

## Title Page

# Sixteenth-Century Philosophy and Theology after John Mair

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## Abstract

This chapter investigates the concept and theological use of philosophy in Scotland after John Mair. Until the 1570s, philosophy in Scotland was in the tradition of scholasticism. After the Reformation, Melville's university reform changed the philosophical landscape. Across Europe, the first generation of the reformers had taught that scholasticism and Aristotle were not necessary for the Christian faith, and philosophers and theologians alike had to rethink the traditional scholasticism of Catholic legacy. This intellectual change is traced here with a focus on the role, scope and autonomy of philosophy with respect to theology. After the dismissal of Aristotelo-scholasticism, both scholasticism and Aristotelianism survived in the universities in new forms adapted to Reformation theology. Aristotle in particular, regarded as the personification of unassisted natural reason, retained his importance. The status of Aristotle is a good indicator of the prevailing concept of philosophy.

The chapter is divided into four sections. Section one covers the progression from John Mair to Andrew Melville. Section two discusses the differences between scholasticism and humanist Aristotelianism. Finally, sections three and four analyse some late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century texts by Andrew Melville, Robert Rollock and five university philosophers: William Robertson, William Craig, John Adamson, John Petrie, and John Knox.

## Sixteenth-Century Philosophy and Theology after John Mair

### 1. From Mair to Melville

In his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1530), John Mair writes that:

In almost all Aristotle's opinions he agrees with the Catholic and true Christian faith in all its integrity. He constantly asserts the free will of man. [...] in so great and manifold a work [i.e., the *Ethics*] you meet scarcely a single opinion unworthy of a Christian gentleman. (Broadie 2009: 58)

Few years earlier, Martin Luther had famously attacked Aristotelo-scholasticism in the *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* (1517):

§41. Virtually the entire *Ethics* of Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace. Against all the scholastics.

§43. It is wrong to say that no one can become a theologian without Aristotle.

§50. Briefly, the whole Aristotle is to theology as darkness to light. Against all the scholastics.<sup>1</sup>

For John Mair and his 'circle' logic and philosophy were 'theologians' tools' (Broadie 2009: 87, 47–84). The 'theological use' of philosophy was to provide logical and dialectical resources for the intelligence of faith. Their commentaries on Aristotle's corpus, especially logic, display a very humanistic attention to the Greek text but always as part of a broader theological outlook.

A man of the old system, John Mair was nonetheless aware of the complex relations between philosophy and theology, humanism and scholasticism. The tensions between scholastics and humanists are discussed in his fictional *Dialogus de materia theologo tractanda* in the commentary on the first book of the *Sentences* (1510). Gavin Douglas, humanist poet and provost, complains of the excessive reliance on Aristotle over the church fathers, that philosophy is a source of obscurity rather than clarity for theologians, and claims

<sup>1</sup> '§41 Tota fere Aristotelis Ethica pessima est gratiae inimica. Contra scholasticos; §43 Error est dicere sine Aristotele non fit theologus; §50 Breviter totus Aristoteles ad theologiam est tenebre ad lucem. Contra scholasticos.' Translations are my own.

that only salvation matters, as in Paul II *Timotheus* 3:14–5. David Cranston, scholastic theologian and philosopher, replies that theology cannot be inconsistent with philosophy because of the unity of truth, and that Aristotelian logic is complementary to theology. Douglas ascribes the prolixity of the scholastic books to ‘the vain pride of those thinkers’ (Broadie 2009: 55). Between Mair’s and Luther’s opposite attitudes towards philosophy, in post-Reformation Scotland the concept of Aristotle, and of philosophy, was closer to Mair’s ‘Christian gentleman’ than to Luther’s ‘destroyer of good doctrine’ (Kusukawa 1995: 36).<sup>2</sup>

Luther’s hatred for philosophy and Calvin’s understanding of philosophy as a sceptical self-defeating discipline set much of the respective philosophical agendas in Wittenberg and Geneva. In Scotland, the Reformation was a communal enterprise without a single leading figure (Wright 2004: 176) and John Knox, arguably the most prominent Scottish reformer, exerted only an indirect influence on philosophy. A student of Mair’s, Knox was a preacher, not a systematic thinker, who had little to say in the way of philosophy provided that philosophy remained within due limits. A similar communal character is true of sixteenth-century academic philosophy, a remarkable fact considering the uniform content of the philosophy texts from the 1590s and 1600s.

In the years after the Reformation scholasticism lingered in the Scottish universities. Though lacking originality, it is unfair to describe it as generally conservative since ‘quite a large number of Scottish Aristotelian purists carefully expound[ed] Aristotle’s ideas’ with a humanist spirit (Broadie 2009: 96). Calls for the reform of the “old scholasticism” of the universities were common but it was only with Andrew Melville’s university reform from the 1570s that a new, consciously post-scholastic, comprehensive account of the relationship of philosophy to theology emerged.

Melville overhauled the curriculum with the introduction of humanist studies and specialised teachers, the dismissal of metaphysics, and a specific theological use of humanist philosophy, namely Ramism. In logic, dialectic and rhetoric, Pierre de la Ramée conceived a reform of the arts curriculum characterised by anti-Aristotelianism, order as the universal method, the practical orientation of theory, and innovative methods of presentation, such as the dichotomous diagrams. Melville used Ramism as a quick and effective way to disseminate the new curriculum inspired by Presbyterianism, so that ‘it was precisely the “pragmatism” of Ramism that Melville found attractive, not its radicalism’ (Reid 2011: 60). A new theology and a new method of presentation came with new philosophical content too. The curriculum

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Latomus (1521): “Thomas [Aquinas] wrote a great deal of heresy, and is responsible for the reign of Aristotle, the destroyer of good doctrine.”

was broadened to include humanist disciplines and Ramist dialectic, but its philosophical content retained a ‘near-monolithic focus on Aristotle’ (Reid 2011: 9), especially in natural and moral philosophy. Melville’s humanist strategy to ‘subvert the scholastic version of Aristotle [...] should not be interpreted as constituting opposition to Aristotle himself’ (Holloway 2011: 80). Hence, ‘at its core, the “Melvillian” reform programme comprised a humanist refocusing on Aristotle in the original Greek’ and ‘the small set of theses extant for the “Melvillian” period are almost entirely occupied with the exposition of Aristotelian texts and ideas’ (Reid 2011: 49, 195).

The next section analyses the distinction of scholasticism and Aristotle, and how Melville’s specialised humanist curriculum promoted a conscious and discipline-specific use of Aristotle.

## **2. Scholasticism and Aristotelianism**

Far from ‘revolt[ing] against Aristotle’ (Rait 1899), Melville regarded Aristotle as an intellectual and pedagogical resource. In the histories of the Scottish Reformation, old and recent alike, the perception of Catholicism, scholasticism and Aristotle as correlated somehow led to overlooking the most immediate background of the Reformation and to regarding it as intrinsically conservative. In the past decades, scholars in different areas have revised the relationship of Reformation and scholasticism. Charles Schmitt gave currency to the idea of a distinction between scholasticism and Aristotelianism and of the varieties of Renaissance Aristotelianisms (Schmitt 1983). Richard Muller argued for the enduring importance of scholasticism in the formulation of Reformed orthodoxy (Muller 1987). John Durkan showed how pervasive Latin culture was in pre-Reformation Scotland, and argued that some intellectual resources of the early Reformation could come only from pre-existing institutions, such as grammar schools and universities (Durkan 1959).

Richard Muller has described scholasticism as a technical and logical approach to theology lasting from around the twelfth to the eighteenth century. It is a method, mostly academic, of exposition of a truth considered as orthodox. It cannot be a descriptor of a thinker, at least not any more than ‘analytic’ is today. Scholastic theology is different from, but also consistent with and complementary to, catechetical, exegetical, and homiletical theology. Scholasticism does not indicate a specific theologico-philosophic content, although changes in method tend to produce changes in form: for example, a scholastic treatise vis-a-vis a pulpit sermon

(Muller 2004: 140–141).<sup>3</sup> The Reformers consciously worked in a plurality of theologies. What remained in the post-Reformation Scottish universities is scholasticism as a *method*, consciously detached from the specific content and curriculum inherited from medieval scholasticism. Late sixteenth-century Scottish philosophy belongs to the ‘early period’ of the formulation of Reformed orthodoxy (Muller 2004: 134). The received body of philosophy was adjusted to the new faith: the systematic elaboration and institutionalisation of theology, apologetics, pastoral duties and teaching.

When the Reformed theologians read the scriptures without the medieval commentators, traditional scholasticism fell out of favour. Specific philosophical content was connoted with Catholicism, such as natural theology and metaphysics as the science of god, but philosophy remained overwhelmingly Aristotelian, especially in logic, physics and moral philosophy, with the addition of classical authors such as Cicero, Seneca and Pliny. The shift in the enduring importance of Aristotle is captured by Broadie: ‘Identifying Aristotle as *the* philosopher, just as the scholastic philosophers did, post-Mair Scottish philosophers sought (unlike the scholastics) to return to his system and to see it in its pristine state, in Greek’ (Broadie 2009: 102). The question is how and why this ‘pristine Aristotle’ fit in the newly Reformed universities.

While Melville predictably ‘condemn[ed] those aspects in Aristotle’s ‘doctrine directlie impugning the grounds of religioun’’ (Kirk 1994: 298), he integrated into the curriculum the many positive aspects of Aristotelianism. In a humanist fashion, reference to the Greek Aristotle was anti-scholastic as well as anti-Catholic. The Scottish humanist Aristotle did not necessarily represent a worldview incompatible with Christianity. He spoke of God and metaphysics disproportionately less than of biology, the movement of falling bodies, and logical inferences. Aristotle was divorced from scholasticism and celebrated for giving a consistent account of the world described with the powers, and within the limits, of the unassisted human mind. Also, Aristotle still provided a usable set of doctrines, terms, concepts and arguments: a “scholastic” Aristotle in the sense of being tuned to the needs of academic teaching, but not anymore the Aristotle cornerstone of the scholastic worldview.

Philosophy remained propaedeutic to theology and the theoretical and practical need of a “synthesis” of theology and philosophy was declined in different terms. For the late sixteenth-century Scottish academics the “theological use” of philosophy was to separate the respective spheres of validity of theology and philosophy in order to minimise overlaps and conflicts.

<sup>3</sup> For a different account, see Alexander Broadie’s chapter in this volume.

While Catholic scholasticism was the product of centuries of harmonisation of the conflicts of reason and revelation, the Scots separated in order to harmonise. Philosophy was self-contained and silent on matters spiritual and of salvation. Natural theology and metaphysics were dropped by Melville as problematic and excessively rationalising in religion. Philosophy, especially moral and natural, was applicable only within strict, mundane limits. Additionally, the new theological practices prompted discussions on philosophy's own method and limits: particularly important were Ramus's *Dialectics* and Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. Whereas the consistency of Aristotle in the absence of revelation had troubled the medievals, the Scots saw it as a resource, and in the long term this separation helped legitimise (again) philosophy vis-a-vis theology.

The enduring importance of Aristotle in post-Reformation Scotland was both a necessity and an innovation of the best humanist scholarship of the time, not a survival of the old Catholic system. The intelligence of the Reformed faith became less reliant on the Christianisation of Aristotle.

### 3. Melville and Rollock

Melville wrote the *Scholastica diatriba in rebus divinis* (1599) for the graduand class of St Mary's College, St Andrews. The adjective 'scholastic' refers principally to the institutional setting of the theses, although the question-response structure is suggestive of the scholastic method in theology. Melville has a positive opinion of philosophy. The opening section is a list of questions for the students to debate on graduation day, such as whether theology and scripture ought to be judged by the arts and science, products of human ingenuity, or the contrary; whether the spiritual teaching of Paul ought to be submitted to the scientific criteria of Aristotle's *Analytics*; or whether natural truth and physics, and supernatural truth and Mosaic physics, contradict one another (Melville 1599: 1, 5, 9, 11).

Melville teaches that the fall has inescapable consequences for humankind but his view is a moderate one. He argues against the pretension that all knowledge has an empirical origin: 'it is surely not certain that famous dogma of the peripatetics, that nothing is in the intellect which has not been earlier in the senses' (Melville 1599: XVI).<sup>4</sup> Since Adam's mind is the root of all science and his mind is in the image of God's mind, then Adam's mind possesses some original (that is, non-empirical) knowledge.

<sup>4</sup> 'Ergo non adeo certum dogma illud Peripateticorum, nihil esse intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu.'

The discussion of free will and grace is a common place for the exhibition of the “limits” of philosophy. Melville is a voluntarist in moral agency:

Free will is the free faculty of the mind, by its own movement without coercion, to approve or disapprove, to choose or to reject that which the intellect or mind says it ought to be chosen or rejected. (Melville 1599: XXII)<sup>5</sup>

Origin of evil is in the deficient free will because all created things are good so they cannot be the origin of evil (Melville 1600: II). Human free will is acknowledged with the crucial remark that ‘we believe that the fallen man is still left with mind and will’ only in the everyday moral decisions (Melville 1599: XXIII). Concerning the spiritual kingdom of Christ and salvation ‘although man can will some natural and moral goods, nonetheless in this way or without grace man cannot will what he ought to: so that no matter how remarkable these faculties seem to be before humankind, before God they only deserve eternal death.’ (Melville 1599: XXIII)<sup>6</sup>

The autonomy of philosophy in moral matters and its blindness in spiritual matters is mirrored in the distinction between natural and divine law. ‘Natural law, by way of notions naturally common to us, informs us naturally by what natural way we can reach our natural goal. So men are naturally inexcusable in their conscience with respect to natural law. Divine law instead stems from revelation and pertains to the things ‘above nature’. Human law is born out of natural and divine law, and it is less perfect ‘because of human weakness.’ (Melville 1597: XXVI)<sup>7</sup>

In the *Diatriba*, Melville accepted the possibility of a limited natural knowledge of God, of the natural world, and of our offices, but he denied the possibility of a functional natural knowledge which could be used to construct a true and reliable natural theology. Hence, his distaste for metaphysics but not for philosophy tout court.

Martin Luther’s hatred for philosophy found scriptural justification in Paul’s *Epistle to the Colossians* 2:8. In Robert Rollock’s *Lectures*, the passage reads: ‘*Beware least there be any*

<sup>5</sup> ‘Liberum arbitrium est libera animae facultas probandi vel improbandi eligendi vel respuendi sua proprio motu sine coactione, id quod intellectus seu mens eligendum vel respuendum esse dicat.’ And Melville 1597: IX.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Licet autem quaedam Naturalia et moralia bona velle possit, tamen neque eo modo nec sine ea vult aut velle potest quo debet: adeo ut quantumvis speciosa illa coram hominibus videantur esse, coram Deo aeternam mortem mereantur.’ And Melville 1600: XXVI.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Lex Naturalis notionibus natura communibus naturaliter informat via naturali ad finem naturalem obtinendum, Divina notionibus supra naturam et communibus et singularibus informat divinitus [...] Utriusque veluti partus est lex humana, quanquam ab utraque non parum deficiat ob humanam infirmitatem.’

*man that spoyles you through Philosophie, and vaine deceit, through the traditions of men, according to the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*' (Rollock 1603: 151)<sup>8</sup> Rollock's analysis of this passage is instructive of the differences from Luther. The discussion of *Colossians* 2:8 in a sermon suggests that the argument of the separation of the spheres of validity of theology and philosophy was not confined to academic discussions and that it was directed at a lay audience.

Rollock uses the metaphor of the believers as 'sheepe' who are 'pray[ed]' away: 'The manner how they doe this; is not by strong hand or by violence, but it is by *Philosophie*, by deceiving of the sheepe'. The targets are the Papists, who deceive people with 'their Philosophie, that is their deceit, and vanitie in doctrine [...] *Philosophie*. A faire name to be called *wisedome*, but hee gives it as foule a name afterward, when he names it *vaine deceit*'. Besides this anti-papist polemics, Rollocks has a positive view of philosophy:

the wisedome of man so long as it is within the bounds of things that are earthly and wordly, thains naturall, thains concerning policie; it will have some soliditie: but so soone as the head of a man, albeit never so ingenious and learned, reacheth without the bounds of earthly and naturall things, & begins to climbe up to heaven, and to seeke out God and his worship; there the head of man vanisheth and becomes foolishness.

(Rollock 1603: 152)

For Rollock, there is an improper use of philosophy, when philosophy concerns itself with matters spiritual and falls prey of foolishness and arrogance, when deception is 'dyed with the colour of wisedome'; and a proper use of philosophy, limited to things natural and of societal life. The improper use of philosophy beyond its limits deceives men, not philosophy itself. In the *Analysis Dialectica* on Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, Rollock makes a similar argument with respect to moral life. Human beings are inexcusable because god's light shines in the visible things, hence a natural theology is available without revelation (Rollock 1593: 17–18). After the fall, some sanctity is left because humans are in the image of god: this little spark ('scintillul[a]') is enough to incline us towards human and natural good, but not to spiritual

<sup>8</sup> Here and below emphasis is original.



good (Rollock 1593: 157–158).<sup>9</sup> Only sanctity will modify free will from indifference and openness to opposites (good and evil) to spontaneity towards the good (Rollock 1593: 153).

The concepts of philosophy and natural reason in Rollock's *Lectures* and *Analysis* are not different from those taught in the Scottish universities.

#### 4. Academic philosophy

There are only a few philosophy graduation theses available from the 1590s and 1600s. The theses are handy compendia of the philosophy and interpretation of Aristotle that were deemed fitting for Reformed institutions. They also hint at the 'long seventeenth century' trajectory of Scottish academic philosophy (see Conclusion). The earliest theses available are some years later than the peak of Melville's influence on the universities, hence they shed light on the his immediate legacy. The first are the *Theses philosophicae* (1596) by the Edinburgh regent William Robertson. The theme of the Fall is treated after Logic, and it introduces physics. It is not clear whether the regent believed that logic is somewhat less affected by the fall than natural philosophy.

Because of the lamentable Fall, not only is the will darkened throughout its acts, due to a paralysis through licentious affects, but also the mind [...] *The grievous human condition is not only in need of the cure of practical training, but also of the eye-medicine and sun of the contemplative science.* (Robertson 1596: Th.Ph. 1.2)<sup>10</sup>

Human mental powers are essentially affected by the original fall, but contemplative science is regarded as a partial remedy to it. The view that some truth is available to the unassisted powers of the mind echoes Rollock's idea that the knowledge of the natural world falls within the 'proper' use of philosophy. Optimism regarding the autonomy and heuristic powers of philosophy is present in Robertson's view of metaphysics:

<sup>9</sup> 'Hoc enim esset dicere in voluntate humana aliquid rectitudinis et sanctitatis quae est ad imaginem dei, etiam post lapsum permanere [...] naturam hominis certo quodam modo propendere ad ista quae moralia ac humana bona dicimus, abhorreere vero a coelestibus ac spiritualibus.'

<sup>10</sup> 'Lapsu flebili, non modo paralysi dissoluti affectus, transuersum acta voluntas, sed [...] tenebris obtenebrata mens. *Lugubris conditio humana non modo disciplinae practicae medelam, sed & scientiae contemplativae collyrium & solem requisivit.*'

Metaphysics, is given the name of ‘first philosophy’ as well as of wisdom, because of its amplitude and of the elevated nature of its subject. *Theoretical happiness of the mind is the contemplation according to metaphysics, that is, according to the highest intellectual virtue.* (Robertson 1596: Th.Eth. 9)<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, this view of metaphysics is in the section on moral philosophy, thus indicating a moral dimension to the theoretical enterprise. Against the anti-scholastics and anti-Aristotelians, Aristotle is praised for connecting the moral life and the contemplation of God:

*1. Theoretical happiness, even according to Aristotle, is best placed in the contemplation of God the Blessed [...] 3. We are not afraid to go against that famous sentence that Aristotle shrouded all philosophers in darkness: in truth, the sparks and glowing ashes of religiosity shone in him.* (Robertson 1596: Th.Eth. 10)<sup>12</sup>

Calvin’s image of the sparks and glowing ashes still present in the mind after the fall serves for a reappraisal of Aristotle. Robertson proposes the equally well-known locus of Aristotle the ‘Christian gentleman’, as in John Mair.

In the 1599 theses for the University of Edinburgh regent Craig addressed the relationship between Aristotle and the Fall on the crucial question of whether human powers are sufficient to achieve happiness. He seems to regard Aristotle less highly than other regents do.

*Aristotle considers the sort of human reason by itself pure, complete and uncorrupted, as the first origin of happiness, and of the deliberation and election of good virtue.* On the contrary, since it is revealed by the established truth that humans are intimately deprived by the primeval fall of the faculty of well understanding, willing, deciding, choosing, and acting, we concur to move away from Aristotle’s opinion on the origin of happiness, virtues, and good actions. (Craig 1599: Th.Eth. 1)<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> ‘Metaphysica, tum propter amplitudinem, tum etiam propter rerum illius scientiae sublimitatem, sicut primae Philosophiae, ita etiam sapientiae nomen fortita est. *Foelicitas theorica animi contemplatio est secundum Metaphysicam, hoc est, virtutem optimam dianoeticam.*’

<sup>12</sup> *1. ‘Foelicitas theorica etiam secundum Arist. Doctrinam, in Dei benedicti contemplatione sita est. [...] 3. Non veremur itaque in eam sententiam ire [...] Aristotelem [...] Philosophis omnibus caliginem obduxisse: verum etiam pietatis scintillas et favillas in eo emicuisse.’*

<sup>13</sup> ‘*Aristoteles primum quasi fontem faelicitatis, virtutis deliberationis bonae, et electionis, constituit rationem humanam per se puram, integram et incorruptam.* Nos itaque, quibus ex agnita veritate revelatum est hominem

Moral philosophy unassisted by faith is useless because even the philosophers fall prey to vice despite their deep moral instruction (Craig 1599: Th.Eth. 2.2). Nevertheless, Aristotle is helpful to analyse how to apply the universal knowledge of good and evil to particular conditions.

Regent Adamson (1600), University of Edinburgh, is on the contrary quite laudatory of Aristotle's epistemology, to the point of addressing him as 'divine philosopher':

*If humans had remained in primeval integrity, they would have known the affections of things by their very proper and proximate causes, according to the way of knowing explained by Aristotle most ingeniously and wisely in his Posterior Analytics [...] Even if we do not have many demonstrations which meet the level of accuracy demanded by Aristotle, the analytic doctrine should not be judged useless, but rather the divine philosopher ought to be admired for it. (Adamson 1600: Th.Log. XV)<sup>14</sup>*

Adamson argues that Aristotle's "epistemic optimism" is not tenable after the Fall because our knowledge of things and of their causes is obscure, and that Aristotle describes the pre-lapsarian human epistemic situation. Nevertheless, Aristotle's method serves in the post-lapsarian state as a limiting method, as a desirable degree of perfection to pursue, at least in natural and moral knowledge. Both Craig and Adamson interpret Aristotle as speaking of the 'ideal man' for he lacked the Christian revelation of the original sin.

Adamson answers positively to Melville's question in the *Scholastica Diatriba* whether Paul's teaching is, in principle, open to investigation with the method of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. When correctly followed, logic and the rules of inference are reliable in the post-lapsarian state, also in theological matters. An interesting addition to Melville's question is that Adamson declares to be following here 'the majority of the theologians' ('theologorum turba', Adamson 1600: Th.Log. XVI).<sup>15</sup> A remark perhaps suggestive of an appreciation of

bene intelligendi, volendi, deliberandi, eligendi, et agendi facultate a lapsu primaevo penitus destitutum esse, ab Arist. Sententia de foelicitatis, virtutum, ac bonarum actionum fundamento recedere cogimur.'

<sup>14</sup> 'Si perstitisset homo in primaeua illa integritate, affectiones rerum scivisset per proprias proximasque causas, secundum sciendi modum ab Aristotele iis Analyticis Posterioribus ingeniosissime simul et sapientissime enarratum [...] Etsi non ita multas [...] ea accuratatione quam requirit Aristoteles, praeditas habeamus demonstrationes, non tamen ideo Doctrina illa Analytica censenda est inutilis, sed suspiciendus potius divinus Philosophus.'

<sup>15</sup> 'Cur non etiam Paulinae apodeixeis pneumatikaj, astipulante doctissimorum Theologorum turba, ad Analyticum Aristotelicae eruditionis modum, revocandae sunt et exigendae?'

scholasticism, which would regain popularity in the seventeenth-century disputes on orthodoxy.

Elsewhere Adamson seems to overlook the difference between Aristotle and the Christian teaching on happiness and virtue. He even finds a way to condemn the heretics – who unsurprisingly include the papists – by the letter of Aristotle: ‘according to truth as well as Aristotle, the heretics are the worst and most unhappy people,’ for the human happiness described by Aristotle is the same as the Christian happiness (Adamson 1600: Th.Pol. V.3, VI.1).<sup>16</sup>

Regent John Petrie taught philosophy at St Salvator’s College, St Andrews, when Andrew Melville was dean of the Faculty of Divinity. Petrie’s graduation theses of 1603 are suggestive of the type of influence exerted by Melville.

Two sets of passages are interesting for the concept of philosophy. In the first set, the regent presents a brief theory of the division of science. Metaphysics, whose scientific achievements are ascribable to the ingenuity of the human mind, is not a science superior to all others. A subordinate science is ‘that which receives the subject-matter from a superior science, and also retains the main way to treat it. [...] It is therefore false that particular sciences are subordinate to metaphysics, because they do not retain the same method’ (Petrie 1603: Th.Disc. 19).<sup>17</sup> Petrie uses Aristotle’s view that each discipline has its own method to argue that theology is a unique discipline because its method is unique. Theology is best understood as ‘the shorter and more exact comprehension of true philosophy’ (Petrie 1603, Th.Disc. 24).<sup>18</sup> This understanding of metaphysics dismisses the role of terminological repertoire and logical connector between theology and natural philosophy which metaphysics played in Catholic scholasticism.

Petrie’s view of Aristotle, natural reason and human happiness is worth quoting at some length. Human happiness as in Aristotle is humankind’s ‘inner perfection’ (Petrie 1603: Th.Eth. 5), suggestive of a teleological and perfectionist anthropology. Petrie argues that ‘acting according to virtue, living well, and glorifying God with our life, all go in the same

<sup>16</sup> ‘ex veritate, ita etiam ex mente Aristotelis, haereticos [...] including the Papists] omnium hominum pessimos esse et miserimos.’ And ‘Felicitas ergo humana Aristoteli, quod et nos Christiani dicimus’.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Scientiam subalternam voco [...] quae a superiori subiectum accipit, retento principe eiusdem consyderandi modo [...] Falsum est ergo particulares scientias Metaphysicae subalternatas esse, cum modum eius consyderandi non retineant.’

<sup>18</sup> ‘non videtur S.Sancta Theologia sacris biblijs consignata in unam aliquam specie Disciplinam tota cogi posse, quin potius ea fuerit totius vera Philosophiae brevior exactiorque comprehensio.’

direction’, that is, towards the ‘acquisition of that goal which the most noble theologians say is the ultimate goal of theology’:

Why would it be absurd to say, with Aristotle, that the essence of happiness is placed in acting according to virtue? Beyond the talk of essence, we acknowledge some errors in Aristotle’s view of happiness and we full-heartedly reject them: such errors concern happiness’s origin, because he ignored God’s supernatural grace and faith [...] Yet, even if we place true happiness not in action but in the communion with God, Aristotle does seem to have grasped it as well, when he writes that the blessed becomes similar to god [...] even if he did not put the essence of happiness in this specific type of happiness [...] How much closer than all other philosophers did our Aristotle get to the truth! (Petrie 1603, Th.Eth. 11)<sup>19</sup>

‘Our Aristotle’ was a fallible man, but his idea of happiness is not in opposition to the Christian ideal of the blessed life.

## Conclusion

The sources investigated here belong to the late sixteenth-century early formulation of Reformed orthodoxy. A general agreement on the nature and scope of philosophy gradually emerged. The humanist Aristotle of the sixteenth-century Scottish scholastics found a new place in Melville’s curriculum. Melville’s preference for Ramus’s *analysis logica* over syllogistic in the interpretation of the Bible (Kirk 1994: 283), and the *sola scriptura* principle dismissed traditional scholasticism as the framework of the relations of theology and philosophy. Nevertheless, coherently with Melville’s idea of specialised university teaching, Aristotle remained central in logic, natural and moral philosophy, where no competing alternative was available. Rather than just being conservative or old scholastic, Aristotle had a specific place in the Reformed universities.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Cum igitur secundum virtutem agere, bene vivere, et Deum vita glorificare, in eandem sensum omnia redeant, cur is prorsus absurde sentiat qui cum Arist. hactenus de faelicitatis essentia statuat, ea in actione secundum virtutem esse positam. Nam praeter essentiam, errores nonnullos Arist. in faelicitatis negotio nos agnoscimus et ex animis rejicimus: cuiusmodi est error de eius origine, ignorata supernaturali Dei gratia et fide [...] Quin etiam si ponamus veram faelicitatem non in actione sed in coniunctione cum Deo, et illam attigisse videtur Arist. quatenus scriptum reliquit beatum Deo similem fieri [...] etsi in haec faelicitatis essentiam non posuerit. [...] quanto propius omnibus alijs Philosophis ad veritatem accesserit Arist. Noster.’

In the early seventeenth century philosophy kept developing in connection with Reformed orthodoxy. Following the great Reformed confessions on doctrine, the need for a systematic presentation of Reformed orthodoxy became more important. Apologetics, anti-Catholic polemics, the needs of university teaching argued for the use of a moderate scholasticism along with Aristotle. Medieval authors such as Aquinas and Scotus and contemporary authors such as Suárez and Bellarmine were freely used as well as criticised. This prompted some realignments with themes traditionally associated with Catholic scholasticism. The Aberdeen Doctors and Robert Baron are a different type of intellectual from the late sixteenth-century philosophy regent and are representative of a return to scholasticism in the Scottish universities from the 1610s. Quite tellingly, the subtitle of Baron's *Philosophia Theologiae Ancillans* (1621) reads: 'A pious and modest explanation of the *philosophical* questions in the theological disputations' (original emphasis). In the *Metaphysica Generalis* (1654) Baron treats metaphysics as the architectonic, connecting science between philosophy and theology. The harmonisation of revelation and reason is structured as a theoretical discipline, not just as a spiritual matter.

The interpretation of Aristotle responded to new theological needs as well. Not only was Aristotle compatible with Reformed orthodoxy, he also became an apologetic tool against the Catholics. The Scottish regents believed that the literal interpretation of Aristotle on substance and accident proved the Catholics wrong in the debates on the Eucharist. In Aristotle they found the reductionist view that the accidents cannot exist without their natural substance. The first explicit reference to Aristotle is in Stevenson's *Theses philosophicae* of 1629 but the argument is already in Craig 1599 (Gellera 2013: 1095 and 1106).<sup>20</sup> The Catholic transubstantiation thus has no foundation in Aristotle's text and the Scottish regents celebrated the Calvinist doctrine of the Eucharist as good Aristotelian philosophy. It is arguably the first explicit apologetic use of Aristotle in the Scottish universities.

John Mair's view of the Christian Aristotle did not last forever. The roots of its eventual obsolescence were laid in the sixteenth-century separation of theology and philosophy, sanctioned in Melville's curriculum and never retracted by later academics. The prince of the philosophers lost his throne when Aristotelianism was no longer theologically serviceable but especially when it ceased to be an effective description of the natural world. Speaking of the limits of human nature, the Calvinist doctrine of the Fall prompted a systematic interest in the

<sup>20</sup> Stevenson 1629, Th.Log. XVI: 'accidens *ex Porphyrio*. semper existit in subjecto, et *ex Aristotele*. non potest seorsum existere ab eo in quo est'; Craig 1599, Th.Log. 21.I: '[accidentia] quae promanant a natura subiecti, eoque a subiecto penitus inseparabilia'.

application of new philosophical and empirical methods to nature and the mind.<sup>21</sup>

Aristotelianism turned from usable to disposable because in Scotland it did not have the same intrinsic relationship with theology as in the Catholic world. As a result, by the 1660s there was little Aristotelian conservatism in the Scottish universities and the new philosophies of Descartes and the English experimentalists were appropriated without raising much concern of orthodoxy (Gellera 2016).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The main thesis of Harrison 2007: 7, 11.

<sup>22</sup> The most explicit claim is in Lidderdale 1685, Endnote: ‘Nihil est rectae rationis aut Religioni Christianae contrarium, quod non adversatur Principiis Philosophiae Cartesianae distincte perceptis’, Gellera 2016: 166.

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