

PHILOSOPHY AS HANDMAID OF THEOLOGY: BIBLICAL EXEGESIS IN THE SERVICE OF SCHOLARSHIP

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“One can only grant the theological faculty the arrogant claim that the philosophical faculty is its maidservant (leaving aside the question of whether the latter bears the torch before, or carries the train after her mistress) on the condition that she is not banished or gagged.” Thus wrote Immanuel Kant, paraphrasing Peter Damian, in his *Der Streit der Fakultäten* of 1798, shortly after being freed from a ban on writing about religion.¹ Kant argued that the role of the philosophy faculty in universities was to lay down the truth for the use of the more practically orientated higher faculties, including that of theology. It could only perform this function if it was totally free.

Whether Kant’s interpretation of the idea of philosophy as maidservant of theology was a product of his anger or reflected what the theologians of his own time were saying is not at present clear. What is clear from the above passage, however, is that Kant considered the role of servant as compatible with freedom. Unlike Kant, many more recent scholars do not. The origin of modern European philosophy is frequently described precisely in terms of its liberation from a supposed state of servitude with regard to theology. Such a liberation is seen as a radical change and has been placed in both the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries, according to the interests and preconceptions of the historian concerned.² That philosophy was not “free” before the chosen period is simply established by reference to the

¹ “Auch kann man allenfalls der theologischen Fakultät den stolzen Anspruch, daß die philosophische ihrer Magd sei, einräumen (wobei doch noch immer die Frage bleibt: ob diese ihrer gnädigen Frau *die Fackel vorträgt* oder *die Schleppe nachträgt*), wenn man sie nur nicht verjagt, oder ihr den Mund zubindet” (Immanuel Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, ed. Klaus Reich [Hamburg, 1959], 21).

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² For a thirteenth-century liberation, see, e.g., Étienne Gilson, *Études de philosophie médiévale* (Strasbourg, 1921), 1–124, which is still influential and which does at least discuss the meaning of the phrase and its true origins. For the seventeenth century, see most recently Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), 10–11, where philosophy’s position as handmaiden is opposed to *libertas philosophica* or *libertas philosophandi*. *Libertas philosophica* referred, of course, to freedom from the tyranny of a *philosophical sect*.

well-known formula *Philosophia ancilla theologiae*, attributed, if at all, to Peter Damian.³

The idea of philosophy as the servant of religious wisdom or theology had, in fact, a very long history before and after Peter Damian, the largest part of which occurred before it was reduced to the formula in which it is now most often encountered.⁴ The present study is an attempt at elucidating the meanings of this idea through an examination of its use by some of the more important writers from the first century to the seventeenth, when, as I shall argue, it was given the meaning it holds today. This survey is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to go more deeply into the contexts of the various occurrences of the idea among selected authors, the latter having been chosen because they used it in interesting ways or added new meaning to it.⁵ It will be seen that the original and principal meaning of the concept of philosophy as a servant of theology was that philosophy had a part to play in the development of a rational Christianity and that it was mainly used to combat those who wished to reject all secular knowledge.

THE GREEK TRADITION

From early in the history of the Christian Church, it is possible to discern three distinct attitudes towards rational philosophy, all of which persisted

³ Although often with the admission that he did not use such a formula; see, e.g., Jean-Luc Solère, "Avant-propos," in *La servante et la consolatrice: La philosophie dans ses rapports avec la théologie au Moyen Âge*, ed. Jean-Luc Solère and Zénon Kaluza (Paris, 2002), v–xv, at v and n. 2, where the meaning of the phrase is summed up as that philosophy "n'est pas maîtresse, ni chez elle ni chez les autres," and it is then admitted that this distorts what Peter Damian actually said.

⁴ It seems necessary to point this out, since scholars frequently search for the formula or point out that such and such an author does not use it in its common form. I have been unable to ascertain the precise moment when use of the formula began, but it becomes frequent after the middle of the seventeenth century.

⁵ There exists an excellent and thorough survey up to the twelfth century in Bernard Baudoux, "Philosophia 'ancilla theologiae,'" *Antonianum* 12 (1937): 293–326, on which this account draws heavily. Also of use for the thirteenth century and later is Franciscus Jacobus Clemens, *De scholasticorum sententia philosophiam esse theologiae ancillam commentatio* (Münster, 1856), reprinted in Antonio Piolanti, *Un pioniere della filosofia cristiana della metà dell'Ottocento: Franz Jakob Clemens (†1862)* (Vatican, 1988); this text suffers from many misprints, but is usable. Neither of these is well known, possibly because they are both in Latin. For a discussion of some of the Greek sources, see also Albert Henrichs, "Philosophy, the Handmaiden of Theology," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 9 (1968): 437–50, who uses Clemens but seems unaware of Baudoux, and Annewies van den Hoek, "Mistress and Servant: An Allegorical Theme in Philo, Clement and Origen," in *Origeniana Quarta: Die Referate des 4. internationalen Origeneskongresses*, ed. Lothar Lies (Innsbruck, 1987), 344–48.

into the seventeenth century and beyond. One was that of men who generally displayed contempt towards purely human reason and believed that philosophy should not be introduced into contemplation of the divine. Such men saw no role whatsoever for philosophy, ancillary or otherwise, and contributed little to the present question. Amongst those who did see a relationship between philosophy and theology, one finds two contrasting ideas: one that regarded philosophy, and all human knowledge, as essentially leading to the same end as theology — knowledge of God — and one that saw everything as being the other way around, all human knowledge flowing from the Bible. Those who held strictly to the latter idea also had no conception of philosophy as a handmaiden of theology, since for them philosophy was merely a product of theology. In practice, however, these two ideas were often united and served to justify each other.⁶ It was those who saw human knowledge as compatible with revelation, and thus recognized a role for philosophy in understanding the Bible, who sought to define its place in religious thought. One result of this activity was the description of philosophy as a servant of theology, an idea whose precise meaning varied according to the circumstances in which it was used.

The earliest instance we possess of philosophy being described as a servant of revealed knowledge, however, comes not from a Christian, but from a Jew, Philo of Alexandria (ca. 15 BC–ca. AD 50). Having received a Greek education, in contrast to the Jews of Palestine whom he regarded as uncultured, Philo clearly felt a need both to incorporate philosophy into his understanding of scripture and to explain away some of the more embarrassing passages of the Pentateuch.⁷ He therefore adopted an allegorical approach to scriptural exegesis similar to that which had been applied to Homer, through which apologists attempted to show that the passages attributing impious behavior to the gods in fact contained higher meanings.⁸ Scripture, according to Philo, possessed both literal and allegorical meanings. But, although both were true, it was the allegorical meaning that conveyed the real wisdom of Moses. Moses' Law was the highest form of wisdom, but to achieve it Moses had had first to invent philosophy. This he later taught to the Egyptians, who in turn passed it on to the Greeks.⁹ Con-

⁶ On these attitudes and their relationship, see Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959), 1:74–94.

⁷ For an introduction to Philo, see David Runia, "Philo, Alexandrian and Jew," in *Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria*, Collected Studies 332 (Aldershot, 1990), I (1–18).

⁸ For an account of Homeric exegesis, see Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1986).

⁹ The idea that the Greeks derived their philosophy from Moses goes back at least to Aristobulus and other Alexandrian Jews of the second century BC, but was itself derived

sequently, philosophy could be used to elucidate the allegorical meanings of scripture, even though, under the Greeks, it had decayed from its original purity. This necessitated the adoption of an eclectic attitude, choosing what was best from the various rival schools that had sprung up in the course of history.¹⁰ Although Philo held that Pythagoras and the Platonists had remained closest to Moses' Law, he was prepared to adopt other philosophical ideas and approaches, such as the etymological analysis used by the Stoics to discover philosophical truths in Homer.¹¹

Of chief interest for the present purpose is Philo's allegorical interpretation of Gen. 16:1–6 from the story of Sarah and Hagar. Sarah is barren and so, rather scandalously to Greek eyes, offers Abraham her Egyptian maid, Hagar, for the purpose of fathering children. When Hagar duly becomes pregnant, she is scornful towards her mistress. Sarah feels dishonored and complains to Abraham, who replies that Hagar is her bondservant and that she can therefore do what she likes with her. Sarah consequently punishes Hagar and drives her out of the house. In Philo's exegesis, Sarah (whose name means "self-control") is identified with philosophy and Hagar ("sojourning") with school learning, the subjects that the Greeks called the *ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία* and in the Latin West came to be known as the liberal arts. According to Philo, the allegorical meaning of the passage is that Abraham (who represents mind) was not ready to consort with and conceive through philosophy and that he first had to spend time learning the propaedeutic subjects. When these had brought forth their fruits, Sarah reminded him that his purpose in studying them was to rise up to higher things and that he should now give them up in favor of philosophy. The handmaidens have their attractions, but one should not grow old in their company. "But," he continues,

from much older claims for philosophy's barbarian origins; see Arthur J. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture* (Tübingen, 1989), 1–29; Baudoux, "Ancilla theologiae," 295 n. 4; Jaap Mansfeld, "Philosophy in the Service of Scripture: Philo's Exegetical Strategies," in *The Question of "Eclecticism": Studies in Later Greek Philosophy*, ed. J. M. Dillon and A. A. Long (Berkeley, 1988), 70–102, at 72.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the role of philosophy in Philo's exegesis, see Mansfeld, "Philosophy," esp. 74–89.

¹¹ Philo's allegorical method is frequently described as Stoic (e.g., Lambertson, *Homer the Theologian*, 45, 47; Runia, "Philo," 8), but this has been called into question by A. A. Long, "Stoic Readings of Homer," chap. 3 in *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley, 1996), 58–84, where it is denied that the Stoics ever indulged in allegory or that the Homeric allegorists whom Philo follows, such as Heraclitus, were in fact Stoics. On this point, see also the introduction to David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, 1992). Dawson also presents an interesting discussion of Philo's etymological method and his justification for employing it on the Greek text of the Septuagint (*ibid.*, 84–86).

just as the school subjects contribute to the acquirement of philosophy, so does philosophy to the getting of wisdom. For philosophy is the practice or study of wisdom, and wisdom is the knowledge of things divine and human and their causes. And therefore just as the culture of the schools is the bond-servant of philosophy, so must philosophy be the servant of wisdom.¹²

Philosophy and what it teaches are desirable in themselves, but they assume a loftier aspect when placed in the service of God.

These ideas passed into the Christian tradition through the work of Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 220), for many years a teacher in that city. Clement read and made extensive use of Philo's works, and took over the allegory of Sarah and Hagar in its entirety.¹³ In his *Stromateis*, or *Miscellanies*, amongst many biblical quotations, he repeats Philo's statement that just as the preparatory subjects lead to the acquiring of philosophy, their mistress, so philosophy itself aids in the acquisition of wisdom, since philosophy is the exercising of wisdom, while wisdom is the knowledge of things divine and human and their causes. "Thus," he says, "wisdom is in authority over philosophy, as philosophy is over the preliminary stages of education."¹⁴ The context of this paraphrase of Philo is Clement's attack on those who denied any role to secular learning in the interpretation of scripture and the acquiring of faith. Clement wished to reconcile Greek philosophy and Christianity, since this was the only way to give it intellectual respectability. He wrote variously that philosophy had been stolen by the Greeks from Moses, given to them directly by God through divine inspiration, or given to them by fallen angels who had stolen it from God. Just as God had given the Law

¹² Καὶ μὴν ὡσπερ τὰ ἐγκύκλια συμβάλλεται πρὸς φιλοσοφίας ἀνάληψιν, οὕτω καὶ φιλοσοφία πρὸς σοφίας κτῆσιν. ἔστι γὰρ φιλοσοφία ἐπιτήδευσις σοφίας, σοφία δὲ ἐπιστήμη θείων καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ τῶν τούτων αἰτίων (Philo of Alexandria, *De congressu quaerendae eruditionis gratia* 14.79, in *Philo*, ed. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, 10 vols., Loeb Classical Library [London, 1929–62], 4:496–97; Baudoux, "Ancilla theologiae," 295–96). Cf. also the passages from Philo of Alexandria, *Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis* 3.244–45, in Colson and Whitaker, eds., *Philo*, 1:466–67, and Philo of Alexandria, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, in *Philo Supplement*, 1, trans. Ralph Marcus, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1953), 205–6. As a possible origin for Philo's interpretation, Henrichs ("Handmaiden of Theology," 444) cites a fragment attributed to Ariston of Chios (ca. 250 BC), which reads, "those who waste their effort with the propaedeutic disciplines but neglect philosophy resemble the suitors of Penelope, who when they failed to win over the mistress mingled with the handmaidens."

¹³ For a survey of Clement's use of Philo, see David Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey* (Assen, 1993), 132–56, esp. 139.

¹⁴ Κυρία τοίνυν ἡ σοφία τῆς φιλοσοφίας ὡς ἐκείνη τῆς προπαιδείας (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.5.30, in *Clemens Alexandrinus: Stromata Buch I–VI*, ed. Otto Stählin and Ludwig Früchtel, GCS 52 [Berlin, 1985], 19; PG 8:721; Baudoux, "Ancilla theologiae," 297). The translation is from Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis: Books One to Three*, trans. John Ferguson, Fathers of the Church 85 (Washington, DC, 1991), 44.

to Moses, he said, so he had given philosophy to the Greeks to prepare them for Christ, and thus, although imperfect in comparison with the truth of Christ, it could be used not only as a preparatory study, but also to strengthen faith and provide it with the underpinnings of science. Adopting an eclectic position similar to that of Philo, Clement believed that some truth was to be found in all philosophies, and that one had to choose the best wherever one found it.¹⁵

It was, however, Clement's successor in Alexandria, Origen (185–253), who was to develop further arguments for the use of pagan learning, including philosophy, that became highly influential in the Latin West. In his *Letter to Gregory*, he urges his correspondent to devote all his talents to Christianity, but through first learning everything that is of value in Greek philosophy and its propaedeutic subjects. For, he says, “just as philosophers say that geometry, music, grammar, rhetoric, and astronomy are the help-mates of philosophy, we say the same of philosophy itself with regard to Christianity.”¹⁶ In his *Contra Celsum*, he elaborates this theme, decrying those who instruct the young in the pleasures of poetry without giving them the philosophical key to extract what is useful from it. He wanted youths who had been well trained in Greek philosophy so that he might teach them the highest truths contained in the philosophy of the prophets and the apostles.¹⁷ Like Philo, Origen required Greek philosophy to practice his allegorical interpretation of the Bible. Origen maintained that there were three levels of meaning in scripture, corresponding to the body, the soul, and the spirit of man. That corresponding to the body was the literal, or historical, sense and was the lowest form of meaning, aimed at those with little or no education. Through allegory, one could attain the higher meanings, relating

¹⁵ Clement, *Stromateis* 1.5.28–9.45, GCS 52, 17–30; PG 8:717–43. On Clement's attitude towards philosophy and its use in exegesis, see Raoul Mortley, *Connaissance religieuse et herméneutique chez Clément d'Alexandrie* (Leiden, 1973), 158–74; Salvatore R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford, 1971), 9–59 (but see the criticisms in Runia, *Philo in Christian Literature*, 151–53). On Clement's equation of the Old Testament and Greek philosophy in terms of their roles in leading to the truth, see also Van den Hoek, “Mistress and Servant,” 346.

¹⁶ “Ὅσπερ φασὶ φιλοσόφων παῖδες περὶ γεωμετρίας καὶ μουσικῆς γραμματικῆς τε καὶ ῥητορικῆς καὶ ἀστρονομίας, ὡς συνερίθων φιλοσοφία, τοῦθ' ἡμεῖς εἰπόμεν καὶ περὶ αὐτῆς φιλοσοφίας πρὸς χριστιανισμόν (Origen, *Epistola ad Gregorium* 1, in *Grégoire le Thaumaturge: Remerciement à Origène suivi de la Lettre d'Origène à Grégoire*, ed. Henri Crouzel, SC 148 [Paris, 1969], 178–95, at 179; PG 11:88; Baudoux, “Ancilla theologiae” [n. 5 above], 298–99).

¹⁷ Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.58, in *Origène: Contre Celse*, 3, ed. Marcel Borret, SC 136 (Paris, 1968), 134–37; PG 11:996–97. On the theme of philosophy as preparatory study in Origen, see also Van den Hoek, “Mistress and Servant” (n. 5 above), 346–47, and Henrichs, “Handmaiden of Theology” (n. 5 above), 445–46.

to the well being of the soul and, in the spiritual sense, to the afterlife.¹⁸ Although, at the literal level, scripture sometimes does not make sense, this serves precisely to alert the reader to the need to go beyond the literal meaning of the Bible and seek out its hidden truths.¹⁹

While he elsewhere made extensive use of Philo, there is no sign in the *Letter to Gregory*, or elsewhere in Origen's extant works, of Philo's allegorical reading of Gen. 16:1–6. When he does refer to the passage, it is to give it its "spiritual" meaning as interpreted by Paul: the children of Abraham by Hagar and Sarah represent the Old and New Testaments.²⁰ Instead, Origen allegorizes another passage, or group of passages, in justification of his advocacy of pagan philosophy, that of the so-called *Spoliatio Aegyptiorum*.²¹ Just as the Israelites, on fleeing Egypt, took with them the gold and silver vessels of the Egyptians, with which they adorned the Temple, so it was legitimate for Christians to take whatever was of value from pagan literature and fashion it to the glory of God. Elsewhere, he also uses a passage from Deut. 21:10–13, on the captive woman, to show how one should go about making use of pagan learning.²² As we shall see, both of these allegories would find their way into the western tradition, where they long provided the scriptural basis for the use of philosophy in religion.

Origen's extensive use of philosophy in developing his Christian teachings angered his bishop and eventually led to his leaving Alexandria for Caesarea. The use of philosophy in scriptural exegesis, however, continued in Alexandria and elsewhere, as did its justification through the idea of philosophy as "servant." The Alexandrian Didymus the Blind (d. 398), for instance, revived the allegory of Sarah and Hagar.²³ Amphilochius Iconiensis (d. ca. 403) represented divine wisdom as the mistress of all worldly learning, which should thus serve it without becoming arrogant. This image was later employed by John of Damascus (d. 749), who in his *Dialectics* again

¹⁸ Origen, *De principiis* 4.2.4–5, in *Origène: Traité des Principes*, 3, ed. Henri Crouzel and Manlio Simonetti, SC 268 (Paris, 1980), 310–19; PG 11:363A–68B.

¹⁹ Origen, *De principiis* 4.2.9, in *Traité des Principes*, ed. Crouzel and Simonetti, 335–41; PG 11:381A–84A.

²⁰ Origen, *De principiis* 4.2.6, in *Traité des Principes*, ed. Crouzel and Simonetti, 322–25; PG 11:369A–70A. The reference is to Gal. 4:21–31. On Origen's use of Philo, see Runia, *Philo in Christian Literature* (n. 7 above), 157–83.

²¹ Origen, *Ad Gregorium* 2; in *Grégoire le Thaumaturge*, ed. Crouzel, 188–91; PG 11:88–89. For a detailed survey of the interpretations of these passages, see Georges Folliet, "La *Spoliatio Aegyptiorum* (Exode 3:21–23; 11:2–3; 12:35–36): Les interprétations de cette image chez les pères et autres écrivains ecclésiastiques," *Traditio* 57 (2002): 1–48.

²² This occurs in Origen, *In Leviticum homeliae* 7.6; PG 12:490–91. The use of this passage is also dealt with in Folliet, "Spoliatio Aegyptiorum," passim.

²³ Baudoux, "Ancilla theologiae," 300–301. On Didymus, see also Henrichs, "Handmaiden of Theology," 446–50 and Runia, *Philo in Christian Literature*, 197–204.

used it to justify the use of pagan knowledge. Since every craftsman used tools, he argued, so it was right for a queen to be ministered to by servants. Thus, it was legitimate to use anything that served the truth, by means of which we could repulse impiety.²⁴

All of these instances share the common theme of justifying the use of philosophy in the Jewish and Christian religions. In opposition to those who wished to reject all secular knowledge, it was argued that philosophy could, and should, be made the servant of religious teaching. This does, of course, place God's wisdom on a higher rank than the knowledge obtainable through merely human reason, and this will not be pleasing to many philosophers. But there is no sense of hostility to philosophy. On the contrary, the motivation for describing philosophy as a servant consisted entirely in enthusiasm for philosophy and its results. Nor is it clear that philosophy was in any more need of being liberated from theology than, say, logic or mathematics were of being liberated from philosophy.

It has already been noted that Origen was condemned for his excessive attachment to philosophy. It has also become a commonplace of modern scholarship to say that Origen attempted to present his religion as a philosophy, although one might question to what extent this is a function of the apologetic nature of some of his works.²⁵ Philo's loyalty to the methods of philosophy has led one contemporary scholar to remark that he effectively turned Moses and the prophets into Greek philosophers.²⁶ And it has been claimed that Justin Martyr saw Christianity and the best elements of Greek philosophy as "almost identical ways of apprehending the same truth."²⁷ Even if such comments might be considered to overstate their case, they do at least give warning of the dangers of opposing philosophy and religion in late antiquity.²⁸ There were many who could move freely between the

²⁴ Baudoux, "Ancilla theologiae," 300–301; for the passage of John of Damascus, see also *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. Bonifatius Kotter, Patristische Texte und Studien 7 (Berlin, 1969), 54, lines 53–60. This text was later translated into Latin, but the only modern edition does not include the relevant passage (St. John Damascene, *Dialectica: Version of Robert Grosseteste*, ed. Owen A. Colligan [New York, 1953]). On the development of the idea of theology as *Regina artium*, see H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale* (n. 6 above), 1:74–94.

²⁵ Origen advocated the use of philosophy to combat the Greeks and barbarians who were hostile to Christianity: it was better to attack them on their ground than try to defend one's own; see Henri Crouzel, *Origène et la philosophie* (Toulouse, 1962), 149–50.

²⁶ Mansfeld, "Philosophy" (n. 9 above), 84.

²⁷ Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: Studies in Justin, Clement and Origen* (Oxford, 1966), 11. See also the discussion in Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), 26–35.

²⁸ These statements all seem to echo Numenius's famous saying: "What is Plato but Moses in Attic Greek?" (from Clement, *Stromateis* 1.150.4, GCS 52, 93; PG 8:893B–96A).

two, and such a sharp distinction carries the risk of imposing post-Enlightenment values and concerns on a very different age.²⁹ The philosophies of Plotinus and Porphyry are a good deal more like religion, and the religions of Philo and Origen more like philosophy, than some would have us suppose.

THE LATIN TRADITION

The idea of philosophy as a servant of religious wisdom for a long time found no place in the culture of Latin Christianity. Few of the western church Fathers made extensive use of philosophy before Augustine (354–430), and even he had no recourse to such an image. Furthermore, Philo's exegetical methods had little influence in the West, where the allegorical interpretation of Sarah and Hagar was almost always in terms of the two testaments. A notable exception was Ambrose (339–97), bishop of Milan, who both read and used Philo extensively in his writings.³⁰ In his *De Abraham*, he adapts Philo's interpretation of Genesis 16 when he says that the passage also has a more specific meaning:

Sarah is true virtue and true wisdom, but Hagar is cunning, like a handmaiden of the more perfect virtue. For there is one wisdom that is spiritual, and another wisdom that is worldly. And therefore she is also called an Egyptian, since philosophical wisdom abounded in Egypt.³¹

Ambrose follows this up with the statement that Moses, although learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians, rejected it all as of no importance. Ambrose was not a friend of philosophy.³²

Another author with some knowledge of Philo, but who did not use him in this respect, was Jerome (347–420). If Jerome was not entirely enthusiastic about philosophy, and pagan learning in general, neither did he entirely reject it.³³ In justifying his use of pagan authors in his writings, he had

²⁹ See also the comments in G. W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1990), 42, on Christianity and pagan religion.

³⁰ On Ambrose's use of Philo, see Enzo Lucchesi, *L'usage de Philon dans l'oeuvre exégétique de Saint Ambroise* (Leiden, 1977); Runia, *Philo in Christian Literature*, 291–311.

³¹ "Sara virtus vera est, vera sapientia, Agar autem est versutia, tamquam ancilla perfectioris virtutis; alia enim sapientia spiritalis, alia sapientia huius mundi. Ideo etiam Aegyptia scribitur, quia philosophica eruditio abundavit in Aegypto" (Ambrose, *De Abraham libri duo* 2.10.73, in *Opera omnia di Sanl'Ambrogio*, ed. Franco Gori [Milan, 1984], 2.2, 230; PL 14:515C).

³² On Ambrose's attitude towards philosophy, see Goulven Madec, *Saint Ambroise et la philosophie* (Paris, 1974).

³³ For a brief survey of Jerome's reading of Philo and his attitude to philosophy, see Runia, *Philo in Christian Literature* (n. 7 above), 312–19.

recourse on a number of occasions to Origen's allegorical reading of Deuteronomy 21. On one occasion, he remarks that the passage was clearly ridiculous if taken in its literal sense, but instead referred to the Christian's use of philosophy.³⁴ On another, having been asked why he used pagan authors in his writings, Jerome answered:

one reads in Deuteronomy (chap. 21) a precept spoken by God that one should shave the head and eyebrows and cut all the bodily hair and nails of a captive woman and so take her as a wife. What, then, is there to wonder at if I also wish to turn secular wisdom from a servant and a captive into an Israelite because of the charm of her speech and the beauty of her limbs? And if there is anything in her of the dead, of idolatry, sensual pleasure, error, or lust, I either cut or shave, and from her union with the purest body I beget servants to the Lord of Sabaoth.³⁵

Thus, by removing all that is pagan from her, the *ancilla* is turned into a wife, and pagan learning is joined to the Christian. Most frequently quoted by later writers, however, was his *Epistula ad Pammachium de dormitione Paulinae*, where he stated that wisdom was in Christ and its source lay in the scriptures. "But if," he continued,

you fall in love with a captive woman, that is to say worldly wisdom, and are captivated by her beauty, shave her head and cut off the beauty of her hair and the verbal ornaments together with her dead nails.³⁶

Augustine, on the other hand, made use of Origen's allegory from Exodus. "As for those who are called philosophers," he says,

if they happen to have said things that are true and accord with our faith, especially the Platonists, then not only should these things not be feared, but they should be taken from them, as from unrightful owners, for our own use.³⁷

³⁴ *Epistola* 21.13 § 6, in Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, 1, ed. Isidor Hilberg, CSEL 54 (Vienna, 1996), 122; PL 22:385.

³⁵ "Legerat in Deuteromonia (Cap. 21) Domini voce praeceptum, mulieris captivae radendum caput, supercilia, omnes pilos et unguis corporis amputandos et sic eam habendam in conjugio. Quid ergo mirum, si et ego sapientiam saecularem propter eloquii venustatem et membrorum pulchritudinem de ancilla atque captiva Israelitina facere cupio, si, quidquid in ea mortuum est idolatriae, voluptatis, erroris, libidinum, vel praecido vel rado et mixtus purissimo corpori vernaculos ex ea genero domino sabaoth?" (*Epistola ad Magnum, oratorem urbis Romae* 70.2 § 5, in Hieronymus, *Epistulae* 1, 702; PL 22:666).

³⁶ "Sin autem adamaveris captivam mulierem, id est sapientiam saecularem, et eius pulchritudine captus fueris, decalva eam et inlecebras crinium atque ornamenta verborum cum emortuis unguibus seca" (*Epistola* 66.8 § 4, in Hieronymus, *Epistulae* 1, 658; PL 22:644). On these letters, see also Folliet, "Spoliatio Aegyptiorum" (n. 21 above), 10–11.

³⁷ "Philosophi autem qui vocantur, si qua forte vera et fidei nostrae accommodata dixerunt, maxime Platonici, non solum formidanda non sunt, sed ab eis etiam tanquam ab iniustis possessoribus in usum nostrum vindicanda" (Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*

After Augustine, although knowledge of philosophy largely disappeared, these two passages of scripture continued to be used to justify the cultivation and promotion of secular knowledge in the form of the liberal arts. Later, with the rebirth of the idea of service, they would form part of a complex of commonplaces used for justifying such learning that could once again be applied to philosophy upon its reintroduction in the twelfth century.

In the meantime, the stock of such biblical references was further enriched by Alcuin (735–804), bishop of York. In his *Disputatio de vera philosophia*, he cites Prov. 9:1, “Sapientia aedificavit sibi domum, excidit columnas septem,” and equates the seven pillars to the seven liberal arts in an attempt to justify their inclusion in his educational curriculum.³⁸ Whilst this use of the passage does not seem to have long survived Alcuin, it is worth noting since it may well have contributed to what became a common paraphrase of Prov. 9:3: “misit ancillas suas ut vocarent ad arcem.” This would, of course, have to wait until secular learning had once again been identified as a servant of religious knowledge, and this did not happen until the eleventh century.

It occurs in the work of Peter Damian (1007–72), usually regarded as the inventor of the fugitive formula. The passage most frequently cited in this context is from the treatise of about 1067 entitled *De divina omnipotentia*, written in the form of a letter to the abbot and monks of Monte Casino. It was occasioned, so the letter tells us, by a lunchtime conversation in which it was asserted that, according to Jerome, God could not repair a virgin.³⁹ Damian was outraged by such a limitation on God’s potency and set out to prove through scripture that God could. After having done so to his own satisfaction, he addresses the contrary argument, put forward by certain individuals excessively inclined towards dialectic, that God cannot bring it about that what happened in the past had not, in fact, happened. While refuting this on logical (as opposed to scriptural) grounds, he launches into a long invective against those who blindly apply the rules of dialectic and rhetoric to matters pertaining to God. “If, however,” he continues,

this knowledge of a human art is sometimes employed in examining Holy Scripture, it ought not arrogantly to claim for itself the right of dominion,

2.40.60, in idem, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. M. Simonetti [Verona, 1994], 118; PL 34:63). See also Folliet, “*Spoliatio Aegyptiorum*,” 12–13.

³⁸ Alcuin, *Disputatio de vera philosophia*, in PL 101:849–54, at 853B–C. See Mary Alberi, “The ‘Mystery of the Incarnation’ and Wisdom’s House (Prov. 9:1) in Alcuin’s *Disputatio de vera philosophia*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 48 (1997): 505–16.

³⁹ On the circumstances and dating of this letter, see the Introduction to *Pierre Damien: Lettre sur la toute-puissance divine*, ed. André Cantin, SC 191 (Paris, 1972), 31–33. Jerome’s statement can be found in *Epistola* 22.5, Hieronymus, *Epistulae* 1, 150; PL 22:397.

but, like a maid, serve under her mistress with a servant's obedience, lest, if she take precedence, she should lose her way and, in following the consequences of the external words, forsake the light of internal virtue and the straight path of truth.⁴⁰

At first sight, this use of the servant motif appears strikingly different from that of earlier authors. Damian uses it not to defend the use of secular knowledge in the interpretation of scripture, but to prevent its becoming the measure of such interpretation. The danger is no longer perceived to come from those who despise secular learning, but from those who are too fond of it. Indeed, much of Damian's writing displays intense hostility to secular learning, and by attributing to him the authorship of the formula *philosophia ancilla theologiae* its anti-philosophical nature has been established in the minds of many. According to one scholar, he was less interested in using philosophy than in wishing to subject it to slavery.⁴¹

One should observe, however, that Damian is speaking of dialectic as *ancilla* in the context of religious belief and knowledge of God and not in any absolute sense. He is not speaking of the status of dialectic on its own territory, the rules governing human discourse.⁴² Nor can it be maintained that Damian is opposed to any use of secular learning in religion.⁴³ The passage quoted above seems, if anything, to imply that Damian does allow some use of dialectic in the interpretation of scripture, and on a few occasions he argues that those who have entered the church with a knowledge of

⁴⁰ "Quae tamen artis humanae peritia, si quando tractandis sacris eloquiis adhibetur, non debet ius magisterii sibimet arroganter arripere, sed velut ancilla dominae quodam famulatus obsequio subservire, ne, si praecedit, oberret, et dum exteriorum verborum sequitur consequentias, intimae virtutis lumen et rectum veritatis tramitem perdat" (Peter Damian, *De divina omnipotentia* 7.56–62, in Cantin, ed., *La toute-puissance divine*, 414–16; PL 145:603C–D).

⁴¹ "Dans la célèbre formule de S. Pierre Damien, c'est donc l'idée d'esclavage qui l'emporte, et de beaucoup, sur celle d'utilisation" (Gilson, *Études* [n. 2 above], 36). Whilst he was aware of the Greek origins of the servant theme, and of its true meaning, Gilson wished to show that the liberation of philosophy began with Aquinas, and accordingly made the greatest possible contrast between Damian's position and that of Thomas. According to Gilson, Damian was against any idea of using dialectic and would have been opposed to all philosophy had he known about it. Apart from the obvious question of why one would want a slave that one did not intend to use, Gilson's interpretation does not accord with the sense of the text.

⁴² This has been pointed out by Martin Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode*, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1909), 1:232; see also idem, *Die theol. Erkenntnis- und Einleitungslehre des hl. Thomas von Aquin auf Grund seiner Schrift "In Boethium de Trinitate" in Zusammenhang der Scholastik des 13. und beginnenden 14. Jahrhunderts dargestellt*, Thomistische Studien 4 (Freiburg i.d. Schweiz, 1948), 183. In fact, Damian implies that in a secular context dialectic is a valid form of inquiry.

⁴³ See n. 41 above.

secular studies (and he himself was one of the most learned men of his day) should apply their knowledge to elucidating the holy mysteries.⁴⁴

A better understanding of his views is provided by *De perfectione monachorum*, a large part of which deals with the role of secular learning in monastic life.⁴⁵ Here, one sees that Peter Damian derives his use of the term *ancilla* from an extended allegorical reading of Genesis 29–30, rather than Genesis 16 as in Philo. Jacob, on asking to marry Rachel, is tricked into first marrying her elder sister Leah before he can have the woman he loves. Leah proceeds to conceive sons, but Rachel remains barren and thus gives Jacob her maid, Bilhah, to bear children in her place. And when Leah stops conceiving, she gives Jacob her maid, Zilpah. The first part of the allegory follows Gregory the Great's identification of Leah and Rachel as the active and contemplative lives. The monk who wishes to accede to the joy of contemplating the divine must, according to the spiritual meaning of the story, first prepare himself through good works. Only then can he reap the rewards of the contemplative life.⁴⁶

Peter Damian then adds an allegorical reading of his own. Since no man is content with the limits of his perfection, says Damian, he will also want to produce spiritual fruit from his union with God, and that is why Jacob agreed to sleep with the maids. Rachel's maid, Bilhah, whose name means *inveterata*, stands for the old way of life, given over to carnal pleasures. Because one cannot express divine mysteries through simple words, it is necessary in teaching to have recourse to corporeal images through which one may intimate the invisible and the incomprehensible. Rachel thus preferred to use her knowledge of the external world to generate spiritual offspring than to remain wholly sterile.⁴⁷

But what of monks who use words not for spiritual gain but solely for their own pleasure, who abandon their spiritual studies and give themselves over entirely to grammar and secular arts? They are abandoning the chastity of their conjugal beds and mingling with the prostitutes of the theater, violating their marriage vows and consorting with the maidservants, aban-

⁴⁴ See the texts cited in Folliet, "Spoliatio Aegyptiorum," 25–26. On Damian's life, see Irvn Michael Resnick, *Divine Power and Possibility in St. Peter Damian's De Divina Omnipotentia* (Leiden, 1992), 7–22.

⁴⁵ Peter Damian, *Opusculum XIII. De perfectione monachorum*, in PL 145:291–328.

⁴⁶ Damian, *De perfectione monachorum*, chap. 8; PL 145:303B–304D. Gregory's allegorical reading is most fully worked out in *Homelias in Ezechiel* 2.2.10–12, in *Grégoire le Grand: Homélies sur Ézéchiel*, ed. Charles Morel, SC 360 (Paris, 1990), 100–112; PL 76:954–55. It is also used in idem, *Moralia in Iob* 6.37, in *Gregorius Magnus: Moralia in Iob libri IX*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, CCL 143 (Turnhout, 1979), 330.

⁴⁷ Damian, *De perfectione monachorum*, chap. 9; PL 145:304D–305B. The etymology of the name probably comes from Jerome, *De nominibus Hebraicis*; see PL 23:815–904A, at 819–20.

doning their wives for the concubines of the brothels.⁴⁸ If scripture allows monks to engage in such studies, it is solely for the purpose of begetting offspring. Once they have taken orders, however, not only may they not engage in vain studies, but they must strip all that is unnecessary from what they have learned before. They must treat such learning as the captive woman in Deuteronomy 21: shave her hair to remove superfluities, trim her nails to cut off all that is superstitious, take away her clothes to lay aside her covering of fable and fiction and reveal the solid truth of reason. Finally, they must let her mourn her parents, the damned authors of the liberal arts, for a period of one month, when she will be purified through shedding blood. Only then may they take her as a wife.⁴⁹

This is strong language. Yet it is clear that it is precisely the use of secular learning with which Peter Damian is concerning himself. Such learning can be used, only it must be used in the right way. It must also be remembered that the context of this, and much of Peter Damian's writing, is his work as a monastic reformer. Monks, he believed, should spend their time in mortification of the flesh and purification of the soul through tears, not delighting in poetry and rhetoric. He displays all the zeal of the convert, and it is easy to imagine a monastery breathing a collective sigh of relief at the end of one of his visits. But his attitude was one of withdrawal from the world, not of desire for its subjugation. "So," he says, "let it be enough for us to defend the faith that we hold in a few words, and let us leave to the wise men of this age what is theirs."⁵⁰

By the twelfth century, as knowledge and scholarship began to thrive again, the idea of service was once more used to justify the teaching of the liberal arts and to directing them towards higher learning.⁵¹ Hugh of St. Victor (1096?–1141) stated in his *De sacramentis christianae fidei* that "all the natural arts are in the service of divine knowledge, and the lower knowledge, when correctly disposed, leads to the higher."⁵² This did not mean, however, that philosophy was a subset of theology. Hugh divided the world into the *opus conditionis*, the creation of the world and its elements, and the *opus restaura-*

⁴⁸ Damian, *De perfectione monachorum*, chap. 10–11; PL 145:306B–D.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, chap. 9; PL 145:306D–307D; see also Folliet, "*Spoliatio Aegyptiorum*" (n. 21 above), 25–26.

⁵⁰ "Quamobrem sufficiat nobis brevi compendio fidem defendere quam tenemus; sapientibus autem huius saeculi quae sua sunt cedimus" (Damian, *Divina omnipotentia* 7.92–94, in Cantin, ed., *La toute-puissance divine* [n. 39 above], 416; PL 145:604B).

⁵¹ This revival of knowledge included a renewed acquaintance with the Greek Fathers, including Origen and John of Damascus; see M.-D. Chenu, *La théologie au douzième siècle* (Paris, 1966), 281–84.

⁵² "Omnes artes naturales divinae scientiae famulantur; et inferior sapientia recte ordinata ad superiorem conducit" (Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis christianae fidei*, Prolog., chap. 6, in PL 176:185; Baudoux, "Ancilla theologiae" [n. 5 above], 304 n. 1).

tionis, the Incarnation of the Word with its sacraments. Secular learning is concerned with the first, but Holy Scripture entirely with the second.⁵³

Of most interest, however, is the work of Peter Abelard (1079–1142).⁵⁴ In his *Collationes*, otherwise known as the *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*, the greatest part is given over to the discussion between the Christian and the philosopher. At one point, the Christian broadly equates the studies of ethics and divinity as the highest forms of learning:

now, indeed, so far as I can see, we are heading for the end and culmination of all the disciplines, which you are accustomed to call ethics, that is moral teaching, and we divinity. For we so name it according to that to whose understanding it leads, which is God, and you according to those things through which it is approached, which are good morals, and which you call virtues.⁵⁵

The philosopher, who is generally regarded as expressing the ideas of Abelard himself,⁵⁶ agrees that ethics is the highest form of philosophy and that all other learning finds its true purpose in serving the study of morals:

indeed, the studies of other disciplines fall far below the highest good and do not achieve the heights of blessedness, nor do they bear any fruit, except in so far as they serve this highest philosophy as servants busied about their mistress.⁵⁷

For, he continues, the study of grammar and dialectics only teaches us about manners of speech and the natures of certain things, and it is only when these are put to proper use that we are led to our true end, “as though by servants to their mistress.”⁵⁸ Abelard, of course, regarded reason

⁵³ Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis*, Prol., chap. 2, PL 176:183A–184A; Baudoux, “Ancilla theologiae,” 303–4; see also Clemens, *Commentatio* (n. 5 above), 4–5, in Piolanti, *Clemens* (n. 5 above), 80–81.

⁵⁴ For other twelfth-century uses, see Baudoux, “Ancilla theologiae,” 303–5.

⁵⁵ “Nunc profecto, quantum percipio, ad omnium disciplinarum finem et consummationem proficiscimur, quam quidem vos ethicam, idest moralem, nos divinitatem nominare consuevimus, nos illam videlicet ex eo ad quod comprehendendum tenditur, idest Deum, sic nuncupantes, vos ex illis per que illuc pervenitur, hoc est moribus bonis, quas virtutes vocatis” (Peter Abelard, *Collationes*, ed. John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi [Oxford, 2001], 82, my translation; PL 178:1636C–D).

⁵⁶ For an important qualification, however, see John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge, 1997), 307–10, and Abelard, *Collationes*, l–liv.

⁵⁷ “Longe quippe aliarum studia citra summum bonum remanent nec beatitudinis contingunt eminentiam, nec ullus in eis fructus apparet nisi quantum huic summe deserviunt philosophie, tamquam circa dominam occupate pedisseque” (ibid., 84; PL 178:1637B).

⁵⁸ “Quasi quodam pedissequarum ducatu pertingamus ad dominam” (Abelard, *Collationes*, 84).

as playing an important role in his theology. In his *Historia calamitatum*, he states that he wrote his first work of theology to satisfy those who demanded philosophical reasons for what they were required to believe. It was impossible to believe something one did not understand, he claimed, and ridiculous to preach such a thing to others.⁵⁹ He also contrasted the way in which human understanding increased over time with the static nature of religious belief:

it is astounding that whereas in other matters human intelligence grows with the passing of time, and as one age succeeds another, in faith, in which error carries the greatest danger, there is no progress, but the young and the old, the simple and the educated, are said to hold the same views on it, and the man whose opinion does not surpass the common understanding of the people is said to be the firmest in his faith.⁶⁰

Abelard was accused during his own lifetime of distorting theology by fashioning it to the norms of philosophy, and such accusations continued after his death. Whether or not such an assessment was justified, there can be little doubt that he based his theology, to a large extent, on his rational (largely Stoic) ethics, and that he believed that, with the exception of the Incarnation, revelation was accessible to reason.⁶¹ Abelard also regarded philosophers as having fulfilled the same role among the pagans as the prophets had among the Jews. They had arrived at a knowledge of such matters as the Trinity through natural revelation, from reasoning on the basis of the universe as it had been ordained by God.⁶² And pagan philosophers, especially Epicurus, fulfilled the role of Abelard's ideal of virtuous men, whom he contrasted unflatteringly with the monks of his time.⁶³

If Peter Damian's derivation and use of the concept of service depart somewhat from the traditional ones and introduce a new meaning, then Abelard seems to return to the very beginning, making the liberal arts the servants of (moral) philosophy, although virtually equating philosophy and religious wisdom. Yet, as we have seen, if Peter Damian was not intent on

⁵⁹ J. Monfrin, ed., *Abelard: Historia calamitatum*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1962), 83; PL 178:141A–42A.

⁶⁰ "Quod enim mirabile est, cum per etatum seriem et temporum successionem humana in ceteris rebus intelligentia crescat, in fide, cuius erroris summum periculum imminet, nullus est profectus; sed eque minores ut maiores, eque rustici ut literati de hac sentire asseruntur, et ille firmissimus in fide dicitur qui communem populi non excedit sensum" (Abelard, *Collationes*, 10; PL 178:1614D–15A).

⁶¹ Marenbon, *Philosophy of Abelard*, 213–15, 328–30.

⁶² See, e.g., the passage in *Petrus Abaelardus: Introductio ad theologiam* 1.12, in PL 178:998B–C, mostly repeated in idem, *Theologia christiana* 1.2, PL 178:1126C–D. This attitude is, of course, justified by Romans 1–2.

⁶³ Marenbon, *Philosophy of Abelard*, 304–10; for Abelard's views on Epicurus, see *Collationes*, lxi–lxxi.

promoting the use of secular knowledge, neither was he so hostile towards it as is often supposed. There is no need to make him out as a champion of philosophy, but he was certainly no Ambrose. One can rather place him in the tradition of Jerome, as being more concerned with how secular learning was used than with providing reasons for why it should be. In the thirteenth century, these two approaches, the traditional one and that of Peter Damian, would be combined to form a powerful set of arguments for defining a place for the new philosophy within the sphere of religious teaching.

THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries witnessed the rapid influx and growing influence of philosophy in the form of Aristotelianism, through the translation of both Aristotle's own texts and those of some of his Greek and Arabic commentators. For the first time in the Latin-speaking world since the barbarian invasions, a complete philosophy was available that sought to explain the universe entirely in rational terms. This process necessitated a revision of attitudes towards the relationship between philosophy and theology, especially as, on many points, Aristotle seemed to be at variance with Christian teaching.

This process also coincided with the establishment and growth of universities, which were quick to absorb the new philosophy into their curricula. Consequently, the faculties set up to teach the liberal arts soon effectively became faculties of philosophy. At an institutional level, placing the teaching of philosophy in the arts faculty served to separate philosophy and theology, but also made philosophy formally a preparatory subject to theology, thus ensuring their close relationship. This contradictory state of affairs became a source of tension at many points in the subsequent history of European universities, with repeated attempts to define where the boundaries between the two subjects lay and the correct procedures to follow where they inevitably overlapped.

University theologians greeted Aristotle with great enthusiasm, and the first use of the idea of service was aimed specifically at curbing this response. In a letter of 1228 to the theologians of the university of Paris (*Ab Aegyptiis*), Pope Gregory IX used the passages from Exodus and Deuteronomy to discourage the regent masters from their — as he saw it — excessive dependence on secular learning.⁶⁴ Through inclining to natural philosophy instead of the teachings of the saints, and

⁶⁴ “Ab Aegyptiis argentea vasa et aurea sic accipienda sunt mutuo, quod spoliatis eisdem ditentur Ebrei, non ut iidem in servitutem illorum quasi ad participium pretii venundati redigantur, quoniam et si doctrina celestis eloquii de sapientia et eloquentia philosophici

being carried away by various passing teachings, they turn everything upside down and force the queen to serve the handmaiden, that is, the heavenly teaching [to serve] terrestrial ones, which is to attribute grace to nature.⁶⁵

The regent masters should not, he says, corrupt theology with the figments of philosophers.⁶⁶

In conjunction with the various bans on the teaching of Aristotle's natural philosophy that were passed in 1210, 1215, and 1231, it is very easy to read this letter as anti-philosophical, and, indeed, Gregory's attacks are clearly based on a deep mistrust of pagan philosophy. But it should again be borne in mind that Gregory argues not against philosophy in the university, but against its excessive use in theology, much in the spirit of Peter Damian some two centuries earlier.

Despite such initiatives, however, philosophy continued to make advances in the university of Paris and elsewhere, in large part owing to the value placed on it by theologians. Amongst the many who made use of philosophical reasoning in their theological discussions, four principal authors stand out: Bonaventure, Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas, and all four made use of the ancillary status of philosophy to defend their positions.

Bonaventure (ca. 1217–1274), in the past often depicted as hostile, or at best resistant, to Aristotle, is now rightly regarded as one of the pioneers in incorporating his philosophy into mediaeval theology.⁶⁷ In his *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, written some time during the 1250s, he attempts to show how all human knowledge can serve the interpretation of scripture. He describes knowledge as light, of which there are six kinds — the mechanical arts; sense perception; rational, natural, and moral philosophy; and theology — corresponding to the six days of creation, and which thus *comprise the knowledge possible in this world. The seventh day corresponds to the light of divine glory, which never sets and is reserved for the world hereafter.* “And just as all these lights take their origin from one,” he says,

dogmatis quasi mutuum ad sui ornatum assumat, interdum ei tamen deservire non debet nec intellectus ipsius ad illius intellectum ullatenus inclinari. Puella etiam de hostibus capta, que pilis rasis et unguibus circumcisis viro Israelitico jungitur, dominari non debet eidem, set obsequi potius ut subjecta” (H. Denifle and A. Chatelain, eds., *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, 4 vols. [Paris, 1891–99; facsimile ed. Brussels, 1964], 1:114). On the background to Gregory's letter, see Fernand van Steenberghen, *La philosophie au XIII^e siècle*, 2nd ed. (Louvain, 1991), 93–95.

⁶⁵ “Ipsi doctrinis variis et peregrinis abducti redigunt caput in caudam et ancille cogunt famulari reginam, videlicet documentis terrenis celeste; quod est gratie tribuendo naturae” (Denifle and Chatelain, *Chartularium*, 1:115).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ On Bonaventure, see van Steenberghen, *Philosophie au XIII^e siècle*, 177–244.

“so all these forms of knowledge lead up to the knowledge of Holy Scripture, are concluded in it, perfected in it, and through it lead up towards the eternal light.”⁶⁸ Having explained this in the course of the work, he concludes as follows:

and thus it is clear how God’s manifold wisdom, which is transparently conveyed through Holy Scripture, is hidden in all knowledge and in every nature. It is also clear how all forms of knowledge serve theology, and that is why theology takes up the examples of, and uses words relevant to, every kind of knowledge.⁶⁹

Bonaventure, however, also made it clear that philosophy is an independent form of knowledge:

philosophy is concerned with things as they are in nature or in the soul, according to natural knowledge that is innate or acquired, but theology, as a science founded on faith and revealed by the Holy Spirit, is also concerned with matters that relate to grace and glory as well as eternal wisdom. Whence theology, making a base of philosophical knowledge, and taking up as much of the natures of things as is necessary to create a mirror through which to represent divine matters, builds as it were a ladder, whose bottom touches the earth and whose top touches heaven.⁷⁰

An admirer of Aristotle, and of pagan philosophy in general, in his function as a theologian Bonaventure attempted to counter the threat he perceived of the development of a rationalism divorced from Christian knowledge. One had to elevate oneself above the merely rational to the higher knowledge given to us by God, and by stressing the unity of Christian knowledge Bonaventure felt able to safeguard both the progress in secular knowledge that

⁶⁸ “Et sicut omnes illae ab una luce habebant originem, sic omnes istae cognitiones ad cognitionem sacrae Scripturae ordinantur, in ea clauduntur et in illa perficiuntur, et mediante illa ad aeternam illuminationem ordinantur” (Bonaventure, *De reductione artium ad theologiam*, 7, in idem, *Opera omnia*, 11 vols. [Quaracchi, 1882–1902], 5:317–25, at 322; Clemens, *Commentatio* [n. 5 above], 17, at Piolanti, *Clemens* [n. 5 above], 93).

⁶⁹ “Et sic patet, quomodo *multiformis sapientia Dei*, quae lucide traditur in sacra Scriptura, occultatur in omni cognitione et in omni natura. Patet etiam, quomodo omnes cognitiones famulantur theologiae; et ideo ipsa assumit exempla et utitur vocabulis pertinentibus ad omne genus cognitionis” (Bonaventure, *De reductione* 26, in idem, *Opera*, 5:325 [original italics]; Clemens, *Commentatio*, 17, at Piolanti, *Clemens*, 93).

⁷⁰ “Philosophia quidem agit de rebus, ut sunt in natura, seu in anima secundum notitiam naturaliter insitam, vel etiam acquisitam; sed theologia, tanquam scientia supra fidem fundata et per Spiritum sanctum revelata, agit et de eis quae spectant ad gratiam et gloriam et etiam ad Sapientiam aeternam. Unde ipsa, substernens sibi philosophicam cognitionem et assumens de naturis rerum, quantum sibi opus est ad fabricandum speculum, per quod fiat representatio divinorum; quasi scalam erigit, quae in sui infimo tangit terram, sed in suo cacumine tangit caelum” (Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, prologus 3, in idem, *Opera*, 5:199–291, at 205; Clemens, *Commentatio*, 15–16, in Piolanti, *Clemens*, 91–92).

had come about during his lifetime and the revealed truth of scripture. He believed that philosophy was distinguished from theology by its method and its aims, and was capable of certainty on its own terms. Because of the imperfection of human reason, however, it was liable to error, and especially so when investigating the nature of God, for which it required the assistance of divine revelation.⁷¹

Roger Bacon (ca. 1210–ca. 1294) is best known for his love of natural philosophy and mathematics and for his enthusiastic promotion of experimental science. In his *Opus majus* of 1266/7, he devotes the whole of Part 2 to the role of philosophy in theology.⁷² He announces his purpose as being to show that there is one perfect wisdom contained in Holy Scripture:⁷³

I say, therefore, that there is one science that is mistress of the others, namely theology, to which the rest are entirely necessary since without them it cannot achieve its purpose. It claims power as its right, before the command and dominion of which the others prostrate themselves. But there is one perfect knowledge, entirely contained within Holy Scripture, which must be explained through canon law and philosophy, and the exposition of divine truth is achieved through those sciences. For through them it is unfolded, as it were, into an open hand, while for itself it gathers all knowledge into a fist. For all knowledge is given by one God to one world, and for one end.⁷⁴

He will therefore show that philosophy is not foreign to the knowledge of God but is contained within it.⁷⁵ He first uses Augustine to show that philosophy is contained in theology and backs up the point with references to Jerome, Bede, and other authorities. He then puts forward a lengthy philosophical argument based on the principles of the possible and agent intellects.⁷⁶ Following Alfarabi and Avicenna, he argues that the agent intellect

⁷¹ Van Steenberghen, *Philosophie au XIII^e siècle*, 185–203.

⁷² On the relationship between philosophy and theology in Roger Bacon, see Christian Trottmann, “Roger Bacon de la philosophie à la théologie et retour,” in *La servante et la consolatrice*, ed. Solère and Kaluza (n. 3 above), 95–116.

⁷³ John Henry Bridges, ed., *The “Opus Majus” of Roger Bacon*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1964), 1:32.

⁷⁴ “Dico igitur, quod est una scientia dominatrix aliarum, ut theologia, cui reliquae penitus sunt necessariae, et sine quibus ad effectum pervenire non potest; virtutem in suum jus vindicat, ad cuius nutum et imperium caeterae jacent; una tamen est sapientia perfecta, quae in sacra scriptura totaliter continetur, per jus canonicum et philosophiam explicanda, et expositio veritatis divinae per illas scientias habetur. Nam ipsa cum eis velut in palmam explicatur, et tamen totam sapientiam in pugnum colligit per seipsum. Quoniam ab uno Deo data est tota sapientia et uni mundo, et propter unum finem” (ibid.).

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1:35.

⁷⁶ On the doctrine of the possible and agent intellects, see Z. Kuksewicz, “The Potential and the Agent Intellect,” in Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny, and Jan Pinborg, eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1982), 595–601.

is not a part of the soul but a separate substance outside of it. Since it is always *in actu*, it belongs to God, and since all philosophical knowledge is infused in us by the agent intellect, it follows that philosophical knowledge comes from God.⁷⁷ Thirdly, philosophy is a gift from God, revealed directly to the philosophers, and is therefore in agreement with his wisdom.⁷⁸

For the rest, the course of all of philosophy consists in this, that through knowledge of his creation the Creator may be known. . . . For speculative philosophy advances all the way to a knowledge of the Creator through his creatures. And moral philosophy establishes moral probity, just laws, and the worship of God. . . . And since these things are entirely necessary to Christians, and entirely in agreement with God's wisdom, it is clear that philosophy is necessary to divine law and to the faithful glorying in it.⁷⁹

Furthermore, philosophy is necessary for determining the literal meaning of scripture, from which its spiritual meaning may be elicited. On the other hand, scripture is necessary to philosophy, since it explains the final causes of things, which human industry cannot discover without the aid of revelation. Finally, Bacon presents a history of philosophy, based on the accounts of Clement of Alexandria and Augustine.⁸⁰ It had, he said, first been given to the patriarchs and prophets in its entirety, was spread by the sons of Noah, and thus passed from the Hebrews to the Egyptians and the Greeks, but through the sinfulness of man its original completeness had been lost. Aristotle had made an attempt to reconstitute it, but he was only one man and could not accomplish everything. His work had been taken up again by the Arabs, notably Avicenna, and they had made many corrections and additions before philosophy had finally come back to Christian lands. From its origins, it follows that Christians should make use of philosophy in their theology. From its subsequent history, and the fact that it is a merely human activity, Bacon argues that philosophy is able to be improved. Therefore, he says,

Christians should investigate other matters for the purpose of their own profession, which is God's wisdom, and complete the paths of the pagan philosophers, not only because we come after them, and ought to add to their

⁷⁷ Bridges, ed., *Opus majus*, 1:38–41.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:41–42.

⁷⁹ "Caeterum totius philosophiae decursus, consistit in eo, ut per cognitionem suae creaturae cognoscatur creator. . . . Philosophia enim speculativa decurrit usque ad cognitionem creatoris per creaturas. Et moralis philosophia morum honestatem, leges justas, et cultum Dei statuit. . . . Cum igitur haec sint omnino necessaria christianis, et omnino consona sapientiae Dei, manifestum est quod philosophia necessaria est legi divinae et fidelibus in ea gloriantibus" (*ibid.*, 1:42–43).

⁸⁰ Clement's history is scattered through bks. 1, 5, and 6 of the *Stromateis*. Augustine's is to be found in *De civitate Dei*, bks. 8 and 18.

labors, but so that we may force the wisdom of the philosophers to be in service to our own.⁸¹

In explaining this section of the *Opus majus*, Bacon stated in his *Opus minus* that he had intended to show that, since we all shared the same knowledge, there were philosophers, as well as theologians, who should be imitated. Otherwise, many things would appear to be mere fictions of the human mind, such as when philosophers had spoken truths concerning Christ, eternal life, and other theological matters,

and concerning signs of future events, the operations of astronomy and alchemy, and experimental science, which to unskilled men appear to be either false or unworthy of Christians.⁸²

Part, at least, of Bacon's motive in arguing that the sciences served theology was therefore, like Clement's, to oppose those Christians who saw no role for philosophy or pagan learning in their religion. But he appears to have had other intentions as well.

Book 6 of the *Opus majus* is devoted to experimental science and its relationship to the other sciences, which Bacon describes in terms strongly reminiscent of his treatment of theology. The arguments are neatly summed up in his *Opus tertium*:

there is one science more perfect than all the others, which all serve, and which validates all the others in a wonderful manner, and this is called experimental science.⁸³

It considers only arguments, he says, whose conclusions are proved by experience. It does not receive truths as belonging to the other sciences, "but uses them as servants."⁸⁴ Bacon also states that experimental science can provide the other sciences with truths that they have no means of acquiring on their own.⁸⁵ And it investigates truths that lie outside the boundaries of

⁸¹ "Christiani debent ad suam professionem quae sapientia Dei est caetera pertractare, et vias philosophorum infidelium complere; non solum quia posteriores sumus, et debemus addere ad eorum opera, sed ut cogamus sapientiam philosophorum nostrae deservire" (Bridges, ed., *Opus majus*, 1:57).

⁸² "Atque de indiciis futurorum, et de operibus astronomiae, et alkyimiae, et scientiae experimentalis, quae hominibus imperitis videntur esse aut falsa aut indigna Christianis" (Roger Bacon, *Opus minus*, in idem, *Opera quaedam hactenus inedita* [London, 1859], 316).

⁸³ "Sed praeter has scientias est una perfectior omnibus, cui omnes famulantur, et quae omnes miro modo certificat: et haec vocatur scientia experimentalis" (R. Bacon, *Opus tertium*, in idem, *Opera inedita*, 43). Cf. Bridges, ed., *Opus majus*, 2:221, where it is stated that experimental science has the same relationship to the other sciences as sailing to carpentry.

⁸⁴ "Non recipit veritates in terminis aliarum scientiarum, sed tamen utitur eis sicut ancillis" (Bacon, *Opera inedita*, 44).

⁸⁵ Bridges, ed., *Opus majus* (n. 73 above), 2:202.

other sciences, but which belong solely to itself: the knowledge of past, present, and future events, and astrology.⁸⁶ Sensory experience on its own, of course, is insufficient, and, in order to achieve a full intuition of truth, mankind requires another form of experience, the gift of interior illumination, as given to the patriarchs and prophets who first invented the sciences as well* as to many of the Christian faithful.⁸⁷ Yet once this has been acquired, it seems that there is a sense in which theology and experimental science hold equivalent positions: scripture and experience, the Bible and the Book of Nature, both supplement the theoretical sciences and stand as the two final authorities on truth and falsity against which they must all be measured.⁸⁸

It is, however, precisely by submitting to the judgments of scripture that philosophy is able to perfect itself. In the *Opus majus*, Bacon argues that philosophy is aware of its own imperfections and arrives at the conclusion that there is a higher science, theology, as Aristotle had taught in the *Metaphysics*.⁸⁹ Philosophy thus discovers that the way to salvation lies in Christian teaching. But this cannot be demonstrated to heathens through the law of Christ since according to the law of disputation they can deny everything in it, just as Christians deny what is contained in other laws. They can only be persuaded through miracles or through philosophy.⁹⁰ Philosophy, therefore, has to give proofs of the Christian faith, and since the articles of faith are the basic principles of theology, philosophy will also have to demonstrate the principles of theology. This is achieved through ethics, the natural end of all speculative philosophy, but which among Christians is properly called theology, and which adds to the older philosophy faith in Christ and truths inaccessible to human reason. As well as using philosophy in their theology, Christians will thus have to employ theological considerations when doing philosophy, for philosophy considered in itself is of no use and has value only when applied to divine wisdom.⁹¹ It follows from such use of Christian truth that philosophy and theology are inextricably entwined,

and for this reason, someone completing philosophy through truths of this kind should not be called a theologian, nor said to be transcending the bounds of philosophy, since he can safely treat those things that are com-

⁸⁶ Ibid., 2:215.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 2:169–71.

⁸⁸ If this is correct, then Roger Bacon's thinking shows very strong similarities to that of Clement of Alexandria.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1:61.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 1:61–62.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1:56, 62–63. On the role of ethics in relation to theology, see Trottmann, "Roger Bacon" (n. 72 above).

mon to philosophy and theology as well as those things that must be accepted by believers and unbelievers alike.⁹²

Roger Bacon thus goes further than any of his contemporaries in blurring the distinction between theology and philosophy. He strongly criticized the arts faculty at Paris for attempting to pursue philosophy without reference to theology. And he complains that one of the chief faults of the theology of his time was that it was the product of men who were ignorant of scientific method.⁹³ On the other hand, perhaps aware that he might be criticized for making theology too dependent on philosophy, he numbers as an additional failing of the theology faculty that it was dominated by philosophy. No faculty should be dominated by one from outside, he said, and especially not the home of the mistress of the sciences. Theologians should stop debating purely philosophical points and content themselves with briefly restating the conclusions of philosophers.⁹⁴

Albertus Magnus (ca. 1200–1280) is chiefly interesting in the present context for his incorporation of Aristotle's arguments in the *Metaphysics*. There, Aristotle had defined what we call metaphysics, and he generally called wisdom (σοφία), sometimes divine knowledge (θεολογική), and sometimes first philosophy, as knowledge sought for its own sake without regard to its results.⁹⁵ After an account of the origins and history of such knowledge, he goes on to state that:

inasmuch as Wisdom is the most sovereign and authoritative kind of knowledge, which the other sciences, like slaves, may not contradict, the knowledge of the *end* and of the *Good* resembles Wisdom (since everything else is for the sake of the *end*).⁹⁶

Thus, Aristotle placed knowledge of final causes above all other forms of knowledge, a position that could be readily adapted to Christian theology.

⁹² "Et propter hoc complens philosophiam per hujusmodi veritates non debet dici theologicus nec transcendere metas philosophiae; quoniam ista quae sunt communia philosophiae et theologiae potest secure tractare et ea quae communiter habent recipi a fidelibus et infidelibus" (Bridges, ed., *Opus majus*, 1:63–64).

⁹³ Bacon, *Opera inedita*, 325–28.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 322–23.

⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.2.982a 14–20.

⁹⁶ Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχικωτάτη καὶ ἡγεμονικωτάτη, καὶ ἣ ὡς περ δούλας οὐδ' ἀντειπεῖν τὰς ἄλλας ἐπιστήμας δίκαιον, ἣ τοῦ τέλους καὶ τὰ γαθοῦ τοιαύτη (τούτου γὰρ ἕνεκα τὰλλα) (*ibid.*, 3.2.996b 11–14). The translation is from Aristotle, *Metaphysics. Books I–IX*, ed. Hugh Tredennick, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1933), 105 (original italics). In *Metaphysics* 1.2.982b 5–7 he had written: "And that science is supreme, and superior to the subsidiary, which knows for what end each action is to be done; i.e., the Good in each particular case, and in general the highest Good in the whole of nature" (Tredennick, trans., *Metaphysics I–IX*, 13).

In his *Summa theologiae*, written some time during the 1270s, Albertus states in Tractatus 1, q. 6, that theology is the end to which all other sciences aim, and thus has no other end than itself.⁹⁷ He then proceeds to justify this through Aristotle's reasonings in *Metaphysics* 1. Human nature causes us to seek out first the mechanical arts for the benefit of our bodies, and then the sciences of discourse and logic for the benefit of the soul. These in turn lead to the physical sciences and mathematics, so that we may understand the nature of bodies and of quantity. But we cannot fully understand these sciences except by reference to the principles by which they are caused.

Such principles, however, are not in those sciences, but in that which considers the first principle, and this, as the Philosopher says, is theology; therefore, all serve this one, and none is free in the perfect sense of freedom except for that single one that does not refer to any other that is outside itself. For the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics*, Book I, that we call free that which is its own cause, that is, which does not have to look to anything in order to exist. Therefore, it alone is free, and it alone is its own cause, and that is why it is wisdom. . . . And just as has been demonstrated in the opening arguments, it is impossible that this science should have an end in the other sciences. Rather, it itself is the end of the other sciences, to which all the others are referred as servants. And in this manner, this one alone is free; for when everything exists to support us, both for pleasure and for necessity, it is sought after everything has been obtained, and in everything obtained. It is therefore sought for its own sake, and is thus free and the mistress, and is wisdom and more powerful than anything.⁹⁸

Thus, by implication, philosophy is not completely free according to Albertus, but this is only because it is not complete in itself but leads on to higher things. Albertus, it is to be remembered, had commented on most of Aristotle's works before writing his *Summa theologiae* and was certainly convinced of the value of philosophical reasoning.

⁹⁷ Albertus Magnus, *Summa theologiae sive de mirabili scientia Dei, libri I pars I quaestiones 1–50A*, ed. D. Siedler, W. Kübel, and H. G. Vodels (Münster, 1978), 23.

⁹⁸ "Principia autem illa in ipsis non sunt, sed in ea quae primum principium considerat, haec autem est theologia, ut dicit PHILOSOPHUS; omnes ergo ancillantur ad istam, et nulla perfecta ratione libertatis libera est, nisi ista sola quae ad nihil aliud refertur, quod sit extra ipsam. Dicit enim PHILOSOPHUS in I PRIMAE PHILOSOPHIAE, quod liberum dicimus, quod causa sui est, hoc est, quod ad nullum, ut sit, habet respicere. Sola ergo libera est et sola sui causa est, et ex hoc sapientia est. . . . Et sicut probatum est in primis rationibus, impossibile est, quod haec scientia finem in aliis scientiis habeat, sed ipsa est finis aliarum scientiarum, ad quam omnes aliae referuntur ut ancillae. Et hoc modo haec sola libera est; omnibus enim existentibus et suffragantibus nobis et ad voluptatem et ad necessitatem, ista post omnia habita et in omnibus habitis quaeritur. Et ideo gratia sui quaeritur et ideo libera et domina est et sapientia et omnibus potior" (ibid.). Aristotle's arguments are contained in *Metaphysics* 1.1, 2. On Albertus's attitude to philosophy, see van Steenberghen, *Philosophie au XIII^e siècle* (n. 64 above), 245–75.

Of all the great thinkers of the thirteenth century, it was Albertus's younger contemporary, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who was to define the relationship between philosophy and theology for generations to come. Thomas wrote about this relationship in a number of places, but the best-known passage relating to the present subject is from his *Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate*, in which he tackles the question “Whether philosophical reasons and authorities may be used in the science of faith, which concerns God.”⁹⁹ Thomas, of course, argues that they can. Having given arguments to the contrary, he then lists six arguments in favor, all based on authorities, two of which rest on Jerome's letters to Magnus and Pammachius, the latter citing the passage from Deuteronomy, and a third on Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* and his allegorical reading of Exodus.¹⁰⁰ In arguing the case from reason, he first states that the gifts of grace do not destroy nature but perfect it, and so the light of faith is not contrary to the light of reason, also given to us by God, since this would imply that one or the other were false. Thus, it is impossible for theology and philosophy to contradict each other. “If something is found in the sayings of philosophers which is contrary to faith,” he says, “then this is not philosophy but rather the abuse of philosophy resulting from a defect of reason.”¹⁰¹ It is therefore possible to refute such an error from the principles of philosophy itself, by showing it to be either impossible or not necessary.¹⁰² Philosophy can be used in three ways in sacred learning: first, to demonstrate the *praeambula fidei*, such as that God exists and that He is one; secondly, to make known matters of faith by analogy, as Augustine had done with regard to the Trinity; and thirdly, to resist what is contrary to faith.

Nevertheless, there are two ways in which those who use philosophy in sacred learning can err. One occurs when, like Origen, they use things which are contrary to faith, which do not belong to philosophy but are its corruption or abuse. The other occurs when matters of faith are included within the ambit of philosophy, as for instance when someone will not believe anything except what can be had from philosophy, when, on the contrary, philosophy should be brought within the ambit of faith.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate*, ed. Bruno Decker (Leiden, 1955), quaest. 2, art. 3: “Utrum in scientia fidei quae est de deo liceat rationibus philosophicis et auctoritatibus uti.” A detailed analysis of this work is to be found in Grabmann, *Einleitungslehre* (n. 42 above). For a briefer discussion see M.-D. Chenu, *La théologie comme science au XIII^e siècle*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1943), 71–101.

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas, *De Trinitate*, 92–93. For the texts, see nn. 35–37 above.

¹⁰¹ “Si quid autem in dictis philosophorum invenitur contrarium fidei, hoc non est philosophia, sed magis philosophiae abusus ex defectu rationis” (ibid., 94).

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ “Tamen utentes philosophia in sacra doctrina possunt dupliciter errare. Uno modo in hoc quod utantur his quae sunt contra fidem, quae non sunt philosophiae, sed corruptio vel

Thomas then proceeds to refute in turn the various objections to such a position given at the beginning of the disputation. The seventh objection stated that every science has its own principles, including sacred learning, which possesses the articles of faith. But, according to the *Posterior Analytics*, no science can proceed correctly if it assumes the principles of another but must proceed from its own principles. Thus, sacred learning cannot proceed from the writings of philosophers. Thomas's answer is as follows:

to the seventh objection it should be said that sciences that have a mutual relationship exist in such a way that one can use the principles of the other, just as secondary sciences use the principles of primary sciences, whether they are superior or inferior. Thus, metaphysics, which is superior to all, uses things that have been demonstrated in the other sciences. Similarly, theology, since all the other sciences are, as it were, servants to it, and forerunners in the path of its creation, even though they come after it in dignity, can use the principles of all the other sciences.¹⁰⁴

Thomas expands on this answer in his *Summa theologiae*, where he explains why sacred learning has more dignity than other disciplines. It is more dignified than the speculative sciences since it is more certain and treats of higher things, and it is more dignified than the practical sciences since it leads towards a higher goal, just as a civilian is more dignified than a soldier, since an army is formed for the benefit of the state.¹⁰⁵ Thus, against the objection that theology uses material from the other sciences, he can answer that:

therefore, it does not take from the other sciences as if from superior ones, but makes use of them as inferior ones and servants, just as architects use assistants and civilians the military. And the fact that it uses them in this way is not because of a defect or insufficiency in itself, but because of the deficiency of our understanding, which is more easily led to those things that are above reason, and which are treated in this science, from those that are known through natural reason, from which the other sciences proceed.¹⁰⁶

abusus eius, sicut Origenes fecit. Alio modo, ut ea quae sunt fidei includantur sub metis philosophiae, ut scilicet si aliquis credere nolit nisi quod per philosophiam haberi potest, cum e converso philosophia sit ad metas fidei redigenda" (ibid., 95).

¹⁰⁴ "Ad septimum dicendum quod scientiae quae habent ordinem ad invicem hoc modo se habent quod una potest uti principiis alterius, sicut scientiae posteriores utuntur principiis scientiarum priorum, sive sint superiores sive inferiores; unde metaphysica, quae est omnibus superior, utitur his quae in aliis scientiis sunt probata. Et similiter theologia, cum omnes aliae scientiae sint huic quasi famulantes et preambulae in via generationis, quamvis sint dignitate posteriores, potest uti principiis omnium aliarum scientiarum" (ibid., 97).

¹⁰⁵ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.1.5.

¹⁰⁶ "Et ideo non accipit ab aliis scientiis tanquam a superioribus, sed utitur eis tanquam inferioribus et ancillis, sicut architectonicae utuntur subministrantibus, ut civilis militari. Et hoc ipsum quod sic utitur eis, non est propter defectum vel insufficientem eius, sed

Theology, of course, has the final say in all matters relating to faith, but it does not determine the principles of philosophy. Thomas makes this quite clear in a subsequent question, where he states that:

it should be said that the principles of the other sciences are either self-evident, and cannot be demonstrated, or are demonstrated by some natural reason in one of the other sciences. But the knowledge that is proper to this science [i.e., theology] is that which is through revelation and not that which is through natural reason. And therefore it does not belong to it to demonstrate the principles of the other sciences, but only to judge them, for whatever is found in the other sciences that is opposed to the truth of this science is entirely condemned as false.¹⁰⁷

Philosophy, in other words, proceeds through its own methods and in its own way; it is only its conclusions that have to be in agreement with theology. In the *Summa contra gentiles*, Thomas makes it clear why he requires a philosophy that is valid on its own terms. In discussing the difficulties of refuting errors, he argues that Muslims and pagans do not accept any Christian scripture, and thus cannot be persuaded by appealing to its authority. It is therefore necessary to have recourse to reason, with which any man is forced to agree, even if it is deficient in matters that are divine.¹⁰⁸ And when philosophical conclusions did appear to contradict revealed knowledge, as for instance the arguments concerning the unity of the intellect or the eternity of the world, Thomas took pains to refute these positions on philosophical grounds, to show that they proceeded from erroneous reasoning, and did not simply reject them on the basis of scripture.¹⁰⁹

It is clear that, in the Latin West, not only was there no formula of the type *philosophia ancilla theologiae*, but neither was there any one attitude associated with the idea. It was used on the one hand to limit the role of secular learning in theology and on the other to justify its use, and it is the latter sense that is predominant. But one also needs to remember that in all these cases it was in theological discussion that such a simile was used. It was in this context that philosophy was an *ancilla*, a *pedissequa*, or a *famu-*

propter defectum intellectus nostri; qui ex his quae per naturalem rationem ex qua procedunt aliae scientiae cognoscuntur, facilius manducitur in ea quae sunt supra rationem, quae in hac scientia traduntur" (ibid.).

¹⁰⁷ "Dicendum quod aliarum scientiarum principia vel sunt per se nota, et probari non possunt; vel per aliquam rationem naturalem probantur in aliqua alia scientia. Propria autem huius scientiae cognitio est quae est per revelationem, non autem quae est per naturalem rationem. Et ideo non pertinet ad eam probare principia aliarum scientiarum, sed solum iudicare de eis; quidquid enim in aliis scientiis invenitur veritati huius scientiae repugnans, totum condemnatur ut falsum" (ibid., 1.1.6).

¹⁰⁸ Idem, *Summa contra gentiles* 1.2.

¹⁰⁹ See, for instance, idem, *Tractatus de unitate intellectus contra Averroistas*, ed. Leo W. Keeler (Rome, 1936).

latus. This did not mean that philosophy was subservient to theology on its own terrain. On the contrary, it had its own principles, its own methods, and its own subject matter. It is, of course, true that philosophical conclusions contrary to articles of faith were rejected, but it was not necessary to resort to allegorical exegesis to justify that.

It is therefore no coincidence that the idea of service came to be used so much in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, precisely when philosophy was reentering Christian culture and the relationship between pagan philosophy and Christian faith again had to be worked out. It is probably also not a coincidence that its use all but totally disappeared thereafter, once the nature of that relationship had been decided, and that it once again made its appearance in the seventeenth century when a new challenge was posed by different philosophical principles, whether old or new in inspiration.

THE *ANCILLA* IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

When the servant role of philosophy came again to be discussed in the seventeenth century, the scholastic legacy had been supplemented by the publication of new editions of Philo, Clement, and Origen, thus reinforcing the original meaning of the simile. What is most striking, however, is that its use was developed above all by philosophers, first to defend and then to justify the development of new philosophies. One of the earliest to use the phrase in this way was Francis Bacon (1561–1626), employing it to justify the search for a new science of ethics. In the face of possible objections, Bacon remarks:

and if it be saide, that the cure of mens Mindes belongeth to sacred diuinity, it is most true: But yet Morall Philosophy may be preferred vnto her as a wise seruaunt and humble handmaide. For as the Psalme saith, *That the eyes of the handmayde looke perpetually towardes the mistresse* and yet no doubt many things are left to the discretion of the handmayde, to discern of the mistresse will: So ought Morall Philosophy to giue a constant attention to the doctrines of Diuinity, and yet so as it may yeeld of her selfe (within due limits) Many sound and profitable directions.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford, 2000), 146, in the section *De cultura animi*. The corresponding Latin from Francis Bacon, *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum libri IX*, 7.3 reads: “Quod si quis objiciat, Animorum Curationem, Theologiae Sacrae Munus esse, verissimum est quod asserit; Attamen *Philosophiam Moralem* in Famulitium Theologiae recipi, instar Ancillae Prudentis, & Pedissequae fidelis, quae ad omnes ejus nutus praestò sit, & ministret, quid prohibeat? Etenim quemadmodum in Psalmo habetur, quod *Oculi Ancillae perpetuo ad manus Dominae respiciunt*; cum tamen minimè dubium sit, quin haud pauca Ancillae Judicio & Curae relinquuntur; Eodem modo & *Ethica* obsequium *Theologiae* omninò praestare debet, ejusque Praeceptis morigera esse; ita tamen ut & ipsa, intra suos limites, haud pauca sana

A reformer of philosophy who was to use the phrase in a more radical manner was Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639), who in his disputation *De gentilismo non retinendo* argued the case for the development of a Christian philosophy to replace that of Aristotle in the universities.¹¹¹ The first question asks whether it is advantageous for the Christian philosopher to develop a new philosophy to replace that of the pagans. Campanella quotes Clement of Alexandria to the effect that philosophy was the teacher of the pagans just as the Jewish Law had been to Christian faith, and was therefore useful, so long as one did not follow any single sect.¹¹² Recent discoveries, however, such as typesetting, the New World, the motion of the earth, and the new planets, meant that ancient philosophy was no longer sufficient and had necessitated building philosophy anew. This had already begun in natural philosophy through the work of Pico, Telesio, Valesius, and Paracelsus.¹¹³ The creation of a new natural philosophy, however, was to be carried out, not by searching pagan texts, but by investigating God's other book, nature, which did not contradict the Bible.

Campanella then tackles the objection that theological wisdom calls all other sciences its servants, and that therefore one should not change them.

To the fourth argument, it is true that wisdom called the sciences as servants to the citadel, inasmuch as they are true sciences. Otherwise, it corrects them and cuts their nails and hair, as Jerome advises in his *Letter to Pamachius*. But when the servant considers herself above her mistress, then “Throw out the servant, for the sons of the servant shall not inherit with

& utilia Documenta, continere possit” (William Rawley, ed., *Opera Francisci Baronis de Verulamio . . . tomus primus: qui continet De dignitate & augmentis scientiarum libros IX* [London, 1623], 366 [original italics]). It is most likely that Bacon was arguing against the followers of Petrus Ramus, who did not consider ethics as a legitimate part of philosophical enquiry, but believed it to be entirely contained in scripture.

¹¹¹ The work was first published in Tommaso Campanella, *Atheismus triumphatus, seu contra Antichristianismum, &c. De gentilismo non retinendo: De praedestinatione et reprobatione, et auxiliis divinae gratiae cento Thomisticus* (Paris, 1636), although it is mentioned in idem, *Apologia pro Galileo* (Frankfurt, 1622). The text used here is from idem, *Disputationum in quatuor partes suae philosophiae realis libri quatuor: Pro Rep. Literaria ac christiana, idest vere rationali, stabilienda contra sectarios*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1637), intended as a new philosophy curriculum for Christian universities, where it appears as part of the prologue. It was published again with slight changes as *De gentilismo non retinendo, quaestio unica* (Paris, 1693). On Campanella's views on the relationship between philosophy and theology, see Paolo Ponzio, *Copernicanesimo e Teologia: Scrittura e Natura in Campanella, Galilei e Foscarini* (Bari, 1998), 123–48.

¹¹² Campanella, *Disputationes . . . suae philosophiae*, “Disputatio in prologum instauratarum scientiarum ad scholas christianas, praesert. parisienses,” quaest. 1, art. 1: “Utrum expediat Philosopho Christiano alteram post Gentiles cudere Philosophiam, & undenam.” The passages he uses from Clement on sig. b1v are from *Stromateis* 1.3.4.

¹¹³ Campanella, *Disputationes . . . suae philosophiae*, sig. b2r.

the sons of the free," says the Lord to those now glorying in Averroisto-Macchiavellianism, and then let us procure faithful servants who serve well.¹¹⁴

In other words, it was the job of philosophers to provide theology with the tools to do its job, a claim not unlike that made by Kant. This could only be achieved, according to Campanella, if one produced a philosophy in accordance with nature. It was therefore a heresy to say that Aristotle had discovered the truth and that he could not be improved upon. This was to prefer darkness to enlightenment from the Gospel and from discoveries and experiments in the real world, the first book.¹¹⁵

The following question examines more deeply whether it is permissible to overturn Aristotle, or at least to contradict him and diminish his authority.¹¹⁶ Campanella argues strongly that it is and repeats the argument that theology calls all other sciences, and therefore all philosophers, to be servants in its worship, at least to the extent that they serve well. When they do not, it rejects and corrects them, he says, citing Origen and Jerome.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, he makes it clear that if philosophical teachings appear to contradict scripture, they should not be automatically thrown out, but scripture should first be examined to see whether it could accommodate their meanings. He justifies this attitude by reference to Augustine, who argued that where passages of the Bible do not make sense they must be interpreted allegorically to reveal a spiritual meaning.¹¹⁸ Innovators and novelties should not be suspect just because they are new, as Columbus, Galileo, and others bore witness.¹¹⁹

Similar sentiments are expressed in his *Defense of Galileo* of 1622. There he states that any religion that forbids its followers to investigate nature must be considered suspect with regard to the truth.¹²⁰ Thus, anyone who

¹¹⁴ "Ad 4. vere sapientia vocavit scientias tanquam ancillas ad arcem, in quo verae scientiae sunt: in caeteris eas corrigit, resecat ungues, & capillos, ut Hieronymus admonet in Epistola ad Pammachium: sed ubi ancilla superbit supra Dominam suam. *Eiice ancillam, dicit Dominus, non enim erunt haeredes cum filiis liberae, filii ancillae*, superbientis iam in Macchiavellismo Averroistico: ac proinde faciamus nobis ancillas fideles bene servientes" (ibid., sig. b4r). The opening phrase is a paraphrase of Prov. 9:3, which was used in this sense by Aquinas, *Contra gentiles* 1. q. 1, acknowledged in Campanella, *Apologia pro Galileo*, 23. For the reference to Jerome, see n. 36 above. The final quotation is from Gal. 4:30, echoing Sarah's words in Gen. 21:10.

¹¹⁵ Campanella, *Disputationes . . . suae philosophiae*, sig. b4v.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., quaest. 1, art. 2, "Utrum liceat Aristotelismus evertere vel saltem contradicere Aristoteli, & auctoritatem minuere."

¹¹⁷ Ibid., sig. c4r.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., sig. d1r. The reference is to Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* 1.18.19; PL 34:187.

¹¹⁹ Campanella, *Disputationes . . . suae philosophiae*, sig. e1r-v.

¹²⁰ Campanella, *Apologia pro Galileo*, 23.

forbids such investigations in the name of the Christian religion is either hostile to Christianity or will be the cause of hostility in others. Since Christianity is true, it has nothing to fear from philosophers. Christianity, therefore,

should not flee the sciences but use them to call men to the kingdom of heaven, for they are its servants, and they serve it truthfully, not contradicting it. For those which contradict are not sciences, but the fantasies of vain philosophers.¹²¹

Since men of Campanella's time could investigate nature much better than those who had preceded them, it was a sin to be bound to the words of pagan authors. And, referring to *De gentilismo non retinendo*, he states that there he shows why in his time, "when the handmaid glories over her mistress theology, she must be driven out like Hagar."¹²²

On several occasions, Campanella cites Clement's eclectic position to demonstrate that the Church Fathers had already rejected Aristotle as the only authority, and that it was impious to follow any one sect of philosophers and swear by the words of a single master.¹²³ And it is in this context that Campanella introduces the formula *libertas philosophandi*, his expression of the idea that one should be free to criticize and depart from the teachings of any philosophical sect, but which was, of course, aimed particularly against the Peripatetics.¹²⁴ Philosophical freedom, therefore, at least in Campanella's view, was not incompatible with philosophy's role as a servant of theology.

Such ideas were particularly congenial to philosophers in the Protestant lands, where ever since Martin Luther it had been argued that the Scholastics had corrupted theology through an excessive reliance on Aristotle. Even though, following the excesses of Anabaptists in 1527, Protestants began returning to a theology informed by Aristotelian philosophy, this theme con-

¹²¹ "Non ergo fugat scientias, sed utitur eis ad convocandos homines in regnum coelorum; quoniam sibi sunt ancillae, & veraciter serviunt, non contradicunt. Nam quae contradicunt, scientiae non sunt, sed phantasiae philosophorum vanorum" (ibid.).

¹²² "Et in quaestione nostra, utrum expediat novam cudere philosophiam, ostendimus, quod hoc tempore, quando superbit ancilla supra dominam theologiam, explodenda sit sicut Agar" (ibid., 25).

¹²³ The final phrase is an adaptation of Horace, *Epistulae* 1.1.14.

¹²⁴ Campanella, *Apologia pro Galileo* (n. 111 above), 27. That Campanella invented the formula is argued by Robert B. Sutton, "The Phrase *Libertas Philosophandi*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14 (1953): 310–16, but similar phrases, e.g., *ratio libera philosophandi*, were used in Francesco Patrizi, *Discussiones peripateticae* (Venice, 1571), while the idea of freedom to dissent from any principles, and especially those of Aristotle, goes back at least to Lorenzo Valla; Laurentius Valla, *Repastinatio dialectice et philosophie*, ed. G. Zippel (Padua, 1982), 2–4.

tinued to be expanded in Protestant histories of philosophy.¹²⁵ Just such a history was given by the Leiden philosopher, Adriaan Heereboord (1614–1661), for his inaugural oration in 1641, in which he strongly advocated the freedom of philosophy.¹²⁶ He argued that there were two kinds of philosophy, a free kind that studied nature, as had been practiced by Aristotle, and a slavish kind that followed the teachings of a particular sect, practiced by most of Aristotle’s successors. The Scholastics had eventually created a monstrous philosophy and had twisted religion to fit it. Thus, both philosophy and God’s word had become slaves to Aristotle. Whilst religion had been reformed, however, philosophy remained in bondage, its reform still incomplete.¹²⁷

A champion of the new philosophies, Heereboord was one of the first to teach the philosophy of Descartes in the 1640s, for which he was attacked by some theologians on the basis that he was undermining religion. In response, Heereboord wrote a pair of disputations on the use and abuse of philosophy in theology.¹²⁸ “The Abuse of Philosophy in Theology,” is an attempt to argue that theology should not be dependant on Aristotle or, indeed, any philosophy. Using the Scholastics against themselves, he states that it is an abuse when philosophical axioms and definitions are applied to the demonstration of mysteries of the faith. Another abuse is when, in other kinds of theological questions, philosophy assumes the position of mistress, for

philosophy ought not to rule over theology like Hera, but serve it like a handmaiden: theology is like Sarah, philosophy like Hagar. Theology is the queen of all the faculties and disciplines, philosophy the servant. Thus, Lombard, Aquinas, Scotus, and all Scholastics of that ilk, whether ancient or

¹²⁵ On the reintroduction of Aristotelian philosophy at Wittenberg, see Sachiko Kusukawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melancthon* (Cambridge, 1995), 65–74. On Protestant histories of philosophy, see Luciano Malusa, “Renaissance Antecedents to the Historiography of Philosophy,” in G. Santinello, ed., *Models of the History of Philosophy: From Its Origins in the Renaissance to the “Historia Philosophica”* (Dordrecht, 1993), 3–65, at 52–59.

¹²⁶ The original does not survive but is paraphrased in Adriaan Heereboord, *Epistola ad Curatores* (Leiden, 1648), which also serves as the preface to idem, *Meletemata philosophica* (Leiden, 1654). The *Meletemata* is a collection of different works, all with individual pagination, that evolved through the many subsequent editions. On Heereboord, see Paul Dibon, *La philosophie néerlandaise au siècle d’or: L’enseignement philosophique dans les universités à l’époque précartésienne (1575–1650)* (Amsterdam, 1954), 107–19; on his history of philosophy see Theo Verbeek, “Tradition and Novelty: Descartes and Some Cartesians,” in Tom Sorell, ed., *The Rise of Modern Philosophy: The Tension between the New and Traditional Philosophies from Machiavelli to Leibniz* (Oxford, 1993), 167–96, at 180–88.

¹²⁷ Heereboord, *Epistola ad Curatores*, 1–4.

¹²⁸ “Disp. IX De usu philosophiae in theologia,” and “Disp. X De abusu philosophiae in theologia” of *Disputationes selectae* 2, 213–21, in idem, *Meletemata*.

more recent, invert the order when, in demonstrating articles of faith and deciding questions of theology, they place philosophical arguments and the authority of Aristotle before the word of God and divine authority, so that the Lord of Israel follows the lord Aristotle with unequal steps.¹²⁹

Thus, the *ancilla theologiae* was used to defend the introduction into university teaching of what most philosophers today consider to be the beginning of modern philosophy. Through a synthesis of Clement's and Peter Damian's interpretations of the phrase, it is argued that theology has nothing to fear from the rejection of Aristotle, since a true philosophy can only illustrate the truth of scripture.

Protestant theologians also made a more restrictive use of the idea of philosophy's being a servant of theology, especially in their fights against Socinianism, a heresy that was considered to be a direct result of attempting to interpret scripture against the yardstick of human reason. But even Leibniz, summarizing such arguments at the beginning of the eighteenth century, found little to complain of. The usual arguments against the Socinians, he said, were that

leurs Maximes étoient bons en philosophie et non pas en theologie; que c'étoit le défaut de l'Hétérogénéité qui s'appelle μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος, si quelqu'un les employoit quand il s'agit de ce qui passe la Raison; et que la Philosophie devoit être traitée en servante, et non pas en maitresse, par rapport à la Théologie, suivant le titre du livre de Robert Baronius Ecossois, intitulé: *Philosophia Theologiae ancillans*. Enfin que c'étoit une Hagar auprès de Sara, qu'il falloit chasser de la maison avec son Ismael, quand elle faisoit la mutine.¹³⁰

In general, he approved of such responses, although he warned against abusing them, "et commettre mal à propos les vérités naturelles et les vérités

¹²⁹ "Non debet Philosophia instar Herae dominari Theologiae, sed instar ancillae servire: Theologia instar Sarae est, Philosophia instar Hagar. Theologia regina est omnium facultatum et disciplinarum, Philosophia pedissequa. Itaque invertunt ordinem, Lombardus, Aquinas, Scotus, et omnes de grege illo Scholastici, qua veteres qua recentiores, dum articulos fidei probaturi, quaestiones Theologicas decisuri, rationes Philosophicas atque auctoritates Aristotelis praemittunt verbo Dei et Auctoritati divinae, atque ita dominum Aristotelem sequitur non passibus aequis Dominus Israelis" (ibid., 2, 218). See also his "Pro libertatem philosophandi," directly based on Campanella (ibid., 2, 330–34).

¹³⁰ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal* (Amsterdam, 1710), *Discours préliminaire de la conformité de la foi avec la raison*, 17, in *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, ed. C. J. Gerhardt, 7 vols. (Berlin, 1875–90; repr. Hildesheim, 1960–61), 6:60. The reference is to Robert Baron, *Philosophia theologiae ancillans, hoc est. Pia & sobria explicatio quaestionum philosophicarum in disputationibus theologis subinde occurrentium*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1658), a work written at the request of some Dutch students to explain philosophical questions that were of use in deciding theological controversies.

révélées.”¹³¹ Such arguments were, of course, to come to the fore with the publication, in 1666, of Lodewijk Meijer’s *Philosophia S. Scripturae interpres*, a work that plainly advocated philosophy as the yardstick of scriptural exegesis.¹³² Even here, however, it was only philosophy’s freedom to decide on matters of religion that came into question.

So where did the modern interpretation of the *ancilla theologiae* originate? It is impossible to be certain at present, but it seems to have first appeared around the middle of the seventeenth century. The earliest instance of which I am aware is in the work of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), a hostile critic of both the Roman Catholic Church and the education of his time. In Part 4 of *Leviathan*, “Of the Kingdome of Darknesse,” he presents a history of philosophy that purports to demonstrate that all philosophy before him was a waste of time. In particular, Hobbes singles out the universities for attack. These were but creations of the Roman Catholic Church for the propagation of Roman Catholic obfuscation:

that which is now called an *University*, is a Joyning together, and an Incorporation under one Government of many Publique Schools, in one and the same Town or City. In which, the principall Schools were ordained for the three Professions, that is to say, of the Romane Religion, of the Romane Law, and of the Art of Medicine. And for the study of Philosophy it hath no otherwise place, then as a handmaid to the Romane Religion: And since the Authority of Aristotle is onely current there, that study is not properly Philosophy, (the nature whereof dependeth not on Authors,) but Aristotelity. And for Geometry, till of very late times it had no place at all; as being subservient to nothing but rigide Truth.¹³³

Whether or not Hobbes was the first to put such a gloss on “handmaid,” it does not appear fortuitous that it should be used by someone outside of, and critical towards, the educational tradition that the idea represented.

Nevertheless, this new interpretation soon came into currency within the universities among the proponents of new philosophies, often in conjunction with the phrase *ancilla theologiae*. As a new way of bashing the Scholastics, it was used by Protestants to argue that Aristotelianism had become hopelessly enslaved to theology and that the only way forward was its replacement. In a remarkable Dutch pamphlet of 1656, it was even argued by a theologian that it was precisely because of such use of a servile philosophy that theology had become enslaved to philosophy. *Ancilla theologiae*, for so long a justification for preserving philosophy, thus finally became an argu-

¹³¹ Leibniz, *Théodicée*, ed. Gerhardt, 6:60.

¹³² Lodewijk Meijer, *Philosophia S. Scripturae interpres* (Amsterdam, 1666).

¹³³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge, 1996), 462 (original italics).

ment for excluding philosophy from theology.¹³⁴ According to this view, freeing philosophy from theology meant, above all, freeing theology from the shackles of philosophy.

CONCLUSION

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the actual position of philosophy during the period from the first to the seventeenth centuries, whether it was totally subordinated to theology or whether it had some degree of freedom, or even to discuss whether such questions can meaningfully be asked. What is clear from such a survey, however, is that a state of servitude for philosophy cannot be established without further ado merely by reference to the formula *philosophia ancilla theologiae*.

It is also worth noting that, while the Bible was placed in ultimate authority over all purely rational knowledge, the tradition of allegorical exegesis which gave rise to, and maintained, the idea of philosophy as a handmaiden of theology allowed considerable scope for interpreting scripture according to what was known about the world. It is striking that a number of those who made use of the idea were accused, during their lifetimes and after, of excessive reliance on philosophy in their theological writings. Origen, Abelard, Roger Bacon, and Thomas Aquinas stand out not only as the greatest thinkers of their times but as amongst the most important figures either in maintaining a presence for philosophy in the Christian religion or in securing its readmission when philosophy was rediscovered. That philosophy could be a servant of religion was but one part of their armory in advocating this. When, in the seventeenth century, Galileo and Campanella argued for an allegorical interpretation of scriptural passages that appeared to establish the sun's rotation about the earth, they were simply resorting to the same tradition, but in the face of the hardened attitudes resulting from the Reformation and the Council of Trent.

Even the relatively negative meaning given to the idea by Peter Damian, apart from not being representative of the tradition as a whole and needing to be understood in its proper context, came to be used to support the introduction of first Aristotelian and then newer philosophies in the thirteenth

¹³⁴ See [Irenaeus Philalethius], *Bedenkingen, Op den Staat des Geschils, over de Cartesiaensche Philosophie, en op de Nader Openinghe over eenige stucken de Theologie raeckende* (Rotterdam, 1656), 39. This was probably written by the Leiden theologian Abraham Heidanus together with the philosophy professor Johannes de Raey. Heidanus supported Cartesianism because, as he saw it, it was incapable of being mixed with theology (see *ibid.*, 39–45). De Raey advocated the separation of philosophy from all the higher faculties as a means of defending Cartesianism, which was incapable of fulfilling a propaedeutic role in relation to subjects that had been based on Aristotelian philosophy.

and seventeenth centuries by establishing limits to their proper use in theology. It provided a defensive shield against the excesses of Paris in the 1260s and '70s, when some had attempted to decide on theological issues solely on the basis of human reason, and served as an offensive weapon in the hands of seventeenth-century philosophers who wanted to undermine theology's dependence on Aristotle.

Finally, by way of a historical postscript, the *ancilla theologiae* was to play an important role in altering the direction taken by Roman Catholic theology in the nineteenth century. It was to counter what he perceived as a move towards mysticism and anti-intellectualism in the face of atheist philosophy that Frans Jakob Clemens produced his study of thirteenth-century attitudes to philosophy under the title *De Scholasticorum sententia philosophiam esse theologiae ancillam commentatio*.¹³⁵ This work sparked a debate that was to culminate in 1879 with Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni patris* that signaled a return to the theology of Thomas Aquinas, and which was thus to provide the stimulus for studies of thirteenth-century philosophy and theology that are the basis for all modern scholarship on the period.

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¹³⁵ See n. 5 above. On the origins of the work, see Piolanti, *Clemens*, 15–16; on its influence, *ibid.*, 21–22, 62–74.