, 3.1.9-12, 10.1.12, 12.10.9-12., quoted in Kimball, 33.
[52]   See Chapter Three above, *passim*.
[53]   On this point, see Frank, *Die Theologische Philosophie,* 52-55.

Isocratean view of rhetoric, philosophy, and humanity. That Melanchthon so understood

himself became explicit in 1548 when in his reply to Pico della Mirandola on behalf of

Ermolao Barbaro he wrote:

> We indeed call that man an orator who teaches men accurately, clearly, and with
> certain dignity concerning good and necessary things...I call a philosopher one
> who when he has learned and knows things good and useful for mankind, takes a
> theory (*doctrina*) out of academic obscurity and makes it practically useful in
> public affairs, and instructs men about natural phenomena, or religions, or about
> government.[54]

And that Melanchthon found Cicero and Quintillian the greatest exemplars of this

tradition becomes clear by the name he gives this approach to philosophy: *Res Romana,*

"the Roman cause."[55]

While Melanchthon does not seem to have used the phrase until just two years

prior to his death, he can be seen to have been a proponent of the view he would in the

end call the *res Romana* from the very outset of his career. In accordance with this

"Roman cause," at least as Melanchthon consistently presented it, philosophy is to be

pursued for the sake of, or as Breen put it, philosophy is "subordinated to" the orator's

task.[56] Melanchthon thus conceived of eloquence rather than reason as the highest

quality to be sought by the human; to produce eloquent citizens was the goal of the

educational system he created.[57] Eloquence as the praeceptor conceived of it requires

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[54]   Melanchthon, "Reply to Pico," 417-418.

[55]   CR 9:688. "Quod si tuas copias nobiscum coniunxeris, confirmare ausim nos brevi te velut
Camillam duce, rem Romanum, depulsis Barbaros recepturos, ac sum artibus decus redituros esse." Cf.
Breen, "Reply to Pico," 414;   also Melanchthon's *De corrigendis adolescentiis studiis*, CR 11:16 (Keen,
48), in which the praeceptor claims "the world was set in commotion" when "Roman literature was
destroyed along with Rome herself."

[56]   Melanchthon, "Reply to Pico*,"* 21-24. For more recent examinations of philosophy in this mode,
see Raymon Angelo Belliotti, *Roman Philosophy and the Good Life* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books,
2009); and Guilio d'Onofrio, *Vera Philosophia: Studies in Late Antique, Early Medieval, and Renaissance
Christian Thought* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008).

[57]   In "On Correcting the Studies" eloquence is "learning and the Muses' rebirth," cf. Keen, 47; CR
11:15.

erudition, and erudition is the product of a liberal education, including knowledge of

nature and ethics as well as of history. He furthermore conceived of eloquence as

requiring training in rhetoric, which as shown above includes dialectics for

Melanchthon.[58] Thus for the praeceptor eloquence is the highest temporal good for the

human being, since it is the most useful quality this social being could posses. Rhetoric is

then pursued for the sake of eloquence, and dialectic is pursued for the sake of rhetoric.

Natural and moral philosophy are, like rhetoric, pursued for the sake of their usefulness to

persons living in society, and these parts of philosophy are directed and shaped by

rhetoric and dialectic, according to Melanchthon.

D. Melanchthon's Eclecticism:

1. Questions

As I noted in the first chapter, the notion that Melanchthon's thought is

Ciceronian in the sense that it is based on an appreciation for that Roman's rhetoric is not

novel.[59] And in this regard the praeceptor was by no means unique among Renaissance

humanists. Indeed, the great Renaissance scholar Paul Oskar Kristeller has suggested

that to have regarded eloquence as the highest goal of education and to regard Cicero as

the master of eloquence had been almost the defining characteristics of humanism since

Petrarch.[60] On the other hand, simply recognizing that Melanchthon was a proponent of a

rhetorical approach to all of learning, what he himself called "the Roman cause," does not

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[58]   Chapter Three above, passim.
[59]   See ch. 1 above, pp. 79-84; also, for example Hartfelder, 211-231; Kuropka, *Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft,* 11-43; Schneider, *Oratio Sacra,* 71-76; Wengert, *Human Freedom,* 91-96;
[60]   Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Humanism," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler,113-138, esp. 122-127; See also Jerrold E. Siegel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 3-30.

reveal much about the content of his philosophy. For there were among the humanists of the Renaissance partisans of many philosophical authorities and schools.[61]

Here Günter Frank has pointed to another very important sense in which Melanchthon could be called "Ciceronian." For as Frank notes, rather than simply attempting to repristinate the thought of Aristotle or Plato, Melanchthon followed the Roman orator in adapting an eclectic approach to philosophical authorities.[62] But again, as Frank notes, merely recognizing that Melanchthon was a sort of philosophical eclectic also adds little to our understanding of the praeceptor. In part this is because, as Pierluigi Donini has pointed out, historians of philosophy have not had a single and clear conception of "eclecticism."[63]

As Donini explains, for some "eclecticism" has denoted an unresolved or unresolvable combination of disparate elements in a philosopher's thought. Donini points out that those who have used "eclecticism" in this sense have associated it with the degradation of philosophy.[64] To refer to an historical figure as "an eclectic" has thus at times been tantamount to claiming that that person has lacked philosophical rigor or creativity.[65] The charge of eclecticism in this sense seems to be implicit in claims that the Renaissance was a time of philosophical vacuity.[66] Karl Hartfelder's claim: "The time of humanism and the first time of the Reformation had brought forth in Germany no

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[61]   See for example the following essays in Hankins, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy*: Luca Bianchi, "Continuity and Change in the Aristotelian Tradition," 49-71; "Christopher Celenza, "The Revival of Platonic Philsoophy," 72-96; and for what Melananchthon calls the *secate praecipuae philosophporum,* Jill Kraye, "The Revival of Hellenistic Philosophies," 97-112.
[62]   Günter Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie* 15 ff.; cf. Hartfelder, *Philipp Melanchthon als Praeceptor Germaniae*, 177-183; also Chapter One above, 60-62.
[63]   Donini, 15-33; on pp. 31-32. Donini lists six senses in which the term has been used.
[64]   Ibid., 31; the first sense Donini identifies.
[65]   Ibid., 18, 22-24
[66]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 38-40.

creative philosophical genius. And Melanchthon was not one himself,"[67] in combination with his recognition that Melanchthon understood himself as an eclectic thinker,[68] perhaps also reflects this sort of disparagement of eclecticism.

On the other hand, Hartfelder claimed that while Melanchthon "proceeded as an eclectic," he identified himself as an Aristotelian.[69] And here Hartfelder suggests that the praeceptor might as well be understood as an eclectic in a second sense Donini identifies, referring to those who have sought to add new elements into an established doctrine of an established philosophical school.[70] As earlier pointed out, the idea that Melanchthon's philosophy can best be understood as a sort of eclectic Aristotelianism has been promoted by the greatest number of twentieth century scholars, most notably Peter Peterson and Heinrich Maier.[71]

Finally, according to Donini, "Eclecticism" has been used to denote without negative connotation the creation of a new, creative, and powerful philosophical synthesis from various ideas received from predecessors. A spirit eclectic in this sense, Donini suggest, may in fact be characteristic of the greatest of philosophers. For as he writes:

> The idea that a philosophy could show the combined influence of other thinkers was by no means unusual in the classical world: we need only be reminded of the way Aristotle explains Plato's thought in the first book of *Metaphysics* as a creative blend of the philosophies of Parmenides, Heraclitus, Socrates, and the Pythagoreans.[72]

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[67]   Hartfelder, 178; Chapter One above, 49.
[68]   Ibid., 181; Chapter One above, 33.
[69]   Ibid., 181; cf. CR 3: 383.
[70]   Donini's second sense of scepticisim, Donini 31.
[71]   Peterson, *Geschichte der aristotelischen Philosophie*), 60-80, 101-108; Heinrich Meier, *An der Grenze der Philosophie: Melanchthon, Lavater, David Friedrich Strauss* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr) 61-67; cf. Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 11-23.
[72]   Donini, 15.

And while dogmatisms of different sorts may have been the offspring of such "creative blends" of other philosophies, a figure like Galen, who "chooses among doctrines with the same deliberate program but whose spirit is strongly anti-dogmatic and anti-sectarian"[73] should also be considered eclectic in this sense, according to Donini.

In the twentieth century's most important study of Melanchthon's philosophy, Günter Frank suggested that the praeceptor should be understood as an eclectic of the second type. While acknowledging that Melanchthon understood himself to be basically Aristotelian, Frank nevertheless followed Stephan Otto[74] in claiming that the key to Melanchthon's philosophy, the organizing principle of his thought, was his conception of truth, his *regulativ Wahheitsidee,* or "ideal of truth." As Frank claimed, "Melanchthon proceeded not in adherence to one or another conflicting philosophical-theological schools, but to a conception of truth, which above all was concerned with ethical-practical dimensions."[75] It is on the basis of this *Wahrheitsidee*, Frank claimed, that "the Platonic, Aristotelian, or Epicurean could be either criticized or received, insofar as they served the search for truth, that is, insofar as they corresponded to his understanding of truth.[76]

But unlike Hartfelder, who claimed Melanchthon was an eclectic Aristotelian, in *Die theologische Philosophie Philipp Melanchthons* Frank has taken Melanchthon's insistence on innate ideas as evidence that Melanchthon's conception of truth was bound

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[73] Ibid., 31.

[74] Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 44-45, citing Stephan Otto, *Renaissance und fruhe Neuzeit,* Geschichte der Philosophie in Text und Darstellung III (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984).

[75] Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 58: "Melanchthon geht es nicht um Gefolgshaft einer der einander widerstreitenden philosophisch-theologischen Schulen und Autoritäten, sondern um eine Wahrheit, die vor allem auf ethisch-prakitsche Dimensionen hinausläuft."

[76] Ibid., 66-67: "...nicht bestmmte philosophische Autoritäten kennenzeichnen dieses Philosophieren, sondern eine Wahrheitsidee, innerhalb der *Platon, Aristoteles, Epikur* kritisiert oder auch rezipiert werden können, sofern der Wahrheitssuche dienen, d.h., sinem Wahrheitsverständnis entsprechen."

up with his supposedly Platonic conception of innate ideas. "My own thesis," he writes in a recent essay, "…is that the core of Melanchthon's philosophy was his doctrine of the intellect, which led to an intellectualist and anthropological sharpening of his understanding of philosophy."[77] Since, as Frank claims, the centerpiece of Melanchthon's anthropology is the doctrine of the intellect, the center of the doctrine of the intellect is the teaching of *the koinê ennoiai* or "innate ideas," and because the doctrine of these "natural notions" is of Platonic origin, one should recognize that the very core of Melanchthon's thought is Platonic. Thus he writes, "[Melanchthon's] understanding of intellect is basically characterized by Platonic *a priorism*: all knowledge is a conceptualization based on 'natural notions' which are inscribed in their *potentia cognoscens*."[78]

Frank's view of Melanchthon's Platonism seems to have become stronger over time, as evidenced by his recent claim that inasmuch as the praeceptor "acknowledged that the world possesses both rationality and intelligibility,"[79] he revealed a "metaphysical optimism" both fundamental to the his philosophy and consistent with that found in Plato's *Timaeus*. Frank thus concludes that "Platonism is the decisive foundation of the metaphysical optimism which is fundamental to Melanchthon's view of nature and the world."[80]

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[77]   Frank, "The Reason of Acting: Melanchthon's Concept of Practical Philosophy and the Question of the Unity and Consistency of His Philosophy," in Jill Kraye and Risto Saarinen, eds., *Moral Philosophy on the Threshhold of Modernity* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 217-234, here 219.

[78]   Ibid., 233.

[79]   Günter Frank, "Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560): Reformer and Philosopher," in Paul Richard Blum, ed., *Philosophers of the Renaissance* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 148-162, here 156. Cf. Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie* 97-102, 108-131, and "Neoplatonism," in Helm and Winkelmann, 3-18, esp. 12-16.

[80]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 157. Cf. Frank, "Neoplatonism," 4.

Moreover, according to Frank, it is on account of this conception that Melanchthon can be considered a forerunner of the philosophical rationalism soon to emerge in Europe. To be sure, Frank cautions, Melanchthon's rationalism is on account of its theological character "far removed from the rationalistic positions of the Enlightenment."[81] But Frank follows a suggestion by F. Kohlabauch that on account of the theological character of some of these innate ideas, Melanchthon could be considered a "theo-rationalist."[82]

Most of the remainder of the present chapter will be dedicated to understanding whether or how Melanchthon's philosophy was eclectic. Was the praeceptor's philosophy fundamentally Aristotelian as Melanchthon himself suggested, was Plato or another authority more fundamental to his thought, or is it eclectic in Donini's third sense and thus *sui generis*? And if Melanchthon's philosophy is too idiosyncratic to be associated with any philosophical authority, what are the principles according to which Melanchthon accepted some ideas and rejected others—what was his regulative philosophical ideal?

2. Melanchthon on Philosophical Authorities

a. The *Secate Praecipuae Philosophorum*

Melanchthon's philosophy is clearly eclectic in the sense that he shows an eagerness to pick and choose elements from various philosophical schools throughout his

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[81]   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 337: "F. Kaulbach hat diese metaphysische Begründungsweise treffend sine theo-rationalistische gennant, nicht zuletzt um deutlich zu machen, daß diese Philosophie weit entfernt ist von späteren rationalistischenm Positionen der Aufklarung."
[82]   Ibid., 337, 99; cf. F. Kaulbach, *Einfürung in die Metaphysic* (Darmstdadt, 1972), 33-68, and "Erkenntnis/Erkenntnistheorie," in TRE 10 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1972), 144-159.

career. A helpful start in coming to an understanding of the praeceptor's eclecticism will then be an examination of some of the places where he discusses the strengths and (more often) weaknesses of these schools. And nowhere does he sort through the philosophical authorities more clearly than in the fourth book of the *Erotemata dialectices* of 1547, where he asses what he regards as the primary sects of philosophy, the *sectae praecipuae Philosophorum*.[83]

As might be expected for someone willing to identify himself as a sort of Aristotelian, in the *Erotemata dialectices* Melanchthon explicitly claims a greater appreciation for Aristotelianism than for any other school. He attributes the division of philosophy into dialectics, physics, and ethics to the peripatetics.[84] More importantly, he finds that contrary to the Epicureans, who overlook dialectics altogether, or the Stoics, who have "a thorny dialectics, impossible to dissentangle,"[85] the Aristotelian dialectic is "true, incorrupt, and sound." "This dialectics," he writes, "allows [peripateticism] to draw much from demonstrations."[86]

But the praeceptor is no dogmatic Aristotelian for whom the Stagirite is "the philosopher," infallible, or the one in accordance with whom others are to be judged. Aristotle was in fact guilty of significant errors, according to Melanchthon. In particular, the praeceptor rejects the Aristotelian claims that the world is eternal and that God, the "prime cause behind this (supposedly) infinite world is himself unmoving."[87] And so

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[83]   CR 13:655-658. See also *De discrimine Euangelii et Philosophiae*, in CR 12: 689.
[84]   CR 13:656: "Aristotelica recte distribuit genera doctrinarum, Dialecticen, Physicen et Ethicen."
[85]   CR 13:657: "Stoica Dialecticen spinosam et inextricabilem hubauit,"
[86]   CR 13:656 : "Et dialecticen [Aristotelica] habet veram, incorruptam et integram, quae laude haud dubie omnibus aliis sectis antecellit. In aliis partibus multa extruit ex demonstartionibus..,"
[87]   Ibid.: " Errat autem de mundi aeternitate, quem semper fuisse imaginatur, ut ipsam mentem, primam causam et motricem."

Melanchthon with the Roman physician Galen damns Aristotelianism with faint praise in

concluding that that it "hallucinates less than the others."[88]

But then, if Aristotle's philosophy is far from perfect, the other sects of

philosophy are worse, according to the praeceptor. Turning to the Stoics, he credits them

with the important doctrine of *koinê ennoiai* or innate ideas.[89] On the other hand, he

finds that their dialectics are inferior to that of the Aristotle, and the Stoic claim that not

only the natural world but the human will itself is materially determined must be rejected,

along with their claim that the human soul is a sort of fire which persists only for a time

after being separated from the body. Also to be rejected is the Stoic claim that God is

bound to secondary causes.[90]

Worse yet is Epicureanism. Melanchthon's disdain for this sect deserves to be

quoted in full. "Epicurean thought," he writes:

> …is filled with horrible madness. First, it entirely overlooks dialectics. In
> physics it makes up the world from atoms, and it dreams that that some worlds are
> born and others die repeatedly. It removes two principle causes—the efficient
> and final—from the overall aspect of things. It denies that there is a God, and it
> affirms that everything is without divine providence—that so much has arisen by
> chance, and by chance perishes. It ridiculously imagines that the stars are not
> durable bodies, but it claims that daily new vapors ascend and disperse, which
> brings about species of the sun and of other stars. It affirms that human souls die
> with their bodies, just as the life of sheep is extinguished. In Ethics it claims that
> the end of human nature is pleasure, that is, to avoid pain. Whence, having
> strongly promoted pleasure, much falsity follows.[91]

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[88]   Ibid.: "...et minus hallucinatur quam caeterae, Galenus etiam inquit, in hac minus esse errorum, quam in caeteris."

[89]   Cf. Chapter One, 58-64; CR 21:116.

[90]   CR 13: 657. "Alligat Deum ad causas secundas, et negat eum aliter posse agere, quam ut causae secundae feruntur, quia ordo turbaretur."

[91]   CR 13: 656-657: "Epicurea plena est horribilium furorum. Primam Dialecticen omnino praetermisit. In Physicis componit mundum ex atomis, et somniat subinde alios mundos nasci, et alios interire, removet ab universitate rerum duae praecipuas causas, Efficientem et Finalem. Neget esse Deum, et affirmat omnia sine providentia divina, tantum casu nata esse, et casu ferri. Stellas ridicule fingit non esse durabilia corpora, sed quotidie novos halitus accendi et deflagrare, qui speciem Solis et aliarum stellarum efficiant. Animas hominum affirmat interire cum corporibus, prorsus ut pecudum vita

In fact, of all of the *sectae praecipuae philosophorum*, Epicureanism seems to warrant the greatest criticism from Melanchthon. Whereas he is able to find something to praise in the other sects he names here and elsewhere, one is hard pressed to find Melanchthon point to a single positive contribution to philosophy by the Epicureans anywhere in his writings.

Melanchthon similarly reviews and assesses what he took to be the principle sects of philosophy immediately following the last page of the 1548 edition of his *Commentrius de anima.* There he provided a work bearing the title "*Disputatio*," consisting of 25 theses about philosophy.[92] In summarizing the contents of the *Dispuatio*, it is worth noting that the *Commentarius* itself ends with a doxological note, ("Δόξα τώ θεῶ").[93] It is entirely fitting that the very clear account of Melanchthon's understanding of philosophy in the *disputatio* should appear just after this display of piety on Melanchthon's part, for the praecepetor reveals in the *disputatio* his intention both to pursue his philosophy in the service of faith, and to criticize philosophical schools primarily for contradicting tenets of the faith.

This *Disputatio,* along with an English translation is appended to the end of this chapter. Its contents may be briefly summarized as follows: God planted a certain light ("*lucem quandam*") in the human mind so that the human can be ruled by certain laws ("*certis legibus legi*"); all philosophy and useful arts are founded upon these certain in-born principles (Thesis 1). That we have these ideas is evidence that we are created by a

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extinguitur. In Ethicis finem humanae naturae affirmat esse voluptatem, hoc est, vacare cruciatu. Inde, cum anteferat voluptatem virtuti, multa falsa sequitur."

[92]   In the Wittenberg 1548 edition of the *Commentarius de anima*, the pages on which the *Dispuatio* appears are not numbered, but are the 156th through 158th sheets.

[93]   Melanchthon., *Commentarius de anima*, 155 verso.

providential God, as Plato recognized (2). To acknowledge theses (1) and (2) is to have a foundation for true philosophy (3). Philosophy so understood is to be pursued by Christians with thanksgiving (4 & 5). In addition to the above, true philosophy requires demonstrations (6). False teaching is to be rejected (7). All the philosophical sects have some errors, but the Peripatetics have the fewest (8). The Epicureans have the most errors including the claims that there are only efficient and final causes (9), that collisions of atoms produce all causes (10), that the sun and moon are fiery vapors (11), that the soul dies with the body (12), that pleasure is the end of good and is the absence of pain (13), that God is bound to secondary causes (14), that affections are opinions (15)[94], and that they are necessarily vicious (16), that virtue is the only good and so that there can be neither true bodily nor true material goods (17). The Stoics' doctrine of determinism harms prudence (18). Contra Stocisim, God is free and God freely sacrificed the Son (19). Stoic necessity denies the free providence of God, thus robbing God of praise (20). The Academics err in claiming nothing is certain (21), a serious error that threatens moral teaching (22). Carefully to gather truths from the philosophical sects is useful for the pious (23). Philosophy may reveal part of the Law of God, but the Gospel can be discovered neither by reason nor by philosophy (24).[95]

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[94] That is, as a more recent commentator has put it, the Stoics maintained "that every function of the soul has both a cognitive and an affective aspect and that the cognitive aspect is the causally important one," and that they "defined a passion as an irrational and excessive movement of the soul—either identical with or the inescapable result of an assent to a seriously incorrect proposition about the value of things." Brad Inwood, "Stocisim," in *The Routledge History of Philosophy Volume II: From Aristotle to Augustine,* David Furley, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 222-252, here 245; for more on this, see Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicisim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), esp. ch. 5.

[95] See the appendix below, 365-368.

b. Plato

A philosophical authority notably absent from these reviews of the *secate praecipuae philosophorum* reviewed in the *Erotemata dialectices* and in this *Disputatio* is Plato. But it must not be supposed that this is because Melanchthon did not highly regard Plato; Frank and others who wish to regard Melanchthon as a Platonist are at least correct in this respect. In fact as Melanchthon wrote in an oration honoring this philosopher, Plato best exemplifies the union of eloquence and wisdom (cf. Melanchthon's *Res romana*), since "his eloquence is such that he excels by far all Greek and Roman orators whose writings are extant. No one's speech is richer or more splendid." [96]

Melanchthon furthermore praises Plato's natural theology as not only legitimate but as pointing to the highest achievement of philosophy. For, the praeceptor claims, of all the useful outcomes of the study of physics or natural philosophy, the most important is that it leads the philosopher to conclude "that nature does not exist by chance, but that it is created by an eternal mind," and that "the Maker is to be worshipped with true praises."[97] And Plato recognized that "the true purpose of learning is that the investigation of nature may lead us to a knowledge of God,"[98] For, as Melanchthon wrote:

> He discusses quite weightily the immortality of the human soul, and he
> everywhere establishes as the goal of philosophy the recognition of God, as he
> says in a letter: 'We philosophize correctly, if we recognize God as the father,

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[96]   Melanchthon, *De Platonis,* CR 11:413-425, tr. in Kusukawa, *Orations,* as "On Plato," 191-203, here 197.

[97]   Melanchthon, "On Plato," in Kusukawa, 220.

[98]   Ibid., 194.

cause, and ruler of the entire nature, and obey him by living justly.' [Letters, 6, c-d]."[99]

What is more, according to the praeceptor, this orientation toward natural theology, along with his dedication to eloquence made Plato an excellent schoolmaster himself. For Plato taught correctly, Melanchthon writes, that eloquence "was not to be employed for causing a public disturbance," nor merely "to delight men…but to say what is pleasing to God."[100]

And yet on other points Melanchthon was very critical of Plato. While he praised Plato for recognizing the end and for establishing the beginning in philosophy, he notes that this philosopher was not able to complete the project. Melanchthon thus finds, for example, that in Plato, "there are some basics of physics," and that this philosopher "began to produce the kind of physics that describes the nature of humours and the parts of the human body is useful." Unfortunately, the praeceptor writes, "these discussions are incomplete in Plato rather than finished—for neither is the reason of the motions of the heavens explained, nor is the anatomy unimpaired. I nevertheless praise the beginnings…"[101]

And in spite of Plato's manifest eloquence, Melanchthon also blamed him for not being as consistently clear as Aristotle with respect to dialectics. For while Plato taught this art well to his students, in his dialogues Plato "does not often employ the method which he proclaims so many times, and wraps some things in images and conceals them deliberately." For this reason "it is rather Aristotle who should be presented to the young"

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[99]   Ibid., 202.
[100]   Ibid., 199.
[101]   Ibid., 193.

in their early studies, while Plato is to be presented to those who have already learned

dialectics from the Stagirite's writings.[102]

Still, according to Melanchthon, whatever faults are to be found in Plato's own

writings, much more grave error is to be found among those who have misinterpreted

him, primarily by failing to recognize his use of imagery and irony. Thus Origen and

others like him "who do not even understand Plato"[103] were guilty of "distorting

[Plato's] forms," by suggesting that they are independent or even fundamental

metaphysical entities instead of "images and notions which the learned conceive in their

minds."[104] The Plato which Melanchthon admired, like his Aristotle, was thus no

metaphysician.

Melanchthon beautifully summarized the several reasons an Evangelical who

wishes to study philosophy must love Plato—properly understood!—in his oration

dedicated to this philosopher in 1538:

> True philosophy, that is, one that does not stray from reason and from
> demonstrations, is some notion of the divine laws: it recognizes that there is a
> God, it judges on civic morals, it sees that this distinction between worthy and
> vile acts is implanted in us by divine providence, it considers that horrid crimes
> are punished by God, and it also has some presentiment of immortality. It
> nevertheless does not see or teach what is proper to the Gospel, that is, the
> forgiveness of sins to be given without recompense, for the sake of the Son of
> God. This notion has not sprung from human minds, indeed, it is far beyond the
> range of human reason, but the Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, has
> made it manifest...[105]

And no one, according to Melanchthon, was truer to this sort of philosophy than Plato.

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[102]   Ibid., 201.
[103]   Ibid., 203.
[104]   Ibid., 201.
[105]   Ibid., 203.

c. Galen

One more philosophical authority of great importance to Melanchthon must be recognized. Much of the last two chapters has confirmed the claim of Quirinius Breen that if Melanchthon's account of that first part of philosophy consisting of the *artes logicales* is to be understood as Aristotelian, one must also recognize that the praeceptor's was something of a Ciceronianized Aristotle.[106] But beginning around 1540 the praeceptor began to indicate that the work of yet another Roman clarified and also corrected a different part of the Stagirite's philosophy. This other part was natural philosophy, and the Roman was the second century physician Galen.[107]

In his oration on Galen of 1540, Melanchthon writes that this physician is to be praised for developing and transmitting knowledge of medicine. And while both Greek and Arabian physicians subsequently practiced with some renown, the praeceptor wrote, "it is well known that Galen was the source of both kinds of medicine, that is, the art of disputations, or the dogmatic kind, and remedies,"[108] or as more recent scholarship had

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[106]   Thus, as Breen concluded about Melanchthon, "It is also true, of course, that he favored Aristotle because he considered him the ace of dialecticians and a rhetorician, in fact, something of a 'Ciceronian.' Had he not so looked upon him, I doubt if he would have defended him," in "The terms 'Loci Communes' and 'Loci' in Melanchthon," *Church History* Vol. 16, no. 4 (Dec. 1947): 208-209.

[107]   A sampling of that portion of the truly vast catalog of Galen's works which may have been most important to Melanchthon must include: P. N. Singer, ed. and tr., *On Anatomical Procedures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956); also tr. by Singer *Galen: Selected* Works (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Paul W. Harkins, tr., *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul.* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1963); and Richard Walzer and Michael Frede, tr., *Three Treatises on the Nature of Science,* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985). For an introduction to particularly relevant aspects of Galen's thought, see Garcia Ballester, *Galen and Galenism*, Variorum Collected Studies Serie (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate/Variorum, 2000); Veronique Boudon-Millot, "Galen's *Bios* and *Methodos:* from Ways of Life to Path of Knowledge," in Christopher Gill, Tim Whitmarsh, and John Wilkins, ed., *Galen and the World of Knowledge,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 175-189; Philipvan der Eijk, "'Aristotle! What a Thing for You to Say!' Galen's Engagement with Aristotle and Aristotelians," also in Gill, Whitmarcsh, and Wilkins, 261-281; and the essays in R. J. Hankinson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Galen* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), especially Vivian Nutton, "The Fortunes of Galen," 355-390.

[108]   Melanchthon, *De vita Galenis,* CR 11:495-503; tr. in Kusukawa, *Orations*, as "On the Life of Galen, 212-219, here 219.

come to refer to these, dogmatist and empiricist medicine.[109] Posterity owes much to

Galen, according to the praeceptor, "since this writer has done great service to the life of

men; he has described the nature of things eloquently, he has taught us many remedies;

and he has collected what the ancient physicians found and added new things."[110]

The claim that Galen "described the nature of things eloquently" points to

Melanchthon's belief that Galen's work provides the best introduction to natural

philosophy. "Leaving out many other things," the praeceptor thus writes, "how profitable

is the discipline that is called physics, which is transmitted nowhere else more learnedly

and more abundantly than in several books by Galen?"[111] And as noted above Galen has

provided this in part by correcting Aristotle's writings in this field. For the physician has

"added what is lacking in Aristotle's anatomy; he has also learnedly corrected some

things, and has shed light on many passages of Aristotle."[112] Indeed, the praeceptor

writes, "I feel that those who are engaged in philosophy cannot defend their function

without Galen, for most of Aristotle cannot be understood without Galen's

explanations."[113]

Finally Melanchthon praised Galen as he had Plato for showing how natural

philosophy, in this case that aspect of natural philosophy which is concerned with "the

teaching of the parts of the human body and their functions,"[114] corroborates fundamental

theological truths. For in displaying "the admirable structure of human parts," Galen's

natural philosophy "teaches that nature does not exist by chance, but that it is created by

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[109]   For a good background on the controversy between medical dogmatists, empiricists and methodists in the second century, see G. E. R. Lloyd, "Galen and His Contemporaries," in R. J. Hankinson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Galen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 34-48.
[110]   Melanchthon, "On the Life of Galen," 219.
[111]   Ibid.
[112]   Ibid., 218.
[113]   Ibid., 219.
[114]   Ibid., 218.

an eternal mind" which cares for human beings. Thus, he writes "Galen said most wisely that the knowledge of anatomy is the beginning of theology, and the path to the knowledge of God."[115]

In summarizing Melanchthon's appraisal of previous philosophers, it is important to remember that for him philosophy requires both certain foundations and a reliable method. Plato at least points to the former through the doctrine of innate ideas, and Aristotle's dialectics provides the latter. Melanchthon praised these two philosophers most highly because each provides or exemplifies one of these necessary elements. But he did not praise either without reservation. Because he regarded neither of these ancient philosophers as having exemplified or clearly taught both elements essential to true philosophy, it would be wrong to characterize Melanchthon simply as either a Platonist or as an Aristotelian. Neither—here especially contra Frank--does Melanchthon accept and depend upon either of these elements of true philosophy—that is, neither certain foundations nor the correct method--simply because they are found in either Plato or Aristotle.

In contrast, the authority of scripture is of a higher order for Melanchthon. As both his critique of the *sectae praecipuae philosophorum* in the *Erotemata dialectices* and in the *disputatio* appended to the *Commentarius de anima* of 1548 show, the praeceptor holds the truth of those ideas he believes he has gained from scripture and Christian faith without question. These ideas are foundational for his philosophy, and they provide criteria by which he criticizes or approves of various ideas found in the philosophers. It is moreover on account of his understanding of scriptural faith and piety

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[115]   Ibid., 218.

that Melanchthon finds it proper and even necessary to pursue and to give thanks to God

for philosophy.

E. Doubt, Certainty, and Faith

1. Skepticism

The above review Melanchthon's critique of the *sectae praecipuae*

philosophorum in the *Erotemata diaelctices* left out the praeceptor's claims about

skepticism or, more specifically, "Academica." Before considering Melanchthon's

assesment of this sect, it should be remembered that the question of whether any

philosophy could provide the foundation for certain knowledge had been a major issue

distinguishing speculative from rhetorical approaches to philosophy since the fifth

century BCE. In the *Gorgias* Plato denied that the orators were able to produce *epistêmê*.

Perhaps worse, according to Plato, they seemed to be uninterested in trying to do so in the

first place.[116] Aristotle underscored the different goals of the orator and the scientist in

his *Topics* and *Rhetoric,* where the primary distinction between dialectical or rhetorical

syllogisms on the one hand and scientific demonstration on the other is that only the latter

could provide certainty while the former provided merely persuasive argument or

probability.[117]

The rhetorical tradition beginning with Isocrates was in significant, though partial,

agreement with Platonic and Aristotelian thought on this point, for while it agreed that

wisdom as pursued by the orator could not attain to sure and certain knowledge, it tended

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[116]   See T.H. Irwin, "The Intellectual Background," in Richard Kraut, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 63-68.
[117]   Aristotle, Topics 100a25-101a5; tr. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge in Barnes vol. 1, 167; Aristotle *Posterior Ananlytics* 70b20-24, tr. by Jonathan Barnes in Barnes, 115; cf. ch. 3 above, 18-20.

to claim that *epistêmê* was not available to speculative philosophy either. Furthermore, it tended to claim that even if *epistêmê* were available, it would not be particularly useful for humans. Thus as Bruce Kimball has pointed out,

> Isocrates was profoundly skeptical of the dialectical search for truth, the central pillar of the Socratic-Platonic education. He scoffed at the distinction between *sophia* and *philosophia* and chided those who would waste time in idle speculation to arrive at wisdom.[118]

What is more, as Jerrold Siegel has noted, since the rhetorical tradition understood that the orator's speech could never be "outside the control of mere opinion, and within the grasp of exact knowledge,"[119] "skepticism was a natural philosophical attitude"[120] for those like Cicero whose thought was rhetorically based.

Lodi Nauta has aided our understanding of the place of Skepticism within the thought of Renaissance humanists by noting that skepticism tended to be spoken of by them in two ways. On the one hand, Nauta writes, it was construed as an adherence to "the main tenets of ancient scepticism" such as "the equipolence of beliefs, the suspension of judgment, and the tranquility of mind."[121] According to Nauta, Cicero may be regarded as a skeptic in this sense. On the other hand, for Renaissance humanists skepticism taken more broadly:

> …can mean the conviction that the human mind is principally incapable to grasp the truth of things. On this view, certainty and truth are out of reach for human beings, who should therefore be content with probability, verisimilitude or mere plausibility.[122]

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[118]   Kimball, 17.Glucker, John. *"Cicero's Philosophical Affiliations,"* In John Dillon and A. A. Long, editors, *The Question of Eclecticism,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 34-69.

[119]   Jerrold Siegel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 11.

[120]   Siegel, 16.

[121]   Lodi Nauta, "Lorenzo Valla and Quatrocento Scepticism," *Vivarium 44,* 2. Accessed at http://www.rug.nl/staff/l.w.nauta/valla-scepticisme.pdf in February, 2010. 375-376.

[122]   Ibid.

And as Nauta and others have pointed out, some of the best regarded humanists of the Renaissance served the ends of skepticism in this second sense, intentionally or not, by questioning the means by which Scholasticism pursued *epistêmê*.

For example, as Jill Kraye has claimed, the purpose of Petrarch's treatise *On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others,* "was not to question the possibility of attaining certain knowledge but to devalue Aristotelian philosophy."[123] And yet, as Robert Rosin notes, "[Petrarch's] treatise did touch a nerve, however, opening the way for others who would regard scepticism more positively."[124] Lorenzo Valla has likewise been regarded as having contributed to "the burgeoning interest in ancient scepticism"[125] among fifteeenth and later sixteenth century humanists, in part by strongly criticizing the Aristotelian dialectic upon which scholastic philosophy founded its search for certainty.[126]

Perhaps most important for our understanding of Melanchthon's thought, in the sixteenth century Erasmus of Rotterdam explicitly sought to promote a Christianized version of skepticism. As he famously (or infamously) claimed in *The Praise of Folly*,

> Human affairs are so obscure and various that nothing can be clearly known. This was the sound conclusion of the Academics [the Academic skeptics], who were the least surly of the philosophers.[127]

Luther's vehement rejection of this sort of claim, "Spiritus sanctus non est scepticus!" was at the center of his response to Erasmus in Luther's own *De servo arbitrio,* [128]

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[123]   Jill Kraye, "The Revival of Hellenistic Philosophies," in Hankins*,* 107.

[124]   Robert Rosin, *Reformers, the Preacher, and Skepticism: Luther, Brenz, Melanchthon, and Ecclesiastes* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1997), 21.

[125]   Nauta, 375 .

[126]   Copenhaver and Schmidt, 209 ff.

[127]   Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly,* tr. C. H. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 71. Cf. Kraye, 108.

Whether Melanchthon followed Erasmus or Luther on this point has been a question which has raised considerable heat, as has been discussed above in Chapter One.[129] But several factors already considered in the present chapter might lead one to expect to find in Melanchthon a staightforward Erasmus-like promotion of a Christianized skepticism. These factors include Melanchthon's rejection of the speculative bent in scholastic philosophy, the fundamental theological-anthropological claim that he found in St. Paul that the powers of the human mind are darkened by sin, and his promotion of Ciceronian rhetoric, along with the authority of rhetoric over Scholastic philosophy in accordance with the *causa Romana.*

And in fact in *Erotemata dialectices* Melanchthon at least shows some sympathy for skepticism. He suggests that skepticism should naturally result when the student considers how hopelessly at odds with one another the other philosophical sects are concerning "certain parts of physics, such as concerning the beginning of the world."[130] Nor does Aristotle provide the solution to such problems, according to the praeceptor, for his treatment of them is "absurd."[131] In fact Melanchthon makes the claim (skeptical in the second of Nauta's senses) that such matters "are not able to be comprehended by the human mind."[132]

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[128]   Luther, "Bondage of the Will," *Luther's Works,* vol. 33, 19-24, esp. 24: "The Holy Spirit is no Skeptic; and it is not doubts or mere opinions that he has written onour hearts, but assertions more sure and certain life itself and all experience." Cf. Kraye, 108; Rosin, 5-ff.; ch. 1 above, 19-20.

[129]   See again Chapter One above, 33-35, 76-79; cf Wengert, *Human Freedom,* 5-14.

[130]   CR 13: 657: "Academica…videret magnas esse dissensiones aliarum sectarum, et animadvertet quasdam partes in Physicis, ut de mundi initio, de fluminum perennitate, et alia quaedam non satis comprehendi acie humanii genii.."

[131]   CR 13: 656: "[Aristotelica] Errat autem de mundi aeternitate, quem semper fuisse imaginatur, ut ipsam mentem, primam causam et motricem. Videtur enim Aristoteli absurdum, primam causam infinitis seculis retro, ociosam cogitare,"

[132]   Cf. n. 129 above. This sort of epistemological modesty was also characteristic of Galen, according to Ian Maclean, "The 'Sceptical Crisis' Reconsidered: Galen, Rational Medicine and the *Libertas Philosophandi." Early Science and Medicine* 11, no. 3 (2006): 249-274; see also R.J. Hankinson, *Epistemology,* in Hankinson, 157-183.

And yet, as Melanchthon writes, the Academics are to be rejected for going far beyond the well-taken caution against trying to understand the movements of the heavens, in that they add to this the "false hyperbole" that all is uncertain.[133] This is no small error, according to the praeceptor, for in making this claim the Academics fight "not only against the judgment of general reason, but even against God, when they deny certainty."[134] Indeed, the ability to produce some certainty is central, if not to Melanchthon's very conception of all of philosophy, then to that of true philosophy.[135] For as will become clear immediately below, Melanchthon explicitly claimed in several places that demonstrations produce *epistêmê*, or as Melanchthon wrote, *certitudo, "*certainty." Melanchthon seems then to have followed Aristotle in claiming that there is some certainty in philosophy, even if such certainty must be much more limited for Melanchthon than for the Stagirite.

But it would be too hasty to simply conclude that Melanchthon in fact follows Aristotle in rejecting skepticism without first considering whether Melanchthon's conception of demonstration and its product is in accord with the Stagirite's. For we saw above that while Melanchthon identified himself as an Aristotelian, his was at least a very strange sort of Aristotelianism. And it was shown above that in his eclecticism Melanchthon was quite critical of several aspects of Aristotle's philosophy. Chapter Three above revealed, furthermore, that Melanchthon's use of several terms key to understanding his rhetoric and dialectics—including the terms "topics," "loci communes," and the very word "dialectics," itself —reflected significant transformations

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[133]   CR 13: 657: "Academica ... addidit falsam hyperbolen, omnia incerta esse..."

[134]   CR 13: 658: "Pugnat igitur Academica non solum cum communi iudicio rationis, et cum vitae ordine, sed etiam cum Deo, cum in universum tollit certitudinum."

[135]   Cf. above, 210.

on Melanchthon's part from their Aristotelian or pre-Aristotelian originals.[136] Indeed,

some readers may be rather uncomfortable allowing Melanchthon's "Ciceronianized

Aristotle" to be considered Aristotelian at all, since some may wish to assert that the

rhetorical "Causa Romana" the praeceptor promoted and followed can be called

philosophy only by equivocation. If Melanchthon's conception of demonstration were

somewhat looser than Aristotle's, the certainty produced through such "demonstration"

would likely not be the sort of thing Aristotle claimed.

A closer look reveals that Melanchthon adheres closely to Aristotle's conception

of demonstration in *Erotema dialectices*, however. Book Four of this work begins with

an explanation of the division of dialectics into *iudicium* and *inventio* and then of the

"prime division" of questions treated in dialectics into the *simplex* and the *coniuncta*. He

then presents three genera of syllogisms: "some are demonstrations, some are dialectical,

some are sophistic."[137] The sophistic, he explains, "is established upon what is false, but

still has the form of a true syllogism."[138] The dialectical syllogism is "that which is based

in material probability."[139]

Aristotle's definition of demonstration is authoritative for the praeceptor: "A

demonstration is a syllogism proceeding from truths primary and immediate, which are

the causes of conclusions [and] better known and prior."[140] With Aristotle Melanchthon

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[136]   Chapter Three above, 174-212.
[137]   CR 13: 643. "Cum dicitur tria esse genera syllogismorum, de materia dicitur…Inde extitit haec divisio syllogismorum: Alii sunt demonstrativi, alii Dialectici, alii Sophistici."
[138]   CR 13:644. "Sophisticus syllogismus est, qui constat ex falsis, sed tamen speciem veri habentibus…"
[139]   Ibid. : "Dialecticus syllogismus est, qui constat ex materia probabili..."
[140]   CR 13: 652. "Demonstratio est syllogismus procedens ex veris, primis et immediatis, notoribus et prioribus, quae sunt causa conclusionis." Cf. Aristotle, *Topics* 100a25-101a5: "Now a deduction is an argument in which, certain things being laid down, something other than these necessarily comes about through them. It is a demonstration, when the premises from which the deduction starts are true and

claims that from these better known and primary truths in demonstrations, "We draw…necessary and unyielding conclusions."[141] Nor are demonstrations limited to the sphere of logic or of pure rationality for Melanchthon, for in answer to the question "Is there not certainty in moral and natural philosophy?" he gives the unequivocal answer: "There are many demonstrations in these as well,"[142] providing a number of examples of each.[143]

2. *Causae Certudinis in Doctrinis*

The all encompassing scope of rhetoric in Melanchthon's thought was not accompanied by a turning away from formal reasoning. Neither did Melanchthon believe his rhetorical construal of philosophy was inimical to the Aristotelian claim that philosophy yields certainties in logic, ethics, and physics. But how is certainty possible from within Melanchthon's *Res Romana*? As Melanchthon put the question, *Quae sunt causae certitudinis in doctrinis*?"[144] "What are the sources of certainty in teaching?"

In answering this question, Melanchthon diverges radically from Aristotle on several counts. Recall that for Aristotle demonstrations rely upon *archai*, but that while the Stagirite denied that such *archai* are innate, he is never clear about just how one has access to them.[145]Melanchthon follows the Stagirite in asserting that certainty must be based somehow in primary and immediate truths. But Melanchthon goes beyond

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primitive, or are such that our knowledge of them has originally come through premises which are primitive and true;" cf. also Chapter Three above, 18-19.

[141]   CR 13:652: "Demonstratio est syllogismus in quo…bona consequentia, necessaria et immotum conclusionem extruimus, aut ex causis proximis effectus proprios sequi ostendimus, aut econtra procedimus."

[142]   CR 13: 653: "Suntne demonstrtationes in physica et ethica doctrina?   Multae sunt in his quoque demonstrationes, "

[143]   Ibid.

[144]   CR 13: 647.

[145]   See Chapter Three Above, 189-193.

Aristotle—or perhaps away from him—in clarifying just what sorts of things can be known with certainty. For according to the praeceptor there is not one but rather there are three there "sources of certainty" for philosophy: *experientia universalis,* "general experience;" *principia, id est, noticiae nobiscum nacsentes*, or "principles, that is, ideas in us at birth;" and *ordininis Intellectus in iudicanda consequentia,* "the order of the intellect in judging consequences."

The second of Melanchthon's *causae certitudinins*, by now somewhat familiar to the reader, correspond to some extent to Aristotle's *archai*. But while Melanchthon follows Aristotle in asserting that certainty must be ultimately founded in statements which need or which can have no demonstrative justification, he claims quite contrary to Aristotle that these notions must be innate. As the praeceptor explains:

> In philosophy and in all arts about which the light of human talent judges per se, there are three norms of certitude: general experience, *principia*, that is, *notitiae* born within us, and the ordering of the intellect in judging consequences. These three the Stoics with erudition joined and named Κριτήρια of teachings.[146]

The explanation Melanchthon provides for these *notitiae nobiscum nascentes,* as well as for his two other "sources of certainty" reveals much about the nature of philosophy as he construes it.

These innate ideas are for Melanchthon the "seeds of each particular art, divinely placed within us, and whence the arts are drawn forth, the use of which is necessary in life." The principles of mathematics and geometry are important examples, but also included among these *notitiae* are the fundaments of logic such as "the whole is greater than any part," and "the cause is not posterior to its effect." Equally important are

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[146]   CR 13:647: "In Philosophia et omnibus artibus, de quibus lux humani ingenii per se iudicat, tres sunt normae certitudinis: Experientia universalis, Principia, id est, noticiae nobiscum nascentes, et ordininis Intellectus in iudicanda consequentia. Haec tria Stoici erudite contexuerunt, et nominarunt κριτήρια doctrinarum."

propositions fundamental to Melanchthon's ethics such as "a human being should be truthful, just, kind, and chaste," and even statements foundational for theology such as "God is an eternal mind, wise, true, just, chaste, benevolent, founder of the world, conserving the order of things, and punishing wickedness."[147]

By *experientia universalis,* "general experience," Melanchthon means an understanding of the data commonly provided by the senses. As he explains, "It is called universal experience when all sane persons in the same way judge about those things which are perceived by the senses." He provides several examples such as "fire is hot" and "females bear offspring."[148] And while Melanchthon raises the question of skepticism about the information gained through the senses here, he provides no kind of philosophical argument against this skepticism. Instead he merely urges vehemently against it, "What sort of madness is it to pretend that it is uncertain whether the female or the male bears the young?"[149] Melanchthon's appeal to common understanding rather than to argument as a basis for rejecting skepticism in this sense thus shows more of a desire to reject it than an aptitude for falsifying it philosophically.

The third of Melanchthon's criteria for certainty is "the order of the intellect in judging consequences." By this, the praeceptor tells us, he means "the intellect rightly

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[147]   Ibid., 647: "Principia vocantur noticiae nobiscum nascentes, quae sunt semina singularum artium, divinitus insita nobis, ut inde artes extruantur, quarum usus in vita necessarius est. Etsi autem similitudo non omnino congruit, tamen discendi causa sic cogitetur, ut lumen in oculis conditum est ad cernenda corpora, sic in mente quasi lumen sunt hae noticiae, quibus intelligimus numeros, ordinem, proportiones, figuras, et conteximus ac iudicamus has primus propositiones: Totum est maius qualibet sua parte: Causa non est posterior effectu suo: Deus est mens aeterna, sapiens, verax, iusta, casta, benefica, conditrix mundi, servans rerum ordinem, et puniens scelera. Sit homo vrax, iustus, beneficus, castus."

[148]   Ibid.: "Experientia universalis dicitur, cum de iis quae sensu percipiuntur, sani omnes eodem modo iudicant, ut ignem calidum esse: foeminam parere: Aliud esse vitam, aliud mortem: In vita animantium sensum et motum esse: Mortem destructionem esse animantium: Vinum, piper, habere vim calefaciendi: Coelum moveri cirulariter,"

[149]   Ibid. : "Qualis furor est fingere incertum esse, utrum foemina pariat, an masculus?"

ordered when the syllogism joins parts together."[150] According to the praeceptor this ability to reason syllogistically is extremely important for furthering knowledge beyond perceptions of sense and pure reason, "For," Melanchthon writes, "it would not be enough for human life that simple propositions be known, as principles are known, and ideas from the senses."[151]   Because the use of this norm of certitude is necessary for human life, and because the joining of discreet bits of knowledge together constitutes philosophy for Melanchthon,[152] philosophy, as he conceives of it, is very important indeed for human life.

Melanchthon thus sets "the order of the intellect in judging sentences" in apposition to knowledge of principles and ideas from the senses. And in doing so, he shows that, as he conceives of them, these sources of certainty correspond to the two parts of dialectic as he conceives of it. The intellect in judgment, of course, nicely corresponds to dialectical *iudicium*. The other two sources of certainty are related to, perhaps he would say attained through, the power of *inventio*. For even if a claim such as "fire is hot" is not merely a sense datum, universal experience as Melanchthon presents it does not arise except through the discovery of the senses, here again reflecting at least an element of, or perhaps even extending Aristotelian empiricism. The *notitiae nobiscum nascentes* are likewise discovered for Melanchthon, it seems, through introspection. What is more, the apprehension of innate ideas is for Melanchthon at least in some sense prior to the ability to reason syllogistically, since these *notitiae* include "numbers, order,

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[150]   CR 13: 648: "Tertium κριτήριον est intellectus ordinis in syllogism recte coagmentis membris."
[151]   Ibid.: "Nam hominum vitae non satis esset, nosse simplicies propositiones, ut sunt principiae et sententiae per experientiam notae. "
[152]   See above, 218-220.

proportions, [and] figures,"[153] the rules and concepts which make syllogistic reasoning possible.

However, to say that all human beings, including the philosophers, have had these sources of certainty does not entail, for Melanchthon, that all philosophy is certain or true. Indeed, as noted above above, Melanchthon is repeatedly clear that all of the *sectae praecipuae philosophorum* have some errors mixed in with their teachings. But if humans possess these *causa certitudinis in doctrinis*, how is such error possible? In the *Erotemata dialectices* he says rather little about this, merely noting, "But there are [among the *sectae*] various errors, as when, in undertaking some journey, one way to the destination is correct, yet some, deviating from this way, go astray in another direction."[154]

But it is not hard to find causes of *un*certainty in philosophy for Melanchthon in other of his writings. Error in philosophy is for him a consequence of that Pauline principle first stated in 1518, that humans live in darkness as a consequence of sin.[155] He subsequently articulated more clearly the effects of sin on apprehension of principles of morality in the *Loci communes* of 1521, where he wrote:

> For the judgment of human comprehension is, on a whole, fallacious due to innate blindness, and accordingly even if certain patterns of morals have been engraved upon our minds, they can scarely be apprehended.[156]

Thus, according to Melanchthon, while the principles themselves may be true, on account of our innate blindness our apprehension of them is uncertain. Nor did Melanchthon

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[153]   CR 13:647; n. 127 above.
[154]   CR 13: 658. "Sed errores sunt varii, ut cum iter aliquo facimus, una ad eam metam rectia via est, a quia discedentes, alii aliter aberrant."
[155]   See Chapter Two above, 104-121 .
[156]   Melanchthon, *Loci communes,* in Pauck, 50; CR:21:117.

abandon this notion before he developed his natural philosophy. It is reiterated, indeed

extended to include *all* innate ideas, in the *Commentairus de anima,* where he wrote:

> If human nature had integrity, the glorious idea of God would burn or glow in us,
> and Κοιναὶ Ἐννοίαί (common principles) would be more stirred up in us than
> they are now, and it would be possible to judge with ease that these things were
> born with us. Now, since we were fit for the image of God, the idea of God and
> the distinction between the honorable and the base had shined in us. For the
> image is folded together with these ideas, as I will say later. But since this image
> has been deformed by Adam's lapse, great blindness has ensued. Nevertheless,
> certain footprints remain, as well as somewhat obscured ideas, from which the
> arts come forth.[157]

According to Melanchthon then, the arts are based upon true ideas which humans can

scarcely apprehend. But since reasoning based upon truths apprehended with uncertainty

cannot be indubitable, Melanchthon's doctrine of the epistemological consequences of

sin actually forestalls the possibility of philosophical *a priorism* or of establishing

epistêmê in the Aristotelian sense.

3. Faith

Robin Smith has noted that since Aristotle believed that "demonstration is

possible only if there are first truths known without demonstration," and because he

believed that such first principles or *archai* were in fact accessible to the human mind, it

is not inaccurate to characterize the Stagirite as a foundationalist.[158] Foundationalists

claim that there are some thoughts or ideas which are justified on the basis of their

intrinsic nature or which "are justified independently of their relationship to other

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[157] Melanchthon, *Commentarius de anima* (Viterbergae, 1548), 131r: "Si integra esset humana natura, arderet ac luceret in nobis illustris noticia Dei, & essent excitatiores Κοιναὶ Ἐννοίαί, quam nunc sunt, facilique iudicari posset, eas nobiscum nasci. Cum enim ad imaginem Dei conditi simus, fulsisset in nobis Dei noticia & discrimen honestorum ac turpium. Nam has noticias imago compleitur, ut postea dicam. Sed cum haec imago deformata sit lapsu Adae, ingens caligo secuta est. Manserunt tamen vestigia quaedam, & noticiae subobscurae, a quibis artes oriuntur."

[158] Robin Smith, "Logic," in Barnes, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Aristotle,* 27-65, here 49.

beliefs."[159] As noted in the previous chapter, it is not clear that Aristotle succeeds in explaining either how his *archai* are attained by the individual, nor how one can know that they are true.[160] But the Stagirite clearly does attempt such an account at the end of his *Posterior Analytics*,[161] and his account suggests that to doubt the existence of these primary ideas led to absurdity.

The Platonic tradition is also regarded as foundationalist. Plato claimed that because some ideas (in the case of the *Meno*, for example, the Pythagorean theorem) form the basis of reasoning and because they cannot be taught, these ideas must be innate, thus unlearned, and the soul must be immortal.[162] "For," as Socrates pressed Meno, "if the truth about reality is always in our soul, the soul would be immortal so that you should always confidently try to seek out and recollect what you do not know at present…"[163] Centuries later Augustine would affirm that one finds truth by looking within one's soul, but held that such truths were revealed in "The Teacher," Christ:

> Regarding each of the things we understand, however, we don't consult a speaker who makes sounds outside us, but the Truth that presides within over the mind itself, though perhaps words prompt us to consult Him. What is more, He who is consulted, He Who is said to *dwell in the inner man,* does teach: Christ—that is, *the unchangeable power and everlasting wisdom of God,* which every rational soul does consult, but is disclosed to anyone, to the extent that he can apprehend it, according to his own good or evil will.[164]

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[159]   Scott Sturgeon, G. F. Martin, and A. C. Grayling, "Epistemology," in A.C. Grayling, *Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7-60, here 19.

[160]   See Chapter Three above, 197-200.

[161]   Sturgeon, 49-50.

[162]   Brief but thorough treatments of Plato's doctrine of recollection can be found in Paul Woodruff, "Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge," in Steven Everson, ed., *Epistemology*. Companions to Ancient Thought:1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 81-84, and in Gail Fine, "Inquiry in the Meno" in Richard Kraut, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 200-226.

[163]   Plato, *Meno* 86b, tr. by G. M. A. Grube in Cooper, 870-898, here 886.

[164]   St. Augustine, "The Teacher," 11.38. 44-52. Tr. by Peter King in S*aint Augustine Agaginst the Academicians* and *The Teacher,* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995) 139. See also Donald Kries, "De Magistro," in Alan D. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine Through the Ages* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 519-20.

But Augustine also argued that there are some ideas which to doubt would be in principle incoherent, most famously his *si fallor, sum*.[165]

A thousand years after Augustine and a hundred years after Melanchthon Descartes would posit his *Cogito, ergo sum* as the foundation of certainty in philosophy established by reason alone. As Descartes concluded in his Second Meditation, "Thus, after everything has been most carefully weighted, it must be established that this pronouncement, 'I am, I exist,' is necessarily true every time I utter it or conceive it in my mind."[166]   Descartes has often been regarded as standing at the head of a foundationalist tradition of rationalism in modern philosophy.

Whether or not any of these were successful, each represents at least an attempted philosophical justification for beliefs which could form the foundation of a system of certain knowledge, of what Aristotle called *epistêmê*. The arguments of both Augustine's *si fallor* and the *cogito* of Descartes's *cogito* can furthermore be characterized as epistemologically *internalist;* they seek to justify foundational beliefs based in appeals to features internal to the mind itself.   *Externalist* foundationalist arguments, on the other hand, would seek to justify claims to certainty through a determination that the cognition has arisen through the proper functioning of a reliable process.[167]

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[165]   As John Rist points out, Augustine developed this "version of the cogito" in several places, but most famously in *City of God* 11:26; cf. Rist, *Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 63-67. See also Ronald Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine's Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1969); and Robert Meagher, Robert. *Augustine: On the Inner Life of the Mind* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1978).

[166]   Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy,* tr. by Donald Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993) 18; see Rist on similarities and differences between this argument and Augustine's *Sin fallor, sum*, Rist, 88.

[167]   While Aristotle's remarks at the end of *Posterior Analytics* have led many to conclude that he was attempting an internalist justification for knowledge, Murat Ayede has quite plausibly made a contrary claim: "Aristotle's project in the *Posterior Analytics* is not to answer the skeptic on internalist justificatory grounds, but rather lay out a largely externalist *explication* of scientific knowledge, i.e. what scientific knowledge consists in, without worrying as to whether we can ever show the skeptic to his satisfaction that we do ever possess knowledge so defined," in "Aristotle on *Episteme* and *Nous*: The *Posterior Analytics*,"

As previously indicated, largely on the basis of the praeceptor's doctrine of

notitiae naturales Frank suggests that Melanchthon should be considered a Platonist, and

thus a foundationalist of the internalist sort. Frank's work is based in part on a closer

examination of Melanchthon's work in physics in 1549 and his *Liber de anima* of 1553

than has been possible in the present work. And on the basis of this overview Frank has

claimed that Melanchthon defended his doctrine about natural notions against a sort of

Aristotelian extremism which would deny the very existence of innate ideas, concluding

that "Melanchthon's epistemology therefore has nothing in common with Aristotle's

position."[168]

Frank's account of Melanchthon's mature philosophy is shockingly at odds with

the view this dissertation has presented, based largely in Melanchthon' *Erotemata*

dialectices of 1547. For in the first place, Frank claims that Melanchthon rejected any

"tradition of knowledge based on experience, as presented by Aristotle."[169] To be sure,

that innate ideas are *causa certitudinis in doctrinis* for Melanchthon in the *Erotemata*

dialectices entails the denial of an extreme empiricism of the Lockean sort which would

reject their very existence, to say nothing of their having an important role in philosophy.

On the other hand, Contra Frank, in the *Erotemata dialectices* innate ideas stand

alongside common experience as sources of certainty for the praeceptor, and to doubt

common experience would accordingly be as grave an error as would be doubting the

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Southern Journal of Philosophy 36 (1):15-46. See also Michael Bergmann, "Externalist Responses to Skepticism," in John Greco, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Skepticism* (Oxford: Oxford UniversityPress, 2011), 504-532

[168]   Frank, "Melanchthon's Concept of Practical Philosophy," 223; cf. Frank's claims at the conclusion of *Die theologische Philosophie* that for Melanchthon, "Jede Erkenntnis besitzt ihre Voraussetzung in diesen dem menschlichem Geist eingestifteten 'notitiae naturales'. Infolge dieses erkenntnispsychologischen Perspektivenwechsels gibt Melanchthon dann auch folgerichtig den Erfahrungsbezogenen Erkenntnisrealismus der aristotelischen Tradition preis," 338.

[169]   Frank, "Melanchthon's Concept of Practical Philosophy," 223.

innate ideas or the reliability of the syllogism. In the *Erotemata dialectices* then, Melanchthon retains important elements of *both* Platonic *a priorism* and Aristotelian empiricism.

But in order to conclude, as Frank's claims suggest, that Melanchthon was a philosophical internalist it would be necessary to find some argument on the basis of which Melanchthon shows that he found it possible to doubt neither the *koinê ennoiai*, nor the reliabilty of the syllogism. That is, Melanchthon would have needed not only to claim that the *koinê ennoiai* and the syllogism are sources of certainty, but he would also have needed to give some purely philosophical reason or reasons for making such a claim. But in fact nothing like the *cogito*, the *si fallor*, nor any other internalist arguments appear in Melanchthon's account of the norms of certitude. To be sure, the praeceptor *does* propose a justification for his belief in and reliance upon these as sources of certainty. In fact, he provides two different sorts of justification, one of these very much dependent upon the other. But neither of these justifications may be classified as philosophically internalist, since they both depend upon factors external to the reasoning mind.

In the first place, according to Melanchthon in the *Erotemata dialectices*, if the innate principles were to be called into question we could not make use of the findings of mathematics, philosophy, or of any of the more common arts since these principles provide the basis for all of these arts.   For example, he writes, "If numbers were confounded, infinite confusion of things and actions would follow."[170] Indeed, were these principles not certain "the destruction of all nature would follow."[171] He writes that for

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[170]   CR 13:648: "Si numeri conturbentur, sequitur infinita confusio rerum et actionum."
[171]   CR 13:647 : "Item, quia dato opposito, sequitur destructio universae naturae."

this reason it is "useful" to warn the young away from doubts about these principles,[172] since the absurd opinions of the Academics and other sects, though often attractive to minds bedazzled by novelty[173] "are the cause of great calamities in life,"[174]

From the point of view of the rationalistic or epistemically inclined philosopher, of course, such an argument from utility waves off the question of skepticism rather than defeats it. And so, out of respect for the philosopher seeking *epistêmê* perhaps the reader may and should push Melanchthon further and ask the praeceptor, "Why must philosophy be useful?" Why shouldn't the philosopher pursue *epistêmê* for its own sake? Why could not Melanchthon reject the notion that we are called to useful life in society—as the Epicureans did? Why indeed does Melanchthon so bitterly reject Epicureanism on this point?

The answers Melanchthon provides reveals the praeceptor's primary justification for belief that there can be any certainty in philosophy, and the answer is clear: faith demands certainty on the part of the faithful, and so to doubt these sources of certainty would be impious. "For," as Melanchthon writes in defense of the first of his norms, "to deny manifest experience is to wage war with God in the way of the giants, because it is just as if someone should deny that this order was founded by God."[175] Moreover he writes that contrary to the proposal of the Academics that even geometry is uncertain because, as they claimed, the *koine ennoiai* upon which it is founded are uncertain, Melanchthon asserts, "God handed down arithmetic, geometry, some physics and ethics,

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[172]   CR 13:658 : "Haec de sectis monere adolescentes utile est, ne veras et receptas sententias, quas docet communis Aristotelica doctrina, fastidiant, et amore noitatis admirentur et amplectantur prodigiosas opniones."

[173]   Ibid.: "…inest enim talis mobilitas animis, ut facile praesentia fastidiant, et Nova ac prodigiosa suscipiant et appetant..."

[174]   Ibid. "Haec vitia et vulgaria sunt, et sunt causae magnarum calamitatum in vita."

[175]   CR 13:647: "Nam dissentire a manifesta experientia, est Deo bellum inferre Gigantum more, quia perinde est, ac si quis neget hunc naturae ordinem a deo conditum est."

that they may govern many parts of life, and that they might be props for heavenly doctrines, and he wishes the certainty of these doctrines to be firm and immobile."[176] Thus, to deny the certainty of the innate ideas such as the ethical principle that a person should be true, just, kind, and chaste is thus "displeasing to God and disgraceful."[177] And even Melanchthon's confidence in the power to reason via the syllogism is grounded in faith, for as he writes, "God imparted this light, that the mind may organize and join appropriate things, and separate those things which are not correctly joined."[178]

According to the faith as Melanchthon understands it, God wishes humans to be able to live well on earth. This requires the ability to negotiate a society with other persons and the ability to navigate the natural world, both of which in turn require a measure of certainty in philosophy. And since, as he believes, certainty in philosophy requires the reliability of the powers of deduction and of sense experience as well as the certainty of innate ideas, his faith compels him to declare these three are not only certain themselves but sources of further certainty. Melanchthon's philosophy is thus ultimately founded upon faith. To fail to believe in the God of Christian faith would thus be, according to Melanchthon, to doom oneself not only to eternal misery, according to the praeceptor. Because true philosophy is a necessary means for improving one's existence here and now, and because true philosophy is founded in the faith, to take up the cause of the Academics would be to relegate oneself to a useless, inept philosophy, and as a result to a miserable and futile life on earth.

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[176]   CR13:657: "Tradidit autem Deus arithmeticam, Geometriam, Physica quaedam et Ethica, ut gubernent multas vitae partes, et sint adminicula in doctrina coelesti, ac vult harum doctrinarum firmam et immotam esse certitudinem."

[177]   CR 13:648 : "Discedere ab hac norma, est facere Deo displicentia et turpia."

[178]   Ibid.: "Ideo Deus addidit hanc lucem, ut mens componat, iungat convenientia, et distrahat ea, quae non conveniunt."

F. Summary

1. Melanchthon's Fideistic Philosophy

The review of Melanchthon's biography in Chapter Two not only revealed that Melanchthon was an Evangelical theologian before he ever developed a natural or moral philosophy, but also that his theological commitments motivated his work in these areas. A further point comes to the surface as a result of the present examination of the philosophy he developed through the remainder of his career: that Melanchthon's understanding of the relationship between faith and reason fundamentally determined the character of his philosophy. It must be noted however that the question of this relationship was importantly distinct for the praeceptor from two other questions he had treated within the first decade or so of his arrival at Wittenberg: first about the relationship between the Gospel and philosophy, and second of the relationship between the Law of God and philosophy. With respect to the latter of these Melanchthon was clear as early as the *Loci communes* of 1521 when he noted that true philosophy can reveal but a portion of the Law of God, namely the natural law, while scripture alone reveals the Ten Commandments as such.[179] He discussed the other question, that of the relationship between the Gospel and philosophy, in the *scholia* on Colossians a decade or so later, where he asserted that while true philosophy can reveal something of the Law of God, it can reveal nothing of the Gospel.[180]

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[179]   See Chapter Two above, 112.
[180]   Ibid., 116-120.

In both the *Loci communes theologici* and in his *scholia* on Colossians
Melanchthon sought to relate "true philosophy" to the revealed Word of God. And in
both of these, but especially in the latter, he indicated that true philosophy is not only
useful, but necessary for the Church and for individual Christians. The pursuit of true
philosophy was thus at least since the mid 1520's for Melanchthon an imperative of his
faith. And yet, another important tenet of his faith, that darkness has fallen upon the
human mind as a result of original sin,[181] threatened to forestall the very possibility of
certainty based in human powers. Faith thus placed an obligation upon the praeceptor's
philosophy and at the same time, seemingly, prevented him from fulfilling it.

In the *Erotemata dialectices* Melanchthon finally resolved this difficulty by
clarifying that because of this inherited darkness of mind, true philosophy can only be
built upon faith. According to Melanchthon here, true philosophy requires
demonstrations, and demonstration entails certainty and thus requires *norma certitudinis*.
But the ultimate grounding for Melanchthon's belief in these norms of certitude—
whether of sense experience, innate ideas or of reasoning—was faith. As Quirinius
Breen recognized, Melanchthon "did not hold to certainty in natural knowledge on
philosophical grounds. He repeats over and over that one must believe $2 \times 4 = 8$ as
certain *because* God wills that some things be certain and immovable."[182]

Melanchthon believed that God made it possible for humans to have certainty by
providing them with the *norma certitudinis*. But it must be stressed that according
Melanchthon the scriptures do not merely claim it possible to discover that these norms
exist, as if, once discovered, it would be impossible for any intelligent person to doubt

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[181]   Ibid., 99-100.

[182]   Breen, "The Terms '*Loci Communes*' and '*Loci*' in Melanchthon," 207.

them. If this had been his claim, then Melanchthon would have believed that upon the discovery of these norms the philosopher would be free to proceed independent of any further reference to faith. And if Melanchthon had held such a view, he would have been, as Frank suggests, a sort of theo-rationalist; his theology would have merely provided a rationale for proceeding as a philosophical rationalist.

But this was not Melanchthon's view. Rather, for Melanchthon faith not only makes possible the discovery of the *norma certitudinis*; in Melanchthon's view it is finally only on account of faith that one can claim that these norms, once discovered, are certainly true.   In Melanchthon's eyes the Academics were in error because they had not received the revelation which compelled belief in the *norma certitudinis*. But though in error on account of this ignorance, they were at least correct to recognize both that human ingenuity could not on its own establish certainty in philosophy and that as a consequence the philosophical sects could not resolve the great dissensions among themselves on the basis of unaided reason. So it is that, on Melanchthon's account, the honest and well read philosopher without the foundation of faith must be a skeptic.

Or rather, according to Melanchthon's account of the human situation, the honest and clear-minded unbeliever must remain a much more thorough skeptic than the one whose philosophy is founded upon faith. For as Melanchthon presents the situation, even the Christian philosopher must remain somewhat doubtful, not only about any claims made by philosophy which are not grounded in faith, but also about claims made by even the theologically grounded philosopher when treating of matters beyond our immediate experience. The Academics are thus at least correct, according to Melanchthon, in

claiming not to know about matters "which cannot be adequately comprehended with the keenness of human talent."[183]

One can now see how Melanchthon's philosophical skepticism was significantly different from that of Erasmus. For when Erasmus made the claim that "human affairs are so obscure and various that nothing can be clearly known," he was not only speaking of the condition of reason without a grounding in faith; he also extended the reach of doubt to include the realm of theological truth revealed in scripture.[184] In contrast, while Melanchthon insisted on the uncertainty of any philosophy grounded in human reason alone, he equally strongly insisted both on the certainty of the claims of the faith and upon the certainty of philosophy which was both grounded in faith and which respected the limits of the power of the human mind. The fault of those, like Erasmus, who would follow the Academics in philosophy is thus not irrationality, according to Melanchthon's way of thinking, but impiety.

An important key to understanding Melanchthon's claims about certainty in philosophy is in the recognition that, in terms used by contemporary epistemologists, there are at least two senses according to which one can speak of "certainty." As Jason Stanley has explained,

> According to the first sense, *subjective* certainty, one is certain of a proposition if and only if one has the highest degree of confidence in its truth. According to the second sense of 'certainty,' which we may call *epistemic* certainty, one is certain of a proposition p if and only is one knows that p (or is in a position to know that p) on the basis of evidence that gives one the highest justification for one's belief that p.[185]

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[183]   CR 13:657: "Academica recentior, cum videret magnas esse dissensiones aliarum sectarum, et animadvertet quasdam partes in Physicis…quaedam non satis comprehendi acie humani ingenii."

[184]   Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 5 ff; also by Popkin, "Theories of Knowledge," in Schmidt, Skinner, and Kessler, 668-684.

[185]   Jason Stanley, "Knowledge and Certainty," *Philosophical Issues, 18, Interdisciplinary Core Philosophy,* 2008, 35-57, esp. 35, though Stanley's primary concern is consider the relationship between

Others make the same distinction while preferring the terms "psychological certainty"

and "propositional certainty." Peter Klein clarifies the criterion for judging *epistemic* or

propositional certainty thus:

> Roughly, we can say that a proposition, p, is *propositionally* certain for a person,
> S, Just in case S is fully warranted in believing that p and there are no legitimate
> grounds whatsoever to doubt that p.[186]

Epistemic or propositional certainty is thus just the sort of thing that internalist

foundationalists from Plato through to Descartes sought and claimed to have found a

foundation for. Both Augustine and Descartes believed that philosophy could be

grounded in some propostion or propositions which to doubt would be incoherent or

absurd.

Epistemic certainty is also just what Erasmus denied that humans could have

when he claimed in his *In Praise of Folly* "nothing can be known for certain." It was

certainty in this sense that Erasmus also denied to the theologian, and on account of this

denial, as he wrote to Luther, he disapproved of making assertions in theology. But

Luther's famous reply to Erasmus in *On the Bondage of the Will* relied upon the other

sense of "certainty" Stanley describes.

According to Luther one could not proceed as a Christian theologian without

assertions. But in making this claim, Luther did not even address the question of whether

or not the theologian could have epistemic certainty. He merely and strongly suggested

that to make the assertions required of a theologian, requires *subjective* or *psychological*

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knowledge and certainty; his claim is that knowledge requires neither sort of certainty. For another
particularly concise account of these two sorts of certainty, (though distinguishing between *epistemic* and
psychological certainty)*, cf. Baron Reed, "Certainty", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008
Edition), Edward N. Zalta ed., URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/certainty/,
accessed on July 1, 2012.

[186]   Peter Klein, "Certainty," in *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge,
2008), 129.

certainty of the claims of the faith.   For as Luther insisted, "And by assertion—in order that we may not be misled by words—I mean a constant adhering, affirming, confessing, maintaining, an invincible perservering...,"[187] This assertion that the Christian theologian must delight in assertions could indeed provide a helpful definition of *subjective certainty*, were one to insert the phrase of *subjective certainty* in the place of Luther's "assertion."

Now, as Stanley suggests, it would seem strange to claim to have *epistemic* certainty about a proposition while also claiming to be *psychologically* uncertain about it. For example, it would be odd for a Cartesian to say something like, "I am epistemically certain that I exist, and yet I am psychologically uncertain of it," or "I know I exist, and yet I doubt it." [188] On the other hand, it is quite commonplace to claim psychological certainty where one has no grounds for epistemic certainty. For example, one will think there is nothing odd about the claim, "I am certain Bob is guilty, but I can't prove it," when one believes the speaker's thought could be restated, "I have psychological but not epistemic certainty that Bob is guilty."

For Melanchthon, certainty in philosophy is grounded upon certainty in theology. But Melanchthon's claims that there is certainty in theology depend upon the same subjective or psychological sense of "certainty" Luther exemplified. Had Melanchthon intended to establish epistemic certainty in philosophy, he would have needed to have attempted an epistemic justification for his belief in the infallibility of the *normae certudinis*. In rather founding his trust in these norms through and appeal to faith, he suggested merely that it is impious and unfaithful for the Christian to waver in trusting in

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[187]   *Luther's Works*, vol. 35, 20.
[188]   Cf. Stanley, 35.

these, and that the Christian is rather to hold them with the sort of subjective or psychological certainty with which Luther made his assertions about the faith. And so while, in Melanchthon's philosophy, it is upon the *normae certitudinis in doctrinis* that one can produce demonstrations in philosophy, yielding further certainties, the certainty so produced could not be *epistemic* certainty; demonstrations based in psychological certainty can only, at best, produce more psychological certainty.

According to Melanchthon's account then, the academics must be correct insofar as they claim that reason cannot attain to *epistemic* certainty. Indeed, there seems to be no evidence in the *Erotemata dialectices* nor in any other of his works that the praeceptor believed epistemic certainty was available even to the Christian. And so, according to Melanchthon, while only the Christian can have "true" and "certain" philosophy, the certainty which is available to the Christian philosopher is both limited in scope and is limited to subjective certainty. Thus, in spite of the praeceptor's repeated insistence that there is certainty in philosophy, the philosopher demanding *epistêmê* will correctly object that there is nothing at all certain in Melanchthon's philosophy in the sense that Plato, Augustine, or Descartes sought, and claimed to have, certainty.

In the terms used by Richard Popkin, Melanchthon was then both a philosophical skeptic and a fideist. For as Popkin explains his use of these terms, "fideists are persons who are sceptics with regard to the possibility of attaining knowledge by rational means, without our possessing some basic truths known by faith (i.e., truths based on no rational evidence whatsoever)."[189] And as Popkin further explains there are also at least two important strains of fideism in the history of Christian thought:

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[189]   Popkin, *History of Scepticism,* xix.

> Fideism covers a group of possible views, extending from (1) that of blind faith, which denies to reason any capacity whatsoever to reach the truth, or to make it plausible, and which bases all certitude on a complete and unquestioning adherence to some revealed or accepted truths, to (2) that of making faith prior to reason. This latter view denies to reason any complete and absolute certitude of the truth prior to the acceptance of some proposition or propositions by faith (i.e., admitting that *all* rational propositions are to some degree doubtful prior to accepting something on faith), even though reason may play some relative or probable role in the search for, or explanation of the truth.[190]

Popkin stresses that while some may insist on restricting the word "fideist" to the first of the above senses to denote those who "deny reason *any* role or function in the search for truth," his second sense makes room for the likes of Luther, Calvin, Pascal, and Kierkegaard, for whom reason was very important and valuable but not foundational for philosophy. [191] Melanchthon's concern for dedication to formal reasoning through dialectics and for the pursuit of certainty in philosophy properly founded upon faith clearly disqualify him from being considered a fideist in Popkin's first sense; Melanchthon was no irrationalist. And the important role of reasoning in his accounts of theology and philosophy on the one hand, in addition to the role the praeceptor established for faith in founding philosophical certainty on the other hand, would clearly qualify him as a fideist of Popkin's second kind.

Furthermore, in so grounding philosophy upon the philosopher's faith in God as God is revealed in scripture, Melanchthon's fideism can be said to belong to what Etienne Gilson called the "Augustinian family" of philosophies. As Gilson explains the relationship between reason and revelation for this family:

> It thus appears from Saint Augustine's explicit statement, first that we are invited by Revelation itself to believe, that unless we believe we shall not understand… it follows that instead of entailing its ultimate rejection the doctrine of Saint Augustine was achieving a transfiguration of the Greek ideal of philosophical

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[190]   Ibid., xix-xx.
[191]   Ibid., xx.

wisdom… For the Greek philosophers had passionately loved wisdom, but grasp it they could not; and there it now was, offered by God himself to all men as a means of salvation by faith, and, to the philosophers, as an unerring guide towards rational understanding.[192]

Indeed, the above could serve as a description of Melanchthon's view of philosophy. The praeceptor thus reflects what Gilson calls Augustine's "famous formula" on the relation of faith and reason: "Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore seek not to understand in order that thou mayest believe, but believe that thou mayest understand."[193]

Several points about Melanchthon's Augustinianism must be made immediately, however. First, to belong to this "Augustinian family" by no means entails that the praeceptor's philosophy was, after all, Platonic in any way resembling Augustine's Platonism. Indeed, as Gilson points out, while

(a)ll members of the Augustinian family resemble one another by their common acceptance of the fundamental principle: unless you believe you will not understand…another characteristic of this family is its ability to contain a number of disparate accounts of what constitutes rationality or rational knowledge.[194]

Of course, as Gilson notes, "To Saint Augustine himself, the perfect type of rational knowledge was the philosophy of Plato, as revised and brought up to date by Plotinus," so that "the whole philosophical activity of Saint Augustine had to be a rational interpretation of the Christian Revelation, in terms of the Platonic philosophy."[195] But others who have belonged to the Augustinian family, while sharing the Bishop of Hippos's understanding of faith, have had quite different conceptions of reason. Thus,

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[192]   Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribners's Sons, 1938), 20-21.

[193]   Saint Augustine, *On the Gospel of Saint John* XXIX, 6; in *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint John,* A Library of Fathers, tr. H. Browne, J. H. Parker, (Oxford: Oxford Univerisity Press, 1848), col. I, 440, quoted in Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation,* 19.

[194]   Gilson, *Reason and Revelation*, 22.

[195]   Ibid.. See also Roland Teske, Roland, "Saint Augustine as Philosopher: The Birth of Christian Metaphysics," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 7-32.

Gilson notes, for Anselm "rational knowledge was logical knowledge,"[196] while to Roger Bacon reason must proceed from faith on through "mathematical demonstration and experimental investigation."[197]

The claim that Melanchthon is Augustinian in Gilson's sense is in fact consistent with Frank's earlier quoted proposal that Melanchthon cannot be understood primarily as a follower of any particular philosophical authority. But by now the difficulty with Frank's later proposal that Melanchthon's philosophy should be regarded as fundamentally Platonic becomes clear. While Melanchthon believed the world is rationally constructed and intelligible, and while Melanchthon may have understood that these ideas are to be found in the *Timaeus*, there is no evidence that Melanchthon believed such ideas *because* he found them in Plato, nor that he believed that the claims made in the *Timaeus* are epistemically certain. While Melanchthon had high regard for Plato, this was just because, as was made clear above, the praeceptor found that Plato's philosophy was, among the philosophers, in some respects most consistent with the understanding of creation Melanchthon found in the scriptures. Thus it was that the Christian faith as Melanchthon understood it provided the framework "within which Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurius are criticized or received."[198]

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[196]   Gilson, *Reason and Revelation*, 24.
[197]   Ibid., 28.
[198]   Cf. Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 66-67, where he claims "daß Melanchthons Philosophiebegriff einer *regulativen Wahrheitsidee folgt*: nicht bestimmte philosophische Autoritäten kennzeichnen dieses Philosophieren, sondern eine Wahrheitsidee, innerhalb der *Platon, Aristoteles*, *Epikur* kritisiert oder auch rezipiert werden können, sofern der Wahrheitssuche dienen, d.h., sinem Wahrheitsverständnis entsrechen."

2. Melanchthon's Pragmatic Philosophy

Frank's assertion that Plato's thought is foundational for Melanchthon's philosophy is furthermore related to the unanswered question of this chapter, that of the key to understanding Melanchthon's eclecticism. As noted above, Frank has claimed that the critical principle according to which Melanchthon chose from among the claims of various philosophers was a *Regulativwahrheitsidee*.[199] He notes that from early on in his career Melanchthon's primary criticism of scholastic philosophy was that it was useless, and so as Melanchthon understood the work of the scholastics, "Philosophy was nothing but stupid wrangling over ideas, the vacuum, atoms, and God, which is moreover useless for concrete political reality."[200] Frank further claims that for Melanchthon:

> Behind this critical understanding of philosophy was hidden however a significant conception of truth (*Wahrheitsidee*). Melanchthon proceeded not in adherence to one or another conflicting philosophical-theological schools, but to a truth, which above all was concerned with ethical-practical dimensions. The critique of the political and ethical uselessness of philosophy clarified straightaway that Melanchthon pursued an understanding of truth with a practical aim.[201]

An examination and correction of several aspects of this claim by Frank will be useful in completing the present summary of the praecpetor's actual understanding of philosophy.

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[199]   Ibid.

[200]   Ibid., 57: "In seiner Vorrede zur bezeichenden Edition der "Wolken" des *Aristophanes* von 1520… präzisiert Melanchthon nochmals seine Polemik: Philosophie sei nichts als dumme Streitigkeiten über Ideen, Vakuum, Atome, und Gott, die überdies für die konkrete, politische Wirklichkeit nutzlos seien," citing CR 1: 273 ff.. For examinations of usefulness as a criterion for worthwhile theology in Melanchthon, see Hans Engelland, *Melanchthon: Glauben und Handeln* (München: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1931); and Sven Grosse, "Die Nützlichkeit als Kriterium der Theologie bei Philipp Melanchthon," in Günter Frank, Ulrich Kopf, and Sebastian Lalla, eds., *Melanchthon und die Neuzeit,* Melanchthon Schriften der Stadt Bretten 7 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2003), 69-94.

[201]   Ibid., 58. "Hinter diesem kritischen Philosophieverständnis verbigt sich jedoch eine beduetsame *Wahrheitsidee*. Melanchthon geht es nicht um Gefolgschaft einer der einander widerstreitenden philosophisch-theologischen Schulen und Autoritäten, sondern um eine Wahrheit, die vor allem auf ethisch-praktische Dimensionen hinauslauft. Gerade die Kritik und der politischen und ethischen Nutzlosigkeit der Philosophie verdeutlicht, daß Melanchthon ein *Wahrheitsverstandnis unter praktischer Absicht verfolgt."*

First, there is no question that Melanchthon has a conception of truth which is vital to his conception of philosophy, or rather to his conception of philosophy worth pursuing. According to the praeceptor the true is that which can be demonstrated to be so. As he puts it in the *Erotemata dialectices*,

> For that philosophy is true which is begun from innately implanted principles, and by means of demonstration, and thence which builds up demonstrations in an orderly manner…And the same things are true, regardless of whence they come, whether from Aristotle or from Plato.[202]

But then there are three sorts of things which are true in philosophy, according to Melanchthon: statements which are arrived at via demonstrations, common experience, and the innate ideas which require no demonstration—indeed, which can have no demonstration since they provide the basis and means for all demonstrations. So far, so good for Frank's assesment. But understanding Melanchthon's conception of truth, his *Wahrheitsidee,* does not help us to understand his criteria for accepting some claims or elements from the *sectae praecipuae philosophorum* and for rejecting others. Nor in Melanchthon's thought is truth an end in itself. Rather, truth is for him to be sought through demonstrations because demonstrations ensure certainty in philosophy, and certainty is to be sought in philosophy because it is a condition for our being able to improve life through natural and moral philosophy.

Second, Frank is quite correct to point out that Melanchthon's primary criticism of philosophy under scholasticism was that it became uselessness. Consistent with this criticism, whenever Melanchthon wished to praise philosophy, indeed when he wished to justify its pursuit by the Christian, he does so by highlighting our need for it or its

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[202]   CR 13:658: "Illa philosophia vera est, quae orditur a principiis natura notis, et materia demonstrationem, et inde demonstrationes ordine extruit…Et vera sunt eadem, ubicunque recte traduntur, sive apud Aristotelem, sive apud Platonem."

usefulness.[203] The previous chapter above revealed Melanchthon's utilitarian motivation

for studying rhetoric.[204] The same motivation is revealed at the beginning of his

Erotemata dialectices, where, having both distinguishing dialectic from rhetoric and then

defining the eponymous art, he finds he must address what he expects will be a just

demand on them part of reader. And so one of the first headings of Erotemata dialectices

is: "Give some testimonies commending the utility of this dialectics to us."[205] Later in

that work one sees that utility is an important factor in judging between the claims of the

secate praecipuae philosophorum.[206]

Such a pragmatic concern appears again and again throughout Melanchthon's

career whenever he writes of philosophy. Thus in his inaugural lecture to Wittenberg

University in 1518 he defends his program of studies against those who claim it would be

"more difficult that useful;" [207] in the oration praising eloquence of 1523 he warns his

audience to reject the notion that the first part of philosophy "is unnecessary for

achieving the other disciplines," [208] an appeal he repeats almost word for word in an

oration promoting the role of schools in 1543.[209] In his Colossians Commentary of 1527,

philosophy is "a thing that is necessary in this corporal and civic life, such as food , drink,

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[203]   For example, consider the following, all in Kusukawa, *Orations*: in "On the order of learning," where Melanchthon commends the study of "higher disciplines…because of their obvious usefulness," 3 (CR 11:209); in "On the role of the schools," he writes in opposition to the idea that philosphical studies "are not something necessary for life, but slothful leisure," 9 (CR 11:606-7); see also "On the distinction," 23, (CR 12: 689-90); "On arithmetic," 92 (CR 11:284-92); "On philosophy," 126 (CR 11:27); "On natural philosophy, 134 (CR 11:555-60).

[204]   Chapter Three above, 174-177, 212-216.

[205]   CR 13: 516. "Dic testimonia aliqua, quae utilitatem Dialecticae nobis commendant."

[206]   CR13: 658. "Haec de sectis monere adolescentes utile est, ne veras et receptas sententias, quas docet communis Aristotelica doctrina, fastidiant, et amore novitatis admirentur et amplectantur prodigiosas opiniones," CR13: 658.

[207]   Melanchthon, "On Correcting the Studies" in Keen, *Melanchthon Reader* 48.

[208]   Melanchthon, "Praise of eloquence," in Kusukawa, *Orations,* 60.

[209]   Melanchthon, "On the role of the schools," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 9.

or such as public laws, etc.,"[210] and in his dedicatory letter to his *Philosophiae moralis epitome* of 1538, he writes "in choosing a teaching one has to choose what is correct, true, simple, steadfast, well ordered, and useful for life."[211] This pragmatic concern is ubiquitous Melanchthon's philosophical writings and it is a crucial criterion determining his philosophy.

In addition to a having a dialectical method and a theological foundation then, Melanchthon's philosophy can be said to have had *not* a regulative ideal of truth, a *regulativ Wahrheitsidee,* but a practical or utilitarian regulative principle, a *regulativ Nützlichkeitidee* as it were.[212] Such a practical principle stands on all fours with Melanchthon's general rhetorical construal of philosophy, his "Roman way." And all of this suggests that the fountainhead of this pragmatic inclination is neither Aristotle, whose dialectical method Melanchthon relies upon, nor Plato, of whose theology he most approves, but Cicero, the Roman master of persuasion. Melanchthon's Augustinian fideism indeed conceives of reason in modified Ciceronian terms, and the praeceptor's philosophy, the "Res Romana" represents a version of Ciceronian rhetorical utilitarianism operating in accordance with his Ciceronian-Aristotelian dialectical method.

Another important conclusion about Melanchthon's philosophy has to do with this practical orientation. Though Frank is wrong to attribute to Melanchthon a *regulativ Wahrheitsidee*, he is quite correct to suggest that Melanchthon pursued philosophy "with a practical aim." And yet Melanchthon's philosophy is not practically oriented in precisely the sense Frank supposes. For when Frank states that practical concerns are

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[210]   Melanchthon, "On the distinction," in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 23.
[211]   Melanchthon, "Dedicatory Letter to Melanchthon's *Epitome of Moral Philosophy,* " in Kusukawa, *Orations*, 139-143, here 141.
[212]   For a discussion of Melanchthon's parallel theological pragmatism, see Sven Grosse, "Die Nützlichkeit als Kriterium der theologie bei Philipp Melanchthon," in Frank and Köpf, 69-94.

paramount for the praeceptor, he identifies the practical with the ethical and political; he claims that Melanchthon was concerned with "a truth, which above all was concerned with ethical-practical dimensions." Hartfelder likewise identified the practical bent in Melanchthon's philosophy with the ethical.[213]

In attempting to identify the practical orientation of Melanchthon's thought with the ethical then, both Frank and Hartfelder conceive of the practical according to the Aristotelian distinction between the practical and the theoretical. None have explained this distinction in Aristotle better than the great A. E. Taylor when he wrote:

> The deepest and most radical distinction among the forms of knowledge, according to Aristotle, is that between the Theoretical or Speculative (θεωρητικαί) and the Practical Sciences, a distinction roughly corresponding to that which we draw in English between the sciences and the arts. Speculative Philosophy (the *tout ensemble* of the speculative) differs from Practical Philosophy (the *tout ensemble* of the practical sciences) alike in its purpose, its subject-matter, and its formal logical character. The purpose of "theoretical" Philosophy as its name shows, is θεωρία, disinterested contemplation or recognition of truths which are what they are independently of our personal volition; its end is to know; the purpose of "practical" Philosophy, on the contrary, is to devise rules for successful interference with the course of events, to produce results which, but for our intervention, would not have come about; its end is thus to do or to make something.[214]

And as Taylor further explains, in this schema speculative philosophy includes Theology, Arithmetic, and physics;[215] practical philosophy is treated of in the Stagirite's ethical and political writings.

The opposite side of Frank's identification of the practical with the ethical in Melanchthon's thought is that, remaining consistent with the Aristotelian distinction,

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[213]   Hartfelder, 182: "Zu den formalen und theologischen Nutzen kommt noch ein ethischer hinzu. Es ist zünachst auch ein sittlicher Vorteil, wenn man mit Hilfe philosophischer Kenntnisse diejeniege philosophische Schule auswahlen kann,…"

[214]   A. E. Taylor, *Aristotle and His Predecessors: Being the First Book of His Metaphysics* (Chicago: Open Court, 1907), 19, accessed online at http://www.archive.org/stream/aristotleonhispr00aris#page/n13/mode/2up on April 8, 2011.

[215]   Ibid., 21-23.

Frank claims that Melanchthon's natural philosophy is theoretical or speculative. To be

sure, Frank denies that Melanchthon's physics is based in Aristotelian metaphysics. But

this does not means that they are not based in any speculative metaphysics. For as Frank

reiterates:

> On closer examination, however, an investigation of the specific and central
> ontological elements of his elaboration of the Physics…shows that all the
> ontological dimensions [from Aristotle] in natural philosophy are eliminated and
> that it is overlapped at the decisive points by Platonism.[216]

And Frank's two-fold claim, that Melanchthon's natural philosophy is speculative, and

that it follows Plato in this regard, is thus again central to hiss assessment of

Melanchthon's philosophy.

Two factors make is clear that Frank certainly has gone wrong on these points.

First, at least up to the point that he wrote the *Erotemata dialectices*, Melanchthon

uniformly rejected any speculative philosophy. As Frank himself points out, though he

lectured and commented upon Aristotle's other philosophical works, he never

commented upon the *Metaphysics*.[217] But furthermore, as has just been shown, in the

Erotemata dialectices Melanchthon maintained enough skepticism to reject speculation

about things which are beyond the knowledge we get through reasoning syllogistically

about common experience using a few innate ideas. Even where Melanchthon does not

count out the very possibility of what Taylor calls "disinterested contemplation," even

when he acknowledges that there might be some delight in it, the utilitarian concern

ubiquitous in Melanchthon's writings discounts the *legitimacy*—that is, the *faithfulness*

and the *usefulness*—of expending time or energy pursuing Aristotelian θεωρία.

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[216]   Frank, "Philipp Melanchthon," in Blum, 155.
[217]   Frank, "The Reason of Acting,"218; *Die theologische Philosophie,* 52-60.

But second, none of this devaluing of speculation discourages Melanchthon from the pursuit of physics or natural philosophy. And this is because natural philosophy as Melanchthon presents it is, contrary to Aristotle, not concerned with θεωρία. Rather, as he puts it in his Colossians commentary, the praeceptor seeks through philosophy only the sort of knowledge helpful in "the corporal life," for example skills involved in the practice of medicine, navigation, and conducting afairs in civil society.[218] Natural philosophy is pursued only with the practical goal of learning how to understand, interact with, or manipulate the natural world in ways conducive to improving human life. Indeed, the one seeking any metaphysical speculation in Melanchthon's philosophy must be disappointed or frustrated; it is not in Melanchthon's work or thought—it can only be read into it.

3. Conclusion

Finally, the claim that Melanchthon was a fideist is consistent with Frank's identification of Melanchthon's philosophy as theological.[219] It will be important to make a few points about the relationship between theology and philosophy in his thought in concluding this summary of his philosophy, however.   First, there is an important sense in which natural philosophy and ethics are subordinate to faith for Melanchthon. For as he understands them, the pursuit of natural and moral philosophy relies upon the sources of certainty, which are held to in accordance with and by faith. What is more, as the praeceptor had indicated as early as 1521, knowledge of ethics and of nature are

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[218]   Ibid., 29; Melanchthon, "On the distinction," in Kusukawa 66, CR 12: 692.
[219]   Thus the title of Frank's most important work: *Die theologische Philosophie Philipp Melanchthons (1497-1560).*

aspect of the Law of God.   Natural and moral philosophy thus are based in and contribute to theology according to Melanchthon.

And yet for Melanchthon theology is at least in a sense subordinate to philosophy's first part.   As noted in Chapter two, Melanchthon was no mystic. He claimed no ability to relate wordlessly or immediately with the divine. Rather, for him, the faith comes through the reading and hearing the Word, conveyed in scripture.[220] But scripture is a text, and so in order to receive the Word of God, according to Melanchthon's way of thinking, a person must be able to read and interpret the text of Holy Scripture. And since, according to Melanchthon, rhetoric is the art of reading and interpreting texts, apprehension of the true faith depends, according to Melanchthon, on rhetoric. His position on this point is the same at the beginning of his career in 1518 and at its end in 1558.[221] For in his inaugural lecture at Wittenberg he notes that while the Spirit leads us in the endeavor of understanding Christ, the cultivation of the language arts is our ally in approaching the holy through teaching us to read texts,[222] while forty years later in his letter to Pico he wrote, "Without eloquence and without those arts which are comprised in eloquence it is in no wise possible to search out and illustrate the other disciplines, the subject matter of physics, ethics, and theology."[223]

Melanchthon's philosophy was, in conclusion, a rhetorically based, pragmatic, modestly skeptical Augustinian fideism in which natural and moral philosophy are importantly dependent upon theology, and theology is importantly dependent upon

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[220]   Chapter Two above, 106-108.
[221]   Breen, "Melanchthon's Reply to Pico," 418; CR 9:693.
[222]   Melanchthon, "On Correcting the Studies," in Keen *Melanchthon Reader,* 55, CR 11:15-25.
[223]   Breen concludes that the praeceptor "considers philosophy as just another field to be treated in the topical manner of the rhetoricians…Melanchthon likewise subordinates theology to rhetoric," in "The Subordination of Philosophy to Rhetoric in Melanchthon," 23-24.

rhetoric. It is only in appreciating all of this that one can understand his eclecticism with regard to the philosophical authorities to whom he was exposed, that one can make sense of Melanchthon's approach to and work in ethics and natural philosophy, and that one can understand the relation of *fides et ratio* in his thought. Having come at length to this understanding about Melanchthon's philosophy, it is finally possible to assess the claims made about Melanchthon's philosophy in the secondary literature, as well as to assess the possible value of Melanchthon's understanding of and method in philosophy for the twenty first century.

Chapter 5: Summary, Final Assessments, and Prospectus

A. Summary

The goal of this dissertation was to discover the fundamental principles, method, and goals of the philosophical work of Philipp Melanchthon. Given Melanchthon's vocation as a reformer of the church, I have been especially interested in discovering Melanchthon's account of the relation between faith and reason. In this concluding chapter I will assess my success at achieving these goals, and propose some suggestions for moving forward.

Chapter One revealed problems with the ways research on Melanchthon has dealt with the question of his approach to philosophy. I found that Melanchthon has received relatively little scholarly attention, that few have explored Melanchthon's philosophy in depth, and that those who have explored it have come to contradictory or less than helpful conclusions. While it is widely agreed that Melanchthon's philosophy can be characterized as eclectic, just what this means has remained unclear. Wiedenhofer, Schneider, Wengert, et al. have regarded Melanchthon's theology as based somehow in rhetoric, but have not been concerned to explain how or whether rhetoric could provide the basis for his philosophy. Kusukawa has claimed that Melanchthon's philosophy was based in and developed to promote Lutheran faith. Frank acknowledges that both philological and theological concerns helped to shape Melanchthon's philosophy, but that ultimately this philosophy became a type of theo-rationalism based in a number of Platonic principles. Maurer accused Melanchthon of floundering between humanism and Lutheran theology, and thus, as Maurer presented the alternatives, between a

Neoplatonist philosophy and an outright rejection of philosophy, throughout his career. Finally, Maurer and Frank have claimed that Melanchthon's philosophy shows a retreat from empiricism relative to his predecessors, while Cunningham and Kusukawa have seen a strong reliance upon the empirical in his natural philosophy.

In order to test Maurer's claim that Melanchthon's thought lacked unity over time, and in order to find the values and principles fundamental to Melanchthon's philosophy, in Chapter Two I undertook a chronological review of its development. I found strong evidence to support the view of Wiedenhofer, Wengert, and Schneider. That is, from the very beginning through to the very end of his career Melanchthon described philosophy as founded in rhetoric and as serving the purposes of the orator rather than those of the theoretician, and Melanchthon's method in pursuit of philosophy was consistently based in his account of and method in rhetoric. Melanchthon's regard for the scriptures as, in John Schneider's phrase, *oratio sacra* "sacred speech," led the praeceptor to search for and find the *status causae* of scripture in the Gospel as articulated in Paul's letter to the Romans: the claim that God declares humans righteous before God in spite of their sin and on account of faith in Christ. Far from drawing Melanchthon away from Evangelical faith then, his humanism provided the means by which Melanchthon discovered and founded this faith in the first place.

With Kusukawa and Maurer I found that both Melanchthon's view of philosophy and his philosophy itself developed almost continuously from the time he arrived at Wittenberg until at least the 1540's. But with Kusukawa and contrary to Maurer, I found no evidence that Melanchthon abandoned the Evangelical principles he developed in his earliest days in Wittenberg. On the contrary, again with Kusukawa, Melanchthon's

philosophy seems to have been developed with the explicit concern to serve the needs of the Evangelical reform of Church and the society he sought to found upon it. Contrary to Frank, it does not appear that the philosophy Melanchthon developed in any way undermined its fideistic foundation.

Melanchthon's humanistic evangelicalism in turn played a crucial role in shaping his moral and natural philosophy. Along with the central theological and soteriological claim Melanchthon found in his reading of Paul, to wit, that claim about justification before God, Melanchthon found two Pauline anthropological principles which would prove equally important for the development of his philosophy. The first of these was that God intended humans to be capable of knowledge and so provided them with *normae certitudinis:* common experience, the ability to reason syllogistically, and innate ideas implanted in the human soul. The second claim was that on account of sin the epistemological prospects of humans are now mixed: while humans have a tremendous power to develop useful understanding of the world, human reasoning is prone to error.

A full view of Melanchthon's account of philosophy suggests that for the praeceptor each of the norms of certitude can fail, or rather that humans can fail in their use of these norms: the innate ideas are not entirely clearly apprehended, and since among these ideas are those required for syllogizing, one can err in reasoning. The product of uncertainly grasped truths used fallibly cannot be expected to be free of error. One can then derive three claims from Melanchthon's understanding of Paul's anthropology: first, it is *in principle* possible for human beings to have certainty through philosophy; second, in *hac tenebra* ("in our present darkness") we have reason for doubting that which we derive from philosophy; but third, this uncertainty should by no

means discourage one from pursuing philosophy, since this pursuit yields understanding of nature and of ways to order human behavior which, even if fallible, conduce to the improvement of life and society. His rhetorically guided scriptural faith thus established a moderate skepticism opening the way to a pragmatic approach to philosophy.

Having discovered the fundamental Pauline claims about both the limits of human reasoning as well as of the goal and destiny of humanity, Melanchthon tended, it is true, to devalue the pursuit of philosophy in his earlier days at Wittenberg. During this stage he was particularly harsh in his criticism of the Aristotelian philosophy of the scholastics (or rather what he took to be the scholastic deformation of Aristotle's philosophy), since he believed it obscured the message of the Gospel. Beginning in the mid-1520's, however, he came to view philosophy, for all its limitations, as more *valuable* than he earlier had. As Kusukawa has concluded, in the 1520's Melanchthon began to see the usefulness of ethics for an Evangelical church and for a society built around it. The ethics he began to develop in this period was thus motivated by and based in his evangelical theology and scriptural anthropology, which was in turn determined by his rhetorically guided theology.   But, contra Maurer, this development signaled neither a modification to his scripturally established anthropology, nor a weakening of his commitment to Evangelical faith, nor an alteration to his understanding of the purpose and limits of philosophy.

At least biographically speaking, and again contrary to Maurer and Frank, Melanchthon's reliance upon the language arts—especially rhetoric—does provide a thread unifying his philosophy. It is the common factor guiding his approach to and valuation of philosophy from his inaugural lecture at Wittenberg through to his

Baccalaureate theses and *Loci communes theologici* through to his final words on philosophy in 1558. One essential key to understanding Melanchthon's philosophy is therefore in understanding Melanchthon's account of the language arts, and so in Chapter Three I sought to explicate these.

In Chapter Three I found that dialectics consisted for Melanchthon of *iudicium* ("judgment") as well as *inventio* ("discovery"), the former being for him the practice of and rules for reasoning syllogistically, while *inventio* is the activity of discovering or inventing new arguments, ideas, or concepts, along with the *quaestiones methodi* ("questions of the method") according to which such an investigation is to proceed. Rhetoric for Melanchthon consists in making speeches, which entails first developing a claim (*status causa*) about some subject or topic (the *scopus* of the speech), along with an argument supporting that claim; all of this is done by the cooperation of the powers of *iudicium* and *inventio*, which together are dealt with in dialectics. Second, one adorns the argument through *elocutio* ("elocution") in order to make a merely dialectical account into a persuasive, useful, rhetorical account. That is, in his most mature account of these arts, rhetoric consists of dialectical accounts and arguments adorned through elocution for the purpose of persuading the audience to take some action or to make some decision.

In Melanchthon's rhetorical scheme, philosophy is a dialectical enterprise; it seeks out useful truth about topics it treats through *inventio* and *iudicium*, using the *quaestiones methodi* and the syllogistic method, respectively. On the one hand, such dialectical investigations are important enough that Melanchthon invented a special genus of speech for them, the *genus didaskalikon,* "the instructive type (of speech)", seemingly putting this type on par with the classical properly rhetorical *genus demonstrativum,* "the

demonstrative type," *genus iudicale* "the forensic type," and *genus deliberativum* "the

deliberative type." On the other hand, valuable as they are, philosophical investigations

and the *genus didaskalikon*, being dialectical, are subordinated to rhetoric in

Melanchthon's scheme; while they are appropriate for the classroom, they are

importantly incomplete until the orator "takes a teaching out of academic obscurity and

makes it practically useful."[1]

One important implication of Melanchthon's understanding of rhetoric, dialectics,

and philosophy, as discussed in Chapter Four, is that philosophy is in an important way

subordinated in his thought both to a concern for language and for utility. In this one can

see both affinities with and dissimilarities between Melanchthon's approach to

philosophy and that of the nominalists. While Melanchthon shares with nominalism both

a central concern for language and a rejection of extra-mental universals, Melanchthon's

humanistic pragmatic turn in philosophy caused him to criticize and to reject what he

considered the abstruse wrangling over words which he regarded as characteristic of the

via moderna.

A second implication of Melanchthon's view of philosophy's relation to rhetoric

is that, contrary to critics from Pelikan to Frank, Melanchthon could not have conceived

of true philosophy as yielding scientific knowledge through of a system of inter-related

deductions ultimately based in propositions regarded as fundamental truths derivable

through reason alone (i.e., knowledge scientific in a scholastic-Aristotelian sense).

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[1]   The translation of the phrase is slightly revised is from from Breen, "Reply of Philip Melanchthon in behalf of Ermolao," 417-418: "We indeed call a man an orator who teaches men accurately, clearly, and with a certain dignity concerning good and necessary things…I call a philosopher one when he has learned and knows things good and useful for mankind, takes a theory (doctrina) out of academic obscurity and makes it practically useful in public affairs, and instructs men about natural phenomena, or religions, or about government." Cf. CR 9: 687-703, here 692.

Rather than seeking a system yielding such scientific knowledge, Melanchthon's philosophy was however systematic in the sense of being methodical. The praeceptor was always quite clear that true philosophy must be systematic in that it must follow a clearly outlined method for both *iudicium* and *inventio*.   And since Melanchthon derived both the syllogistic method and the *loci* method from Aristotle's *Organon*, one can say that Melanchthon is systematic just to the extent that it is Aristotelian. But the beginning of philosophy for Melanchthon is *inventio*, which is in his account as much a power to create new ideas as it is an ability to discover truth. And so rather than yielding a system of absolute knowledge, Melanchthon's method produces a set of always-revisable elaborations of reasonable proposals on the central topics or *loci communes* ("general topics") of natural and moral philosophy.

All of this brings clarity to an understanding of how *fides-et-ratio* were related to one another in Melanchthon's Evangelical perspective*;* this was also explored in detail in Chapter Four above.   In short, I found that Melanchthon's scriptural-theological fideism entailed that philosophy is founded upon the aforementioned anthropological Pauline claims accepted dogmatically, and that accepting these claims in turn entailed a certain level of skepticism regarding the ability of human beings to gain understanding of God and the of world without any appeal to the scriptures. This combination of theological dogmatism and philosophical skepticism suggests that whenever and wherever Melanchthon claims that there is or that there must be certainty in philosophy, one should understand him to refer, in twenty-first century epistemological terms, to *psychological* rather than to *epistemic* certainty. Frank is correct that there is no hint of Aristotelian metaphysical realism in Melanchthon which could ground claims to epistemic certainty.

But contrary to Frank, neither did Melanchthon rely upon Platonic metaphysical claims as foundational for philosophical certainty. Philosophy for Melanchthon was based ultimately not upon rationally irrefutably certainties, but rather upon reputable opinions or justified beliefs grasped with psychological certainty.

This picture of Melanchthon's philosophy, which I've called a "humanistic account" is consistent with Cunningham's view that Melanchthon at least provided the groundwork for a renewed dedication to empiricism. For while innate ideas and the ability to reason syllogistically were for Melanchthon *normae certitudinis* in philosophy, so was common experience. Indeed, Melanchthon's account of the co-equality of innate ideas, the syllogistic method, and common experience as *normae certitudinis* falsifies Maurer's claim, shared by Frank, that Melanchthon's is *keine Erfahrungswissenschaft* ("no science based on experience"). Indeed, since Melanchthon nowhere indicates that the darkness upon the human intellect affects such experience, experience may have been for Melanchthon the most reliable of the *causa certitudinis in doctrinis*.[2]

On the other hand, while the claims of Kusukawa and of Cunningham can be reconciled with the humanistic account outlined above, and while all of these can be reconciled with those texts of Melanchthon here examined, none of this can be reconciled with Frank's view of Melanchthon's philosophy. Frank acknowledges a biographical foundation for Melanchthon's philosophy in his account of and method in rhetoric. But nothing in the present review of Melanchthon's philosophy supports Frank's claim that Melanchthon's philosophy ultimately developed into a sort of theo-rationalism in which all knowledge was founded solely upon the infallible grasp of innate ideas. According to

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[2]   Cf. CR 13:150, 651.

Frank, this foundation eventuated in the transformation of what Melanchthon intended as a theological philosophy into a purely philosophical theology.

To be sure, according to the humanistic view of Melanchthon's philosophy, the praeceptor in fact came to outline a philosophical theology. But as Kusukawa has shown Melanchthon limited philosophical theology to merely providing *a posteriori* arguments for belief in the existence of God. The theology which philosophy working apart from the faith could construct, according to Melanchthon, could never reveal this God's ultimate will for humanity. Contrary as well then to Engelland, who claimed that scriptural theology came for Melanchthon to have a merely supplemental value for theology,[3] for Melanchthon philosophy could only provide a supplemental support for scriptural faith; it could never provide a substitute for scripture, nor could it ever make revealed faith superflous.

B. Final Assessment of Claims about Melanchthon's Philosophy

1. On Melanchthon and Platonism

Based on the material examined in this dissertation, Frank is quite right to note that there are affinities between Melanchthon's philosophy and certain Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas, that Melanchthon recognized these points of convergence with Plato, and that he praised Plato for his philosophical theology. But for several reasons it is wrong to suggest that Melanchthon's philosophy was fundamentally Platonic. Frank is

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[3]   Cf. Hans Engellund's introduction to Clyde Manshrek's translation of Melanchthon's Loci Communes, 1555, published as *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci Communes 1555* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), xxv-xliv, here xxx: "From this naturalistic [sic] approach of Melanchthon's theology it follows that the revelation of God as attested in the Holy Scriptures can have only supplementary significance. Revelation only adds something to that which man himself can and ought to say about God."

correct to note with Peterson that Melanchthon's Aristotelianism was limited to his appropriation of Aristotle's dialectics and rhetoric.[4] But Frank fails to see that Melanchthon's appropriation of Platonic ideas was just as qualified. As Melanchthon's several summaries of the *sectae praecipuae philosophorum* ("principle sects of philosophy") show, the praeceptor accepted ideas from the Platonists, Peripatetics, and Stoics just to the extent that he found that they accorded with what he found in scripture. And as he stated in the *Erotemata dialectices*, "the same things are true, regardless of whence they come, whether from Aristotle or from Plato."[5] And so it may be true that elements of Melanchthon's worldview are consistent with Plato's, but that Melanchthon derived these ideas from Plato or some Neoplatonic source, that he accepted these ideas because he found them in Plato, or that Platonism subsequently governed his philosophical method seems clearly false.

The possibility remains however that the humanistic view of philosophy Melanchthon outlined throughout his career and in the works most closely examined here is in fact inconsistent with the natural philosophy he developed in his primary works in that area—the *Commentarius de anima* of 1540, *the Initia doctrina physices* of 1549, and the *Liber de anima* of 1553—and that this inconsistency can only be seen through a much more careful examination of these than has been possible in this dissertation. Perhaps respect for Frank's increasingly voluminous writings on Melanchthon's philosophy demands that a final conclusion about Frank's Platonism thesis must await a much closer examination of all of Melanchthon's works in natural philosophy.

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4   Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie*, 71-77.
5   CR 13:658; above, 275.

But even before such an examination is undertaken, a few more problematic points in Frank's account should be highlighted. First, based on what this dissertation has uncovered, Frank's claim that Melanchthon's alleged Platonism was expressed in a "metaphysical optimism"[6] seems to be at best misleading or confusing. One could perhaps agree with Frank to the extent of acknowledging that Melanchthon had what could be called a *cosmological optimism*, if this were taken to mean that, according to Melanchthon, the universe is somehow constructed in such a way that humans can flourish within it. One might also say that Melanchthon had a certain optimism about the pursuit of natural philosophy, if this were taken to mean that according to Melanchthon the world is constructed in such a way, and human reasoning remains reliable enough, that by reasoning on the basis of innate ideas and common experience we can understand nature in a way conducive to human flourishing—for example by predicting weather, by establishing medical treatments for illnesses, or by coming to have an account of the qualities of building materials. But again, this optimism on Melanchthon's part was firmly based in scriptural-theological dogmatism rather than upon any fundamental guiding metaphysical principles. In claiming that such cosmological optimism is metaphysical Frank seems to suggest that it is somehow grounded in a Neoplatonic metaphysics. But such a claim, based on the present analysis, would be clearly false.

To be sure, Melanchthon's view of the cosmos certainly did not entail the rejection of the claim that there is reality beyond that which is normally comprehended by the senses. In fact, being a form of fideism, his philosophy is founded upon the belief

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[6]   Günter Frank, "Melanchthon and the Tradition of Neoplatonism," in Jürgen Helm and Annette Winkelmann, eds., *Religious Confessions and the Sciences in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 3-18, esp. 16 ff.

in a God the understanding of whose attributes and will are beyond human ken. That is, Melanchthon was clearly a theological realist.

Nor does Melanchthon's view of human nature entail that it has always been in principle impossible for any human being to engage in metaphysical speculation. As noted in Chapter Two above, Melanchthon seems to have believed that humans before the Fall could have attained a greater knowledge of God using their own abilities than is now possible, and that humans before the Fall could have had a sounder and more certain understanding of nature. Moreover, Melanchthon seems to have believed that these abilities would be restored among the saints in the next life. But nothing in the present examination suggests that Melanchthon thought that in our current situation humans have either the ability or the need successfully to engage in metaphysical philosophy and theological speculation. Rather, for Melanchthon we have a pious duty to refrain from such.[7] Scripture alone assured Melanchthon both that there is reality beyond present human experience and that in the next life human beings will be capable of understanding the fundamental constituents of reality.

And if for now Frank's claim that Melanchthon had a metaphysical optimism seems strictly speaking false, it is also surely incomplete. For any optimism about the cosmos or about the power of natural philosophy on Melanchthon's part was coupled with and limited by his moderate epistemological pessimism. To be sure, Melanchthon rejected Academic global skepticism. But since his estimation of the limits of human knowing was theologically rather than philosophically grounded, Melanchthon made no

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[7]   Here quite contrary to anyone, especially those in the Lutheran tradition, who following Hinlicky would claim, "With Leibniz then, we who understand ourselves as created images of this God have the right, the access, and the duty to ask this question about the divine nature, in order that we might know the mind of God and so cooperate intelligently with his aims for the earth," *Paths not Taken,* 137.

philosophical argument to defeat global skepticism; he merely proclaimed such skepticism impious. Thus, just as Melanchthon has only theological reasons for believing that common experience, syllogistic reasoning, and innate ideas are *normae certitudinis*, his account of sin explains why humans now live in such darkness that even the power of reasoning and our grasp of innate ideas cannot be trusted to give us certain knowledge of that which requires our venturing beyond common experience.

2. On the *Imago Dei* in, and the Unity of, Melanchthon's Philosophy

All of this would undermine a fundamental claim of Frank's account of Melanchthon's philosophy. Frank claims that even in our present condition, according to Melanchthon, the image of God remains in humans, which image is "a permanent structural similarity of men to God" (i.e., of the human mind to God), which was not destroyed in the Fall.[8] This enduring *imago dei*, Frank writes, accounts for an enduring ability to know God (a *bleibenden fahigkeit zur Gotteserkenntniss*)[9] among humans according to Melanchthon. What is more, through this image, on Frank's account, all knowledge gained by humans comes about through a participation in the divine mind. As Frank explains this claim about the praeceptor:

> This theory of 'natural notions' was crucial for Melanchthon's understanding of philosophy. Since God himself had inscribed these theoretical and practical notions in human minds as images of his own mind, it was by means of these philosophical principles that human minds were able to participate in God's own mind….In this way he explained that when the human mind acquires any knowledge, which is possible only by means of these philosophical notions, it touches infinity and recognizes them '*per participationem*.' These two basic philosophical notions—the doctrine of the image [of God] and Plato's doctrine of

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[8]   Günter Frank, "The Reason of Acting: Melanchthon's Concept of Practical Philosophy and the Question of the Unity and Consistency of His Philosophy," in Jill Kraye and Risto Saarinen, eds., *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity* (Dordrecht, Springer, 2005), 217-234, here 222.

[9]   Cf. Günter Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* passim, esp. 104-112.

participation (*methexis*) –are foundations for Melanchthon's doctrine of the intellect.[10]

And a central claim of Frank's account of Melanchthon's philosophy is that the doctrine of the intellect is at the core of all of the praeceptor's philosophy.

Melanchthon explicitly deals with this issue in a locus entitled "On the image of God," both in his *Commentarius de anima* and in his *Liber de anima.* But these *loci* show that the praeceptor had a very different understanding of the *imago dei*, of its presence in humans after the Fall, and of the implications of this endurance for philosophy and theology than Frank claims to have found. For Melanchthon does not describe the image of God as anything like "a permanent structural similarity of men to God." Rather, as Melanchthon writes in the *Commentarius de anima*:

> The mind itself is therefore the image of God, but insofar as the true *noticia* of God shines in it, and in truly obedient will, that is, burning delight and the placing of trust in God, and freedom, it is wholly obedient to this knowledge and love of God.[11]

The *imago dei* is thus for Melanchthon nothing like an ability to participate in God's very being, but rather an innate ability to recognize, love and trust God in freedom.

Secondly, it is not at all clear that the *imago* can be said to remain in humans after the Fall, according to Melanchthon. For as he writes, "There are, to be sure, impious minds by nature knowing and in a certain way free. These endowments, even if they are relics of the imago, still do not suffice for the imago."[12] Thus in the natural human after

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[10]   Frank, "The Reason of Acting," in Kraye and Saarinen, 222.

[11]   Melanchthon, *Commentarius De anima* (Viterbergae, 1548), 138 recto. "Est igitur imago Dei ipsa mens, sed quatenus in ea lucet uera noticia Dei, & in uoluntate uera obedientia, hoc est, ardens dilectio Dei & fiducia acquiescens in Deo, ac libertas, quae illi noticiae & amori Dei integre obtemperat."

[12]   Ibid., 138 verso. "Impiae mentes sunt quidem naturae intelligentes, & aliquo modo liberae. Hae aotes etsi sunt reliquiae imaginis, tamen non sufficiunt ad imaginem. "

the Fall the image itself cannot be said to reside, but only a relic of it, and such a relic is insufficient for an identity with the *imago*.

Third, there seems to be no evidence at all in Melanchthon's psychological works that knowledge of God is *per participationem* as Frank claims. As noted in Chapter Three, in the *Commentarius de anima* Melanchthon does not write at all of such participation, and God is not presented as the subject of human knowing. Melanchthon not only there explicitly claims that God was meant to be a fundamental *object* rather than the *subject* of human cognition, but also that after the Fall "in this darkness," God is not seen directly. And as Kusukawa points out, Melanchthon reiterates repeatedly that philosophy is only able to provide *a posteriori* arguments for God's existence and qualities, and none at all about God's will. That is, while contemplation on the wonders of nature and on human nature in particular leads the thoughtful to conclude that there must be a good and wise creator of all, nothing in philosophy can reveal how God intends to deal with humans clearly lacking as we now are in goodness and wisdom, according to Melanchthon.

And while it may be that a much closer examination of Melanchthon's psychological works will reveal more truth in the account Frank outlines than now appears, in that case a different problem with Frank's account would emerge. For in that case Frank would still be wrong in claiming that Melanchthon's doctrine of the intellect, or rather the Platonic presumptions upon which Frank believes Melanchthon's teaching on the intellect depends, constitute the unifying factor in all of Melanchthon's philosophy. For the present dissertation has found one clear and ever-present account of philosophy throughout Melanchthon's career, and this account is founded upon and

unified by a rhetorically based fideistic skepticism. But if it were to be found that

Melanchthon's works in natural philosophy was after all established upon Platonic

metaphysical ideas, as Frank insists, then it would have to be concluded that there was in

fact *no* unity to Melanchthon's philosophy. Instead, one would have to conclude that

there were at least two distinct philosophies in Melanchthon. Melanchthon's allegedly

Platonic doctrine of the intellect would then constitute the factor by which physics and

perhaps ethics on the one hand diverged from his logic and theology on the other hand.

And so the question arising will be whether Frank has erred in claiming that such

Neoplatonic metaphysical principles are fundamental to Melanchthon's natural

philosophy, or whether he merely errs in claiming that these principles provide a thread

unifying all of Melanchthon's philosophy.

3. On Intellectualism and Existentialism

Another question about Melanchthon's philosophy, the first question treated in

the secondary literature in Chapter One, is of Melanchthon's alleged intellectualism.

Frank's account would support the older claims of Pelikan, Caemerer, et al. that

Melanchthon was an intellectualist on several counts. According to Frank's reading, for

Melanchthon "All knowledge is a conceptualization based on 'natural notions' which are

inscribed on *the potentia cognoscens,*" and that "the basic knowledge of practical

philosophy is located in the intellective part"[13] of the soul. Furthermore, on Frank's

account Melanchthon does not appear to show concern for "the whole man." Rather, on

this reading, intellect controls and indeed seems to suffice for human nature.

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[13]   Frank, "The Reason of Acting," in Kraye and Saarinen., 224.

Quite contrarily, the view of Melanchthon's philosophy uncovered in the present

dissertation, that Melanchthon's philosophy was pragmatically oriented, entails that

Melanchthon was far from having an intellectualist view of human nature in this sense.

To begin with, this dissertation has found that according to Melanchthon humans can

attain but little knowledge without turning to the bodily senses. While it is true that

Melanchthon believed innate ideas were required for knowledge and that he and included

them in his account of human nature, it is not the case, as Frank claims, that

"Melanchthon's epistemology therefore has nothing in common with Aristotle's

position."[14] Common experience is, as Melanchthon repeatedly indicates, a norm of

certitude with dignity and importance equal to that of innate ideas. No knowledge

(beyond that gained in grasping innate ideas) is accordingly to be had, according to

Melanchthon, without appeal to the empirical evidence given in common experience.

Obversely, while innate ideas are necessary for reasoning beyond that which is given in

common experience for Melanchthon, some knowledge not based on innate ideas is

available to humans without appeal to innate ideas, according to Melanchthon, through

experience.

Frank's overemphasis on the importance of innate ideas and his ignoring of

common experience as a requisite source of philosophical knowledge in Melanchthon's

account of philosophy is reflected, moreover, in the way Frank focuses upon the intellect

to the exclusion of concern for the body in his account fo Melanchthon's psychological

works. In his treatment of these works Frank focuses exclusively on those parts dealing

with the intellect, and even then upon the *potentia cognoscens*, one of two parts of the

intellect, along with the will, on Melanchthon's account. Frank utterly ignores the

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[14] Ibid., 223.

approximately 80 to 85 per cent of the pages of these texts dedicated to anatomy,

physiology, and the senses.[15]

Frank thus does not seem to recognize that for Melanchthon the human is a

corporeal as well as an intellectual being. But that the praeceptor so conceives of the

human is clear from the first page of the *Commentarius de anima,* where Melanchthon

wrote:

> Thus, when something is understood about [human] actions, the potencies or
> powers [of the soul] are discerned and organs are described, through which at the
> same time the *res* for the whole body and the nature of humanity is clearly
> explicated. Thus this part [of philosophy] ought to be called not only "On the
> soul," but "On the total nature of humans."[16]

Likewise in the *Liber de anima* the praeceptor asserts rather strongly that the human must

be understood as being composed of mind and body, writing:

> This consideration of human nature is useful for examining why two dissimilar
> things should be joined in humans? [First, there is] the mind, the nature of which,
> we can see, is incorporeal and immortal and fit for the light of divine wisdom and
> infused by God. And part [is] corporeal, even indeed an altar for immolating
> cattle, nourishing this mortal body….Therefore this conjunction ought to be
> regarded with wonder by all who are not stupid.[17]

There is thus no question for Melanchthon that the human being is both mind and body.

The question of how mind and body are joined, rather than the claim that the mind

contains innate ideas, is at the center of Melanchthon's psychology.

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[15]   That is, 120 out of 148 pages of the *Commentarius de anima* (Viterbergae, 1548), 35 out of 178 columns (i.e., columns 142-177) as printed in CR 13.

[16]   Melanchthon, *Commentarius de anima* 15481 recto: "Esti enim substancia Animae non satis persipui potest, tamen uiam ad eius agnitionem monstrant actiones. Itaque, cum actionibus dicendum erit, potenciae seu uires discernentur, describentur organa, qua in re simul tota corporis, ac praecipue humani, natura explicanda est. Itaque haec pars, non solum de anima, sed de tota natura hominis inscribi debeat."

[17]   CR 13: 8: "Utilis est haec consideratio inuentibus hominum naturam, cur in homine res dissimilae copulatae sint? Mens, cuius naturam dicimus esse incorporam, et semper victuram, et capacem divinae lucis sapientiae, et adflatus divini. Et pars corporea, et quidem culina, coquens cibos et hoc mortale corpus nutriens. [Haec miranda societas rerum dissimilarum non casu extitit, nec temere condita est.] Itaque semper omnes non stolidi hanc coniunctionem valde admirati sunt."

Nor could Melanchthon be said to be an intellectualist in the sense that, within his

account of the rational part or mind, he regarded the intellect as a higher power than the

will. In the *Loci* of 1521 the praecepter was all but a declared voluntarist in his response

to this question, famously asserting that the passions cannot be controlled by the reason,

but rather that *adfectus adfectu vincitur* ("passion is overcome by passion"),[18] and that the

intellect is the slave of the passions. This position is moderated but not quite rejected in

his psychological works of a much later date. For example, as he wrote in the *Liber de*

anima:

> I set aside a quarrel over whether either power, the knowing or the willing,
> surpasses the other. For one should judge that they rule equally. And even if will
> is more excellent, in the way that a king chooses or rejects that which has been
> decided upon, still [will] does not have tyrannical power, but it ought to comply
> with the right judgment.[19]

Finally, Melanchthon cannot be said to have been an intellectualist in the sense

that he was only concerned with "the life of the mind" or what would come to be referred

to as "inwardness" or"*innerlichkeit*."[20] His constantly reiterated reason for undertaking

philosophy at all was his belief that it could be of use for human beings living in the

world of God's creation and for the formation of society. Chapter Four above has treated

this aspect of Melanchthon's philosophy.

As Chapter Two showed, the claim that Melanchthon was an intellectualist was

made by way of contrasting his thought with Luther by those who have viewed the latter

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[18]   CR 21: 90.

[19]   CR 13: 171: "Omitto rixam utra potencia praecellat, cognoscens, an voluntas. Pariter enim regere caeteras vires debent. Et quamvis voluntas est praestantior, quia velut rex eligit deliberata aut reiicit, tamen non habent tyranicum imperium, sed recto iudicio obtemperare debet."

[20]   For an interesting recent treatment of the importance of this concept, see Peter Watson, *The German Genius: Europe's Third Renaissance, the Second Scientific Revolution, and the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 817-851, especially 830-833.

as a forerunner of existentialism. Recall that Pelikan claimed that both Luther and

twentieth century existentialists:

> 1) treat of the total person, "mind, body, and spirit" (not just the intellect) as, 2) being called to account before ultimate reality, 3) in crises experienced as determining one's existence or nihilation (and not merely as determining one's intellectual assent to theological truth claims).[21]

But if this dissertation has shown that Melanchthon was certainly concerned with 'the

whole person," and should not be charged with "intellectualism," the question may be

asked whether Melanchthon's philosophy meets Pelikan's other criteria for existentialist

thought after all.

As with so many questions about the praeceptor, this one has straightforward

answer. On the one hand, it must be said that there is an important characteristic which

the writings of the likes of Luther, Kierkegaard, and Sartre bear but which is clearly

missing in Melanchthon's philosophical works. This is, to apply Wriedt's words, a

"lively, situation-centered and context-related style of writing." In comparison with the

direct, engaging, sometimes appalling, and often humorous style of those normally

considered existentialists, the prose of Melanchthon's philosophical works, all of which

would fall within his *genus didaskalikon,* come off as detached and, not to put too fine a

point on it, as *schoolmasterly*. One wonders whether this difference in the styles in

which Melanchthon wrote in philosophy and Luther wrote in theology might have

something to do with the disdain one finds for Melanchthon among some who have loved

Luther much. The one who has been drawn by Luther's *Sturm und Drang* into the

reformer's own noisy and mighty struggles with the hiddenness of God and with the

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[21]   See Chapter One above, 40; Pelikan, *From Luther to Kierkegaard*, 16-21.

brokenness of humanity could hardly be expected to love the analytic, cautious, and cool writings of the dispassionate pedant.

But if, on the contrary, existentialism has little to do with style but can be reduced to Pelikan's above three criteria, then perhaps one may be able to find close affinities to it in other of Melanchthon's writings. Given that "ultimate reality" for Melanchthon was surely the divine, and given that philosophy can for Melanchthon only treat of this ultimate reality in a superficial way, one should not expect to find that what he regarded as philosophy (i.e., rhetoric, ethics, and physics) would bear much resemblance to or have much to do with latter-day existentialism. On the other hand, Melanchthon clearly believed that the individual is called to account before ultimate reality and that this encounter surely determines one's existence or nihilation. But such an encounter and its consequences would for Melanchthon be a matter with which *theology* must deal, and which was well beyond the mandate of *philosophy* as he conceived of it. Since this dissertation has striven to avoid delving into Melanchthon's theology any more than has been necessary in order to understand his philosophy, it is not possible to say here whether, as Michael Aune has suggested, Melanchthon's *theology* bears more marks pointing toward the development of existentialism than is often supposed.[22] A further study closely examining Melanchthon's theology with this in mind would be needed in order to answer this question.

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[22]   Cf. Michael B. Aune, "A Heart Moved," in Hendrix and Wengert, *Melanchthon: Then and Now,* 75-99.

4. On the Threshold of Modern Philosophy

In any case the *praeceptor germaniae* does not appear, in those works which he identified as *philosophical*, as a clear forerunner of twentieth century existentialism in the way Luther is acknowledged to have been. Nor could one unambiguously regard Melanchthon as a forerunner of either of the two best known philosophical movements of the early modern era.[23] While Frank indeed wishes to regard the praeceptor as a sort of ur-rationalist, in order to portray Melanchthon in this way Frank has had to ignore the greater part of both Melanchthon's teachings about norms of certitude in philosophy and his psychology. And yet as Paul Hinlicky has claimed, it seems to be a matter of historical record that this is just what occurred among those who believed they were following Melanchthon's thought in the generations immediately after the praeceptor's death.[24] It may be that rather than providing an accurate explication of Melanchthon's philosophy, Frank's treatment of it is valuable as an illustration of *how* rationalism could be derived from Melanchthon's thought through a serious misapprehension or deformation of it.

And if Melanchthon's philosophy cannot be regarded as an early form of modern rationalism, much less could it be seen as a prototype of the empiricism which would

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[23]   See also Günter Frank, "Wie modern war eigentlich Melanchthon? Die theologische Philosophie des Reformators im Kontext neuerer Theorien zur Hernkunft der Moderne," in *Der Theologue Melanchthon.* Melanchthon Schriften der Stadt Bretten, Band 5, ed. Günter Frank and Johanna Loehr (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2000), 67-82.

[24]   See Paul Hinlicky, *Paths Not Taken,* where he writes of Leibniz: "His stance in philosophy…reflects his schooling in the reorganized university curriculum that derives from the *praeceptor Germaniae,* Philip Melanchthon. It is a matter of historical fact that a path exists here," 10 (citing Max Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulmetaphysik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1939), 143-144; James William Richard, *Philip Melanchthon: The Protestant Praeceptor of Germany (1497-1560)* (New York and London: Putnam, 1902), 139-40; and Frank, *Die theologische Philosophie,* 5, 11, and 339. See also U. G. Leinsle,"Methodologie und Metaphysic bei den deutschen Lutheranern um 1600," in *Aristoteilismus und Renaissance*, ed. Eckhard Kessler, Charles Lohr, and Walter Sparn (Wiesbaden 1988), 149-161.

emerge in England the following centuries following his death. It is true that, as noted above and contrary to Frank, Melanchthon did preserve elements of empiricism from Aristotle. In that the praeceptor built his philosophical work upon a desire to follow Aristotle's dialectical method while rejecting the Stagirite's realist metaphysics, Melanchthon's reliance upon experience may even have been more important for him than it was for the scholastics, as Cunningham claims. And as Kusukawa has shown, Melanchthon's philosophical works were read in both Oxford and Cambridge after Melanchthon died.[25] One could perhaps even see how a philosophy somewhat like Hobbes's could be derived from Melanchthon's, if Melanchthon's philosophy were shorn of the doctrine of innate ideas and uprooted from Melanchthon's scriptural-theological foundation. But Melanchthon could hardly be credited with or blamed for such a development.

Steven Toulmin has suggested that there was in addition to Platonic rationalism and Aristotelian empiricism a third major approach to philosophy which arose or re-emerged in the sixteenth century.   According to Toulmin the very development of the rationalism and empiricism beginning around 1630 and identifiable with figures such as Descartes and Hobbes represents a "second, scientific and philosophical phase" of the Renaissance, even a sort of counter-Renaissance or *antirenascimento*. As counter-Renaissance, this second phase formed around the rejection of a first "literary or humanistic phase," within which Toulmin includes figures such as Shakespeare, Montaigne, and Bacon, which emerged from beyond the clerical cultural and intellectual

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[25]   Sachiko Kusukawa "The Reception of Melanchthon in sixteenth-century Cambridge and Oxford" in Günter Frank and Martin treu, ed., *Melanchthon und Europa* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2001), 233-54. See also Prins, J.. "The Influence of Agricola and Melanchthon on Hobbes' early Philosophy of Science," in *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius 1444-1485: Proceedings of the International Conference at the University of Groningen, 18.-30. October 1985*, ed. F. Akkermann and A. J. Vanderjagt, (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 293-301.

hegemony of the middle ages, and which displayed a characteristic approach to learning

and to claims about truth.[26] As Toulmin describes this approach:

> …[F]rom Erasmus to Montaigne, the writings of the Renaissance humanists
> displayed an urbane open-mindedness and skeptical tolerance that were novel
> features of this new lay culture. Their ways of thinking were not subject to the
> demands of pastoral or ecclesiastical duty: they regarded human affairs in a clear-
> eyed, non-judgmental light that led to honest practical doubt about the value of
> "theory" for human experience—whether in theology, natural philosophy,
> metaphysics, or ethics."[27]

Toulmin writes that this relaxed attitude toward conflicting claims to truth was a strategy

used by sixteenth century humanists to deal with the explosion of new learning being

experienced in those years, or rather with the flood of rediscoveries of the mutually

incoherent claims of rival philosophical schools from classical antiquity. In the midst of

this flood of discovery and literature, Toulmin claims, humanists such a Montaigne

adopted the attitude of Plato's teacher. Thus:

> For the moment, then—Montaigne argued—it was best to suspend judgment
> about matters of general theory, and to concentrate on accumulating a rich
> perspective, both on the natural world and on human affairs, as we encounter
> them in our actual experience.[28]

This accumulation of erudition, openness to new perspectives produced, and suspension

of judgment between conflicting perspectives led, Toulmin writes, to the epoch-making

achievements of Shakespeare in literature and of Machiavelli in political theory.

But in Toulmin's treatment of this "first Renaissance," Montaigne's skeptical

treatment of natural science is emblematic. And he writes that for Montaigne, suspension

of judgment on went hand-in-hand with broad erudition. And so, according to Toulmin:

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[26]   Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: the Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 1990), 23.
[27]   Ibid., 25.
[28]   Ibid., 27.

> Surveying the wide variety of doctrines that 16th-century writers used to explain natural phenomena of Nature, as Socrates had surveyed his predecessors in Elea and Ionia, Montaigne saw attempts to reach theoretical consensus about nature as the result of human presumption or self-deception.[29]

The result of this suspension in the midst of new learning was a skepticism which was both global and moderate. For while Montaigne's skepticism extended beyond natural philosophy to theology, metaphysics and ethics, ethics, it was not dogmatic. That is, it was not the sort of systematic doubt which Descartes would later establish in order to find some proposition which could not be doubted, and which could anchor an epistemically certain philosophy. As Toulman notes, Montaigne's skepticism was not the sort that that "denies the things the other philosophers assert."[30] Rather, as he explains:

> The 16th century followers of classical skepticism never claimed to refute rival philosophical positions: such views do not lend themselves to either proof or to refutation. Rather, what they had to offer was a new way of understanding human life and motives: like Socrates long ago, and Wittgenstein in our own time, they taught readers to recognize how philosophical theories overreach the limits of human rationality.[31]

And as noted in the previous chapter, this Pyrrhic skepticism seems to have been that which was espoused by Erasmus, who so enraged Luther by claiming that he did not like to make assertions.[32]

Toulman finds with some regret that the philosophical movements of the seventeenth century were established in order to overcome this sort of skepticism. These later schools sought a foundation upon which to find certainty in philosophy, a "scratch line" from which to begin philosophy anew on an undeniably true foundation.[33] Toulmin's book claims that this search for a certain foundation for philosophy, or perhaps

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[29] Ibid., 29.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid..
[32] Chapter 4 above, 30-35.
[33] Ibid., 178.

rather the confidence that one has been found, is just what marks modernity. It is this confidence, he writes, which made both empiricism and rationalism modern, though the two chose radically different "scratch lines."

All of this helps us understand the uniqueness of Melanchthon's approach to philosophy. Melanchthon, too, was a philosophical skeptic of a modest sort. As we've seen, Melanchthon is insistent that, at least in *hac tenebra*, human rationality is strictly limited in its power to provide knowledge. For this reason Melanchthon was quite concerned to reject dogmatic claims of purportedly self-grounded philosophy. And as noted above, a curious feature of Melanchthon's treatment of the *sectae praecipuae philosophorum* is that in rejecting various claims made by philosophers he offers almost no philosophical argument; in this regard he very much fell in line with Toulmin's description of the *modus operandi* of the Renaissance humanists the latter writes of.

But while Melanchthon was a philosophical skeptic, he was not a global skeptic of the sort Toulmin describes. For as Toulmin writes of two prime exemplars of this skepticism:

> Neither Montaigne nor Bacon harps on the theological rights and wrongs of his views…both of them write on life as they find it, and they write about it in a nondoctrinal spirit.[34]

But Melanchthon might agree with Toulmin's humanists that philosophy produced by human rationality alone could yield no certainty. Yet the praeceptor by no means shared with Toulmin's humanists any sense of comfort with uncertainty. Melanchthon's philosophical skepticism was rather motivated by, demanded by, and yet limited by his scripturally-based fideism. He was insistent about the truth of his theological views, and he wrote about these in a definitively doctrinal spirit. As Wengert has shown,

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[34]   Ibid., 37.

Melanchthon's rejection of the skepticism of Erasmus was as complete as Luther's.[35]
The praeceptor's fideistic skepticism thus defended the certainty of theological and
anthropological claims received in scripture, and a attempted to establish a measure of
psychological certainty through faith-based philosophy.

But here again Melanchthon's fideistic skepticism was both like and unlike the
anti-skeptical empiricist and rationalist philosophies of the early modern era. For these
seventeenth century philosophies insisted that it was possible to have epistemic certainty
and each proposed its own "scratch line" which could provide a certain foundation for it.
Unlike either empiricism or rationalism however, Melanchthon's "scratch line" was
ultimately supplied by revealed scripture rather than by philosophy or reason or sense.
Perhaps it could thus be said that in his philosophical work Melanchthon had a
relationship to scripture parallel that of Luther as a theologian. For as Luther famously
proclaimed in defending his theological works before the emperor at the Diet of Worms
in 1521, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God," Melanchthon's fideistic
rhetorical philosophy, from perhaps 1519 on, reveals in parallel a man whose intellect
and whose philosophy was captive to the word of God.

Toulmin notes with some regret that the global skepticism he writes of had a short
career, lasting perhaps from the time of Erasmus through that of Montaigne.[36] The career
of philosophy pursued in Melanchthon's mode may well have been shorter—perhaps
lasting only through the praeceptor's own life. A further study examining the ways
Melanchthon's successors adapted or rejected his rhetorical approach to philosophy could
be help uncover the fate of the *fides et ratio* relationship in the next generations of the

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[35]   Wengert, *Human Freedom,* 106-109.
[36]   Toulman, 22-28.

Lutheran movement. It may well be that Melanchthon, the schoolmaster of Germany for whom teaching and persuasive speech were so fundamental, was in the end unable to raise up any pupils who could or were persuaded of the need to preserve his understanding of philosophy.

C. Prospectus: Melanchthon On the Threshold of Post-Modernity

1. Steven Toulmin on Post Modernity in Philosophy

It remains finally is to ask "Who cares?" Or, perhaps as Melanchthon himself might prefer to ask, "Of what use, of what practical benefit, could such a view of philosophy be?" In the introduction of this dissertation I said I wished to find a solution to the question of *fides et ratio* which might pave the way for a renewed vitality to a particular expression of a specific spiritual and theological tradition—that of Lutheranism, especially in North America. In these closing pages, I will propose some possible consequences and opportunities, especially for this tradition in this time and place, of re-appropriating something like a Melanchthonian understanding of philosophy.

In order to understand how an approach to philosophy like Melanchthon's could be relevant to and helpful for twenty-first century North Americans, it will be important to propose a picture of our present intellectual situation. I believe Toulmin's diagnosis of our present philosophical condition provides a fine starting point for this diagnosis. For Toulmin the phrase "post modern" with respect to philosophy points to the widespread consensus among our contemporaries that attempts of rationalism to find a "scratch line" a position from which one could build a sure and certain philosophy, abstracted from any

cultural inheritance and unquestionably true, has failed.[37] As Toulmin described this

situation as of the last decade of the twentieth century:

> The burden of proof has shifted; the dream of finding a scratch line, to serve as a starting point for any "rational" philosophy, is unfulfillable. *There is no scratch.* The belief that, by cutting ourselves off from the inherited ideas of our cultures, we can "clean the slate" and make a fresh start, is as illusory as the hope for a comprehensive system of theory that is capable of giving timeless certainty and coherence…All we can be called upon to do is to take a start *from where we are, at the time we are there:* i.e., to make discriminating and critical use of the ideas available to us in our current local situation, and the evidence of our experience, as this is "read' in terms of those ideas. There is no way of cutting ourselves free of our conceptual inheritance: all we are required to do is use our experience critically and discriminatingly, *refining and improving* our inherited ideas, and determining more exactly the limits to their scope.[38]

Toulmin thus finds that there is for us no choice but to recognize again a reality that

modern people have ignored or tried to deny for a few hundred years, a recognition

central to Toulmin's "first Renaissance": that humans are socially embedded creatures

who see and value the world through our cultural inheritance. He suggests that a re-

appropriation of the sort of humanism Montaigne espoused, both broad-minded and

comfortable with uncertainty, could be of great value to a people who have come to

believe that "there is no scratch." But rather than calling for a rejection of modernity—a

seemingly impossible and mostly undesirable task, given the vast and largely beneficial

achievements produced in natural science over the last several hundred years—he

suggests that this humanization would call for a reformation of modernity. Thus Toulmin

writes:

> The current task…is to find ways of moving on from the received view of Modernity—which set the exact sciences and the humanities apart—to a reformed version, which redeems philosophy and science, by reconnecting them to the humanist half of modernity.[39]

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37   Ibid., 5-12
38   Ibid., 178.
39   Ibid., 180.

At the end of the last century Toulmin in fact thought he saw this humanizing beginning to take place within the natural sciences, in the recognition among scientists that as human beings pursuing science they bear some responsibility to encourage the use of their research for salutary ends. In particular, he noted that among some scientists concerned to connect their research to their humanity:

> Three sets of problems have attracted special attention—those of nuclear war, medical technology, and the claims of the environment: none of them can be addressed without bringing to the surface questions about the value of human life, and our responsibility for protecting the world of nature, as well as that of humanity."[40]

Toulmin notes that these scientists were finally coming to recognize that "all attempts to unfreeze the distinction between 'facts' and 'values' are overwhelmed by the practical demands of new problems and situations."[41]

Toulmin furthermore suggested that there are two historical precedents we might follow in our desire to reclaim the best of our immediate past as we move into a new era: the sixteenth century Reformation of the Church and the American Revolution in the eighteenth century. He writes approvingly that the Founding Father of the United States of America:

> …were aiming to restore the traditional order in society, so as to enjoy the immemorial liberties of Englishmen, which the Hannoverian kings had put in peril…Where Calvin and Luther had stripped away the corruptions defacing the institutions and practices of Christianity, hoping to reform them from within, the Founding Fathers of the United States hoped to strip away the corruptions defacing the British Monarchy and devise a Republic that embodied traditional English virtues.[42]

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[40]   Ibid., 186.
[41]   Ibid., 181.
[42]   Ibid., 179-180.

Likewise in the present case, Toulmin proposed that contemporary people should seek to retain the virtues of modernity while reforming its great dehumanizing vice by recapturing that which was lost in the seventeenth century's turning away from humanism.

But while Toulmin's diagnosis seems apt and his cure desirable, the patient's prognosis is not good unless we can find a reliable source for the medicine prescribed. Toulmin is clear enough about what this medicine would be—values supporting the full flourishing of every human being. He is also clear that they must somehow be found within the institutions and traditions of our own cultural inheritance. But which institutions or traditions? He finds that the moral authority of the nation state has been utterly discredited through two world wars in the twentieth century, and that

> No one takes wholly seriously the moral opinions voiced—whether in outrage, sorrow, or excuse—in the General Assembly or the Security Council of the United Nations, as they are always presented by official spokesmen for the Member States, whose status marks them as "interested parties."[43]

Toulmin concludes that in our situation our most reliable repositories for "the decent opinion of Humankind" are non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and the World Psychiatric Association.[44]

In short, Toulmin proposes that we can be rescued from the difficulties of post modernism through a reliance upon institutions founded upon a supposedly universally agreeable image of human nature, staffed by scientifically trained professionals. But such institutions are themselves emblematically modern (what more perfectly modern institution could be conceived than the World Psychiatric Association?). Toulmin's prescription amounts to a dutiful subjection of human existence to the foundationalist

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[43] Ibid., 197.
[44] Ibid.

claims upon which such institutions are founded, which would entail a rejection of his own diagnosis of the problem: no foundationalist claims seem to hold any longer.

The twenty years since the publication of Toulmin's book have indeed revealed that his diagnosis was far more prescient than his prescription is useful. For no sooner were the words "there is no scratch" written than one began to witness the rise in the United States of a distrust in supposedly disinterested, distinctively modern, institutions such as public schools and the academy, along with an increasing willingness to ignore the findings of natural science where inconvenient to our lifestyle or prejudices, or to our self-interest narrowly construed. Thus, in addition to dealing with the sense that "there is no scratch" twenty-first century North Americans must now deal with the sense, seemingly more and more widespread among us, that "there is no *disinterested* decent opinion of Humankind." It is hard to see what any group like Amnesty International or the World Psychiatric Association could do to remedy this situation, when they too may now be widely regarded now as "interested parties," by so many, founded upon and promoting but one of several competing views of human nature.

While Toulmin is clear that Renaissance humanists such as Bacon and Montaigne were neither irreligious not anti-religious,[45] an important feature of Toulmin's proposal for moving ahead into the twenty-first century is that religious faith seems to play no role in it. In that he fails to turn to the religious traditions of the West and living communities of faith rooted in these traditions as repositories of "the decent opinion of humankind," he at least reflects a view possibly characteristic of late modernity that properly civilized humanity is, or would be well served to be, shot of the influence of these traditions. But if in fact more than seventy-five percent of Americans consider

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[45] Ibid., 37.

themselves Christian at the beginning of the twenty-first century and only twelve percent claim no belief in God,[46] then it would seem wise to plumb the depths of religious scriptures, communities and traditions as a important source of the values at least potentially guiding the lives of the great majority of North Americans, and thus of society as a whole.

Surely one must be careful here. Some kinds of appeals to religious tradition have surely motivated some of the very threats with which Toulmin is concerned, at least to some extent. He finds that the rejection of humanism like Montaigne's in the seventeenth century can be closely associated with increasing intolerance of religious differences which led directly to the Thirty Years' War. Surely in the twenty-first century in North America we can likewise see a close relationship between the rise of anti-intellectualism and an increase in religious sectarianism. And yet the two historical examples Toulmin provides for moving forward constructively into a new era certainly did not accomplish their goals by turning a blind eye to the important role of religion within their own societies. While this is most obvious of Luther's and Calvin's efforts to reform the Church, it is also at least arguable that the founding fathers of the United States of America could not have and did not desire to achieve what they did without turning to what was both best and most common among the various religious traditions of the people of their nascent nation.

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[46] American Religious Identification Survey 2008, accessed on line at http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/files/2011/08/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf on April 24, 2012.

2. Melanchthon's Humanistic Fideism as Prescription for the Post-Modern

To reiterate, my own motivation for undertaking this examination of Melanchthon's philosophy was to provide a resource which might help my own religious tradition and community—North American Lutheranism—clearly to relate *fides et ratio* in a way which could help members of this community to speak faithfully, vigorously, and relevantly about issues of greatest importance to Church and society. As it turns out, Melanchthon's humanistic fideism seems particularly well suited to do this. As a form of humanism, Melanchthon's mode of philosophizing can help Christians both to move with good faith into the situation Toulmin has diagnosed and to pursue Toulmin's end of humanizing science and civilization. An approach to philosophy much like Melanchthon's could lead this way by providing resources Toulmin's agenda requires but that his method cannot access. This is because Melanchthon's philosophy regards Christianity not only as a source of eternal salvation, but as a resource for a Christian humanism affirming the value of human life here and now as well.

While Melanchthon's philosophy was fideistic, as noted in Chapter Four above, his fideism was not of the irrationalist, anti-intellectualist "blind faith" sort, the sort which Tertullian famously promoted, the sort of fideism which would deny the legitimacy of reason, the sort of fideism currently found today among those Christians who deny evolutionary science, climate science, or findings of the human sciences which conflict with their own supposedly literalistic readings of scripture. Rather, Melanchthon's fideism was of the Augustinian sort which merely makes faith a precondition for reasoning. While acknowledging (perhaps even celebrating) the impossibility of epistemic certainty, Melanchthon's humanistic fideism would thus rely

upon evangelical faith as a foundation for a philosophy developed for the sake of promoting human flourishing.

To be clear, contrary to the desire of some Protestant Evangelicals in the United States, contemporary North American Christian should probably no longer desire that which Kusukawa has identified as Melanchthon's goal of establishing a philosophy which would provide the foundation for law and government designed primarily to serve Evangelical faith. As North Americans gaze with all good will and respect at the situation of Protestant state churches in Europe over the last 500 years and of theocratic states elsewhere today, one must ask whether the value of subjecting either church to state or state to church is quite low to both entities relative to the cost to both faith and to human freedom in either case. That is, to use a Melanchthonian term, common experience would seem to teach that both Church and state are better off where neither is subject to the other. Rather, the task at hand is to assist people of faith in a religiously pluralistic society to make a case for the reasonableness of their faith and for the faithfulness of—even the pious duty of—engaging in work which Melanchthon would have called philosophical: moral philosophy and what we now call natural science.

Melanchthon's approach grounded philosophy in Christian faith, and Christian faith in the interpretation of scripture. Understanding something of the way Melanchthon interpreted scripture will then be a prerequisite for adopting a Melanchthonian approach to philosophy. Fortunately, Wengert, Schneider and others have helped uncover the Melanchthon's way here,[47] showing that for Melanchthon understanding the scriptures

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[47] Timothy Wengert, "Biblical Interpretation in the Works of Philip Melanchthon," in Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, eds., *A History of Biblical Interpretation,* 2 Volumes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 2:319-340, esp. here 320-326. Also of note in Hauser and Watson are Christopher Ocker, "Scholastic Interpretation of the Bible," 254-279; Erika Rummel, "The Renaissance Humanists," 280-298; and Mark

required finding the *status causa,* the primary point scripture wishes to make (or rather,

as Melanchthon would surely put it, the point God desired to communicate through the

scriptures). According to Wengert, Melanchthon "viewed [Paul's Letter to the] Romans

as the key to the principle themes of the entire scripture,"[48] and for the praeceptor "the

status of Romans is that we are justified by faith."[49] Scripture is so arranged, according

to Melanchthon, that as with any other work of rhetoric, all other parts are intended and

are to be read as an *argumentum* either supporting or illustrate or leading to this *status*

causa. A very important key to interpreting scripture for Melanchthon was to separate

the Gospel (i.e., the promise of justification before God by grace through faith in Christ)

as *status causa,* from the Law as *argumentum*, always condemning the sinner, thus

driving him or her to seek the grace offered through the Gospel alone. Melanchthon

followed Luther in referring to this use of the law to terrify the conscience as the

theological use.[50]

But if the law always accuses the sinner before God, according to Melanchthon, it

does not *only* accuse. As pointed out in Chapter Two, for Melanchthon the law had

another role to play in human life as well. In its *civil use,* according to Melanchthon, the

law is a necessary aid in keeping order in the world, in part by revealing, or by proposing

accounts of, how humans and the world have been constructed in their creation. And

while he held that divine law is explicitly revealed in scripture, Melanchthon also claimed

Thompson, "Biblical Interpretations in the Works of Martin Luther," 299-319. See also Robert Kolb, "Melanchthon's Influence on the Exegesis of His Students: The Case of Romans 9," in Timothy J. Wengert and Patrick Graham*, eds., Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and the Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 194-215; and, for a general account of the application of rhetoric to Biblical exegesis, George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).
[48]   Wengert, "Biblical Interpretation," 325.
[49]   Ibid., 322.
[50]   See Wengert's treatment of Melanchthon on the first and second uses of the Law in *Human Freedom,* 85-87 and 106-109.

that divine natural law is at least in part revealed in nature and in society, that human beings are to some extent capable of discovering this law in nature and society, and that they are then capable of discovering truth about nature and society on the basis of natural law so discovered. Philosophy is for Melanchthon just this reasoning about nature and society.

For Melanchthon nature can thus be treated as a text, revealing a part of God's Word, or perhaps merely a part of an aspect of God's Word. But then because Melanchthon's interpretation of any text entails finding and keeping as central its *status causa*, Melanchthon insisted that there is a central message around which philosophical investigations must be organized. Kusukawa has helped us see that for Melanchthon the central claim of scripture about nature is that it was created by, is ruled by, and gives glory to God. On Melanchthon's account humans glorify God by using to the fullest their capacity to understand and relate to the natural world in ways conducive to glorifying God and promoting human well being.

For the twenty-first century Christian, philosophizing in the Melanchthonian mode could thus entail supporting the pursuit of natural science enthusiastically and fearlessly as a sort of pious duty (though the Melanchthonian, maintaining moderate skepticism with regard to this endeavor which is now called "natural science," might prefer to refer to it as "natural philosophy"). Regarding the natural world as God's creation, the Melanchthonian would seek to understand its working in order to find means of interacting with it, stewarding its powers and resources in ways conducive to human flourishing and to the improvement of society, as a faithful use of one's own God-given powers. Natural philosophy could on this account be understood as reasoning (i.e.,

constructing hypotheses and theories) about that which is experienced (i.e., data collected through senses and in common collaboration with others), relying to some extent upon common ideas (i.e., widely if not universally accepted *axia*). It would expect that this method would produce useful, largely true, but always-revisable accounts of nature as God's creation, and would thus suggest a stance of critical realism toward scientific theory. While a non-theist may perhaps find the identification of nature as God's creation either vexing or amusing, nothing in the Melanchthonian's method would entail any kind of hindrance of the pursuit of natural science. And this approach would seem at least to answer Toulmin's call to humanize "science," even if the Melanchthonian could not give an explanation of why one should expect anyone without Christian faith to heed such a call.

It might be objected that natural philosophy in Melanchthon's pragmatic mode would still place undesirable limits on the pursuit of natural philosophy or natural science in that it would not promote "pure research," because Melanchthon's approach would deny that knowledge is worthwhile for its own sake, and that proposed research would need to be justified in terms of immediate desired consequences. And yet, while it would presumably be that the Melanchthonian would not support using resources in pursuit of research which had no *conceivable* benefits to humanity, a Melanchthonian *could*, and probably *would*, promote research the practical consequences of which were unknown, when a convincing case could be made that there would likely be unforseeable useful applications for the results of such research. Thus, Melanchthon's approach to pure research might well be consistent with policies on pure research followed within contemporary liberal democracies.

Nor, contrary to another possible objection, would natural philosophy pursued in Melanchthon's mode promote a sort of pseudo-science such as so-called "creation science," the primary goal of which is to prove the reasonableness of a literal reading of scripture. This is because Melanchthon's rhetorical construal of biblical authority would surely reject such Biblical literalism as "missing the point" (i.e., the *status*) of scripture in the first place. That is, the Melanchthonian fideist would at least be free to look to scripture for very little information about nature beyond the claim that it is created by and sustained by God. Natural philosophy undertaken in Melanchthon's way would indeed expect to discover truth about nature not uncovered in scripture, and even contrary to accounts of nature in scripture as received literally (or, as the rhetorican might say, "artlessly").

According to Melanchthon, scripture teaches that humans are social beings, created for relationship with both God and with other humans beings in society, and God desires humans to flourish in society. To build up societies in which human life flourishes and in which piety is promoted is therefore a pious duty for Melanchthon. Ethics or moral philosophy was for Melanchthon the product of the application of human reason toward establishing rules conducive to such societies. As with natural philosophy, Melanchthon conceived of ethics as proceeding through reasoning about human experience (in this case, experience of life in society) on the basis of common notions which he took to be innate.

Common notions were as important for Melanchthon's ethics as they were for his natural philosophy. But Melanchthon explained these notions somewhat differently with respect to these two sides of philosophy. The praeceptor distinguished the ideas

fundamental to natural philosophy from those of ethics as being theoretical in the case of the former and practical in case of the latter. And while the praeceptor was never quite clear in about just what all the *axia* guiding natural philosophy are, he was quite explicit about the *axia* of ethics. As he listed these first principles of practical philosophy in the *Loci communes* of 1521, these are:

> 1. God must be worshipped.
> 2. Since we are born into a life that is social, no one must be harmed.
> 3. Human society demands that we make common use of all things.[51]

That these are the basis for moral philosophy in Melanchthon's mode suggests special challenges and opportunities for any who would follow this way in twenty-first century North America.

It might at first appear that, while Melanchthon's view of natural philosophy would in no way prevent the Melanchthonian from working side-by-side with an atheist on research into nature, Melanchthon's ethics is explicitly sectarian. That is, one might think that since for Melanchthon the first principle of ethics is that God must be worshipped, Melanchthon must promote a specifically Christian or at least religious ethics, fundamentally different from that produced by the secular humanist. And this is surely true to some extent. Any ethicist following Melanchthon's lead is bound to insist that a moral philosophy which does not seek to establish and promote some form of piety consistent with this principle is incomplete and unfounded.

On the other hand, a Melanchthonian ethicist need not insist that an ethics which is based only upon Melanchthon's second and third practical *axia* is entirely wrong. There would seem to be no reason why a Melanchthonian could not work side-by-side with any ethicist congenial to the utilitarian meta-ethical principle implied in

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[51]   Philip Melanchthon, "Loci communes theologici," in Pauck, 51.

Melanchthon's thought that morally good actions are those which conduce to overall human flourishing. To be sure, the Melanchthonian may have to justify the claim that achieving this end requires obeying the imperatives "Harm no one," and "Divide property for the sake of public peace" as well as "Worship God!"[52] But the means of justifying the claim of the necessity of each of these imperatives will be the same in each case and will be equally available to the secularist and the Christian alike: One simply observes whether or not measures taken to promote each of these in society actually conduce to greater flourishing, and one then strives to make a convincing case for one's conclusion.

Thus, ethics pursued according to Melanchthon's mode will be open, as in the case of his natural philosophy, to the findings of human experience. While the assertion of the three practical principles listed above constitute at the very least an opening gambit on the part of the Melanchthonian ethicist, any forms of life which can be persuasively promoted as conducive to greater human experience of flourishing will need to be taken seriously by one operating in this mode. The role that observation or experience must play for a Melanchthonian, along with the hermeneutical humility required by the doctrine of sin, will make it possible to challenge and even reject orders of life and forms of society which seem to be approved of in scripture and in Christian tradition.

Thus, while ethical egoists, Thomistic natural lawyers, or Kantian deontologists might object to the utilitarian presumption of ethics pursued in a Melanchthonian mode, there is nothing about Melanchthon's approach to ethics which would forestall engaging in ethical deliberations with persons of other faiths, or of no religious faith. Indeed, many Christians ethicists might fault the Melanchthonian for not being sufficiently particularistic or positivist in the theological sense.

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[52]   Ibid., 53.

3. Doxology

That neither faith nor philosophy can provide epistemic certainty is foundational for Melanchthon's account of philosophy. But for Melanchthon, rather than being a cause for despair, this reality points to the importance of faith in establishing beliefs upon which philosophy can be built. That is, this recognition prepares the way for the Augustinian (and now perhaps also post-modern) insights that all understanding ultimately relies upon belief or psychological certainty, that moving forward in philosophy is always moving forward on the basis of faith in the truth or reliability of some *basic truth claims*.

According to Melanchthon's view of philosophy then, no science—in the Aristotelian sense—of either nature or of ethics is possible. Much less can reason provide us a certain foundation for understanding or for having a good relationship with God. Accordingly, all realms of thought—in particular ethics, natural philosophy, and theology—are ultimately based in and built upon what Aristotle called *endoxa*— justifiable and defensible but epistemically questionable claims. That is, from a Melanchthonian standpoint, the highest expression of human striving to understand and live well with nature, in society, and before God will be not sciences in the Aristotelian sense, much less a single such science, but rather *doxologies*.

The acknowledgment that all human efforts in theology, in natural philosophy, and in ethics can at best be doxological in the sense that they are at best based upon justified or justifiable beliefs may be an assumed starting point for many twenty-first century philosophers, whether they are happy about this or not. Christians whose traditions are based in the primacy of faith, who wish to heed the Evangelical call to

share this faith in a persuasive way, and who understand that the Evangelical task requires engaging the ideas of nonchristian philosophers, scientists, and ethicists in good will and with all seriousness may have cause to rejoice here, however. For such Christians will find themselves standing on common ground with others who believe we are in a post-modern, post foundationalist philosophical situation, and will have as a common starting point St. Paul's claim (II Corinthians 5:7) that we walk by faith and not by sight.

Δόξα τῶ θεῶ

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Appendix to Chapter 4:
The *Disputatio* in Melanchthon's
***Commentarius De Anima*, 1548**

DISPUTATIO

1. Deus indidit mentibus hominum lucem quandam, e qua exusciata sunt extructae artes uitae utiles, quas Deus uult extare. Vult amorum spacia esse definita, uult cognosci remedia & usum, ad quem opus est aliqua Physices cognitione, uult uitam hominum certis legibus legi, quae congruant ad discrimen honestorum & turpium, inditum mentibus humanis, ult & sermonem constare certis legibus, ut doceri homines & possint & c.

2. Haec universa doctrina uera & donum Dei est, & testimonia prouidentiae insigne, ut est in dicto Platonis grauissimo & dulcißimo, cum ait illustrem famam de Deo in artibus sparsam esse, id est, artium certitudo testatur mundum non extitisse casu. Quare grato pectore amplectendae & tuendae sunt.

3. Cum haec doctrina Philosophia dicitur, uera est sententia, Philosophiam ueritatem, & Dei donum esse multarum utilitatum causa tuendum.

4. Et Deo opus gratum est, elaborare in his donis Dei ornandis, praesertim uocatis ad hanc militiam.

DISPUTATION

1. God placed a certain light into the mind of humans, from which are (exusciata) exusciated the compiled useful arts for living, which God wishes to put forth. He wishes the bounds of loves to be defined, he wishes remedies and cures to be known, to which work is all knowledge of physics, he wishes the life of humans to be ruled by certain laws, placed in the minds of humans, which laws combine for the distingishing of the upright and the base, he wishes also a "word" to be decided by sure laws, so that humans are able to be taught, and so forth.

2. This universal teaching and gift is of God, and (is the) manifest testimonmty of providence, as it is in the teaching of Plato most seriously and sweetly, when he said that the bright fame concerning God is sprinled in the knowledge (? ars-artis)/limbs (?artus/artus), that is, assurance of art testifies that the world has not appeared by chance. For which reason they will be upheld and they are about to be sorrounded

3. When philosophy is this doctrine, the claim is true, (that) philosophy is truth and a gift of God and the source of many useful things about to be upheld.

4. And thanks ought to be given to God, to elaborate in this gift about to be adorned of God, especiall by those who have been called to this service.

5. Paulus cum inquit ad Titum, μανθανέτωσαν δε και οι ημέτεροι *καλων έργον προίστασθαι εις τασ αναγκαιας χρείας, ινα μηωσιν, ακαρποι, vult* Christianos non abhorrere a civilibus artibus. Sed ita erudiri ut praeesse poßint bonis operibus, hoc est, regere Rempub. Praesse iudiciis, exercitibus, ut luceant fides & dilectio in magnis negociis pertinentibus ad communem societam.

5. Since Paul said to Titus, "And let people learn to devote themselves to good works in order to meet urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive." he wished Christians not to spurn skills of civil society. Rather, thus to be taught in order to be able to take charge in good works—that is, to rule the republic, To take charge of the courts, armies so that they may illuminate faith and pleasure in the great matters pertaining to common society.

6. Vna est igitur Philosophia, scilicet Uera doctrina quae demonstrationisbus constat.

6. Thus philosophy is one, of course: true doctrine which stands by demonsration.

7. Nec cuiuslibet sectae docrina, Philosophia Est, Sed opiniones falsae repudiandae & Explodendae sunt, non praestigiis uerborum defendae.

7. Nor is philosophy the doctrine of any sect one pleases, but false opinions ought to be repudiated and exploded, not defended by deceits of words.

8. Alia secta plus, alia minus errorum habituit, Peripatetica tamen minus habet errorum, quam caeterae. Et candor est etiam in caeteris sequi uetus praeceptum, *orthon d' hoti dwtis epainei.*

8. Some sects have more errors, some fewer. Still, the Peripatetic has fewer errors than the others. And it is still illuminating to follow the old precept: *orthon d' hoti dwtis epainei.*

9. Epicurea continet haec Physica errata, Tollit causas duas praecipuas naturae, Efficientem & finalemm.

9. The Epicureanism contains these erros of physics: It removes two causes clearly in nature—efficient and final.

10. Fingit omnia casu oriri ex concursu Atomorum

10. It imagines that all causes arise from the collision of atoms.

11. Fingit Solem & caeteras stellas esse uapores incensos & deflagrantes.

11. It imagines that the sun and other stars are fiery vapors and burning themselves out.

12. Adfirmat animas hominum interire cum corporibus.

12. It asserts that the human soul dies with the body.

13. In Ethicis hoc est praecipuum erratum, quod sentit uoluptatem finem esse bonorum, & satis perspicue testatur, quid uocet uoluptatem, scilicet uacare cruciatu.

13. This is their clearest error in ethics—they think that pleasure is the end of the good, and that this bears witness clearly, that it calls pleasure, of course, to be free from pain.

14. Stoici errant in Physicis, cum fatum defendunt, hoc est, cum sentiunt omnia necessario fieri, Deum alligatum esse sequentibus causis, nec posse aliter mouere, quam ut ferunt caetera causae. Item uoluntatem humanum, ut Neronis fati uinculis cogi ut turpiter agat, nec esse liberam.

14. The stoics err in physics when they defend fate, that is, when they claim that all is done by necessity, that God has been bound in the sequence of causes, nor is able to move in any other way, than as other causes determine. Thus human will, as that Nero should be bound in chains, lest he should so something worse, us not even free.

15. Falsum & hoc est, Adfectus esse opiniones.

15. Thus is also false—that affections are opinions.

16. In Ethicis errant, cum adfectus omnes uiciosos & tollendos esse ex natura hominis censent.

16. In ethics they err, when they suppose that all affections are vicious and to be removed from human nature.

17. Quod dicunt solam uirtutem bonam, ualetudinem, successus bonos esse *wrohgmena, logomaxia est.*

17. Because they say virtue is the only good, sound body and further goods are....

18. De prouidentia, etsi Stoici hanc magna contentione defendunt, Epicurei rident, tamen utraque opinio pariter nocet humanis mentibus quod prudentes expendant.

18. Concerning providence, even if the stoics defend this with great exercise, (which) the Epicureans ridicule, still it harms whatever other opinion the prudent judge (to go along with it) about the human mind.

19. Deus est liberrimum agens, & ineffabili deliberatione ac libere decreuit se placabilem fore hominibus & donare hostiam, filium.

19. God is the most free agent, and by unsearchable deliberation and freely he determined himslef to be pleased with humans and to send as a sacrifice the son.

20. Si Zeno necessitati tribuit res secundas Cyri, non laudat bonitatem & consilium Dei. Si tribuit neceßitati poenam Dionysii, quamodo laudat iusticiam uindicem.

20. If Zeno of necessity attributed things to Cryus, he did not praise the goodness and plan of God. If he attributed the punishment of Dionysis to necessity, howevermuch he praises the just protector.

21. Errabant & Academici qui contendebant nihil esse certum, ac iubebant suspendere assensionem, seu *epexeih* etiam de principiis natura notis, & de perpetua experientia. Ab his prodigiosis deliramentis abhorrere auribus atque animis omnis debent.

21. The academica also err, who have contended that nothing is certain, and who have decided to suspend assent, or epikeia even concerning natural principles of note, and concerning perpetual experience. All ought to shield their ears and souls from such prodigious deliraments.

22. Ne leue scelus est, falsas opiniones mordicus retinere, aut consuetudinem cauillandi ueras sententias confirmare, quia lex diuina inquit, Non dicas falsum testimonium. Estque petulantia per sese digna odio. Et uitae ac moribus doctrinarum errata nocent.

22. Nor is it a slight wickedness to maintain false opinions, or to encourage the habit of mocking true statements, since the law of God says, "You shall not give false testimony." And so, petulance of itself is worthy of hatred. And errors are harmful for the teaching of life and morals.

23. Prodest studiosis erudita collatio Philosophiae & doctrinae quam Deus de sua uoluntate & de uita perpetua tradidit Ecclesiae.

23. The gathering together of philosophy and the teaching which God put forth to the Church concerning God's own will and concerning perpetual life is useful to have been taught to theose eager.

24. Philosophia moralis quae demonstrationes habet, pars est legis diuinae, Sed promissio Euangelii propria de reconciliatione propter filium Dei, prorsus aliud genus est doctrinae, ignotum rationi & Philosophiae.

24. Philosophy has demonstrations of morals of which part is the law of God, but the promise of the Gospel itself concerning reconciliation on account of the Son of God, is entirely another sort of doctrine, unknown by reason and philosophy.

25. Tres sunt causae cur Luna alias citius, alias tardias conspiciatur post coniunctionem Zodiaci obliquitas uel Horizontis, uelocitas motus Lunae & latitudo.

25. There are three causes why the moon sometimes sometimes quickly and sometimes slowly appears hidden after the conjunction of the Zodiac: either the speed of the motion of the horizon or of the moon, or the latitude.