

Introduction

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Francisco Suárez, S.J. (1548–1617) was one of the most important philosophers and theologians of early modern Aristotelian scholasticism. His fame in the seventeenth century and beyond rests to a great degree on his *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, or *Metaphysical Disputations* (*DM*), first published in Salamanca in 1597. The work is explicitly described by its author as having been composed out of a desire to provide the grounding in metaphysics that is necessary for the proper study of supernatural theology, and it constitutes an extraordinarily comprehensive statement of a broadly Aristotelian metaphysics. It is sometimes said to be the first systematic work of scholastic first philosophy not to take the form of a commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. This is not *quite* right, however: for one thing, the Dominican Diego Mas (1553–1608) published his *Metaphysical Disputation on Being and Its Properties* in 1587. Moreover, it seems that in the 1570s many Jesuits wrote metaphysical treatises that did not follow the traditional order of exposition.¹ Nevertheless, if we confine ourselves to published works, Suárez's *Metaphysical Disputations* is unprecedented in size and scope. It was, in addition, extraordinarily popular: despite its bulk – the Latin text runs to about 1,527,000 words – it went through nine further editions in its author's lifetime, in Venice (1599, 1605, 1610), Mainz (1600, 1605, 1614), Paris (1605), and Geneva (1608, 1614). Indeed, the work's influence, in both Catholic and Protestant universities, was considerable. That it was read or cited by canonical early modern philosophers like G. W. Leibniz (1646–1716) and René Descartes (1596–1650) is often noted. But more significant still is the frequency with which Suárez is cited by later scholastic authors, authors whose philosophical views have lately become objects of study in their own right. For example, Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza (1578–1651) names Suárez more than 300 times in his *Universa Philosophia*. Suárez's presence is

¹ Schmutz (2004), 347–48, n. 1.

similarly ubiquitous in the writings of many other scholastic philosophers and theologians from diverse traditions, including those of the Portuguese Dominican John of St. Thomas (or João Painsot, 1589–1644), the Spanish/Bohemian Jesuit Rodrigo de Arriaga (1592–1667), and the Italian Franciscan Bartolomeo Mastri (1602–73). The Protestant scholastics, such as the Genevan Reformed Francis Turretin (1623–87) and the German Lutheran David Hollatz (1648–1713), do not explicitly cite Suárez as often, but scholarship has traced extensive Suárezian influence on the Protestant tradition as well.² The geographical and confessional reach of Suárez's influence within a century of his lifetime is remarkable.

Scholarly interest in Suárez's work, including his metaphysics, has grown tremendously in the last few decades, as one can gather from the fact that about half of the entries in Jacob Schmutz and Sydney Penner's bibliography of secondary literature on Suárez (www.sydneypenner.ca/bib.shtml) are for works published in the last twenty years, and this despite the fact that the bibliography itself stretches back to 1850. The reasons for this significant increase in scholarly interest are many and various. But a few seem clear. First, thirty years ago, the only language into which the *DM* had been translated in its entirety was Castilian, and at that point only five of the *DM*'s fifty-four disputations had been translated in their entirety into English, only one had been translated in its entirety into German, and none had received a complete translation into French, Italian, Portuguese, or Russian. Quite a few more of the *DM*'s disputations have now been translated into these languages.³ Second, because it is a textbook, albeit a remarkably thorough and detailed one, the *DM* serves as a relatively convenient entryway into the world of early modern scholasticism and thus as a sensible jumping-off point for the study of important thinkers who are more or less contemporary with Suárez, including Francisco de Toledo (1515–82), Pedro da Fonseca (1528–99), and Antonio Rubio (1548–1615). Third, scholars of better-known early modern philosophers like René Descartes have sought to gain insight into their subjects by looking at the system of thought that Descartes and others were reacting against, namely, Aristotelian scholasticism, and although they have all too often treated the thought of Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) as representative of the entire scholastic tradition, many scholars now recognize that

² Kronen (2015).

³ For a partial list of disputations that have been translated into a modern language, see Suárez (2021), 334–35. To this list one can add Suárez (2023a, 2023b, and 2023c).

philosophers like Descartes and Leibniz should be read in the light of more immediate predecessors such as Suárez. Fourth, Suárez's *Metaphysical Disputations* is part of a tradition that stretches back not just through the European Renaissance and Middle Ages but also through the Islamic Golden Age of Ibn Rushd (or Averroes, 1126–98) and Ibn Sīnā (or Avicenna, ca. 970–1037), as well as the ancient commentary tradition of Alexander of Aphrodisias (active late second and early third century CE) and Simplicius of Cilicia (ca. 480–560 CE). Indeed, according to one scholar, in the *DM*, Suárez cites not just these thinkers, but another 243 authors across 7,718 citations.⁴ The *Disputations* can therefore serve to acquaint us with philosophical debates and discussions reaching back all the way to antiquity.

Despite the increased scholarship devoted to the *Metaphysical Disputations*, the sheer size and scope of the work are such that many of its discussions have received no scholarly attention whatsoever. Indeed, the longest of the work's disputations, *DM* 30 ("On the First Being, Insofar as What He Is and What He Is Like Can Be Cognized by Natural Reason"), whose length Suárez justifies in a prefatory note to the reader by alleging "the importance and loftiness of the subject matter," appears to have received no sustained scholarly treatment in the last century.⁵ Even when it comes to the disputations that have received scholarly attention, none can be said to have been treated exhaustively.

The scope of the *Metaphysical Disputations* is such that it can be difficult to grasp. This is not for lack of organization. The work is carefully structured, beginning with a disputation on the nature and purpose of metaphysics and ending with a disputation on beings of reason that helps delineate the boundaries of metaphysics. In between, we get a series of disputations on the attributes of being (transcendental unity, truth, and goodness) and an extraordinarily comprehensive set of disputations on material, formal, efficient, final, and exemplar causes. We then get the division of being into infinite and finite being, each of which receives extensive discussion. Finite being itself is further divided into substance and accidents, and accidents into the nine accidental categories familiar from Aristotle. As one would expect from Suárez, every division is followed by remarkably comprehensive discussion of each member of the division.

⁴ Iturrioz (1949), 58–66.

⁵ There are a few works that examine Suárez's account of God that cite occasional passages from *DM* 30 (e.g., Marschler [2022]), but the focus is generally on either *DM* 29 or *De Deo Uno et Trino*.

Even with such an overview, it is easy to miss how much is covered. Indeed, this overview makes no explicit mention of classic philosophical topics such as the problem of universals, the nature of corporeal substance, free will, the existence of God, puzzles about omnipotence, the relationship between divine and creaturely action, the ontology of relations, modality, or the nature of time. But all these topics are encompassed by the structure outlined above, and all are given significant treatment by Suárez from a systematic Aristotelian perspective, along with many topics less frequently contemplated. To say that much work remains to be done when it comes to understanding Suárez's *Disputations* is a severe understatement.

It is our view that Suárez has too often been held hostage to larger historiographical narratives that treat him merely as a transitional figure in (say) the decline of Thomism. This has resulted in caricatured or even false portrayals of his philosophical views.⁶ The essays in this volume treat Suárez as a significant philosopher in his own right and focus on analyzing what he himself says. Support for one historiographical narrative or another may emerge from these close readings, but the focus of the contributors is on first letting Suárez speak for himself.

In Chapter 1, Daniel D. Novotný briefly describes the systematic framework of the *Metaphysical Disputations* and then examines its character, arguing not only that Suárez attempts to construct a rigorous Aristotelian science of being but that there is also a certain dialectical character to the work that might be seen as an attempt to capture “contrary aspects of reality.” Novotný suggests that this peculiarity might explain, at least in part, why the work's impact is far more difficult to assess than is usually assumed.

On the Aristotelian conception of a theoretical science, each such science has an adequate subject or object, and one of its principal tasks is to demonstrate that subject's passions or properties. The next six essays in this volume focus on aspects of Suárez's conceptions of both the adequate subject of metaphysics, real being (*ens reale*), and its properties. In his contribution, Stephan Schmid (Chapter 2) observes that in the Second Disputation (*DM* 2), Suárez explains that in one sense of “being,” the term is to be understood broadly so as to encompass any real essence, regardless

⁶ In the course of offering such a narrative, for example, Jean-François Courtine claims that Suárez endorses a basically Scotist conception of being's properties (see Courtine [1990], 376), but as Rolf Darge points out, not only is Courtine mistaken in this, he even *misquotes* Suárez in the course of making his case (see Darge [2004b], 121).

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of whether it exists or not. Schmid notes that this raises a number of important questions: To what extent are there such non-actual but merely possible real essences, according to Suárez? How, on his view, do merely possible things relate to actual things, including God, the necessary being? And what, for Suárez, makes God a necessary being in the first place? By answering these questions, Schmid undertakes to reconstruct Suárez's metaphysics of modality, a better understanding of which, he argues, serves to shed new light on Suárez's widely debated theory of necessary and eternal truths.

In Chapter 3, Rolf Darge observes that in his *Metaphysics* Aristotle situates truth in the intellect while also calling first philosophy, which is concerned with being as such, the "science of truth," thereby implying an intrinsic connection between being and truth. Aristotle's commentators were therefore left with the task of explaining both the latter connection and the relation between "ontic" or "real" truth – the truth of beings or things (*res*) – and the sort of truth found in the intellect. Darge's aim in his chapter is to explain Suárez's account of epistemic truth, real truth, and the relation between them while also situating this account in relation to the accounts of Thomas Aquinas and the famous Thomist Cajetan (1469–1534). Central to all three accounts is the idea that *true* is said analogically of cognition and things. Darge explains that in *DM* 8 Suárez develops his position in direct opposition to Cajetan, against whom he argues that truth can be attributed to things not merely by extrinsic denomination from the intellect's truth, but also formally and intrinsically, as Aquinas holds. In so doing, however, Suárez rejects Aquinas's use of the analogy of attribution to explain the order in which *true* is predicated of cognition and things, relying instead on the analogy of proportionality. For Suárez, "true" was originally predicated of the intellect's judgment but was then transferred to signify ontic truth, the transference having its basis in a real relation between epistemic truth and real truth. As such, Darge argues, in his interpretation of ontic truth, Suárez brings into a new synthesis elements of Aquinas's and Scotus's conceptions of first philosophy as transcendental science.

In his contribution, Shane Duarte (Chapter 4) focuses on Suárez's claim that *true* adds an extrinsic denomination to being. After explaining what exactly is meant by an extrinsic denomination in this context, Duarte argues that for Suárez being's transcendental truth is none other than its intelligibility or aptitude to be understood and that his appeal to extrinsic denomination is motivated by his conviction that we can understand this aspect of being only by having recourse to things that are foreign to the

nature of being as such, namely, the intellect, its operations, and the relations that the intellect bears to its objects.

In Chapter 5, Sydney Penner notes that, despite being the only disputation explicitly cited by Descartes, *DM* 9, “On Falsity or the False,” has received little by way of scholarly attention, aside from some discussion of the notion of material falsity. This chapter offers a more wide-ranging look at *DM* 9, though focusing on the question of the origin of false judgments or error. Suárez’s answer is simple: all error is caused by the will. The intellect can be necessitated to a true judgment, but it is never necessitated to a false judgment. Indeed, Suárez considers three putative sources of necessitation to a false judgment – God, an evil angel, and apparent evidentness – but argues that none of them is an actual source of such necessitation. False judgments, then, always involve a voluntary choice to assent to something false. Penner concludes the chapter by noting that *DM* 9.2 stands in contrast to most other sections of *DM* by its almost complete absence of references to Suárez’s predecessors, which might suggest that Suárez is here exploring new territory, new territory that is then further explored by Descartes.

In Chapter 6, Christopher Shields begins with Suárez’s mixed signals regarding the status of universals: Suárez, he says, poses the question of their real existence clearly enough in *DM* 6.2, and he immediately proceeds, it seems, to offer a positive answer: “Things which are denominated universals truly exist in reality” (*DM* 6.2.1). However, further along in *DM* 6, Suárez aligns himself with those philosophers who reject the existence of universals: “The nominalists,” he says, “in reality do not differ much from us, as we have said” (*DM* 6.5.3). Shields argues that, when all is said and done, Suárez is a nominalist, but a nominalist of a richly nuanced sort. His view may be summed up in a single sentence: a universal is a being of reason (an *ens rationis*), properly regarded as an extrinsic denomination grounded in the intrinsic formal unities of the mind- and language-independent *res*, as mediated by non-formally representing intelligible species related to their objects predicatively by some manner of analogy of attribution. The principal aim of the chapter is to unpack, explain, and assess the view expressed in this sentence.

In Chapter 7, Marleen Rozemond notes that Suárez accepted the traditional real distinction (a distinction between *things*) and the distinction of reason (a distinction between *concepts* rather than things) but in addition argued for the existence of modes and a “modal distinction.” All three types of distinction continued to be important in the early modern period. Rozemond argues that, although scholastic distinctions are

commonly understood in terms of separability, Suárez saw separability merely as a *sign* of specific types of distinctions, a way of telling what type of distinction is at hand. Thus, mutual separability is a sign of a real distinction, but not all really distinct beings are mutually separable. Moreover, Suárez required knowledge of actual cases of separation as a sign; conceiving entities as separable, on his view, presupposes knowing that they are really distinct. Rozemond also argues that Descartes's theory of distinctions inherited Suárez's view that separability is a mere sign and that Suárez's theory offers elegant solutions to thorny problems in Descartes's theory of matter. Finally, Rozemond further argues that the notion of a mode played an important role in arguments for immaterial beings both in Descartes and in various other early modern philosophers, including Leibniz.

The next three chapters in the volume take up issues in Suárez's theory of causation. In Chapter 8, Giuseppe Capriati notes that final causation is a heavily debated topic in early modern philosophy. Indeed, the causality of the end, namely the way in which an end really causes, was one of the most controversial *quaestiones* on the final cause in early modern scholasticism: it brought into play the status of the end as a cause, and it involved coming to terms with an increasingly efficiency-based view of general causation. Capriati also notes that Suárez holds that the end's causality is a metaphorical motion (*motio metaphorica*), as many Aristotelians before him did. But how this motion – and its metaphorical nature – had to be understood was open to discussion, as Suárez shows by considering several rival theories and finally settling on his personal version of the traditional theory. Capriati further argues that, aside from allowing us a glimpse at his way of dealing with, and taking positions vis-à-vis, his contemporary philosophical context, Suárez's account of the causality of the end is linked with, and helps us better understand, several key features of his metaphysics, such as the relation between efficient and final causes, the final cause as a moral cause, psychological determinism, and the dual meaning of “real” as actual and possible. Capriati's aim throughout is to reconstruct Suárez's theory of final causality, starting from his criticism of rival theories and ending with the reasons why he settled for the traditional theory of *motio metaphorica* and how he interpreted that view.

In Chapter 9, Kara Richardson notes that Suárez's common account of cause (*communis ratio causae*) in *DM* 12 defines a cause as “a *per se* principle that inflows being to another.” According to Suárez, in other words, each of Aristotle's four causes counts as a cause because it inflows being to another, and each has a proper influx. In *DM* 12, moreover,

Suárez acknowledges that the influx of the final cause is obscure, but he promises to address this problem later, and he does so in *DM* 23. In recent years, several scholars have argued that Suárez's solution to the problem of the influx of the final cause is not wholly compatible with his broad commitment to the reality of final causality. Still missing from the scholarly discussion is a sufficiently detailed analysis of the problem of the influx of the final cause, as Suárez describes it, and of his solution to that problem. In particular, Richardson notes, recent interpreters disregard Suárez's identification of a cause's influx with its causality, as well as his view that to explain the causality of a cause is not just to describe how something functions as a cause, but also to identify an entity, a thing (*res*) or a mode, that is its causality. Richardson's essay examines Suárez's account of the influx or causality of the final cause in three types of cases: elicited human acts, commanded human acts, and divine transeunt acts. She argues that, on Suárez's view, the influx or causality of the final cause is an irreducible component of the mode of action and that this account satisfies the demands of Suárez's influx theory of cause. The examination of this account also reveals some elements of Suárez's view of final causality that have not received due attention in the literature, namely, that final causality is simultaneous with efficient causality and that, wherever an end is a real cause of some effect, its causality is an intrinsic feature of the action by which the effect is produced.

In Chapter 10, Jacob Tuttle argues that Suárez takes efficient causation to be *intensional*, rather than *extensional*. That is to say, Suárez thinks that co-referring terms cannot be substituted *salva veritate* in statements about efficient causation. This view can be illustrated by an example from Elizabeth Anscombe: although it is true that Charles de Gaulle, the president of France, caused an international incident, it is nevertheless false that the man with the largest nose in France caused an international incident. For Suárez, on Tuttle's reading, whether a statement about some particular instance of efficient causation turns out to be true depends on more than just how the world is; it also depends on *how that statement represents* particular things in the world. Tuttle expects his thesis to be controversial, because it appears to threaten Suárez's professed realism about efficient causation. If efficient causation turns out to be intensional, then whether a particular causal connection obtains would appear to be at least partly a function of how we conceive or speak of the world. Many philosophers in Suárez's time, as well as today, would find this suggestion implausible. As the contemporary metaphysician Jonathan Schaffer puts the point, "How could mere talk stem the tide of causation?" Indeed,

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because realism about causation is such an intuitive view, this is a challenge that must be confronted by any philosopher who endorses an intensional theory of causation. Accordingly, in addition to arguing that Suárez is committed to such a theory, Tuttle suggests a tentative answer to this objection on his behalf.

The next two chapters are devoted to aspects of Suárez's theory of corporeal substance. In Chapter 11, Brian Embry explains that in the scholastic Aristotelian tradition, there was a debate about how many substantial forms an ordinary substance can have. Thomas Aquinas famously argued that every hylomorphic composite has exactly one substantial form. Recent scholarship on Suárez presents him as falling in a broadly Thomist tradition vis-à-vis the plurality of forms debate. Suárez is presented as endorsing a unitarian view of substantial forms due to Thomistic concerns about substantial unity. Embry argues that this picture of Suárez is mistaken and that it obscures an important difference between Suárez's brand of unitarianism and Aquinas's. In fact, Suárez does not have a unity argument against the plurality of substantial forms because he has the metaphysical resources to account for the unity of a substance with multiple substantial forms. It is also a mistake to claim, as some scholars do, that Suárez was a unitarian in the same sense that Aquinas was. This is a mistake because, unlike Aquinas, Suárez thinks that non-human organisms contain multiple substantial forms. Paying close attention to the differences between Suárezian and Thomistic unitarianism results in a more nuanced picture of the plurality of forms debate.

In Chapter 12, Tad Schmaltz considers Suárez's intricate account of the matter (*hylê*) portion of his hylomorphic conception of the material world. He begins with Suárez's claim that the prime matter that serves as the underlying subject of a composite material substance is itself an incomplete substance with its own mereological structure. He then considers Suárez's argument that the extension of prime matter's integral parts cannot derive from the accident of quantity insofar as these parts can be distributed in space even in the absence of that accident. Finally, Schmaltz focuses on Suárez's defense of the conclusion that quantified extension exhibits a kind of impenetrability, which serves to distinguish it from the different unquantified extensions of prime matter and angelic substances. One of his aims throughout is to relate these aspects of Suárez's conception of the material world to relevant medieval debates as well as to the more "modern" views of Descartes, Hobbes, and More.

Finally, the last two chapters in this volume concern Suárez's conception of the categories in general and his conception of time as presented in

the disputation devoted to the category of *when*. In Chapter 13, Dominik Perler notes that Suárez devotes a large part of the *Metaphysical Disputations* to the ten Aristotelian categories, discussing each of them in detail (*DM* 32–52). But what, Perler asks, are the categories – fundamental entities or concepts? It is in his answer to this question that Suárez proves to be original, Perler argues. On the one hand, Suárez rejects a strong realist position, denying that there are ten types of entities; on the other, he refutes an extreme conceptualist position, emphasizing that there are not just ten types of concepts. On Suárez's view, the distinction of ten categories marks a fundamental conceptual distinction that is grounded in reality, yet without there being a one-to-one relation between concepts and entities. Rather, the distinction is grounded in different things (*res*) as well as modes (*modi*). The chapter examines this grounding relation by first analyzing Suárez's account of things and modes and the way they are related to each other. It then focuses on the categories of substance and quality and explains in what sense the relevant concepts are grounded in things and modes. Finally, it assesses Suárez's theory of categories against the background of late medieval debates and argues that he subscribes to a distinctive form of reductionism that differs from the standard nominalist approach.

In Chapter 14, Cecilia Trifogli notes that Suárez devotes *DM* 50.8–11 to an extensive discussion of time, and this as part of a more general investigation of the category *when* and the duration of things. The central component of Suárez's account of time, she explains, is the metaphysical notion of duration. Duration is understood as permanence in existence and as belonging to every real being in its actual existence. Suárez associates different kinds of duration with the different modes of existence displayed by real beings. The mode of existence relevant to time is that of successive beings: Suárez identifies time with the duration of successive things, that is, with the duration of change. Suárez's ambitious project is to offer a “metaphysical deduction” of time from the notion of duration. In this chapter, Trifogli analyzes two central aspects of this project: the existence of time and its real identity with change. Suárez emphasizes that both the existence of time and its identity with change can be deduced from general properties of duration. However, he is also very much concerned to show that this deduction does not miss specific features of time and does not oversimplify matters. Trifogli's overall provisional assessment of Suárez's project is a positive one: there is enough space in Suárez's account of duration to accommodate specific features of time in a meaningful way. Still, she does not think that Suárez is successful in defending the real