

Simone Guidi

Baroque Metaphysics

Studies on Francisco Suárez

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BAROQUE
METAPHYSICS
Studies on Francisco Suárez

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Acknowledgments

Current scholars widely recognize Suárez as a key-figure in early modern philosophy and theology, but the ambivalent nature of his work is still surprising, and many aspects of his thought remain to be uncovered. Despite his being one of the most prolific commentators on traditional Scholastic texts, Suárez is better-known for having facilitated the transition from the traditional methods of the Schools, which focused on the exegesis of authoritative works, to the modern philosophical method of discussing philosophical problems.

Both characterizations are true, and are the result of the combined effects of the Counter-Reformation and certain peculiar aspects of the Jesuit approach. This does not diminish, however, the value of Suárez's innovative effort. On metaphysical issues in particular, he was an intermediary figure who stood between two worlds and throughout his entire life, tried to defend the fundamental truths and approaches of Scholastic philosophy by uniting all of its authorities across a unique front. With Suárez, Scholasticism started to dismantle its traditional articulations in factions and Schools, and tried to build a colossal, unitary edifice.

These are just a few of the reasons why Suárez's extraordinary work in metaphysics has yet to be approached in an organic fashion. Thus, his oeuvre remains partially unexplored, often misunderstood and constantly debated by his contemporary academic readers. The studies collected in this volume aim at contributing to this debate by dealing with certain aspects of Suárez's thought that go all too often neglected. They are the results of many different activities, participations, interests, explorations and ideas, which took place in different countries over the last three years.

Their unity is due to the mutual references between them, which I hope the reader will identify. In all of them, however, I tried to approach Suárez by a specific methodology; that is, by reading his endless and insightful discussions especially in light of his sources. This means that, on the one hand, I investigated Suárez's reading and usage of the Medieval tradition; but it also means, on the other hand, that I tried to see Suárez in the context of the Jesuit tradition, notably in relation to his great forerunner, Pedro da Fonseca. Indeed, I dare say that most of the major turning points in Suárez's metaphysics can hardly be understood without considering his dialogue with Fonseca.

One special unifying element of this work lies in the many people to which these six essays are indebted. I wrote some of them thanks to a three-year Post-Doc fellowship by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) within the research project "Disembodied Intellects and Celestial Movers. The Renaissance Portuguese-Spanish Debate on 'Separated Substances' and its Influence on Early Modern Dualism" (SFRH/BPD/120796/2016), which I developed at the *Institute for Philosophical Studies* (IEF) at the University of Coimbra. Later, I continued working on Suárez as an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Coimbra's Faculty of Art and Humanities (FLUC). Those years in Portugal were among the most important experiences in my life and career, and I want to sincerely thank Mário Santiago de Carvalho, my former Post-Doc supervisor and a constant model in working on the Late Scholastics. He not only pulled my work out of the darkness, but also gave me the best guidance in the development of my studies and in my life.

Together with Professor Carvalho, I extend my sincere gratitude to the entire *Institute for Philosophical Studies*, which funded the publication of this book, as well as the entire *De-*

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Rome, 15 September 2020

General Note

“The Order of Knowledge: Fonseca and Suárez on the Confused and Distinct Starting Point of Science”, has been published in this volume for the first time.

“The Truth We Know. Reassessing Suárez’s Account of Cognitive Truth and Objective Being” was published for the first time in A. Robiglio, I. Zavattero, P. Silva (eds), *Finzione nel pensiero filosofico medievale, Mediaevalia. Textos e estudos*, 39 (2020).

“Is Truth a Property of Things? Suárez’s Razor on Transcendental Truth”, was conceived as a continuation of the latter, and has been published in this volume for the first time.

“*Solo lumine naturae utens. Suárez and the ratio angelis: Remarks on DM 35, 1-3*” is an English translation of the chapter, which was originally written in Italian as, “*Solo lumine naturae utens. Suárez e la ratio angelis: note su DM 35, 1-3*”, published in *Francisco Suárez (1548-1617): alle soglie della modernità*, edited by S. Langella, C. Faraco (Capua: Artetetra, 2019): 83-109.

“Suárez’s Metaphysical Investigations on Angelic Intellects. A Comparative Reading of *DM 35, 4* and *De Angelis, II*”, was conceived as a continuation of the latter, and has been published in this volume for the first time.

“Suarez’s Entitative Extension and its Reception Until Descartes”, is a reworked version of the essay “Quantity Matters. Suarez’s Theory of Continuous Quantity and its Reception Until Descartes”, which was published in *Francisco Suárez: Metaphysics, Politics and Ethics*, edited by M. S. de Carvalho,

M. Pulido, S. Guidi (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2020): 229-261.

Except for translated editions indicated in the table of abbreviations and in the Bibliography, and/or when expressly noted in the footnotes, all English translations of Latin texts are mine.

Abbreviations

FRANCISCO SUÁREZ

CDA: De Anima, texto inédito de los doce primeros capítulos, introducción y edición crítica por S. Castellote (SUÁREZ, 1978-1992).

De Ang.: De Angelis (SUÁREZ, 1856-1861, vol. 2).

DM: Disputationes Metaphysicae (SUÁREZ, 1856-1861, vols. 25-26).

TDA: Tractatus De Anima (in SUÁREZ, 1856-1861, vol. 3).

ARISTOTLE

An. Pos.: Analytica Posteriora (in ARISTOTELES, 1848-1874, vol. 1, p. 121-171). English translation ARISTOTELES, 1984-1985, vol. 1.

Cat.: Categoriae vel Praedicamenta (in ARISTOTELES, 1848-1874, vol. 1, p. 1-24). English translation ARISTOTELES, 1984-1985, vol. 1.

De An.: De Anima (ARISTOTELES, 1956). English translation ARISTOTELES, 1984-1985, vol. 1.

De Int.: De Interpretatione vel Periermenias (in ARISTOTELES, 1848-1874, vol. 1, p. 25-38). English translation ARISTOTELES, 1984-1985, vol. 1.

Metaph.: Metaphysica (ARISTOTELES, 1957). English translation ARISTOTELES, 1984-1985, vol. 2.

Phys.: Physica (ARISTOTELES, 1992). English translation ARISTOTELES, 1984-1985, vol. 1.

THOMAS AQUINAS

CG: Summa contra Gentiles cum commentariis Ferrariensis (THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1918-1930). English translation THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1975.

DV: Quaestiones disputatae de veritate (THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1970-1976). English translation THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1952-1954.

In De Int.: Expositio libri Peryermeneias (in THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1882). English Translation THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1962.

In Met.: Sententia libri Metaphysicae (THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1961).

In Phys: Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum (THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1884). English translation THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1958-1963).

In Sent.: Scriptorum super Sententiis (THOMAS DE AQUINO 1929-1947).

QDA: Quaestiones disputatae de anima (THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1996). English translation THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1949a.

QQ: Quaestiones quodlibetales (THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1996).

QSC: Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis (THOMAS DE AQUINO, 2000). English translation THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1949b.

ST: Summa theologiae cum Supplemento et commentariis Caietani (THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1888-1906). English translation THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1947-1948.

UI: De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas (THOMAS DE AQUINO, 1976b).

RENÉ DESCARTES

AT: Oeuvres de Descartes (DESCARTES, 1897-1909).

CMS: The Philosophical Writings of Descartes I & II (DESCARTES, 1984-1985).

CMSK: The Philosophical Writings of Descartes III – The Correspondence (DESCARTES, 1991).

PEDRO DA FONSECA

CMA: Commentariorum Petri Fonsecae in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae (FONSECA 1577- 1612).

ISD: Institutionum dialecticarum libri octo (FONSECA 1564).

JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

Or.: Quaestiones in librum Sententiarum (DUNS SCOTUS, 1891-1895, vols. 8-21).

Qu. De An.: Quaestiones in libros Aristotelis de Anima (in DUNS SCOTUS, 1891-1895, vol. 3: 475-642).

Qu. Quod.: Quaestiones quodlibetales (DUNS SCOTUS, 1891-1895, vols. 25-26).

Sc. Met.: Quaestiones subtilissimae super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis (DUNS SCOTUS, 1891-1895, vol. 7).

Rep. Par.: Reportata Parisiensia (DUNS SCOTUS, 1891-1895, vols. 22-24).

1. The Order of Knowledge. Fonseca and Suárez on the Confused and Distinct Starting Point of Science

1. Introduction – 2. Aristotle’s Difficulties and the Order of Knowledge – 3. Aquinas’ Difficulties – 4. Fonseca and the Three Genera of Things – 5. Fonseca, Scotus and the Difficulties in Knowing the Truth – 6. Fonseca’s Strategy – 7. Suárez on Confusion, Distinction, and Scientific Knowledge – 8. Suárez on Experience and Evidence – 9. Suárez, Non-Scientific and Scientific Knowledge – 10. Suárez and the Snare of the Body – 11. Conclusion

“Hence it is better never to study at all than to occupy ourselves with objects which are so difficult that we are unable to distinguish what is true from what is false, and are forced to take the doubtful as certain”
(René Descartes¹).

1. Introduction

This essay aims to investigate the problem of the appropriate order of human knowledge in the accounts of the two major Jesuit metaphysicians of the sixteenth century: Pedro da Fonseca and Francisco Suárez. The debate between these two authors exemplifies how early modern Scholasticism addressed this issue, but it also shows how they confronted a theoretical problem which is connected with the process of

¹AT, X: 362; CMS, I: 10.

the “epistemologization” of metaphysics² to which Suárez in particular owes some of his notoriety.

By “the problem of the order of knowledge” I effectively mean the famous Aristotelian question concerning priority “by nature” and “for us” as presented in the *Posterior Analytics*. However, this is an issue that, if considered in all of its complexity, and as the Medieval and the early modern Schools would understand it, cannot be isolated in a single text or problem. Rather, it is structured over a broader network of

²I borrow this expression from Heider (2009a: 106-108) who notices how “Suárez, though in many respects rather conservative, truly anticipates the early modern period; it is no surprise then that he exemplifies two paradigmatically modern tendencies of philosophical thought” by setting “a certain epistemological agenda to the sphere of metaphysics”. As Heider stresses, Suárez’s tendency is also apparent in the discussion of the concept of being, where “Suárez remarks that metaphysical enquiry ought to begin by analyzing the logical status *not* of the objective concept of being [...], but only of its formal concept [...]”. Indeed, “according to Suárez we are more familiar with the formal concept than with the objective concept”, which things “suggests nothing less than a certain degree of determination of objective truth by the subjective state of our mind”. As is well-known, Suárez’s epistemological effort has been the pivotal argument for a fortunate reading of his metaphysics as an essentialist (and Avicennian intentionalist) one (see especially Cronin 1966, Doyle 1967 and 1999, Courtine 1990, Wells 1993a), anticipating Leibniz’s, Clauberg’s and Wolff’s and culminating in a “mentalization” of metaphysics which anticipates Kant (Heider 2014a, p. 208). Sometimes, this interpretation has been accompanied by an existentialist anti-modernist approach (inaugurated by Gilson, 1952a), aimed at identifying, in Suárez’s epistemology, the mark of a masked form of univocism and ontological reductionism (see also Rompe 1968 and Marion 1986). Contrary to these readings, I follow especially Gracia (1991), Pereira (2004 and 2006), Heider (2009b, 2014a) and, more recently, Poncela González (2019) in considering Suárez as a realist, characterized by a strong “existential integralism” and whose epistemological use of the objective being cannot be reduced to essentialist possibilism. The portrait of Suárez as the founder of modernity, especially in connection with his re-foundation of ontology, has been questioned especially by Miner 2001. On Suárez’s epistemology in his metaphysics, see also Salas 2010.

interrelated problems and texts, and overall on the definition of terminological dualisms: intelligible and sensible; soul and intellect; soul and body; easy and difficult; universal and particular; distinct and confused; true and false; scientific and non-scientific. The possible combinations between these different elements are innumerable, and this is particularly why the Jesuits, even in the wake of Aquinas, exhibited a particular liberty in interpreting this problem.

In reconstructing a small portion of this debate, my first aim is to show that between Fonseca and Suárez there is a slight but substantial disagreement on how to understand the body and sensibility as our first sources of knowledge, and thus as the remote sources of scientific knowledge. In this case, my main focus is on the epistemic and scientific status of metaphysics, which seems to be the ultimate target of the Jesuits' efforts. My second aim is to trace between the lines the pre-formation of two pivotal themes of Cartesianism within this debate. These are the very definition of the terminological duo "confused and distinct", and the evolution of the problem of the "ease" or "difficulty" of the human effort in the process of knowing the truth.

2. Aristotle's Difficulties and the Order of Knowledge

Despite the fact that the present essay is not devoted to the thought of Aristotle, it is important to recall the general textual and doctrinal networks in which the issue appeared. Indeed, among the theoretical positions presented in Aristotle's works, a famous pair therein properly delimits the nature of the problem.

The first aspect of the problem consists in recognizing that the possibility of obtaining natural knowledge does not guarantee that our souls can know every truth about the world.

Although Aristotle does not focus independently on the problem of the structural limits of human knowledge, he famously states that our souls can only easily know certain things, i.e. those that are sensible, while others are not accessible to it or, at least, only indirectly and with great difficulty. Among the latter things are the primary objects of metaphysics, according to one of the six definitions of the “wise man” in *Metaphysics A*, as the one “who can learn things that are difficult”, and which are in opposition to common sensible experience³.

The pivotal text which presents this view can be found, however, at the beginning of *Metaphysics α*⁴, where Aristotle stresses how

theoretical, that is, speculative, knowledge of truth is in one sense difficult (χαλεπός) and in another, easy (ῥῶδιος). An indication of this is found in the fact that, while no one can attain an adequate knowledge of it, all men together do not fail, because each one is able to say something true about nature. And while each one individually contributes nothing or very little to the truth, still as a result of the combined efforts of all a great amount of truth becomes known. Therefore, if the situation in the case of truth seems to be like the one which we speak of in the proverb “Who will miss a door?” then in this respect, it will be easy to know the truth. But, the fact that we cannot simultaneously grasp a whole and its parts shows the difficulty involved. However, since the difficulty is twofold (τῆς χαλεπότητος οὔσης κατὰ δύο τρόπους), perhaps its cause is not

³“He who can learn things that are difficult, and not easy for man to know, is wise (sense-perception is common to all, and therefore easy and no mark of wisdom)” (*Metaph. A*, 982 b4-19, trans. Aristotle 1984-1985).

⁴Among the books of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, Alpha Elatton is by no means the most studied in the secondary literature. See, however, Crilly 1962; Reale 1980: 39-45 (also on the debate about the possible inauthenticity of *Metaph. α*); Berti 1982 and 1983 (also on its relationship with Aristotle’s early works like the *Protrepticus*). See also Gigon 1983, Owens 1984 and Szelzák 1983.