

Theory and History of Ontology by Raul Corazzon | e-mail: rc@ontology.co

Francisco Suárez on Metaphysics as the Science of Real Beings

INTRODUCTION

References to the Latin edition of the Disputationes Metaphysicae (= DM) are to the edition in two volumes edited by Charles Berton reprinted in the Luis Vivés edition (voll. 25-26).

"Suarez's contributions are important in three areas in particular: philosophy, law, and theology. From a philosophical standpoint his most important works are: *De anima*, which contains much of his psychology, epistemology, and philosophy of mind; *De gratia*, which deals with issues of philosophical theology involving free will and determinism; and the monumental *Disputationes metaphysicae*. The last is undoubtedly one of the great works of Western philosophy. It is the first systematic and comprehensive treatise on metaphysics composed in the West that is not a commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Furthermore, it summarizes and evaluates the metaphysical thought of fifteen hundred years of medieval and scholastic metaphysical speculation. Indeed, it is to this day the most complete and comprehensive exposition of scholastic and Aristotelian metaphysics. Its fifty-four disputations cover every metaphysical topic known during Suarez's time. *De legibus* is Suarez's most important work dealing with legal and political theory. In it he explores in detail the nature of law and of civil society. Suarez's views on international law (*ius gentium*) make him one of its founders. Suarez's contributions in theology are contained in his numerous books on the subject. He touched upon almost every aspect of sacred doctrine, from the Trinity to questions pertaining to the spiritual life. This has made his theological writings a standard source of Catholic theology. Moreover, his role in helping to shape the response of the Catholic Counter-Reformation to the rise of Protestantism, guarantees a prominent place for his ideas in history. Suarez's place in the history of philosophy is frequently disputed. Some authors place him firmly in the medieval tradition, claiming that he should be seen as perhaps the last world-class figure of that tradition before modern philosophy changes the philosophical direction of the West. Others see Suarez as providing the foundation for some of the views that were going to form the core of modern philosophy. Under the latter interpretation he is seen as a precursor of modern philosophy, rather than as the term of a medieval process of development." (pp. 260-261, notes omitted).

From: Jorge J. E. Gracia, "Francisco Suárez: the Man in History", *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 65, 1991, pp. 259-266.

"Perhaps the most important enterprise of the *Doctor eximius*, the *Disputationes metaphysicae* is a complete résumé of his own and previous Scholastic thought on a myriad of questions, arranged in the form of fifty-four "Disputations" dealing with various topics systematically. (...) In format, Suárez's *Disputationes* represented a radical departure from previous metaphysical treatises. Until its appearance, metaphysics had been explicitly treated either just incidentally in the form of *Opuscula* ("little works"), such as St. Thomas Aquinas's *De ente et essentia* ("On Being and Essence"), or in commentaries on the text of Aristotle. Both methods were clearly unsatisfactory, the one incomplete and the other shackled to the

rambling obsolete order of Aristotle. So Suárez says that he intends to give, preparatory to theology, a complete exposition of metaphysics which, instead of following the text of Aristotle, will proceed in a systematic fashion.

In executing his intention, the *Doctor eximius* has divided his work into two main parts, to which correspond two tomes. After explaining in the first Disputation the object, the dignity, and the utility of metaphysics, he proceeds in the first part to treat of being in general, its properties and causes.

In the second tome, he descends to items under being, considering them from a metaphysical viewpoint.

The first part studies the concept of being (Disputation 2) which, representing in some way everything that entails an order to existence, transcends all genera, species and differences. It will encompass everything real, from extrinsic denominations, through mere possibles, to the subsistent, purely actual, and necessary reality of God. Following this is a treatment of the essential properties of every being inasmuch as it is a being, namely, unity, truth and goodness. Under the discussion of unity, space is given to questions concerning the principle of individuation (Disputation 5), the reality of universal natures (Disputation 6), and the various kinds of distinction (Disputation 7). The discussion of truth (Disputation 8) is balanced by discussion of falsity (Disputation 9) and that of goodness (Disputation 10) by that of evil (Disputation 11) After the essential properties, there follows a consideration of the causes of being. Disputation 12 treats causes in general while Disputations 13-25 deal with various types of causes. Concluding this first part, Disputation 26 presents a comparison of causes with their effects and Disputation 27 considers the mutual relations of causes one to another.

The second part opens with the division of being into infinite and finite (Disputation 28). Infinite being, or God, is the subject of the next two Disputations. In Disputation 29, the existence and unicity of God is demonstrated metaphysically. Disputation 30 goes on to investigate, as far as unaided human reason can, the divine perfection, simplicity, immensity, immutability, wisdom, and omnipotence. With Disputation 31 Suárez begins his treatment of finite being. It is this Disputation which is the locus of the famed Suárezian denial of the real distinction between essence and existence in creatures. In Disputation 32, Suárez considers the distinction of substance and accident in general. Substance is treated in metaphysical detail through the next four Disputations while the different categories of accident are the subject matter of Disputations 37 to 53. The fifty-fourth Disputation, (...) concludes the whole work with a discussion of "beings of reason" including negations, privations, and reason-dependent relations -- all of which fall outside real being, the object of metaphysics." (pp. 8-10, notes omitted)

From: John P. Doyle "Introduction" to: Francisco Suárez, *On Beings of Reason. (De Entibus Rationis). Metaphysical Disputation LIV*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press 1995.

"It is generally agreed that modern philosophy places greater stress on the subjectivity of the knower than on the objective reality of the known, as does medieval philosophy. Suárez, when faced with a basic problem of metaphysics, whether the concept of "being" is one or multiple, decided, without any Scholastic precedent, to make a subjective state of mind (*conceptus formalis entis*) the criterion for establishing the unitary sense of objective reality (*conceptus obiectivus entis*). When problems like that of "being" became too difficult to resolve by the usual medieval objective" approach, Suárez recommended recourse to the "subjective" because it was better known (*notior*) to us than the objective, especially as the subjective is produced "by us and in us" (*a nobis et in nobis*). On the basis of the principle that "to one formal concept one objective concept necessarily corresponds;" *uni conceptui formali unus conceptus obiectivus necessario respondet*, Suárez, as never before in Scholasticism, made extra-mental reality dependent for its truth on in intra-mental concept, thus changing the main thrust of medieval philosophy. Descartes adopted the same approach when faced with he basic problem of his system, of establishing, through the resources of the intellect, knowledge that was objectively certain. Like Suárez, he made an intra-mental concept the criterion for determining extra- mental reality. The intra-mental concept was the thinker's "cogito"; the extra-mental reality was the thinker's existence, "sum"; with the certainty of the existence following as a necessary

consequence, "*ergo*", from the intra-mental concept itself.

Suárez could not have become the founder of modern philosophy before he had worked out his own system, the technical vocabulary of which provided the groundwork for the emerging modern systems. This vocabulary was first needed to systematize metaphysics. The long subjection to the unmethodical text of Aristotle had delayed the attainment of this important philosophical object, realised at last in the *Disputationes Metaphysicae*.

In the two volumes of that great work, the philosophy of being was given a binary structure, characterized, though not by its author, as general (vol. 1) and special (vol. 2) metaphysics. *General metaphysics* has as its theme the common concept of being, its general attributes, and its causes; and *special metaphysics*, the kinds of being contained under the common concept, (*) classified in two dichotomies, the primary of finite and infinite, and the secondary of substance and accident. Suárez also furnished the burgeoning modern systems with vocabulary as groundwork for their ideas, in many cases the vocabulary anomalously grew to be alien to the system that was its source. How was this possible? Through that system undergoing anamorphosis, a condition where something distorted occasionally appears to be regular; indeed so regular, that the distorted ideas seem to belong to the nature of anamorphosed thing itself. Which may explain why the realist Suárez is made out to be a crypto-idealist, and it may be that the philosophies of realism (Scholasticism) and idealism (modern philosophies) have some hidden affinity and are closer together than one would suppose." (pp. 27-28)

Notes

(*) Suárez describes *general* metaphysics and its "proprium et adaequatam rationem, ac deinde proprietates eius et causas." DM 2: 1, introductory paragraph [25: 64] "... de communi conceptu entis, illiusque proprietatibus, quae de illa reciproce dicuntur." DM 28, introductory paragraph [26: 1]. He describes *special* metaphysics as "res omnes, quae sub ente continentur, et illius rationem includunt, et sub obiectiva ratione huius scientiae cadunt, et a materia in suo esse abstrahunt." DM 2: 1, introductory paragraph [25: 64] "... definitas rationes entium... divisiones varias ipsius entis et membrorum eius... primam et maxime essentialem divisionem entis in finitum et infinitum secundum essentiam seu in ratione entis." DM 28, introductory paragraph [26: 1].

From: José Pereira, *Suárez Between Scholasticism and Modernity*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press 2007.

AN OVERVIEW OF SUÁREZ'S METAPHYSICAL DISPUTATIONS

"The two large folio volumes of the *Disputationes metaphysicae* appeared in Salamanca in 1597. In his brief foreword, "Ad lectorem," Suárez indicates his reason for undertaking this project: "It is impossible for anyone to become a competent theologian unless he builds upon a solid metaphysical foundation." He develops this view in the *Prooemium* or prologue to his work. The science of metaphysics, he holds, is indispensable for a mastery of theology. More intimately than any other human field of knowledge, it is connected with theology; it has for its object the most universal and supreme principles which embrace all being and are the foundation of all knowledge. This function of metaphysics was for Suárez a compelling motive for interrupting his theological labors and producing, in one systematic, comprehensive work, the results of his metaphysical studies and investigations, begun many years before. The prologue reads as follows:

"Sacred and supernatural theology relies on divine illumination and on principles revealed by God. However, it is cultivated by human reasoning and investigation, and therefore enlists the aid of truths naturally known, using them as ministers and instruments to develop its deductions and to illustrate divine truths. But of all the natural sciences, that which holds the primacy and has won the name of first philosophy is most valuable for promoting sacred and supernatural theology. For among them all it approaches most closely to the science of divine things, and also explains and vindicates those natural principles which embrace the universe of being and in one way or another stand at the basis of all learning.

For this reason I wished to revise and expand what I have worked out for my students and publicly taught on various occasions during many years concerning this natural wisdom, so that the results of my reflections might be made available to the general public. Accordingly I am forced for a time to interrupt, or rather to postpone, the more weighty commentaries and disputations on sacred theology I am so busily engaged in, as well as the taxing labor required for their publication.

It often happened that while I was treating of divine mysteries, metaphysical problems would come up. Without a knowledge and understanding of these, the higher mysteries of Christianity can scarcely, if at all, be discussed as they deserve. Hence I had to mingle baser questions with supernatural subjects, a practice that is annoying to readers and is not very profitable for them; or else, to avoid this awkward procedure, I had briefly to propose my own opinion in such matters, and its demand of toy readers a blind faith in my judgment. This was embarrassing for me, and could well seem out of place to them. Metaphysical principles and truths are so closely interwoven with theological conclusions and deductions, that if knowledge and full understanding of the former are lacking, knowledge of the latter must necessarily suffer.

Led on by such considerations, I yielded to repeated requests and decided to write the present work. I have arranged all the metaphysical disputations according to a method calculated to combine comprehensive treatment with brevity, and so to be of greater service to revealed wisdom. Hence it will not be necessary to divide the work into several books. For all that pertains to this doctrine and is suitable to its subject matter in the light of the method adopted, can be fully handled in a limited number of disputations. What belongs to "pure philosophy" or dialectics has, so far as possible, been left out as not in keeping with the scope of the work. I shall adhere to this norm, even though I am aware that other writers on metaphysics devote much space to such subjects. But before I begin to treat of the subject-matter of this doctrine I shall, God willing, discuss wisdom or metaphysics itself, its object, use, necessity and its attributes and rewards."

The work falls into two main parts, coinciding with the two volumes in which it was published. It comprises fifty-four disputations in all. The first volume treats of metaphysics in its broadest comprehension: being as such, and the properties and causes of being. The first disputation deals with the object of metaphysics; the second inaugurates an exposition of the concept of being. Disputations III to XI discuss the passions and transcendental properties of being. Disputations XII to XXVII embody the author's doctrine on causes.

The second volume opens with a consideration of infinite and finite being. Two disputations deal with natural knowledge of the existence, nature, and attributes of God. The remaining disputations are devoted to the metaphysics of finite being, distributed according to the Aristotelian categories. As the title indicates, the work is cast in the form of disputations. The discussions follow a regular pattern. First, the problem is stated. Then the various solutions that have actually been proposed by philosophers are reviewed (*Variae opiniones*). Thirdly, Suárez gives what he considers to be the true doctrine or, as the case may be, the most probable theory (*Vera sententia or Resolutio quaestionis*). A refutation of opposing views often brings the disputation to a close." (pp. 6-7)

From: Cyril Vollert, "Introduction" to: Francisco Suárez, *On the Various Kinds of Distinctions (Disputatio VII)*, translated from the Latin with an introduction by Cyril Vollert, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press 1947.

An outline of the *METAPHYSICAL DISPUTATIONS*

I. The nature of metaphysics (1)

II. The transcendentals: being and its attributes (2-11)

- A. Being (2, 3)
- B. One (4, 5- 7)
- C. True (8, 9)
- D. Good (10, 11)

III. The causes of being (12-27)

- A. Causes in general (12)
- B. The material cause (13, 14)
- C. The formal cause (15, 16)
- D. The efficient cause (17-19, 20-22)
- E. The final cause (23, 24)
- F. The exemplar cause (25)
- G. Relation of the causes to their effects and to each other (26, 27)

IV. The division of being into infinite and finite (28-31)

- A. The distinction between infinite and finite being (28)
- B. The existence and nature of the First Being (29, 30)
- C. Finite being (31)

V. The division of finite being into substance and accident (32-38)

- A. The distinction between substance and accident (32)
- B. Created substance in general (33)
- C. Primary substance (or *suppositum*) (34)
- D. Immaterial substance (35)
- E. Material substance (36)
- F. Accidents in general (37, 38)

VI. The division of accidents into the nine categories (39-53)

- A. The division of accidents into the nine highest genera (39)
- B. Quantity (40, 41)
- C. Quality (42-46)
- D. Relation (47)
- E. Action (48)
- F. Passion (49)

G. Time (50)
 II. Place (51)
 I. Position (52)
 J. Having (53)

VII. Real being versus being of reason (54)" (pp. XVI-XVII)

From: Alfred J. Freddoso, Introduction to: *On Efficient Causality. Metaphysical Disputations 17, 18, and 19*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1994.

THE OBJECT OF METAPHYSICS IN THE FIRST THREE *DISPUTATIONS*

"In the twenty-seven Disputations which make up the first volume, Suárez is concerned with being in general while, symmetrically, in the twenty-seven Disputations of the second volume he descends to particular being -- in effect dividing metaphysics itself into a general and a special part. In the very first Disputation (*Opera omnia*, Paris: Vivès [1856]: vol. 25, pp. 1-64), he tells us that the object of metaphysics is "being insofar as it is real being." Explaining this, in Disputation 2 (pp. 64-102) he uses two distinctions already familiar to Scholastic authors. The first is between the formal concept as an act of the mind and the objective concept as what is immediately the object of that act. This latter may be an individual thing or some common feature (ratio) of things. It may, further, be something mind-independent, whether actual or possible, or it may be something merely objective or mind-dependent. The second distinction is between being as a participle, which refers to actual existents and being as a noun, which refers to whatever is not a simple fiction but is true in itself and apt really to exist. The object of metaphysics is then identified with the "common objective concept of being as a noun." This precise object, which reflects Avicenna's (980-1037) understanding of Aristotelian metaphysics, abstracts from existence and, as common, transcends all categories, genera, species and differences to embrace everything real. This last runs a range from extrinsic denominations (such as "being right," "being left," "being known," or "being willed"), 9 through mere possibles (which reduce to non-contradiction), to actual created substances and accidents, to the subsistent, purely actual, necessary, untreated, and infinite reality of God. Over this range, the common concept of being as a noun is analogous with what Suárez will call "an analogy of intrinsic attribution." In this analogy, a unified concept of being is shared, in an order that is intrinsic to it, by different beings (God and creatures, substance and accidents) in such way that the being of what is posterior depends upon and indeed "demands" (postulat) the being of what is prior. Disputation 3 (pp. 102-115) offers a general treatment of the transcendental properties, namely unity, truth, and goodness, which belong to every being insofar as it is a being." (pp. XI-XII, notes omitted)

From: John P. Doyle, "Introduction" to: Francisco Suárez, *The Metaphysical Demonstration of the Existence of God. Metaphysical Disputations 28-29*, South Bend: St. Augustine Press 2004, pp. IX-XXIV.

"To what extent Suárez, despite his token references to Thomas Aquinas, follows Scotus' approach is evident from the definition of the subject matter of metaphysics in the first of the 54 disputations. Here he discusses six possible solutions to the problem, but dismisses all of them as either too comprehensive or too restrictive. The subject matter of metaphysics is neither everything that is knowable nor the "supreme real being" (Suárez,

Disp. Met. 1.1.9), i.e. God or the immaterial being; nor is it the finite being that is the subject matter of physics. Rather, the subject matter of metaphysics is "being as such" (*ens inquantum ens*), i.e. a common determination (ibid. 1.1.23 and 26) that is grasped in a concept that abstracts from all categorial determinations as well as from being finite/infinite, being caused/uncaused, and being material/immaterial. Metaphysics is, therefore, the "most general science" (ibid. 1.5.14), because it treats of the "*rationes universales transcendentales*" (ibid. 1.2.27). That is to say, metaphysics is a *scientia transcendens* in the Scotistic sense. Because the immaterial being (God) cannot be known except through previously known transcategorial attributes of being, metaphysics as transcendental science and metaphysics as theology coincide.

According to Suárez, metaphysics deals with the "formal" as well as the "objective" concept of being. By the formal concept of being, Suárez understands the act of knowing, which "*ex unica et prima impositione*" (ibid. 2.2.24) yields an intentional representation of the object; by the objective concept he designates that which is intentionally represented by that act. In other words, Suárez does not assume a theory of concepts characterized by a noetic-noematic parallelism of *res* and *conceptus*; rather he accepts Ockham's critical approach towards a strictly realistic interpretation of universal concepts. Since Scotus himself does not rely on that parallelism when it comes to the concept of being, Suárez can substantially follow Scotus and apply 'being' to a first and unified formal concept which, in virtue of its imposition, represents a first and unified objective concept of absolutely simple content that grasps all different beings in an indeterminate way, i.e. as being.

To the formal concept of being there corresponds an appropriate and immediate objective concept, which is explicitly neither substance nor accident, neither God nor creature, but which designates these in a unified way, i.e. inasmuch as they are similar and agree in being. (ibid. 2.2.8)

What does the objective concept that corresponds to the formal concept of being mean? According to Suárez, it is a determination that transcends the generality of the genus; this determination cannot be defined, but only explicated through its relationship to actual existence. 'Being' means "that which can exist" (*id quod aptum est esse seu realiter existere*: ibid. 2.4.7); the possibility of existence is grounded in an ontological disposition which (as we have seen before) appears in the non-contradiction of the internal contents constituting essences.

Because entity in the sense of being(ness) -- which in a concrete being is identical with the entity or being(ness) of that being -- is grasped indeterminately by the concept of being, that concept has an "illimitability and transcendence" (ibid.2.6.10) on account of which it precedes all more determinate modes. First among those more determinate modes, according to both Suárez and Scotus, is the classification "finite/infinite", which Suárez understands in terms of "intensity"; this allows him to interpret finite being as a non-determinate mode of an intensive quantity and infinite being as the "totally indivisible infinity of perfection which in itself is most real and complete" (ibid. 30.2.25)." (pp. 62-63)

From: Ludger Honnefelder, "Metaphysics as a Discipline: from the "Transcendental Philosophy of the Ancients" to "Kant's Notion of Transcendental Philosophy"." In *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory, 1400-1700*, edited by Russell L. Friedman and Lauge Olaf Nielsen, Dordrecht: Kluwer 2003, pp. 53-74.

EXCLUSION OF THE "BEINGS OF REASON" FROM THE SUBJECT OF METAPHYSICS

"As every historian of philosophy knows, Aristotle thought the subject of metaphysics was "being insofar as it is being" and from this subject he excluded "being as true". Centuries after Aristotle, Francisco Suárez, S.J., designated the subject of metaphysics more explicitly as "being insofar as it is real being".

The addition of "real" to Aristotle's formula highlighted the inclusion of all that can as well as does exist (4). Against the backdrop of two already well known distinctions - (1) between formal and objective concepts, and (2) between being as a participle and being as a noun -- for Suárez the

subject so conceived was identical with "the objective concept of being as a noun" (5). Concurrently, while being was said to be analogous with regard to hierarchically ordered objects (God and creatures, substance and accidents) with an intrinsic attribution of the perfection it represented (6), such analogy presupposed a common, unitary, and all but univocal, concept (7). But from that concept and from the subject of metaphysics Suárez excluded "beings of reason" (8), which he subsumed under Aristotle's being as true (9), and of which impossible objects, in the sense of those that would be self-contradictory, furnished the paradigm case. (10)" (pp. 297-298)

Notes

(4) DM 2, 4, n. 3 (XXV, 88).

(5) Cf. DM 2, s. 4, n. 3 (XXV, p. 88). For the distinction between formal and objective concepts in writings available to Suárez, cf. Thomas de Vio, Cardinalis Caietanus, *In "De ente et essentia"*, c. 1, qu. 2, ed. P. Laurent. Taurini, Marietti, 1934, pp. 25-28, and Pedro da Fonseca, S.J., *In Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae Libros*, L. IV, c. 2, q. 2. ed. Coloniae, Sumptibus Lazari Zetzneri Bibliopolae, 1615, I, pp. 710-11. On being as a noun in contrast to being as a participle, see e.g. P. Fonseca, *In Met. Arist.*, L. IV, ch. 2, qu. 2, s. 2 (I, p. 740). Also see the texts of Duns Scotus (1265-1308) given by M. Fernandez Garcia, O.F.M., *Lexicon Scholasticum*. Quaracchi, Ex Typographia Coll. S. Bonaventurae, 1910, p. 241. We may note that Scotus in one of the texts cited by Fernandez Garcia refers to the distinction as "antique": "Solet antiquitus dici, quod ens potest esse participium, vel nomen", *Opus prim. super I Periherm.*, q. 8, n. 10. Before Scotus, cf. St. Thomas, *Quodlib. II*, q. 2, a. 1, ed. Spiazzi. Taurini, Marietti, 1956, p. 24.

(6) Cf. DM 28, s. 3 (XXVI, p. 13); *ibid.*, d. 32, sec. 2 (XXVI, p. 319); *ibid.*, d. 2, s. 2, n. 14 (XXV, pp. 69-70); *ibid.*, d. 12, s. 1, nn. 13-24 (pp. 378-82); also see his treatment of the analogous notion of "cause", *ibid.*, d. 27, s. 1, nn. 9-11 (p. 952).

(7) Cf. DM 2, s. 2, n. 36 (XXV, p. 81).

(8) DM 1, s. 1, n. 6 (XXV, p. 4); *ibid.*, n. 26 (p. 11); *ibid.*, d. 4, s. 8, n. 4 (p. 138); *ibid.*, d. 47, s. 3, n. 3 (XXVI, p. 794); and *ibid.*, d. 54, prol. 1 (p. 1014).

(9) Cf. DM 54, s. 1, n. 4 (XXVI, p. 1016) where he is speaking about beings of reason in general; cf. *ibid.*, s. 3, n. 1 (p. 1026); and *ibid.*, s. 5, n. 16 (p. 1035), where he is immediately speaking about true statements regarding chimerae.

(10) On this, see my article, "Suárez on Beings of Reason and Truth (I)", in *Vivarium*, XXV, 1 (1987), esp. pp. 69-75. For Suárez's overall teaching on "beings of reason", cf. DM 54, *De Entibus Rationis* (XXVI, pp. 1014-41). For an English version, cf. *Francisco Suárez, S.J.: On Beings of Reason (De Entibus Rationis Metaphysical Disputation LIV*, translated with introduction and notes by J. P. Doyle, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995. On impossible objects after Suárez see my article, "Another God, Chimerae, Goat-Stags, and Man-Lions: A Seventeen Century Debate about Impossible Objects", in *The Review of Metaphysics*, XLVIII (1995), pp. 771-808.

From: John P. Doyle, "Supertranscendental Being: On the Verge of Modern Philosophy", In: Stephen F. Brown (ed.), *Meeting of the Minds. The Relation between Medieval and Classical Modern European Philosophy*, Turnhout: Brepols 1998, pp. 297-315.

HEIDEGGER'S APPRECIATION OF SUÁREZ

"Heidegger reserves the place of honor in his exposition [*of the Thesis of Medieval Ontology*] for the Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548-1617), a figure whose pre-eminence for Heidegger is both systematic and historical. Suárez is the bridge between the Middle Ages and the modern world (*Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* 111-16/ English translation 79-83). It was through Suárez that the metaphysics of Scholasticism flowed into modern thinkers; his influence is clearly detectable in Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff, Schopenhauer, Kant, and Hegel. Suárez abandoned the format of the *commentarium* employed by the classical Scholastic thinkers and developed instead a strictly philosophical and systematic treatise entitled *Disputationes metaphysicae*. Although it was written in the seventeenth century, it is the first major systematic Scholastic treatise on metaphysics (GP 112/80). St. Thomas' major works, for example, are either commentaries or, when they are systematic, theological treatises. The *Disputationes* is divided into fifty-four tracts. The first twenty-seven treat of *metaphysica generalis* (or *ontologia*); the next twenty-six treat of special beings (*metaphysica specialis*); the fifty-fourth is devoted to beings of reason (*entia rationis*). In general metaphysics Suárez investigates the properties of the abstract concept of being in general. In special metaphysics, he investigates God and creatures, that is, infinite and finite beings. This distinction between general and special metaphysics was imported fully intact by Wolff and made its way to the center of Kant's architectonic -- to the distinction between the transcendental analytic and the transcendental dialectic -- in the *Critique of Pure Reason*." (p. 69)

From: John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas. An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*, New York: Fordham University Press 1982.

"The first *Disputatio* treats: *De natura primae philosophiae seu metaphysicae*, of the essence of First Philosophy or metaphysics. Suárez begins in the introduction (3) by discussing the various designations of metaphysics (*varia metaphysicae nomina*), and does so with independent recourse to Aristotle. Here he finds that metaphysics is designated as *sapientia (sophia)*, *prudentia (phronesis)*, then as *prima philosophia (proté philosophia)*, then as *naturalis theologia(theologikê)* -- which Suárez here interprets in a sense quite unlike that of antiquity (*quoniam de Deo ac divinis rebus sermonem habet, quantum ex naturali lumine haberi potest* 4) – and finally as *metaphysica*.

Suárez says that this natural theology or First Philosophy is called metaphysics because it deals with God (*ex quo etiam metaphysica nominata est* 5). He thereby gives the expression a different meaning from that of Aquinas. Aquinas uses the expression *metaphysica* insofar as it treats *de ente in communi*. Suárez, on the other hand, says it is called metaphysics because it is theology. He remarks that this title 'metaphysics' does not stem from Aristotle himself, but from his interpreters (*quod nomen non tam ab Aristotele, quam ab ejus interpretibus habuit* 6). However, he is of the opinion that Aristotle did put together this collection.

He explains the expression 'metaphysics' in a sense that deviates from the explanation given by Aquinas, and brings in another point of view which is significant in the history of metaphysics: *de his rebus, quae scientias seu res naturales consequuntur*. (7) (...)

The *Metaphysics* is not concerned, then, with such books as come after those about physics, rather 'coming after' is now taken in the sense of *content*: knowledge of the suprasensuous is later than that of the sensuous. In the order of appropriation, in the order in which knowledge of the suprasensuous arises, in the sequence of investigation, metaphysical knowledge is placed after knowledge of physics. Suárez stresses the *méta* in the sense of *post* and understands this *post* in the sense of the stages of knowledge proceeding from the sensuous to the suprasensuous. At the same time however he brings into play the interpretation in terms of content: *méta*, afterwards, that which comes afterwards, which exceeds the sensuous." (pp. 52-53)

Notes

(3) Suárez, *Disputatones Metaphysicae*. Disp I *Opera Omnia* Ed. C. Berton (Paris, 156ff.) vol. 25 pp. 1 ff.

(4) *ibid.*

(5) *ibid.*

(6) *ibid.*

(7) *ibid.*

From: Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics. World, Finitude, Solitude*, translated by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1993.

"Suárez is the thinker who had the strongest influence on modern philosophy. Descartes is directly dependent on him, using his terminology almost everywhere. It is Suárez who for the first time systematized medieval philosophy and above all ontology. Before him the Middle Ages, including Thomas and Duns Scotus, treated ancient thought only in commentaries, which deal with the texts seriatim. The basic book of antiquity, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, is not a coherent work, being without a systematic structure. Suárez saw this and tried to make up for this lack, as he regarded it, by putting the ontological problems into a systematic form for the first time, a form which determined a classification of metaphysics that lasted through the subsequent centuries down to Hegel.

In accordance with Suárez' scheme, distinctions were drawn between *metaphysica generalis*, general ontology, and *metaphysica specialis*, which included *cosmologia rationalis*, ontology of nature, *psychologia*, ontology of mind, and *theologia rationalis*, ontology of God. This arrangement of the central philosophical disciplines recurs in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Transcendental logic corresponds in its foundations to general ontology. What Kant deals with in transcendental dialectic, the problems of rational psychology, cosmology, and theology, corresponds to what modern philosophy recognized as questions. Suárez, who gave an exposition of his philosophy in the *Disputationes metaphysicae* (1597), not only exercised great influence on the further development of theology within Catholicism but, with his order colleague Fonseca, had a powerful effect on the shaping of Protestant Scholasticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their thoroughness and philosophical level are higher by far than that which Melanchthon, for example, attained in his commentaries on Aristotle." (p. 80)

From: Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, translation, introduction, and lexicon by Albert Hofstadter. Revised edition, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. (Lecture course given at the University of Marburg in the summer of 1927).

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