Vermigli, Calvin, and Aristotle's Ethics[1]

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Abstract

Peter Martyr Vermigli and John Calvin differed in significant ways in their attitudes toward Greek philosophy, notably toward Aristotle, who was chiefly of interest for his remarks on the structure of human nature and ethics. Peter Martyr was more reverential, perhaps more positive, in his use of Aristotle, and studied him for theological purposes. Calvin distinguished between Aristotle's excellence at metaphysics and his ethics, which was handicapped by his lack of conception of the fall and its effects on human nature. In Vermigli this distinction was present but not pronounced or controlling. The effect of Vermigli's scholastic training is evident.

Peter Martyr Vermigli, exiled from Italy with the Inquisition breathing down his neck, lectured in Strasbourg 1542–1548, then went to England with Bucer and others. As it turned out, John Calvin had been in Strasbourg 1538–1541, also as an exile. But as far as I can see, they did not meet there, narrowly missing each other. Vermigli lectured on Aristotle on his return to Strasbourg from England following the death of Edward VI, 1553–1555/6, alternating in teaching with fellow Italian and Aristotelian Jerome Zanchius, who lectured on Aristotle's *Physics*. He then moved to Zurich as Conrad Pellican's

[1] This article is a revised and somewhat enlarged version of "Vermigli, Calvin et l'éthique d'Aristote," *Contre vents et marées*, ed. Jean-Philippe Bru (Aix-en-Provence: Kerygma, 2014).

successor and died in 1562. Calvin had a very high opinion of him: "… most excellent man, and my truly honoured brother; may the Lord always stand by you, govern you, and bless your labours."[2]

I. *Vermigli's* Lectures *on Aristotle's* Ethics

Vermigli's extensive lectures run to over four hundred pages in translation. Apparently, he delivered them while at the same period commenting on the book of Judges. Though he provides a summary of all ten books of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the commentary itself runs only as far as book 3, chapter 2, presumably first interrupted and then suspended permanently by his move in 1556 to Zurich, where Conrad Gesner was already teaching philosophy. After Vermigli's death in 1562, the lectures edited by Santerenziano were published by his Zurich colleagues. They have now been translated into English for the first time and edited by Emidio Campi and Joseph C. McLelland.[3]

This paper has arisen from an attempt to familiarize myself with what for me was a surprising fact and to try to understand why it should be less surprising. We tend—or I tended—to think of the Reformation during the second half of the sixteenth century as chiefly if not exclusively concerned with the recovery of the authority of Scripture, with the repristination of Christian theology, and with meeting the need for polemical and expository works arising therefrom, including of course, and alas, a good deal of internecine debate.

So it is of some interest (to me at least) to find a Reformer of the generation of Calvin (Vermigli was ten years older than Calvin and died shortly before him) lecturing in the 1550s so extensively on Aristotle's corpus. It is not surprising that a Reformed theologian who was Aristotelian by training, as Vermigli and Zanchius were, should retain a fondness for the Stagirite—what could be more natural?—just as Calvin retained a fondness for the Stoics, say. But that he should devote precious time to expounding his writings at such length initially seemed odd. I learned from the introduction to this translation, however, that five sets of similar lectures on Aristotle's ethics had already been published before Vermigli lectured, those by Melanchthon (twice), Werdmuller, Scheegkius, and Hyperius, though Vermigli does not refer to any of them. So perhaps I should not have been surprised.

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[2] John Calvin, Letter to Vermigli, August 27, 1554, in *Tracts and Letters*, ed. Jules Bonnet, trans. Marcus Robert Gilchrist (1858; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2009), 6:60.

[3] Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Emidio Campi and Joseph C. McClelland, The Peter Martyr Library 9, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 73 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2006).

Richard Muller has pointed out how, by the turn of the sixteenth century, the Reformed churches were becoming institutionalized and education was having to be provided to a rising generation of Reformed professional men—including, of course, ministers.[4] It is natural, as part of this, to find a curriculum being developed within seminaries, with attention being given to the teaching of philosophy. But it was somewhat surprising, or was to me, to find such extensive attention being paid to Aristotle fifty years earlier. Maybe the attention was nothing nearly as extensive as that which subsequently followed, or perhaps the process of institutionalization began earlier than I imagined; certainly, it was earlier in Strasbourg and Zurich than in Geneva.

II. *Geneva*

Nevertheless, despite Calvin's qualification regarding Aristotle, it should be borne in mind that in 1559 the statutes of the newly-established Academy of Geneva included the following:

> The Professor of Greek shall follow the Professor of Hebrew in the morning, and shall expound some book of moral philosophy, by Aristotle or Plutarch or some Christian philosopher.[5]

Whatever the truth, the sharp contrast between Vermigli's rather careful, if not exactly reverential, attitude toward Aristotle's ethics, as compared with Calvin's more complex attitude toward Aristotle as a philosopher, is striking. While Calvin had a basically Platonic attitude toward the immortality of the soul, he may be said to have bolted onto the soul the apparatus of faculty psychology developed by Aristotle in which the soul was distinguished into a number of faculties or powers—intellect, will, emotions and so on. At the same time he had a dismissive attitude to the moral philosophy of the ancient Greeks in general, Aristotle included. So as regards Aristotle he could, in book 1 of the final edition of the *Institutes*, make favorable remarks regarding his distinction between theoretical and practical reason,[6] and make use of his faculty psychology, in the following terms,

> We dwell not on the subtlety of Aristotle, that the mind has no motion of itself; but that the moving power is choice, which he also terms the appetive intellect. Not to

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[4] Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), part 1.

[5] "Extract from the Statutes of the Geneva Academy, 1559," in *Calvinism in Europe, 1540–1610: A Collection of Documents*, ed. Alastair Duke, Gillian Lewis, and Andrew Pettegree (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 218.

[6] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1.15.7.

> lose ourselves in superfluous questions, let it be enough to know that the intellect is to us, as it were, the guide and ruler of the soul; that the will always follows its beck, and waits for its decision, in matters of desire. For which reason Aristotle truly taught, that in the appetite there is a pursuit and rejection corresponding in some degree to affirmation and negation in the intellect (Aristot. Ethic. lib. vi. c. 2). Moreover, it will be seen in another place (Book II. c. ii. sec. 12–26), how surely the intellect governs the will. Here we only wish to observe, that the soul does not possess any faculty which may not be duly referred to one or other of these members.[7]

Here we see Calvin's admiration for Aristotle coupled with a tendency to cut him short when he suspects that some Aristotelian distinction is not profitable and may lead to speculation.[8] We shall find Calvin later being similarly approving of Aristotle in his *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*.

Calvin's most basic criticism of pagan philosophers, including Aristotle—and of those Christians unduly influenced by them, such as later medievals—is that in their analysis of free will and virtue and vice, "they were seeking in a ruin for a building."

> Hence the great darkness of philosophers who have looked for a complete building in a ruin, and fit arrangements in disorder. The principle they set out with was, that man could not be a rational animal unless he had a free choice of good and evil. They also imagined that the distinction between virtue and vice was destroyed, if man did not of his own counsel arrange his life. So far well, had there been no change in man. This being unknown to them, it is not surprising that they throw everything into confusion.[9]

One consequence of this is that the pagan moral philosophers have deficient views of human fallenness; not surprisingly, for they have no concept of a fall. In *Institutes* 2.2.2 Calvin repeatedly inveighs against "the philosophers" (they are referred to five or six times in two short sections) and their view of the "bondage of the senses."[10] The attitude of Vermigli to pagan moral philosophers, or at least to one moral philosopher, is much less sharp, as we shall see. This is not to say that the outlooks of the two Reformers were antithetical, but it may be that they had different views of philosophical ethics, Calvin seeing in such work a direct challenge to the gospel, Vermigli seeing it more as an adjunct.

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[7] Calvin, *Institutes* 1.15.7. For a fuller discussion of the influence of scholastic faculty psychology on Reformed orthodoxy, see Paul Helm, *Human Nature from Calvin to Edwards* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, forthcoming).

[8] So Aristotle is "a man of genius and learning" (John Calvin's Commentary on Ps 107:43, in *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson [Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1847], 4:266); and while "Plato, in some passages, talks nobly of the faculties of the soul," yet "Aristotle, in discoursing of it, has surpassed all in acuteness" ("Psychopannychia [1542]," in Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises*, 3:420).

[9] Calvin, *Institutes* 1.15.8.

[10] Ibid., 2.2.2.

The structure of this article is to spend some time attempting to understand Vermigli's general attitude to the relation between Aristotle and Scripture, then to look at two topics, first virtue and habit and then voluntary action, at which point we shall rejoin Calvin. I choose these topics partly because Calvin also makes general philosophical remarks on them, though of course much briefer than Vermigli's, but it might be worthwhile standing the two Reformers side by side where we can.

III. *Vermigli's Attitude to Aristotle and Scripture*

Vermigli's practice in the *Commentary* is to give his chief attention to an intensive discussion of Aristotle's text, occasionally with some help from the Byzantine philosopher and theologian Eustratius of Nicaea (ca. 1050–ca. 1120), noting textual variants and expounding Aristotle in a manner that, in the main, upholds and commends what he is doing. Toward the end of most lectures, Vermigli provides a scriptural support or comment on what has just been discussed, using words such as, "It remains to look at how the above statements agree with holy scripture" (47).[11] What follows may turn out to be an endorsement of Aristotle's doctrine by Scripture, as in Vermigli's provision from Scripture of examples of different types of voluntary action and their value, as we shall see later, more or less fully agreeing with Aristotle's views. Or it could be a reminder to the reader that since Aristotle knew nothing of the grace of justification, nor of the life to come, his definition or characterization of happiness is deficient in its attitude to death, or in the importance that he gives to material possessions as a necessary condition of happiness (216). A similar attitude is found in remarks about the contemplative life, which Aristotle sees as the ultimate form of or ideal for human life. On this Vermigli comments—with a sidelong glance, no doubt, at forms of monastic community and solitariness—that contemplation can form only a part of the Christian life (178). On one occasion within the body of the lecture, there is a quite extensive discussion of Aristotle's famous account of universals in the *Nicomachean Ethics,* including comments from Augustine and the bearing of the topic on the doctrine of God (135–36).

When Vermigli discusses Aristotle's views on providence and fortune he is particularly scathing.

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[11] Numbers in parentheses in the text that follows are page references to the English translation of Vermigli's *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*.

> Now was the time [for Aristotle] to affirm categorically that [happiness] should be expected from God no less than other gifts. In speaking this way, he attempts to avoid the shame of being impious, but does not merit the praise of having given an open and candid confession. If his views were good and right he should not have used these evasions. (220)

Vermigli adds, "Aristotle speaks ambiguously about whether God is the author of happiness, but we affirm that point most constantly" (230). Sometimes the "Christian" application seems so different from what Aristotle is taken to be saying as to make the much longer and more elaborate discussion of Aristotle seem beside the point. So, at the opening of his discussion of book 1, chapter 4, where Aristotle discusses his procedure in his determination of what happiness is, Vermigli is bold enough to say regarding the constituent parts of what happiness is that holy Scripture is "more preferable in this context than philosophy" (78), for it proposes a twofold end for us, one in this life and one in the life to come. But he goes on to endorse Aristotle's own procedure in establishing the nature of true happiness—proceeding from effects to their causes, from just, brave, well-balanced, prudent actions to their corresponding virtues, which, together with the premise that virtues depend upon happiness as their goal, enables Aristotle to arrive at an understanding of what happiness is—rather than to adopt the procedure of first defining happiness (81, 83). This gives rise to a detailed epistemological discussion (91–92). The supreme end in this life is that we be justified in Christ, which differs from the end of eternal life only in degree. Nevertheless, even this supports Aristotle's view that there are great differences among people as to what happiness is. Yet in Scripture God seeks to establish faith in himself, his greatness, by what he does. Vermigli appeals to Romans 8:32: God, who gave up his only Son, will freely give us all things besides: "As Aristotle wishes to use demonstrations based on results and consequences, so from the effects just mentioned, we may conclude that we have acquired eternal happiness" (92). Yet while Aristotle restricts his ethical teaching to a certain kind of student, to those without corrupt minds, God invites anyone to study his teaching.

One might draw various conclusions from this style of comparing and contrasting. Vermigli might take the view that lectures on Aristotle are not the time or the place to discuss Christian theology at length. If so, then, this is likely to emanate from a warm endorsement of Aristotle's general outlook on the place of reason in ethics and on the nature of virtue and its relation to happiness, holding that this is so satisfactory that it only needs a little tweaking from the Christian theologian. For the most part, it looks as if he thinks that a Christian outlook can be bolted onto the body of Aristotle's thought.

Another possibility, which Vermigli seems occasionally to favor, is that Aristotle is dealing with family and especially civic virtue, and so we must bear in mind that the *Nicomachean Ethics* is simply the first part of a two-volume work on political ethics, in which case this would be the wrong place to look for an account of ethics that places a premium on motive and intention in the manner of, say, Augustine, or of the New Testament. So, for example, Vermigli comments,

> Nor should we fail to point out that Aristotle spoke improperly when he said that "action will of necessity be acting and acting well" since in truth it is not the action that acts, but that by which men act. But he could speak like this because the distinction is not important for the question under discussion. (204)

Aristotle is telling us how we ought to behave in the *polis*, what the good *civic* life consists in and so has things of direct value to the Christian in that role; otherwise, we should be blaming Aristotle for doing something that he was not trying to do in the first place.

Writing of the governing of the passions, Vermigli comments,

> One thing now remains to be seen: how these passions may be governed and corrected. The first is the "civil" way, through moral virtues. These bring the passions back to the mean and are sufficient, if we consider only the present life; before God, however, they are not so, nor does civil justice suffice before his judgment seat. There is need, then, for another standard, namely that of holy scripture, which is useless unless it is grasped by faith. (319)

As I say, there is some evidence for such a view: At one place (197) Vermigli asks, Does the scriptural statement that those whose sins have been forgiven and whose iniquities are covered are blessed (Ps 32:1–2) not refute the Aristotelian motif that the end of man is happiness revealed in action? He then responds,

> We are not speaking of that kind of happiness, but only of the happiness that follows primary happiness and lies in acting properly in this life and in contemplating and enjoying the sight of the supreme God in the world to come. (197)

See also his reference to the virtues being political (253) having to do with the nature of civic morality (319). So there is some ambivalence here. Sometimes Vermigli says that moral action has the same structure in Aristotle and in the gospel (41). At other times he gently makes the point that Aristotle was a stranger to God's revelation in Jesus. At still other times he forcefully criticizes Aristotle for his paganism. He may at times be suggesting that the ethics of Aristotle has to do chiefly, if not exclusively, with the first kingdom, the earthly kingdom, and not with the kingdom of God,

though I am not aware that Vermigli used this terminology. Certainly, at one place he endorses the thought given prominence by Calvin that whatever the source of some truth God the Holy Spirit is its ultimate author. As Vermigli puts the point, "We do not deny the sentiment that is hallowed by the centuries, which says that any truth set forth by any author proceeds from the Holy Spirit."[12]

One other thing occurred to me: the pattern of detailed exegesis and commentary of Aristotle, followed usually by a much briefer scriptural comment, is consistent with Vermigli having first prepared and given the lectures at some stage in his earlier years in Italy—either before he adopted Evangelical views or afterward. If afterward, if the lectures were prepared and delivered during the period 1537–1542, then the Evangelical views and the comments on Scripture may already have been present in them; if earlier, then they may have been added during this later period as Vermigli climbed up the rungs of the ladder of the Augustinian order, finally becoming Abbot of Saint Pietro and Aram in Naples (1537–40) and Prior of Saint Frediano in Lucca (1541–42), during which time he established a Reformed theological college.

There is some additional evidence for this latter view, perhaps: those theological discussions that occur within a lecture, as opposed to being at its end, are not specifically Protestant. We have already noted a discussion of Augustine and Platonic ideas, and there is one on Pelagianism (216), which one might expect from an Augustinian friar. There are exceptions to this general procedure, however. In the middle of one lecture, he criticizes "what the Papists do in reducing the pure religion of Christ, which is already complete in itself, to a histrionic Mass" (205). So the form of the lectures is *generally* consistent with them being in existence before Vermigli fled Italy and then being "Protestantized" by having a tail added to most of them, giving scriptural comments of a Protestant kind. Why prepare more lectures when one already has a perfectly good set? The pre-existence of the lectures may even have determined that in Strasbourg he lectured on the *Nicomachean Ethics* and not on some other part of the Aristotelian corpus.

For the rest of this piece, I shall spend time looking in a little more detail at two philosophical topics that Vermigli deals with in Aristotle that are of particular interest to me and noting some points of divergence from and convergence with Calvin. These are the relationship between habit and virtue, and the place of voluntariness and ignorance in the evaluation of

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[12] Cited by McLelland in his introduction (xxv), but the reference he gives to the main text (66) appears to be inaccurate.

personal responsibility. I should stress that all the material that follows is sketchy and based entirely on one reading and a partial rereading of the text, with (so far) little or no attention paid to secondary literature, of which I am largely ignorant.

IV. *Habit and Virtue*

Debating about the hardness of the human heart and the need for grace, Calvin states, "Pighius declares that the hardness [of the heart] was incurred through bad habit. Just as if one of the philosophers' crew should say that by evil living a person had become hardened or callous towards evil." Calvin's (and Augustine's) view is at odds with the Aristotelian idea—the idea of the "philosophers' crew"—that we become just by doing just acts, prudent by doing prudent acts, brave by doing brave acts, and so on. For if, for example, being just is not simply a matter of habitually or spontaneously doing what is objectively just but also a matter of having the right motives and dispositions in doing so—if, in other words, we take a motivational view of ethical goodness, as Calvin and Augustine do—then the first question is how we come to do the just thing in the first place, how we come to be remotivated to love justice. Calvin's answer is that we can only do a just act in the first place by having the *habitus* of our minds redirected, a redirecting that, at least in its first stages, must be done for and to us rather than our doing it.

However, there is reason to think that Calvin is not being quite fair to Aristotle here, if indeed he had Aristotle clearly in view. For Aristotle not only says this:

> This then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and by being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly.

He also says this:

> Again, the case of the arts and that of the virtues are not similar; for the products of the arts have their goodness in themselves, so that it is enough that they should have a certain character, but if the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character.[13]

[13] Cited in Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 178.

There is plenty of scope here for Calvin to adapt Aristotle to his own view by claiming that a firm and unchangeable desire to be virtuous can only be brought about by the efficacious grace of God, though he does not appear to want to adapt it.

In dealing with the same passage in which Aristotle argues that moral virtue is acquired through habit (287–88),[14] Vermigli makes the same point as Calvin, though he also provides Aristotle with a get-out-of-jail card. Moral virtues (like intellectual virtues, though distinct from them), though not conatural or innate, are not contrary to nature. Virtues derive from the exercise of the will—"or rather, the will, God, and action; we should also add reason, with which right actions should agree" (296). As is his custom, Vermigli compares what Aristotle says to holy Scripture.

Though expressed in a very mild and undemonstrative way, Vermigli makes serious criticisms of Aristotle. Men have sometimes been made wise in an instant; not developing the virtue over a period. More generally, God is the primary and most powerful cause of all the virtues (citing 1 Cor 4:7).

> With respect to vitiated and corrupt nature, however, these statements [by Aristotle] are true in the normal course of things and according to ordinary reason. Aristotle, however, was unable to see this corruption of nature, since he was left without faith and the light of holy scripture It is also true that our nature, in its present state, is suited to and capable of receiving the virtues, if we are speaking of the civil and moral kind, although not all people are disposed to them in the same way. (296–97)

The "civil and moral" kind of virtue is presumably being contrasted with the theological virtues, though as far as I am aware Vermigli does not use this phrase in this work, he goes on to refer to the "true virtues, such as faith, hope and charity and the like" (297; see also, 331–37).

V. *Voluntariness and Ignorance*

In his work *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will* Calvin tirelessly insists on the fact, against Pighius but with Augustine, that our present lack of free will is not part of our nature, but is a corruption of it.

He includes a short excursus, "Coercion versus Necessity," that establishes the difference. The importance of the distinction for Calvin is that while acting out of necessity is consistent with being held responsible for the action, and being praised or blamed for it, being coerced is inconsistent with such praise or blame. In his criterion of praise and blame, he explicitly follows Aristotle:

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[14] Aristotle, *Eth. nic*. 2.1.

> When Aristotle distinguished what is voluntary from its opposite, he defines the latter as, *to bia e di agnoian gignomenon*, that is, what happens by force or through ignorance. There he defines as forced what has its beginning elsewhere, something to which he who acts or is acted upon makes no contribution (*Eth. nic.* 3.1).[15]

So normal human activity is not forced or coerced; insofar as it proceeds from fallen human nature it is not free, because a person with a fallen nature does not have the power to choose what is good. Nonetheless, where a person is not forced, but makes a contribution to his action and is not acting out of ignorance, he is acting voluntarily and is responsible for what he does.

Vermigli similarly follows Aristotle in his comments on the passage (book 3.1), but much more closely and in greater detail. The distinction between the voluntary and the involuntary is, for Aristotle, the basis of praise and blame (373–74). ("Ought implies can" applies to "secular laws" [Vermigli concedes] but "not those of God.") "For the latter require things that are impossible, especially in view of the corrupt and spoiled condition of nature" (374). In civil actions, involuntary actions and actions done through ignorance are pardoned, as they also are in Scripture (Deut 19:5).

The voluntary is understood in terms of the absence of force—an impossible-to-resist or difficult-to-resist impulse, an external force which receives no help from the recipient (Aristotle) but which may nevertheless be cooperated with (for example, the highwayman who shouts, "Your money or your life!")—and of the presence of knowledge (375). Vermigli follows Aristotle in showing considerable analytic interest; for example, in distinguishing the spontaneous from the voluntary, and the range of possible instances of the voluntary, leading to a discussion of "cases" (377), and also a discussion of the blameworthiness of actions in this range of the "voluntary."

For example, if one endures evil for an unworthy end, this is blameworthy, but if for a noble end—one's country, one's parents, one's wife and children—then praiseworthy (379). Those who act from base motives may not be acting involuntarily, as they may claim (384).

Vermigli goes into all this with great expository skill—clearly, orderly, and in detail—making judicious points, and then toward the end of the chapter, he presents a longer-than-usual discussion of how all these Aristotelian claims accord with holy Scripture. He cites a number of biblical examples that accord with Aristotelianism. Of particular interest is the way in which

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[15] John Calvin, *Defensio Sanae et Orthodoxae Doctrinae de Servitvte et Liberatione Humanae Arbitrii*, Joannis Calvini, Scripta Didactica et Polemica 3, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane and Graham I. Davies (Geneva: Droz, 2008), 224. English translation, John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, ed. A. N. S. Lane, trans. G. I. Davies (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1996), 190.

Vermigli thinks that scriptural examples of moral action, together with praise and blame, follow the same contours as Aristotle's thinking.

Aristotle famously distinguished between those actions that are fully voluntarily and those in which the will is involved, but that are not fully voluntarily.

> Something of this sort occurs in jettisoning goods during a storm. There is no one who, strictly speaking, willingly and voluntarily throws away his own property, but people do it to save themselves and others, if they have any sense. (Aristotle, *Eth. nic*. 3.1; quoted on p. 376)

So, as regards responsibility, there is a threefold classification: the fully voluntary, the partly voluntary (as in the jettisoning case), and actions done out of ignorance. Vermigli thinks that this is exactly what we find in Scripture.

First, voluntariness (396): The faithful are praised for being a willing people (Ps 11:9), and the woodcutter is excused if his action is accidental because it was not voluntary (Num 35:18). The devil tells the truth but does so only under compulsion and so is not praised; neither is Balaam, who is forced at the metaphorical point of a sword to bless the people of God (Num 22:1–35). Mixed actions—that is, those where we are constrained, though we still act of our own accord—are commended in Scripture, for example, self-denial for a greater good, to suffer rather than to sin, or to endure persecution (397). We are praised for such mixed actions, for those who endure persecution are blessed (Matt 5:10). What should be endured for what? We should endure anything rather than depart from Christ. Base actions may be as voluntary as honorable actions, as Aristotle taught.

But there are issues over which Aristotle and Scripture deviate. For what if the evil we do is due to the presence of original sin? Vermigli asks, "Suppose someone said that knowledge or awareness is lacking when this sin is contracted and that the sin is caused by the first evil motions of our soul, in which there is no deliberation or choice?" Answer:

> Aristotle's teaching should be understood of ethical and actual behavior, but that he had no knowledge of original sin. It is enough for us that they cannot be called compulsory because they have an internal principle.

Original sin is such an internal principle (400). So Aristotle is confirmed after all! (396–97).

Finally (in this rather rapid survey), what of ignorance? Aristotle distinguished between those actions done from ignorance about which we feel remorse when our ignorance is uncovered and those over which we do not feel remorse. That we do not feel remorse when sin is uncovered does not

mean that we committed no sin if we ought to have known (398): "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." They had sinned and needed forgiveness: "I know that you acted in ignorance." But if they could not have known what they were ignorant of, this ensures nonculpability. (He cites the drunkenness of Noah.) Culpability depends partly on the importance and centrality of ignorance in the question in view (398). Actions done when drunk are voluntary, both for Aristotle and Scripture (399). So the approach here is that what Aristotle says is true because and insofar as it accords with Scripture, and we might say that Vermigli sees Aristotle as an astute observer of and commentator on human life, as a recipient of "natural light," "common grace," and so forth.

Several things are interesting about this treatment. There is no discussion of the metaphysics of human action, nothing on what is nowadays called determinism or compatibilism, or of agent causation. His reference to original sin presented him with an invitation to discuss these issues, but he does not accept it. There is no attempt to discuss Aristotle's account of the voluntary and the blameworthy in light of Aristotle's own indeterminism and fear of fatalism to be found in his famous chapter "The Sea Battle Tomorrow" in book 5 of the *De Interpretatione*. It is true that Aristotle's account of blameworthiness in terms of voluntariness and knowledge (or awareness) can be bolted onto either a compatibilist or an incompatibilist account of action, depending on what one takes the sources of voluntariness to be. But it seems that Vermigli, in common with Calvin, is sympathetic to some form of compatibilism.[16] In ignoring the questions of the overall consistency or otherwise of Aristotle's moral psychology and his ethics, Vermigli is simply content to help himself to this aspect of Aristotle's thought without bothering about its significance for Aristotle's overall views themselves. (This may be partly at least because he takes Aristotle to be discussing ethics from a civil or public angle rather than from the angle of metaphysics, and he may be correct in this.) There is considerable merit in the care with which he discusses voluntariness, and Calvin's short statements on the matter could certainly have benefited from discussions of the matter with his friend.

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[16] Luca Baschera, "Peter Martyr Vermigli on Free Will: The Aristotelian Heritage of Reformed Theology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 12.2 (2007): 325–40. But alongside this account must be played the much more ambiguous account of free will in the following passage: "Judgment belongs to the function of understanding, but desire belongs to the will. Reason or understanding has the place of an advisor, but the will desires, accepts or rejects. Accordingly, we may define free will that follows the directive of the understanding to refuse or desire something by itself." (From a lecture given on January 25, 1560, and incorporated into his *Loci Communes*. English translation Joseph C. McClelland, in *Philosophical Works*, Peter Martyr Library 4, Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 39 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1996), 272.