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*Dicionário do Curso Filosófico Conimbricense*  
MÁRIO SANTIAGO DE CARVALHO

*Baroque Metaphysics. Studies on Francisco Suárez*  
SIMONE GUIDI

Simone Guidi

Baroque Metaphysics  
Studies on Francisco Suárez

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Apartado 10032

3031-601 Coimbra

palimage@palimage.pt

www.palimage.pt

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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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## 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.: Scriptum 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 Descartes<sup>1</sup>).

## 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

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<sup>1</sup>AT, X: 362; CMS, I: 10.

the “epistemologization” of metaphysics<sup>2</sup> 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

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<sup>2</sup>I 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 experience<sup>3</sup>.

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

theoretical, that is, speculative, knowledge of truth is in one sense difficult (χαλεπός) and in another, easy (ῥάδιος). 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

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<sup>3</sup>“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).

<sup>4</sup>Among 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.



in things, but in us; for just as the eyes of bats are to the light of day, so is our soul's intellectual power to those things which are by nature the most evident of all<sup>5</sup>.

It is not accidental that the whole Scholastic tradition saw this passage as the manifesto by which Aristotle, rejecting Plato's approach, enumerates conditions for the functioning of our natural cognitive powers, and thus for the natural possibilities of a metaphysical inquiry. For Aristotle, certain things are perfectly intelligible in themselves, but which the human soul cannot immediately grasp. Such things are said to be "difficult" for us to grasp, whereas other things, which are less intelligible by themselves, are very easy for us to know. Reprising Aristotle's dualism, the difficulty in building metaphysics as a true science is, hence, "not in things", which are perfectly understandable by themselves, but "in us", that is in our cognitive structure.

I must leave aside a more precise discussion of Aristotle's claim that "the difficulty is twofold" (both in us and in things), a point with which I will deal later, with the help of Aquinas and his epigones. Now it is worth dwelling on a second aspect, which would help us to shed some light on one enigmatic claim of the passage above, namely that "the fact that we cannot simultaneously grasp a whole and its parts shows the difficulty involved". Indeed, for Aristotle, it is precisely for the same reason, i.e., because of their immaterial nature, that the "things" described in *Metaphysics α* are both hard to know for us and intelligible in themselves.

This point, however, brings us to the problem of the natural order through which the human soul passes from sensory knowledge to scientific knowledge (of which metaphysics is the higher case). This issue is presented in two even more famous Aristotelian texts, which are part of the textual network we are dealing with. The first one of these, which is entirely

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<sup>5</sup> *Metaph. α*, ch. 1, 993b3-14 (trans. Aristotle 1984-1985).

compatible with the claims of *Metaphysics α*, is taken from the *Posterior Analytics*:

[demonstrative understanding] must depend on what is primitive and non-demonstrable because otherwise you will not understand if you do not have a demonstration of them; for to understand that of which there is a demonstration non-accidentally is to have a demonstration. They must be both explanatory and more familiar and prior – explanatory because we only understand when we know the explanation; and prior, if they are explanatory, and we are already aware of them not only in the sense of grasping them but also of knowing that they are. Things are prior and more familiar in two ways; for it is not the same to be prior by nature and prior in relation to us, nor to be more familiar and more familiar to us. I call prior and more familiar in relation to us what is nearer to perception, prior and more familiar simpliciter what is further away. What is most universal is furthest away, and the particulars are nearest; and these are opposite to each other<sup>6</sup>.

Here, Aristotle maintains that the first principles of human science (philosophical or not) are indemonstrable notions, which play the role of the “more familiar” and “prior” causes of necessary conclusions<sup>7</sup>. However, we cannot grasp them directly and primarily. What is prior by nature is indeed the more immaterial and universal, but what is prior *quoad nos*, in relation to our knowledge, is the material and particular,

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<sup>6</sup> *An. Pos.* I, ch. 2, 70b34-72a5 (trans. Aristotle 1984-1985). See also *Eth. Eud.* I, ch. 6, 1216 b30-35, where Aristotle says that “by advancing from true but obscure judgments [man] will arrive at clear ones, always exchanging the usual confused statement for more real knowledge”. And also *Metaph. Z*, ch. 3, 1029 b3-12: “one must start from that which is barely intelligible but intelligible to oneself, and try to understand what is intelligible in itself, passing, as has been said, by way of those very things which one understands”.

<sup>7</sup> On Aristotle’s concept of “science” in the *Posterior Analytics*, see especially Jenkins 2007; Harari 2004 (especially 13-38), Bronstein 2016 (especially 50-66). See also Bolton 1991.

our knowledge being based on sensory perception, for which the material particulars are the closest objects. What is more universal, being immaterial, is instead the furthest from that starting point of our knowledge<sup>8</sup>.

This very account of the priority of our knowledge is, once again, proposed by the Philosopher in a second text, this time from the *Physics*, which yet is a bit more controversial:

when the objects of an inquiry, in any department, have principles, causes, or elements, it is through acquaintance with these that knowledge and understanding are attained. For we do not think that we know a thing until we are acquainted with its primary causes or first principles, and have carried out our analysis as far as its elements go. Plainly, therefore, in the science of nature too our first task will be to try to determine what relates to its principles. The natural way of doing this is to start from the things which are more knowable and clear to us, and proceed towards those which are clearer and more knowable by nature; for the same things are not knowable relatively to us and knowable without qualification. So, we must follow this method and advance from what is more obscure by nature, but clearer to us, towards what is clearer and more knowable by nature. Now what is to us plain and clear at first is a rather confused masses, the elements and principles of which become known to us later by analysis. Thus, we must advance from universals [καθόλου] to particulars; for it is a whole [ὅλον] that is more knowable to sense-perception, and a universal [καθόλου] is a kind of whole, comprehending many things within it, like parts<sup>9</sup>.

How should we understand the claim that “we must advance from universals to particulars”, which openly contrasts

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<sup>8</sup> Aristotle's claims in *Metaphysics A*, where he states that “these things, the most universal, are on the whole most difficult for men to know; for they are furthest from the senses” (*Metaph. A*, ch. 2, 982a20-982b10) strengthen this reading. On Aristotle's doctrine of universals, see Leszl 1972 and Henn 1999.  
<sup>9</sup> *Phys.*, I, § 1, 184a22-184a26 (trans. Aristotle 1984-1985).

with the idea of the impossibility of starting from universals? Does Aristotle say that one knows universals, which are very difficult for us to know, before particulars, which are those things that man knows more easily?

As Bolton<sup>10</sup> has shown (in opposition to the more traditional account), the text of the *Physics* should be read in comparison with the *Posterior Analytics* II, 19, where Aristotle exposes the passage from non-scientific knowledge to the cognition of principles, and thus to scientific knowledge. Here, the Philosopher employs the term καθόλου not to refer to logical universals, but rather to “primitive” universals, a unity composed of “undifferentiated things”<sup>11</sup> in our sensory perception, from which the soul is able to reach the principles. Thus in the *Physics* as well, Aristotle probably does not claim that our first object of knowledge is a logical universal; he instead speaks of “confused masses” of perceptions on a non-scientific level of knowledge, from which our cognitive process begins to arrive at the first principles and achieve the status of scientific knowledge.

Unfortunately, Bolton’s does not seem to be the prevalent interpretation of Aristotle in the Middle Ages, being that the Latin West translated the term καθόλου from the *Physics* as the more ambiguous term *universalis*<sup>12</sup>. As consequence of

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<sup>10</sup> See especially Bolton 1991.

<sup>11</sup> *An. Pos.* II, § 19: “when one of the undifferentiated things makes a stand, there is a primitive universal in the mind (for though one perceives the particular, perception is of the universal – e.g. of man but not of Callias the man); again a stand is made in these, until what has no parts and is universal stands – e.g. such and such an animal stands, until animal does, and in this a stand is made in the same way. Thus it is clear that it is necessary for us to become familiar with the primitives by induction; for perception too instils the universal in this way”. On this point, see Sirkel 2010: 81-96, and Gasser-Wingate 2019. *Metaph. B*, ch. 19, 1000a15-b5 is another very important passage in this respect, as this is where Aristotle also refers to a πρώτον καθόλου, as what we derive from the process of ἐπαγωγή.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle 1990: 7-8: “Sunt autem nobis primum manifesta et certa que confusa magis, posterius autem ex his fiunt nota elementa et principia

this misreading, medieval Scholastics often understand the καθόλου as a logical (or even pre-logical) universal, creating a new and very complex overlapping of problems. Why does Aristotle say that human scientific knowledge starts from universals, even though our cognition begins from the perception of singulars? Does perception allow us somehow to know universals, and is it, hence, a segment of scientific knowledge, or is it just its beginning? And why does Aristotle claim that “the fact that we cannot simultaneously grasp a whole and its parts” shows the fundamental difficulty of metaphysics? How is the part-whole problem connected with the question of our overall access to true knowledge?

A unitary reply to these questions is crucial to establish, based on Aristotle’s texts, especially which is the right order of scientific cognition (not only from sensory perception to knowledge, but also from the universal to the particular, or from the particular to the universal). In the following paragraphs, I will show that the Scholastics try to provide an overall account. I will dwell especially on how Fonseca and Suárez, in the wake of Aquinas, shape their accounts between the lines of Aristotle’s texts, and how they put forward different and interrelated solution of such important questions.

### 3. Aquinas’ Difficulties

Late Scholastics would address these problems in the wake of the debate of the thirteenth century. Hence, in order to shed light on the views of Fonseca and Suárez, it would be useful to say a few words also about Aquinas’ interpretations

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dividentibus hec. Unde ex universalibus in singularia oportet provenire; totum enim secundum sensus notius est, universale autem totum quiddam est; multa enim comprehendit ut partes universale”.

of these Aristotelian texts and doctrines<sup>13</sup>, which, as is well-known, are doctrinally crucial for early Jesuit Scholastics<sup>14</sup>.

Let us start from how Aquinas reads the text of the *Physics*<sup>15</sup>. In line with the whole medieval tradition, he holds that those described by Aristotle in the *Physics* are logical universals, whereas the “particulars” to which the Philosopher refers, are intellectual species representing singulars (i.e. *species infimae*)<sup>16</sup>. This reading is nonetheless congruent with a famous doctrine of Aquinas,<sup>17</sup> i.e. that in all of our knowledge (both sensory and intellectual), the process passes from the more confused and common to the most specific and distinct, according to a model which “proceeds from potentiality to act”.

Aquinas distinguishes between two different kinds of wholes: the universal or “universal whole” (Aristotle’s καθόλου, understood as logical and known intellectually), in which the parts are there just potentially, and the “integral whole” (Aristotle’s ὅλον, which are cognized by the senses), which is a physical whole made up of integral parts in act which is unified in an individual substance<sup>18</sup>. In both cases, we get knowledge according to a process which passes from the most common, potential and confused to the particular, actual, and distinct<sup>19</sup>, given that “to know an object that com-

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<sup>13</sup> On Aquinas’ reading of Aristotle, see especially Jordan 1991, Jenkins 1996 and Porro 2015: 312-315.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, my main aim in the next lines is not to discuss Aquinas’ view, but rather to present his interpretation of Aristotle and his account of the texts of the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics*.

<sup>15</sup> On Aquinas’ theory of perception, see especially Lisska 2016. But see also Cohen 1982, Mahoney 1982, Haldane 1993, Kenny 1993: 31-40, Burnyeat 2001, South 2001, Porro 2015.

<sup>16</sup> *In Phys.*, lec. 1, ch. 1, § 8.

<sup>17</sup> See *ST*, I, q. 85.

<sup>18</sup> *ST*, I, q. 85, art. 3, *resp.*

<sup>19</sup> *ST*, I, q. 85, art. 3, *resp.*: “we must consider that our intellect proceeds from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality; and every power thus proceeding from potentiality to actuality comes first to an incomplete act,

prises many things, without proper knowledge of each thing contained in it, is to know that thing confusedly<sup>20</sup>.

By sense, our soul<sup>21</sup> judges “the more common before the less common”, in reference “both to place and time”<sup>22</sup>. Likewise, from the side of the intellect<sup>23</sup>, abstractive knowledge of confused universals is prior and direct, whereas the species representing singulars is always secondary. By abstraction from a confused phantasm of a man, our intellect first forms the species of the universal genus “animal”; then, it “rationally” obtains a concept of the species and finally comes to a

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which is the medium between potentiality and actuality, before accomplishing the perfect act. The perfect act of the intellect is complete knowledge, when the object is distinctly and determinately known; whereas the incomplete act is imperfect knowledge, when the object is known indistinctly and as it were confusedly. A thing thus imperfectly known is known partly in act and partly in potentiality” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

<sup>20</sup> *ST*, I, q. 85, art. 3, *resp.*

<sup>21</sup> Presumably through the *vis cogitativa*. The *vis cogitativa* is, indeed, the power of the human soul appointed for “dividing or breaking into parts the data prepared by the phantasy and stored in the imagination. To compare how these different functions operate we might imagine that we have a group of people before us. Our eyes do not see that there are human beings as such before us but only patches of color just as our ears only hear sounds. Phantasy or common sense organizes the different external sensations, obtaining different human figures. The imaginative power stores these figures. The cogitative power begins to associate or separate the figures, obtaining a first sufficiently abstract – but still sensible (and, so, individual and material) – image of man or the particular reason” (Porro 2015: 230). See *ST*, I, q. 78, art. 4. See also Kenny 1993: 36-38 and overall Lisska 2016: 237-272, for an extended discussion of this power in Aquinas.

<sup>22</sup> For instance, “when a thing is seen far off, it is seen to be a body before it is seen to be an animal; and to be an animal before it is seen to be a man, and to be a man before it seen to be Socrates or Plato” (*ST* I, q. 85, art. 3, trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

<sup>23</sup> On Aquinas’ theory of intellection, see especially Kenny 1993, pp. 89-117, Kretzmann 1993, Pasnau 1997 and 2002: 267-329, Panaccio 2001, Porro 2015: 232-235.

distinct knowledge of “man”<sup>24</sup>. Only at the end of this process does the intellect have a distinct cognition of the “man” it knew; that is, a knowledge of all of its elements, or constituent parts (“animal”, “rational”, etc.).

According to this model, even in intellectual knowledge, man always starts from the confused cognition of the universal, and only progressively comes to a distinct knowledge of it. This would have allowed Aristotle in the *Physics* to speak of a logical καθόλου which is a “confused mass”. Indeed, for the Philosopher, logical universals also “contain in themselves something potential and indistinct”,

and because to know something indistinctly is a mean between pure potency and perfect act, so it is that while our intellect proceeds from potency to act, it knows the confused before it knows the distinct. But, it possesses complete science in act when it arrives, through resolution, at a distinct knowledge of the principles and elements. And, this is the reason why the confused is known by us before the distinct. That universals are confused is clear. For universals contain in themselves their species in potency. [...] Knowing something in potency is prior to knowing it in act<sup>25</sup>.

As one can see, Aquinas not only reads Aristotle’s καθόλου in the *Physics* as a logical universal, but he also places the text

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<sup>24</sup> *ST*, I, q. 85, art. 3, *resp.* As for the species of the individual “Socrates”, such knowledge is, for Aquinas, always indirect. See *ST*, I, q. 86, art. 1, where Aquinas remarks that: “our intellect cannot directly and primarily know the singular in material things [...] what is abstracted from individual matter is the universal. Hence, the intellect only directly knows the universal. But indirectly, and as it were by a kind of reflection, it can know the singular.” (*ST*, I, q. 86, art. 1). Such a primary perception is understood by many as the acquisition of a *species infima* of the singular (however an abstractive species), but not of the singular in itself. This is the view defended by Cajetan (*Summa Theologiae cum supplemento et commentariis Caietani* [ed. 1888-1906], I, q. 86, art. 1, § 7: 348) and later by Fonseca and Suárez (see *infra*).

<sup>25</sup> *In Phys.*, lec. 1, ch. 1, § 7 (trans. Aristotle 1984-1985).



from the *Physics* in full continuity with the doctrine of the *Posterior Analytics*. Our intellect first has, from the senses, the confused knowledge of universals described in the *Physics*, which is nevertheless non-scientific; later, it gets the complete and perfect science<sup>26</sup> which Aristotle describes in the *Posterior Analytics*, which only starts once the intellect has acquired distinct abstractive knowledge of the universal notions.

Therefore, Aquinas affirms that one peculiarity of human knowledge lies in always starting from a confused, universal, and still not scientific, cognition. Man never immediately apprehends a universal as a distinct whole along with all of its constituent parts, and needs a process to pass through the composition and division by which it compares multiple instantiations. Without such reasoning, it is impossible for us to access distinct knowledge of both integral wholes and universal predicables. As Aquinas remarks in the *Summa*,

the human intellect does not acquire perfect knowledge by the first act of apprehension; but it first apprehends something about its object, such as its quiddity, and this is its first and proper object; and then it understands the properties, accidents, and the various relations of the essence. Thus it necessarily compares one thing with another by composition or division; and from one composition and division it proceeds to another, which is the process of reasoning<sup>27</sup>.

Of course, for Aquinas, such a picture recalls the enigmatic sentence of *Metaphysics α*, i.e. that it is impossible for us to immediately seize the most intelligible substances by “the fact that we cannot simultaneously grasp a whole and its parts”. In other words, we cannot immediately have distinct cognition

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<sup>26</sup> For more on Aquinas’ account of knowledge and science, see specially McDonald 1993, Jenkins 2007: 101-128, Stump 2003: 217-243, Hall 2003 and 2019.

<sup>27</sup> *ST*, I, q. 85, art. 5, *resp* (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

of immaterial beings, given that we achieve distinct knowledge of essences only through abstraction and comparison.

As for the context of *Metaphysics α*, however, a preliminary remark should be made. In the Middle Ages, one of the dominant interpretative traditions<sup>28</sup>, which was influenced by the Neo-Platonic *Liber de causis*, identified intelligible things with metaphysical beings such as pure forms, separate substances (i.e. angels) or (in the cases where they exist) separate intellectual species. To the extent that these substances are immaterial, they are also “universal”. Such a doctrinal overlapping is why Aquinas openly classifies both logical predicables and separate substances as universals but he also introduces a famous distinction, namely, between the universal *in praedicando* (the logical universal) and the universal *in causando*<sup>29</sup> (God and spiritual substances, which only “insofar as they are free from the restrictions of matter, exert a still more universal causality”)<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> As Berti (1983: 270) remarks, among Medieval commentators of Aristotle, one can find a “présupposition typiquement néoplatonicienne, à savoir que les choses les plus claires par nature sont seulement les substances immatérielles, ou bien les moteurs immobiles des cieux, les intelligences pures. Cette présupposition, du reste, est commune aussi à tous les interprètes médiévaux, d’Averroès à Albert le Grand, à Thomas d’Aquin et à Siger de Brabant”. This interpretation arises especially in the Arabic tradition and was then transmitted to the Latin West. In his *Long Commentary* on the *Metaphysics*, Averroes already identifies the “things which are by nature the most evident of all”, with God and the intelligences (see Adamson 2010).

<sup>29</sup> See McArthur 1962 for a comprehensive reconstruction of this terminology.

<sup>30</sup> McArthur 1962: 72. This distinction is aimed especially at rejecting the Averroist doctrine that “in this present life man can in the end arrive at the knowledge of separate substances by being coupled or united to some separate substance, which he calls the ‘active intellect’”, and its possible connection with Platonism. Nevertheless, Aquinas’ radical rejection of Platonism was based upon its affinity to the Arabic theory of the universality of the Agent Intellect. For Thomas, Plato’s ideas are simply separate substances, which stand as the first objects of our knowledge, but which are also common first objects for all men. See *ST*, I, q. 88, art. 1: “Nevertheless Averroes (in his Commentary on *De Anima*, III) teaches that in this present life man can in

Apart from such a distinction, the claims of *Metaphysics α* regard both types of universal, and Aquinas' strategy is generally aimed at explaining why man cannot immediately grasp these things. He argues that our incapability to achieve direct knowledge of universal things stems not merely from the impossibility of our intellect to directly grasp separate forms, but

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the end arrive at the knowledge of separate substances by being coupled or united to some separate substance, which he calls the "active intellect," and which, being a separate substance itself, can naturally understand separate substances. Hence, when it is perfectly united to us so that by its means we are able to understand perfectly, we also shall be able to understand separate substances, as in the present life through the medium of the passive intellect united to us, we can understand material things". And *ST*, I, q. 88, art. 1: "In the opinion of Plato, immaterial substances are not only understood by us, but are the objects we understand first of all. For Plato taught that immaterial subsisting forms, which he called 'Ideas,' are the proper objects of our intellect, and thus first and per se understood by us; and, further, that material objects are known by the soul inasmuch as phantasy and sense are mixed up with the mind. Hence the purer the intellect is, so much the more clearly does it perceive the intelligible truth of immaterial things". Also this aspect is connected, though, with Aquinas' criticism of Avicenna and Averroes: "since it is contrary to the nature of sensible things that their forms should subsist without matter, as Aristotle proves in many ways (*Metaph.*, VI), Avicenna (*De Anima*, V) setting this opinion aside, held that the intelligible species of all sensible things, instead of subsisting in themselves without matter, pre-exist immaterially in the separate intellects: from the first of which, said he, such species are derived by a second, and so on to the last separate intellect which he called the 'active intelligence', from which, according to him, intelligible species flow into our souls, and sensible species into corporeal matter. And so Avicenna agrees with Plato in this, that the intelligible species of our intellect are derived from certain separate forms; but these Plato held to subsist of themselves, while Avicenna placed them in the 'active intelligence'. They differ, too, in this respect, that Avicenna held that the intelligible species do not remain in our intellect after it has ceased actually to understand, and that it needs to turn (to the active intellect) in order to receive them anew. Consequently he does not hold that the soul has innate knowledge, as Plato, who held that the participated ideas remain immovably in the soul" (*ST*, I, q. 84, art. 4, *resp.*) (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948). On Aquinas' knowledge and consideration of Platonism, see especially Henle 1956 and Fay 1973.

rather, from the *unibilitas* of the soul with the body<sup>31</sup>. Our intellect, which would be somehow able to directly seize universal and intelligible beings by itself, is structurally dependent on the senses as its primary source of knowledge, which is why we cannot seize any universal form if we do not pass through a process of perception and abstraction which involves the body.

In the case of the universals *in causando*, the necessary dependence of our intellect upon the body means that although they are highly intelligible by themselves, we can only know them by their effects, i.e. via sensible things<sup>32</sup>. In the standard

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<sup>31</sup> For a reconstruction of the Scholastic debate about the notion of *unibilitas substantialis*, including Aquinas, see especially Weber 1991: 121-146, Petagine 2004: Lenzi 2007 and 2011: 162-171, Bottin 2010 and Bieniak 2010: 9-45. Already in *In Sent.*, II, d. 3, q. 1, art. 6, Aquinas pointed out the *unibilitas* as a peculiar feature of the human soul's essence. But see especially *ST*, I, q. 75, art. 7, ad 3: "The body is not of the essence of the soul; but the soul by the nature of its essence can be united to the body, so that, properly speaking, not the soul alone, but the 'composite', is the species. And the very fact that the soul in a certain way requires the body for its operation, proves that the soul is endowed with a grade of intellectuality inferior to that of an angel, who is not united to a body" (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

<sup>32</sup> It is worth noting that this happens through an intellectual process that, contrary to what happens for the universal *in praedicando*, passes from the less universal to the most universal: "those things which are universal in causation are known subsequently by us (notwithstanding the fact that they are things which are primarily knowable according to their nature), although things which are universal by predication are known [intellectually] to us in some way before the less universal (notwithstanding the fact that they are not known prior to singular things). For in us sensory knowledge, which is cognitive of singular things, precedes intellectual knowledge, which is about universals" (*In Met.*, I, lec. 1, § 46, trans. Thomas de Aquino 1961). This is the very doctrine which Aquinas enumerates in the *Summa*, according to which our soul in this life cannot directly or indirectly (i.e. through the cognition of material things) have quidditative knowledge of separate substances. Since these substances are not sensible, the universals which cause them can at least be glimpsed in their effects, through a process by which one passes from the particular to the universal. See *ST*, I, q. 88, art. 1, *resp.*: "our intellect in its present state of life has a natural relationship to the

case of grasping the universal *in praedicando*, the intellect abstracts, instead, the universal concept before the *species infima*, following the (aforementioned) natural priority of the more potential, universal and confused over the most actual and particular. And also in this case, the union with the body is responsible for the impossibility of directly grasping the universal.

Accordingly, Aquinas interprets Aristotle's etiology of the "difficulties" in *Metaphysics α*, and his claim that metaphysics is simultaneously easy and difficult. For us, there are truths which are easy to know, and truths that are hard to know, and both of which man can know by the process Aristotle describes in the *Posterior Analytics*. From sensory experience, our soul can indeed easily infer unquestionable and self-evident principles (the truths which are easy to know) and the first definitions which are the "doorway" to arriving at evident knowledge<sup>33</sup>.

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natures of material things; and therefore it can only understand by turning to the phantasms, as we have said above [see *ST*, I, q. 84, art. 7]. Thus it clearly appears that immaterial substances which do not fall under sense and imagination, cannot first and *per se* be known by us, according to the mode of knowledge which experience proves us to have". And *ST*, I, q. 88, art. 2, *resp.*: "a philosopher named Avempace [Ibn-Badja, Arabian Philosopher] taught that by the understanding of natural substances we can be led, according to true philosophical principles, to the knowledge of immaterial substances. For since the nature of our intellect is to abstract the quiddity of material things from matter, anything material residing in that abstracted quiddity can again be made subject to abstraction; and as the process of abstraction cannot go on forever, it must arrive at length at some immaterial quiddity, absolutely without matter; and this would be the understanding of immaterial substance" (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

<sup>33</sup> *In Met.*, II, lec. 1, § 277: "since anyone can attain some knowledge of the truth, even though it be little, the situation in the case of knowledge is like the one that we speak of in the proverb 'Who will miss a door?' i.e., the outer door of a house. For it is difficult to know what the interior of a house is like, and a man is easily deceived in such matters; but just as no one is mistaken about the entrance of a house, which is evident to all and is the first thing that we perceive, so too this is the case with regard to the knowledge of truth; for those truths through which we enter into a knowledge of others

But another and much more difficult process is that which starts from the “confused” cognition of universals and passes, not without difficulty, to a distinct knowledge of their essences.

But, how can this explanation be traced to the original text of *Metaphysics α*, which did not mention the *unibilitas* to the body as the main cause of the “difficulties”? As recalled before, Aristotle maintained that the difficulty is “twofold”, and enigmatically attributed it to two possible causes: “the things” and “us”. Aquinas answers this question by interpreting the Philosopher’s words, and asserting that the “difficulties” in our knowledge are traceable to two factors: 1) the fact that the “things themselves are imperfect in some way” and 2) “some weakness on the part of our intellect”, which for Aristotle was “the principal source of the difficulty”. The first factor (imperfection) cannot be attributed to separate substances, and Aquinas, following Boethius, institutes a specific category of material things that are imperfect “in being”. This refers to those things which are “less knowable by their very nature”; for example, “matter, motion, and time”, which “are less knowable because of the imperfect being which they possess”, and *all* material things, which are less knowable by themselves precisely because of their material nature<sup>34</sup>.

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are known to all, and no man is mistaken about them. Those first principles which are naturally apprehended are truths of this sort, *e.g.*, ‘It is impossible both to affirm and deny something at the same time’, and ‘Every whole is greater than each of its parts’, and so on. On the other hand, there are many ways in which error may arise with respect to the conclusions into which we enter through such principles as through an outer door. Therefore, it is easy to know the truth if we consider that small amount of it which is comprised of self-evident principles, through which we enter into other truths, because this much is evident to all” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1961).

<sup>34</sup> It is noteworthy that Aquinas only embraces a moderate version of this theory (these things are limitedly intelligible), by which some responsibility is attributed to the things themselves. This view could indeed be taken radically, as if to claim that “the difficulty experienced in knowing the truth is *wholly* attributable to things themselves” (those things are not intelligible at

Aquinas, however, does not directly charge the lesser intelligibility of material things as the cause of the difficulties in grasping formal realities. The idea of “less knowable” things does indeed serve Aquinas’ aim of arguing that – even if the weakness of our intellect is formally the principal cause of the “difficulty”<sup>35</sup> – the impossibility for us to directly know

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all). Such an extreme perspective, however, would be that of Heraclitus and Anaxagoras, who Aristotle criticizes in *Metaphysics Γ*. Moreover, the idea that things are unintelligible in themselves is nothing but the inverse of Plato’s theory of ideas. Indeed, if separate species are “immaterial and immovable”, no “knowledge of movement and matter” would be excluded from natural science, including “all demonstration through moving and material causes” (*ST*, I, q. 84, art. 1, *resp.*). On the other hand, it remains a strategic necessity for Aquinas to uphold the possibility of knowledge of elements such as matter and motion, as this allows for the demonstration *propter quid* of the existence of God and separate substances, i.e. Thomas’ famous five ways. For Aquinas Aristotle thinks that “the doctrine of Heraclitus, that all things are and are not, seems to make everything true, while that of Anaxagoras, that there is an intermediate between the terms of a contradiction, seems to make everything false; for when things are mixed, the mixture is neither good nor not-good, so that one cannot say anything that is true”. According to the Philosopher, the theories “that nothing is true” are thus especially close to Heraclitus’ philosophy, “for that which says that all things are true and all are false also makes each of these statements separately, so that since they are impossible, the double statement must be impossible too”. (*Metaph. Γ*, 1012a18-1012b22, trans. Aristotle 1984-1985). Aquinas also discusses this point in *ST*, I, q. 84, art. 1, *resp.* However, Aquinas maintains that this doctrine must be rejected, not only because it is wrong, but also because it explains why Aristotle pointed to human intellect as “the principal source of the difficulty”. Indeed, if the difficulty were to lie mainly in the nature of things, the things that we know would be most knowable by nature. Yet, this would imply that we know what is the most knowable by nature, which is false: “If this difficulty were principally attributable to things, it would follow [that] we would best know those things which are most knowable by nature. But, those things which are most knowable by nature are those which are most actual, i.e., immaterial and unchangeable things, yet we know these least of all” (*In Met.*, II, lec. 2, § 282, trans. Thomas de Aquino 1961).

<sup>35</sup> Aquinas concludes that “the difficulty experienced in knowing the metaphysical truth is due principally to some weakness on the part of our intel-

separate substances stems precisely from the rootedness of our intellects in our bodies and so, in the senses. The soul's need for the body entails that our souls primarily know material things, which are less self-evident things. Thus, the human intellect is forced to know formal and separate things only indirectly, despite their being the most self-evident:

[material things are] less knowable by nature because of their materiality, although they can be known by abstracting sensible forms from phantasms. And since this process of knowing truth befits the nature of the human soul insofar to the extent that it is the form of this kind of body (as whatever is natural always is), it is possible for the human soul to know the truth about things only insofar as it can be elevated to the level of the things which it understands by abstracting from phantasms. By this process, however, the soul cannot be elevated to the level of knowing the quiddities of immaterial substances because these are not on the same level as sensible substances. Therefore, it is impossible for the human soul, which is united to this kind of body, to apprehend separate substances by knowing their quiddities<sup>36</sup>.

It is important to note two interconnected aspects of Aquinas' account. The first is that our soul, as for the bat's eyes, is incapable of directly apprehending separate things<sup>37</sup>, although he maintains that such an impossibility is not fully comparable with that of the eyes of bats. The cause of our difficulties lies not in the extreme brightness of such substances (which would make for an essential incomprehensibility), but rather, in a structural feature of our knowledge, which forces us to turn to the things that are "less knowable by their very na-

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lect". This does not mean that the deficiencies in things are not responsible for the generation of errors, but rather that the deficiency of our intellect is implied in both theories.

<sup>36</sup> *In Met.*, II, lec. 2, § 285 (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1961).

<sup>37</sup> *In Met.*, I, lec. 2, § 46.



ture”, i.e. those that are material. The second aspect is that such a structural feature is not conceived as a whole *impedimentum corporis*, but rather as a necessary union that our soul needs due to its weak spiritual nature. Although he sometimes points to the body as obstructing the full knowledge of spiritual substances<sup>38</sup>, Aquinas stresses that the mode of knowing that excludes separate substances from the possible objects of knowledge also happens to be the most *convenient* to the soul because of the peculiar nature of the latter<sup>39</sup>.

Therefore, the causes of the “difficulties” are actually two-fold and they wholly exclude separate substances themselves: on the one hand, our intellect, which is rooted in a soul of

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<sup>38</sup> *ST*, I, q. 89, art. 2, ad 1: “The separated soul is, indeed, less perfect considering its nature in which it communicates with the nature of the body: but it has a greater freedom of intelligence, since the weight and care of the body is a clog upon the clearness of its intelligence in the present life”. Aquinas also accounts for the fact that the separate soul can somehow participate in the same divine influx as separate substances. *ST*, I, q. 89, art. 1, ad 3: “The separated soul does not understand by way of innate species, nor by species abstracted then, nor only by species retained, and this the objection proves; but the soul in that state understands by means of participated species arising from the influence of the Divine light, shared by the soul as by other separate substances; though in a lesser degree. Hence as soon as it ceases to act by turning to corporeal (phantasms), the soul turns at once to the superior things; nor is this way of knowledge unnatural, for God is the author of the influx of both of the light of grace and of the light of nature”.

<sup>39</sup> *ST*, I, q. 89, art. 1, *resp.*: “it is as natural for the soul to understand by turning to the phantasms as it is for it to be joined to the body; but to be separated from the body is not in accordance with its nature, and likewise to understand without turning to the phantasms is not natural to it; and hence it is united to the body in order that it may have an existence and an operation suitable to its nature”. This why Aquinas stresses that “this process of knowing truth benefits (*convenit*) the nature of the human soul insofar as it is the form of this kind of body”. Nevertheless, as I showed elsewhere (see Guidi 2018: 88-110 and 2019a) the cognition of the separated soul is a *praeter*-natural mode of cognition, which provisionally substitutes the natural mode, and never substitutes or replaces the natural cognition that passes through the body (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1961).

such nature; on the other hand, the objects towards which this knowledge force us to turn to, i.e. the material things, which are less knowable by their very nature.

#### 4. Fonseca and the Three Genera of Things

Among the Late Scholastics, the question of the “difficulties” departed from Aquinas’ original articulation, to then focus on the problem of the structural possibilities of human metaphysical science and its epistemological status. The Jesuits especially seem to understand this problem as being essentially related to the Aristotelian conception of truth as the conformity between *intellectus* and *res*. Science, including metaphysics, is a complex architecture made up of the connection between true principles and true conclusions, and it is based upon the possibility of true natural concepts being instituted in our overall cognitive nature. Accordingly, the “difficulties” in question are structural limits to our process of knowledge, which impose a specific way of accessing the truth and a specific path to build a true science.

Such an approach can already be found in the work of the “Portuguese Aristotle”, Pedro da Fonseca<sup>40</sup>. Fonseca’s account is peculiar as it deals with the question of the “difficulties” as an independent discussion over the obstacles which obstruct natural knowledge and perfect truth. Thus, it stands as a reflection on the causes behind those issues which prevent man from obtaining the truth which he is naturally able to achieve.

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<sup>40</sup> For more on Fonseca, see especially Ashworth 1974, 1997, 2019; Caruso 1979, Carvalho 2009, Casalini 2016, Coxito 2005, Martins 1991, 1994, 2019, Pereira 1967, 1999, Heider 2014b: 37-43, Guidi 2019b and 2020a. A very accurate biography of Fonseca has been recently written by Carvalho (2020). A comprehensive bibliography on Fonseca (up to 2006) can be found in Madeira 2006, but see also its updated version on the Conimbricenses.org project: [www.conimbricenses.org/bibliographies/pedro-da-fonseca/](http://www.conimbricenses.org/bibliographies/pedro-da-fonseca/).

In his Commentary on the *Metaphysics*<sup>41</sup>, Fonseca addresses the issue in a whole *quaestio* devoted to the first chapter of book  $\alpha$ , which is entitled “the cause of those difficulties that occur in knowing the truth”<sup>42</sup>. Yet, Fonseca first addresses the problem already in the *Explanatio* of *Metaphysics A.2*, in which he comments on Aristotle’s six definitions of the “wise man”. In this regard, the Portuguese Jesuit recuperated Aquinas’ distinction between the universals *in praedicando* and *in causando*, emphasizing that only the firsts are, properly speaking, the universals to which Aristotle referred as those difficult things which are the object of metaphysics<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> *CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q. 1, s. 1: 301-311.

<sup>42</sup> *CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q. 1, s. 1: 301.

<sup>43</sup> The universals *in causando* are just singular beings that are universal in causing, and knowing logical universal is even more difficult than knowing separate substances. See *CMA*, bk. I, ch. II, *Explanatio*: 94-95: “those things which are the most universal are, simply, known with much difficulty, though [only] by men, because [in themselves] the separate substances, which do not need the aid of the senses, are actually understood very easily. Yet, [Aristotle] adds a specification [*Metaph. A*, ch. 2, 982a20-982b10: ‘And these things, the most universal, are on the whole the hardest for men to know; for they are furthest from the senses’] because many particulars, however, are known with much difficulty by us, such as prime matter, that is known by the Philosopher from the extended progress in time [of material beings], and the squared circle, on which, the things to be discovered, although the efforts of many Mathematicians, are still not discovered. Here, by the name of “the most universal”, the majority means only the most universal causes, which, being separate from matter, are distant from our senses. Yet, because Saint Thomas understood Aristotle on those terms, it must be explained both [what are] the most universal causes and the most predicated universals, which both are very far from the things that first fall under the sense, and so from the senses themselves. And why do not add also that [here] it should be understood especially the universal predicates, not only because, insofar as they are more universal, are known more hardly than the separate substances, being abstracted by them, but also that by the name of universal is meant specifically the universal things; though, the separate substances although they are universal causes, are not called simply “universal things”, since they are singular, but things which are universal *in causando*”.

Fonseca, however, does not consider such difficulties to be insurmountable. The knowledge of universal concepts, he maintains, are very difficult for man, but not impossible. This caveat is important, as it reveals the Portuguese's fundamental aim of distinguishing abstractive knowledge of the universals *in praedicando* from the class of the things that man cannot know. The difficulties pointed out by Aristotle prevent us from easily and directly acquiring knowledge of immaterial and material things, but for Fonseca, this does not imply that there is any structural difficulty in the process that moves from sensory perception to abstractive knowledge.

Anyway, as regards the problem of elaborating an etiology of such difficulties, Fonseca's strategy is mainly that of lining up with Aquinas<sup>44</sup>. Such a defense of Thomas, however, is quite original, since it integrates some doctrinal elements from Scotus and partially tries to revise Aquinas' account. Indeed the Jesuit defends the view that the cause of the "difficulties" lies partially in things and partially in us, but he immediately takes a step back from Aquinas to then introduce a different account regarding the responsibility of things. According to Fonseca, there would indeed be

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<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Fonseca bases his position on the traditional doctrine of Avicenna concerning the *primum cognitum*. Indeed, "there is no kind of thing that, even while we are in our mortal body, cannot be understood by us in some way. And this happens because of the adequate object of whatever intellect is the being (*ens*), which embraces everything in its extent" (*CMA*, bk II, ch. 1, q. 1, s. 2[3]: 303). Thus, our intellect is *naturally* able to *truly* understand, at least to a minimal degree, every possible being, and, absolutely speaking, there is nothing that it cannot grasp. Fonseca actually overlaps the problem of the minimal degree of knowledge with that of the *primum cognitum*. Regarding the latter, Aquinas actually placed being *qua* being as what first and foremost falls under our apprehension. See especially *ST*, I-II, q. 94, art. 2, co., but also *In Sent.*, I, 4, ad. 4 and *DV*, I, 1. This view was especially supported by Cajetan (*In De Ente et Essentia commentaria* [ed. 1934], q. 1, see Riva, 1993). For more on the reception and discussion of this question within the Thomistic tradition, see especially Kemple 2017.

three genera of things, which we understand, neither with equal difficulty or equal ease. [1] The first one is that of the things which are excellent by their nature; and such are all substances deprived of matter, and their qualities. [2] Another is that of things which are weak entities, like prime matter, relations, and beings of reason, that usually are said to be beings to the minimal degree. [3] The third one is that of things which are absolutely intermediate between those, that is sensible substances, of course, and their absolute accidents<sup>45</sup>.

Fonseca maintains that all of the difficulties in metaphysics follow *solely* from the first two genera of things (separate substances and “weak” material entities), given that the human soul is extremely *familiar* with the third group, i.e. “intermediate” beings, through the senses, and that our perception of these things is “easy” or at least “not so difficult”<sup>46</sup>. These things are material compounds, namely “sensible substances” “and their absolute accidents”, which are the most common objects for sensory cognition<sup>47</sup>.

It is worth stressing the difference between this doctrine and Aquinas’ genuine view. For Thomas, sensible material substances (Fonseca’s third group) were not *easily* knowable by themselves. Rather, they were due to the union of the soul with the body, the main source of our knowledge, which is precisely one of the causes of the “difficulties” in our capacity to know. By contrast, Fonseca now aims at setting aside a specific category of material things, i.e. the third one, which is not only the main source of human knowledge, but which is also known easily, indeed flawlessly. Fonseca does this by creating the second category, which

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<sup>45</sup> *CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q. 1, s. 2[3]: 303.

<sup>46</sup> *CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q. 1, s. 2[3]: 304.

<sup>47</sup> Therefore: *a)* our senses *cannot* immediately and easily understand separate substances; *b)* our senses *cannot* immediately and easily understand “weak” entities, but; *c)* our senses *can* easily understand sensible, material substances and their sensible accidents.

consists of “difficult” things (weak entities), to which all the difficulties caused by things are attributed.

## 5. Fonseca, Scotus and the Difficulties in Knowing the Truth

The certainty that Fonseca places in the knowledge of material substances must be, however, proven by first explaining how, according to this view, it would be *harder* to know prime matter (which belongs to the second group) than it is to know material substances (which belongs to the third group)<sup>48</sup>. Now, Fonseca justifies his perspective by the very relevant clarification that the whole matter in question is not “distinct, or definitive” knowledge, but rather “confused or simple knowledge”<sup>49</sup>. Only when speaking of confused knowledge alone, Fonseca says, is our cognition of material things easier than that of prime matter.

This account can only really be understood in light of an important premise. Indeed, Fonseca seems to place it against the background of a Scotistic<sup>50</sup> understanding of confused and

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<sup>48</sup> *CMA*, bk II, ch. 1, q. 1, s. 2[3]: 304.

<sup>49</sup> *CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q. 1, s. 2[3]: 304.

<sup>50</sup> Scotus uses this conceptual duo in the *Questions on the On the Soul* (*Qu. De An.*, q. 16, § 3: 568): “Grasping (*cognoscere*) something confused and grasping something confusedly are not the same, and neither are grasping something distinct and grasping something distinctly. For something confused can be distinctly grasped, as animal, which is confused in relation to man. Similarly what is distinct can be grasped confusedly, as man, by someone grasping animal or what animal is. Moreover, that is confused which is indistinct, although distinguishable, as is a genus. But to grasp something confusedly is to grasp what its name says or to grasp it in general only. But to grasp something distinctly is to grasp it through its proper principles placed in its definition”. Another definition is in the *Qu. Quod.*, q. 14, § 13: “A confused concept supplies a partial, general grasp of some entity, for instance, the concept of ‘animal’, prescinding from any difference, is confused. Distinct concepts, in turn, should comprise genera

distinct knowledge. His defense is implicitly rooted in a doctrine which he took from the Subtle Doctor and which he reshaped in his commentary on *Metaphysics A.2*.

According to Fonseca, confused or simple cognition is that in which “a thing is said to be known when another one is perceived, in which that [thing] is in a way contained”<sup>51</sup>. By contrast, distinct cognition is that “by which a complete something is known evidently in all its parts, which are contained in it”<sup>52</sup>. Thus confused or simple cognition is only the partial knowledge of a whole, without any distinct cognition of all the constituent parts; whereas distinct cognition is a complete knowledge of a whole and all its parts. According to such a doctrine, Fonseca established four possible kinds of knowledge<sup>53</sup>: 1) the *distinct*

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and differences, or in the case of the blessed who cognize singular entities, a distinct concept of such an entity is proper to that entity, A confused concept supplies a partial, general grasp of some entity, for instance, the concept of ‘animal’, prescind from any difference, is confused. Distinct concepts, in turn, should comprise genera and differences, or in the case of the blessed who cognize singular entities, a distinct concept of such an entity is proper to that entity, i.e., characteristic of no other being. A potentially distinct concept is grasped confusedly when the specific element is absent, for example, one may know of man only that he is some type of animal. Likewise, a confused concept can be distinctly known when determined by some difference”. The translation is from Hall 2007: 27, which explains very well the metaphysical context where Scotus employs such a distinction. However, the distinct/confused lexicon is employed also in the context of logic, and especially in the discussion of the *suppositio*. See Maierù 1972: 217-321. Despite the consonance with Scotus, Fonseca partially took this theory from Cajetan’s commentary on the *De Ente et Essentia* ([ed. 1934] see *Introduction*, q. 1, § 3). See Kemple 2017: 33-40

<sup>51</sup> *CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 1: 117. This occurs, for example, when “we say that the cause is known in the effect, and conversely the effect in the cause, and the genus in the species, and the species in the genus” (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 1: 117).

<sup>52</sup> Take, for instance, “when we see a whole building, once we have examined all its parts, not only externally, but also internally” (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 1: 117).

<sup>53</sup> It is worth noting the terminological effort by which Fonseca, following

*cognition of an essential whole*<sup>54</sup>; 2) the *confused cognition of an essential whole*<sup>55</sup>; 3) the *distinct cognition of a universal whole*<sup>56</sup>; 4) the *confused cognition of a universal whole*<sup>57</sup>.

For the Portuguese Aristotle, man cannot have immediate and distinct cognition of a universal whole (3), nor can our soul have immediate and distinct cognition of an essential whole (1). Nevertheless, man can acquire distinct cognition of single finite beings<sup>58</sup>, but such distinct cognition always follows the confused (both 2 and 4), which is our first, simplest and main form of knowledge. Distinct and complex concepts are indeed always the effect of the subsequent activity of analysis and synthesis of the intellect on confused cognitions. Fonseca describes this process as follows:

If we follow the manner by which we know it, any object whatever is firstly understood confusedly, rather than distinctly [...], as the Anatomists first knew the human body, rather than observing all its limbs, and all the limbs' parts; and the inhabitants of Western India, when they saw knights fighting on horseback for the first

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Aquinas, solves the καθόλου / όλον problem. Herein, Fonseca distinguishes between “essential wholes”, which are physical integral wholes of parts (όλον), and universal wholes (καθόλου), relative to abstractive cognition, and holds that the knowledge of both can be either confused or distinct

<sup>54</sup> All the essential predicates of something are known, part by part. This is true, for example, of knowing a higher genus and all the differences it contains (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 1: 118).

<sup>55</sup> A whole is known by its essence, but not in all of its constituent parts. This is the case, for example, of knowing what is essentially (*secundum se*) a species, but not the genus to which it belongs, or all the species' internal differences (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 1: 118).

<sup>56</sup> All knowledge of a common property comes to be known by knowing all of the individuals to which it applies one-by-one. Take, for example, how the universal of animals is understood by knowing all individual existing animals (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 1: 119).

<sup>57</sup> A universal is known without knowing its lower species, such as, for example, if one knows a color, but not its shades (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 1: 119).

<sup>58</sup> *CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 1: 119.



time, firstly thought they were one animal, like a centaur, rather than distinguishing them one by one, as two different animals<sup>59</sup>.

As one can see, this is nothing other than Aquinas' account, along with a sharper distinction between perceptive wholes and logical universals. But it is also a doctrine that Fonseca conceives again in the light of its agreement with Scotus<sup>60</sup> on another important aspect, i.e. the priority of the singular in universal in cognition<sup>61</sup>. For Fonseca, the “confused” cogni-

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<sup>59</sup> *CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 2: 121.

<sup>60</sup> See *Qu. De An.*, q. 16: 568-569: “the less universal is what is first known to us, according to a priority in time and by a confused cognition, rather than a universal”; hence, “the intellect, in its primary act of intellection, which precedes the act of the will, understands the most perfectly intelligible as possible, which terminates the most perfect action it can have; that which is intelligible, though, is the *species specialissima*”.

<sup>61</sup> Over his entire commentary on *Metaphysics A*, ch. 1-2, Fonseca followed Scotus in deeming that singulars, not universals, are the first things that the intellect knows by way of phantasms and those from which it constitutes, by abstraction, the universal (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 4: 121-126 and s. 6: 129-132). The *species infima* (the “least universal” concept) is, absolutely speaking, most easily (*facilissime*) known (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 6: 132). Against Aquinas and in line with Scotus he also maintained that our intellect knows universals “better” (*melius*) than singulars, but it knows “less universal” concepts (Fonseca adopts such an expression to refer to the *species infima*, which is not strictly a singular, but a very restricted abstractive species of the particular) “more easily” than universals. Moreover, he defended (also from Cajetan's belief that only universal concepts can be known [see *In De Ente et Essentia* [1934] q. 3, s. 3, pp. 144-145 and *Summa Theologiae cum supplemento et commentariis Caietani* [ed. 1888-1906], I, q. 86, art. 1, § 7, p. 348]) the doctrine that although the intellect never knows singular *sensibilia*, the concepts of singulars, the *species infima* (singulars are simply perceived, but are never known, since the intellect is not proportional with matter. See *CMA* bk. I, ch. 2, q. 3, s. 1: 138-140) are primary and known *per se* by our intellect (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 3, s. 2: 140 ff). As the Portuguese Jesuit stresses, again consistent with Scotus (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 2: 121) such knowledge, and its cognitive priority over the more universal, takes place at the level of confused cognition.

tion of “less universal” singulars is (as it was for Scotus) our first line of access to knowledge, which provides us with the cognitive “raw material” we analyze to arrive at a distinct essential cognition. “Less universal”, and not “more common” concepts (as it was for Aquinas) form, the basis from which our mind abstracts more distinct cognitions, and thereby it founds the very possibility of a human science.

Therefore, Fonseca’s choice of placing the entire discussion on the level of confused cognition appears to be due to a very meaningful reason. On the one hand, Fonseca implies, like Aquinas, that distinct knowledge is just that which stems from abstractive cognition<sup>62</sup>, whereas confused knowledge is the primary knowledge we get from the senses. On the other hand, Fonseca attributes all matters surrounding knowledge to sensory perception and so, to confused knowledge. The latter, although confused, is also easier for us, at least when speaking of the material substances which are the proper object of our senses. Only in this sense are material substances more easily known by us, whereas the distinct knowledge of such substances nevertheless remains difficult, as it requires a complex process of abstraction<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, according to Scotus, who aims to founding an Avicennian and univocalist first philosophy, the most universal is known first, but in *distinct* cognition. See *Qu. De An.*, q. 16: 569: “by us, what is more universal is known first by distinct cognition. This is proven by the fact that what is distinctly known enters into the definition of the other, by which the other is known distinctly; but the being (*ens*), which is absolutely universal, enters into the definition of everything, since the concept of being is included in the concept of whatever is; on the other hand, that very concept does not have a concept if it does not have a distinct one, because there is nothing in which it could be known confusedly or indistinctly”.

<sup>63</sup> It is also worth noting that the concept of *cognitio confusa* is strategic even in Fonseca’s epistemology of metaphysics. For Fonseca, metaphysics is ultimately the science that deals which the *ens commune* understood as a whole, including its parts, God and whatever falls under the categories. This effectively excludes matter, as it mixes confused and distinct knowledge. On the

Hence, Fonseca resolves the entire issue about the causes of difficulties in knowing the truth by placing it on the level of confused or simple knowledge, where he includes the certainty about things belonging to the third group, which can be flawlessly known in the sense of confused knowledge<sup>64</sup>. Hav-

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one hand, the metaphysician has knowledge of material things confusedly and through general concepts (like “being”, “substance”, etc.), though even more so than the experts of the other sciences (*CMA*, bk. I, ch. 2, q. 1, s. 3: 114: “none of the other experts [in other sciences] understand in a entirely distinct way the natures of the things which he deals with, accordingly none of them breaks down the definitions of their sciences up until the extreme predicates, which though is what the metaphysician does about all essences of the things that he considers. This is also the reason why the cognition of the metaphysician is more excellent, because it encompasses all the things also respect to their specific concepts, at least confusedly, whereas the cognition of the other [sciences] does not reach, neither distinctly, nor confusedly, all things”). At the same time, metaphysics has a twofold conceptual apparatus. On the other hand, the metaphysician has distinct knowledge of immaterial substances, which entirely excludes matter from their essence, by way of special concepts. As Martins (1994: 83 ff) points out, such an ambiguity reveals, in Fonseca, an inner struggle between the two classic understandings of metaphysics, *metaphysica specialis* (which has its own special and distinct concepts), and *metaphysica generalis* (which uses general and common confused concepts), or rather between *metaphysica particularis* (of God alone) and *metaphysica communis* (ontology). The Portuguese Aristotle is able to unify this duality through the daring proposal of an analogical theory of being (*ens*) based exactly on the confused objective concept of *ens* (*CMA*, I, bk. 4, ch. 2, q. 2, s. 4: 555-556), which is the only formal concept which can account for the common predication of the being of separate substances and all other categories (see Martins 1994: 130-190).

<sup>64</sup> Apart from the setting of the third group of things, Fonseca’s view would be close enough to Aquinas’ if Fonseca had not stressed his disagreement with Thomas for having classified time and movement as less knowable things. For Fonseca, time and movement cannot be easily understood as “distinct” knowledge, but they are perfectly understandable from the perspective of the “confused”, which can even be “known by themselves” (*CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q. 1, s. 2[3]: 304). As Fonseca remarks, this is actually of the view of Augustine, who writes: “is it not true that in conversation we refer to nothing more familiarly or knowingly than time? And surely

ing established these premises, and saved from the possibility of errors of the confused knowledge of material substances, Fonseca finally states that:

- the difficulty of knowing the truth of spiritual things (first group) comes “only from the imperfection of our intellect.”<sup>65</sup> This is especially explained by the fact that immaterial beings are beings “at rank” and that they are also perfectly true and equally intelligible. The (self-evident) fact that we do not know them immediately, therefore, must be attributed to the limited nature of our intellect;
- the obstacles concerning the second group of things instead derive “partially from their imperfection, and partially from the imperfection of our intellect”<sup>66</sup>. Indeed, although our intellect is limited and naturally inclined to the cognition of sensible things, the things of the second group, which are not sensible by themselves, have “the lower level of entity, and truth”, such that they are not so easily understandable by our intellect<sup>67</sup>.

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we understand it when we speak of it; we understand it also when we hear another speak of it. What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is” (*Conf.* XI, § 14). For Fonseca, however, these things still belong to the second group, since acquiring knowledge of them is more difficult than it is for “quantities and permanent sensible qualities”, which belong to the third group (*CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q.1, s. 2[3]: 304).

<sup>65</sup> *CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q.1, s. 3: 305.

<sup>66</sup> *CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q.1, s. 3: 306.

<sup>67</sup> *CMA*, bk. II, ch. 1, q.1, s. 3: 306. To conclude his entire discussion, Fonseca actually returns to defending Aquinas’ doctrine and points to our mind as being the *principal* (if not the only) cause of the unintelligibility of things of both the first and the second kind. Indeed, “if talking absolutely and simply, namely without making any distinction between things, the difficulties happening in knowing them [the things], primarily stems from the imperfection of our intellect”. This occurs because of the weakness of our intellect, which is implied in knowledge of both kinds of things, and

## 6. Fonseca's Strategy

It should be stressed that Fonseca's strategy bears two parallel consequences. On the one hand, neither the first nor the second groups of things, which are responsible for the "difficulties", are the union of the soul with the body or material sensible substances. "Weak" and less intelligible beings (i.e. relationships, potencies, prime matter, time, etc.) are elements that one can find in the physical world, but they do not constitute the essence of the material substances that are the primary object of our sensory knowledge. On the other hand, the soul's inner tendency to turn to material things is no longer an obstacle to the construction of a true knowledge, but it is, rather, the first step of scientific knowledge. This is why, Fonseca, unlike Thomas, cannot agree with the idea that material things are less intelligible in themselves, and he strains to show that at the level of "simple or confused" cognition, the knowledge we have of them is nevertheless flawless.

This strategy stems, first of all, from an overlapping of Aquinas' general structure and Scotus' theory of the first object of sensory knowledge. At the same time, I suppose that Fonseca is worried about the remote implications of *Metaphysics*  $\alpha$ , especially the possible classification of material beings among the causes of our difficulties. This might entail putting into question the entire cognitive continuum that leads the human soul from the cognition of material particulars to the abstract knowledge of universals and to the induction of principles, the pillars of human scientific knowledge and of metaphys-

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reveals its structural imperfection when it comes to the knowledge of the clearest beings. "As the nightbird's eyes to the daylight" (*CMA*, II, ch. 1, q.1, s. 3: 307), but also by comparison with other intellects – the angelic ones – which are, by contrast, able to understand beings of the second kind

ics as well<sup>68</sup>. For Fonseca, then, all issues concerning material things are confined to the level of “weak” entities. From the sensible perception of material substances, however, we are able to arrive at a reliable representation, even by simple and confused knowledge, which can then serve as the basis for building a solid metaphysical science.

We can confirm this interpretation by virtue of Fonseca’s claims about the value of experience in apprehending the principles or habits of human science. The Jesuit wholly embraces the perspective of the *Posterior Analytics* and establishes three important conclusions: 1) apprehensive habit, which precedes judgment, is not attributable to experience itself, but to a certain enhancement of sensorial apprehension; 2) judicative habit is generated through experience in the singular; 3) from a few principles, habit is able to generate many different conclusions, without a single experiment of each case. Moreover, in replying to an objection, Fonseca, stresses that the actual cause of our knowledge of principles is, properly speaking, not derived from experience, but from the natural light of our intellect<sup>69</sup>. All of our knowledge, therefore, relies on the truth of the process of induction of principles and universal concepts. Through this process, sensory perception serves as the remote foundation of true scientific knowledge and, thus, of metaphysics.

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<sup>68</sup> It is not unreasonable to suppose that such a position depends on the need to defend the possibility of human scientific knowledge against the rebirth of Skepticism (see, of course, Popkin 2003: 3-43, and Floridi 2002). Fonseca knew the Ancient debate on Skepticism quite well, and he discusses the perspectives of the Skeptics and the Academics especially in *CMA*, bk. I, *Proemium*, ch. 4: 15-20. See Blackwell 2009, for an interesting discussion about the translation of *Metaph. B*, ch. 1’s ἀπορέω into the Latin *dubito*, and the consequent debate between Fonseca, Suárez, Pereira and Descartes.

<sup>69</sup> *CMA*, I, ch. 1, q. 4, s. 3: 74-80.

## 7. Suárez on Confusion, Distinction, and Scientific Knowledge

I dwelled on Fonseca's account not only for its own philosophical value, but also because it is a key-element to understand the important discussion put forward by Suárez. The Spanish Jesuit dedicates to the topic of the "difficulties" a whole section of *DM* 9<sup>70</sup>, which is specifically devoted to the problem of cognitive falsity<sup>71</sup> (in conformity with the Aristotelian definition of truth as the conformity between intellect and things)<sup>72</sup>. In this context, Suárez opens a final section (the third), to deal with the problem which Aristotle<sup>73</sup> raises in *Metaphysics*  $\alpha$ , where he

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<sup>70</sup> There is no secondary literature entirely devoted to *DM* 9, especially to the nature of falsity or to the problem of the sources of the "difficulties" in knowing the truth which is addressed here (*DM* 9, s. 3). Most of the secondary literature is related to Suárez's theory of falsity and concerns Suárez as a source of Descartes' theory of false ideas. See, for example, Wells 1984, García 1998 and 2000, Scribano 2001. On Suárez's theory of truth, see instead Burlando 2014.

<sup>71</sup> Of course, a "falsity" is not the same as a "difficulty". For Suárez, falsity corresponds to a false (i.e. inadequate) judgment produced by the mind, whereas a "difficulty" (as this term is defined in the Scholastic tradition) is that which prevents us from full or distinct knowledge of a thing. Suárez chooses to deal with these two problems in the same *Disputation*, presumably since both are forms of non-truth.

<sup>72</sup> Suárez defends the traditional correspondence theory in sections 1-5 of *DM*, 8. See Burlando 2014, and the essay "The Truth We Know. Reassessing Suárez's Account of Cognitive Truth and Objective Being", *infra*, p. 77-113.

<sup>73</sup> Note again a possible reference to the rebirth of Skepticism. Suárez's *De Anima* maintains nevertheless a specific *quaestio* to defend sensory perception from the "Academics", arguing the possibility that the senses make mistakes about both proper and common sensibles. Suárez attributes these errors to the bad representation of the object provided by the sensible species, which disposes the sense to producing a wrong judgment (*TDA*, bk. 3, ch. 10, pp. 651-652; *CDA*, II, d. 6, q. 3, § 6: 498-500). Such errors can be brought about, however, by two possible causes: 1) the sensory organ's indispositions, which are sometimes also an indisposition of the medium; 2) position or local distance, which especially affects sight. Suárez draws

argues “against those who considered [it] not only difficult, but impossible to pursue a genuine truth”, and who held that “there is nothing for men that is true if not what appears”.

As I will show, Suárez defends the account which he attributes to Aquinas<sup>74</sup>: men cannot immediately know separate beings because of some weakness of their knowledge. Still, in knowing “imperfect and lower things,” men fall into difficulties because of the structural imperfection of such things. An interesting disagreement with Fonseca concerns, though, the question of “intermediate” beings, such as “elements or other natural things”<sup>75</sup>. Do they still belong to the order of things whose truth is difficult for our intellect to know?

The *DM* 9 provides an account of Fonseca’s<sup>76</sup> position, whose general approach with which Suárez disagrees<sup>77</sup>. The Uncommon Doctor holds indeed that the whole question does not pertain to “confused and simple” cognition, being that, regarding immaterial things, the question concerns distinct cognition instead. Accordingly, it is simply untrue that the whole discussion concerns confused sensory knowledge alone, given that it actually deals with knowledge “in general” (both confused and distinct)<sup>78</sup>.

Such a criticism might appear to be a quibble, but it actually reveals that Suárez does not understand the problem of the “difficulties” to solely concern the reliability of sensory

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Skeptic theories especially from Cicero, Tertullian, and Augustine (*TDA*, bk. 3, ch. 10, § 1: 651; *CDA*, II, d. 6, q. 3, § 2: 494).

<sup>74</sup> *DM*, 9, s. 3, § 11.

<sup>75</sup> *DM*, 9, s. 3, § 5.

<sup>76</sup> *DM*, 9, s. 3, § 5.

<sup>77</sup> “Still, I do not agree with this claim; indeed, it is against the thoughts of all the authors of that third opinion, as it looks clear from the very example of time and motion [...]. Thus, since no reason proves that we are here speaking of confused cognition, and not of distinct, in which, precisely, are found the difficulties in getting the truth, as well as the many chances to go wrong, whose reasons and causes are investigated mainly by philosophers” (*DM*, 9, s. 3, § 6).

<sup>78</sup> *DM*, 9, s. 3, § 7.



perception. As the context of the *DM* 9 suggests, it is in fact an epistemological question; namely, one which deals with the overall status of our knowledge. In other words, it pertains to the ease or difficulty we have in knowing the truth, both at the level of simple and confused cognition, and at the level of complex and distinct cognition.

This is why, before addressing Suárez's own account (which I will present in the next paragraph), it is important to notice that his disagreement with Fonseca is founded upon a solid epistemological basis. As is well-known, like Fonseca, Suárez already dealt with the epistemological framing of the problem in the *DM* 1<sup>79</sup> where he addresses the scientific nature of metaphysics and the greater or lesser ease of knowing universal or particular things. Here, he had to confront Aristotle's definition of metaphysics as the science that "deals with the most difficult things, and with the things far from the senses"<sup>80</sup>, and he stressed that such a claim regards the cognition of difficult things "insofar as it is possible for man". This science is not attributable to human knowledge by nature, since it deals with the higher and most difficult things only *juxta ingenii humani capacitatem*<sup>81</sup>, within the limits of its finite powers.

Regarding this problem, however, the Uncommon Doctor disagreed with the idea (attributed to Aquinas) that the universal knowledge discussed by Aristotle in the *Physics* was just a simple, raw, and still non-scientific form of knowledge. For Suárez, the object of Aristotle's discussion in the *Physics* is already, in fact, a form of complex scientific knowledge, albeit in its initial state. Indeed,

science [...] must not proceed from the most known [things] according to apprehension, but rather according to that cogni-

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<sup>79</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 5.

<sup>80</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 5, § 9.

<sup>81</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 5, § 9.

tion of them that can be acquired by science; and, if science is the more difficult [form of knowledge], the fact that simple apprehension is easier, does not contribute in starting from such things, according to the proper methodology<sup>82</sup>.

As one can see, Suárez formulates the principle here that even if the “simple” knowledge of material beings (what Fonseca called “confused and simple” knowledge) is an easier form of truth for us to know, this does not entail that scientific knowledge consists in passing from these easy perceptions to difficult abstractive knowledge. The truest science instead only starts from the distinct cognition of universal elements, which is hard for sensory perception, but easy for our intellect:

in scientific knowledge, common reasons are known more easily than the proper [ones], as the natural or movable being [is known] in relation to the heavens or man, and as the reason of the being [is known] in relation to that of substance or accident. And this also attests to that [solution] in science, that what is understood by itself and directly is distinct knowledge, both of the essence and of the properties of everything, *i.e.*, of formal reason; and the universals themselves are neither treated nor known, absolutely speaking, in their entire universality or potentiality, given that according to that reason, their distinct knowledge depends on the knowledge of lower things. [...] Therefore, in the proper and real sciences, such universals are known according to their proper actual essences and according to the properties which are appropriate and adequate; but, following this way, it will be easier to know the more universal things, because the knowledge of the less universal things wholly depends on them<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 5, § 18.

<sup>83</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 5, § 18. This principle could be found already in Aquinas, *ST*, I, q. 85, art. 8: “In the acquisition of knowledge, principles and elements are not always [known] first: for sometimes from sensible effects we arrive at the knowledge of principles and intelligible causes. But in perfect knowledge, the knowledge of effects always depends on the knowledge of

Suárez, like Aquinas, holds that scientific knowledge is based only on that part of abstract cognition where the universal notions are cognized distinctly, and according to their proper actual essences. Such knowledge is not distinct from the whole universal with respect to its material (so to speak) content, which would depend on the knowledge of lower things, and would necessarily consist of the cognition of confused wholes which encompass a plurality of individuals. Instead, true scientific knowledge consists of the intellectual knowledge of the true essences of universal things. So, while the first things known through sensory perception are simple and confused easy perceptions, in metaphysics, the first and most easily accessible objects are common and distinct universal essences.

Therefore, what is easy for our senses is not easy for our intellect, and science starts only from what is easy for our intellect. This is why Suárez renounces Fonseca's idea of sensory knowledge being the easy and confused starting point of all scientific knowledge. The truest science is strictly intellectual, and it is epistemologically (even though not gnosiologically) independent of the senses. In other words, the quality of its truth does not depend upon the truth of sensory perception (from which, of course, it draws its first contents), but solely on the quality of the species in our intellect. Indeed, once we have abandoned the level of sensory perception and accessed the realm of the distinct knowledge by abstraction, our intellect deals with mental objects that one can handle according to their *ratio*, as if this knowledge was *a priori*; that is, as if their distinct knowledge was independent of the extra-mental entity or reality (which remains, however, the ultimate foundation of the *truth* of these concepts) and from the process that goes from sensory perception to abstractive knowledge.

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principles and elements”.

## 8. Suárez on Experience and Evidence

Hence Suárez seems to hold that even if our knowledge begins from the senses, starting from the segment of distinct cognition, it acquires the status of an entirely theoretical science. Evidence of this perspective can be found again in the *DM* 1, where Suárez addresses the relationship between experience and the acquisition of the first principles of science. According to the Jesuit, “experience cannot be, by itself, the proper cause of art or science *a priori*, but it can be a certain occasion or necessary condition, by which one prepares the way to science”<sup>84</sup>. Suárez’s premise is that the science of conclusion, i.e. Aristotle’s ἐπιστήμη, is nothing but the connection of principles and conclusions, and that principles are never known as conclusions (being, indeed, principles). Therefore, strictly speaking, a scientific conclusion does not depend on the experience from which one draws the principle, but only on this necessary connection, which is immediately evident to the natural light of the intellect<sup>85</sup>. Indeed,

if the principles containing the cause of the conclusion could be known or understood clearly without experience, the science of conclusion would not depend in any way on experience. On the other hand, the evident cognition of the principles, which is proper to them, does not arise from any middle term, but immediately, from the very natural light, when the meaning and the reason of the extreme terms is cognized<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 6, § 26.

<sup>85</sup> South (2002, p. 805, but see already 2001: 152-156), goes to argue that for Suárez these “principles [are] so central to his thought that he is willing to accept this kind of innateness within the intellect”. South’s reference goes notably to *CDA*, d. 9, q. 8, § 18.

<sup>86</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 6, § 26.

Thus, for Suárez, experience plays the role of an occasion, which allows our mind to have better cognition of simple terms and then, by acquiring more evidence and certainty, of establishing their mutual connection by the natural light of the intellect<sup>87</sup>. This is precisely why there are “more general principles” – i.e. “a thing is, or is not”, or “it is impossible that a same thing exists and simultaneously does not exist” – which are known independently of experience:

it is not required to know these principles through experience, but it is rather, enough to know them solely through the apprehension, intellection and explication of the terms; in fact, they barely can be reduced to a positive experience; and this since, although one can experiment the existence of a whatever singular, he cannot experiment positively the fact that it currently does not lack existence by an experience which is distinct from that by which a thing is seen to exist; [the thing] is rather understood just by the intelligence, once explicated the terms<sup>88</sup>.

With respect to less universal principles (however common to almost all of the sciences they may be), i.e. that “the whole is greater than the part”, Suárez holds that they come to be known by learning (*disciplina*, opposed here to *inventio*). Learning consists in nothing more than a clear experience of singular terms, starting from which our natural light can immediately deduce their mutual relationship. Accordingly, it is enough for our mind to have a single experience in order for it to reach the evident cognition of principles:

[for learning] I do not think that experience, properly taken, is necessary. Indeed, once one presupposes that [experience] is enough to provide the distinct knowledge of terms, and once the reasons of these terms is sufficiently explained by learning, the

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<sup>87</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 6, § 26.

<sup>88</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 6, § 27.

intellect, without any other experience, can assent with enough evidence and certitude by way of its light. And the reason for this is that what is required for such evident assent (either the experience or whatever other explanation of the terms) is not required as the formal reason of assent, neither as the principle which is by itself efficient or elicited of the act of assent, but as a sufficient application to the object<sup>89</sup>.

Thus, for Suárez, the role of sensory experience is not that of actively generating the basic habits of science in the intellect. Experience is just a “sufficient application” by which the knowing subject apprehends the terms and allows the natural light alone to “see” the principles. Nonetheless, the reason why we need experience is only the impossibility for us to directly grasp intelligible things, i.e. the intrinsic weakness of our intellect<sup>90</sup>. Such a prohibition, though, is just a “limitation” for Suárez, since nothing prevents a powerful human intellect from grasping a principle in a single gesture:

someone could possess a powerful intelligence [*ingenio*], and evaluate attentively and cautiously in a single instant, for example, the reason of the whole and the part, so that he can draw from it the truth of the entire principle<sup>91</sup>.

It is not difficult to see here a strong reinterpretation (if not a surpassing) of Aristotle’s claim in *Metaphysics α* that our limited intellect “cannot simultaneously grasp a whole and its parts”. For Suárez, such a limitation primarily pertains to that which our senses impose on our acquisition of knowledge.

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<sup>89</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 6, § 28.

<sup>90</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 6, § 29: “our intellective cognition is very limited and imperfect and it depends too much on the senses; therefore, without its support, it cannot advance with certainty and firmness, and so it often happens that those who trust too much in their intellect, fall into error as they do for natural things”.

<sup>91</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 5, § 30.

This limitation applies to both sensory perception in itself and as our primary source of knowledge. Indeed, we are not able to perceive a whole and its parts and, accordingly, our intellect is not able to immediately acquire, from the senses, a distinct cognition of the whole and its parts. Yet, once the cognitive process ascends to the level of intellective cognition, a single case is enough to allow a powerful intelligence to intellectually and distinctly “see” the principles.

### 9. Suárez, Non-Scientific and Scientific Knowledge

In the next paragraph, I will dwell on the imperfection of our cognition which derives from the senses. Now it is important to clarify Suárez’s explanation of Aristotle’s recommendation in the *Physics*, of starting from simple and confused knowledge, even if science is mainly intellective and distinct. The Spanish Jesuit solves this puzzle by explaining that in simple knowledge, we know that which is universal “more” and “by a simple and confused knowledge, being them a certain potential and universal whole”, and that there is no contradiction at all in starting from confused knowledge to acquire distinct, scientific knowledge:

It does not matter that in the sciences, one is not aiming for confused knowledge, but for distinct knowledge, because Aristotle does not say that the universals are best known by that cognition at which science is aimed, but rather by the kind of cognition that is supposed to be imperfect, as it is perfected by science<sup>92</sup>.

Also for Suárez, confused knowledge can be, somehow, the foundation of any science. However, this happens only because our intellect is able to refine raw, simple knowledge

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<sup>92</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 5, § 21.

acquired through distinct cognitions, which serve as the principles of science (including metaphysics and its proper object, the *ens*)<sup>93</sup>. Both in this perspective and in a broader sense, metaphysics, the highest science, can be said to be “difficult”, as Aristotle claims in *Metaphysics α*. Indeed, this kind of abstraction entails a very arduous cognitive process, and especially regarding the objects proper to metaphysical science, “there is such great abstraction that it excludes matter altogether, as well as sensible actions and properties as such, and in its object there is nothing on which one can depend that could eliminate the difficulty implied by such great abstraction”<sup>94</sup>.

It is worthwhile noting the Jesuit’s claim in his *De Anima* that such a process starts concretely from the perception of the species of the singular<sup>95</sup>. Like Fonseca, the Jesuit upholds Scotus’ idea that singulars are known directly and that they are known *absque reflexione* prior to universals by way of proper and distinct species that are constituted by our intellect. Our intellect later refines these perceptions until they eventually acquire the status of universal and distinct cognitions, thereby allowing us to reach those principles which form the basis of metaphysics<sup>96</sup>. The book 4 of the *De Anima*, where Suárez

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<sup>93</sup> As is well-known, Suárez grounds his entire metaphysics on the concept of *ens*, taken in its objective sense. In note 2, I already explained my preference as to the general sense by which to understand Suárez’s move. For more on Suárez’s concept of *ens*, see García López 1966, Doyle 1969, Courtine 1990 and 2005: 291-365, Martins 1994: 130-190. More recently, see Heider 2007 and 2017, Pereira 2007: 73-78, Esposito 2001a, 2004, 2007a-b, 2010, 2011 and 2015; Llamas Roig 2020.

<sup>94</sup> *DM*, 1, s. 5, § 20.

<sup>95</sup> Like Fonseca, Suárez holds that singulars are cognized before universals. For more on this issue, see especially the full reconstruction by South (2001 and overall 2002). Also see Peccorini 1974 and Heider 2014a-b, 2016b, and 2020.

<sup>96</sup> See *TDA*, bk. 4, ch. 3, §§ 3, 5, 7; *CDA*, III, d. 9, q. 3: 106-118. Perler 2020b: 30, describes this process as follows: “Cognition is [...] not to be understood as a simple two-step process, as it seemed at first sight, but as a



explains the entire process of acquiring knowledge, from the senses to the intellect, bears a clear witness of this view:

Hence, the process of knowing traced by our intellect seems to be [as follows]: as it firstly receives a certain spiritual species representing the sensible and material thing itself, which is represented in the image, and so firstly represents the proper sensible accidents of any substance; then, also [representing] the common sensibles, which modify the cognition of their proper [sensibles], and finally representing the subject of the accident confusedly [*in confuso*], since those accidents represent it concretely. Therefore the intellect, informed by such species, acquires the proper sensibles by a proper concept, as well as the common [attributes], which in some way shine by themselves in the species: [and] because intellect is born to divide what is joined, it can know such sensibles with proper and distinct concepts: still, it deduces [*colligit*] by discourse the subject of the accidents, and other things, which are not represented by the species, so far

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more complicated one. In the first step, we produce a material representation of a particular thing with particular features; in the second step, we produce a dematerialized representation of the very same thing; and in the third step, after making many comparisons, we finally produce an immaterial representation of the essence or nature of that thing. Suárez even introduces an additional fourth step. He claims that, strictly speaking, we do not yet represent a thing or a substance when we have made the third step, because we have only grasped a bundle of features". It is worth recalling that Suárez talks (*TDA*, bk. 4, ch. 3, §§ 22-23; *CDA*, III, d. 9, q. 3: 143-146) of three kinds of universals (corresponding more or less to Porphyry's famous problem which opens the *Isagoge*): 1) physical, 2) metaphysical and 3) logical. Physical universality exists intrinsically in material things and thus refers to real beings; it is not made by the intellect, but it is set by the intellect's cognition. The metaphysical universal, instead, is formed by abstraction and corresponds to the universality of intelligible species made up by the process of abstraction. Logical universality is a *dictum* belonging to beings of reason too, and it is the rational relation between a physical universal and a metaphysical universal, which are connected by a reflexive act of our mind (the *notitia comparativa*). Only the second kind of universality is produced by the intellect's abstraction. See South 2002, Åkerlund 2009, Heider 2014a-b, 2015.

as considering the same accidents, and especially knowing their transmutations, which happen in the same subject [...] infers [*colligit*] that something lies beneath them<sup>97</sup>.

A distinct cognition could arise from a confused one, but only thanks to the work of the intellect, without which the confused and simple cognition would remain non-scientific, and not pre-scientific. Unlike Fonseca, Suárez holds that simple and confused knowledge is not, strictly speaking, scientific cognition, but just indistinct raw material. Starting from the confused perception of a singular, the intellect can acquire distinct and universal knowledge of a thing and its parts (the terms), until reaching a distinct knowledge of more universal notions and, from them, it can constitute the habit of the first principles which form the fundamental building blocks of science. Therefore, nothing prevents one from considering simple and confused cognition as the starting point of scientific knowledge, even if, properly speaking, it is just a pre-scientific, imperfect phase of science, that needs to be perfected by the intellect.

## 10. Suárez and the Snare of the Body

Let us now return to *DM* 9, in order to see Suárez's critique of Fonseca's account along with his own proposal. First of all, the Spanish Jesuit holds that in sensory perception, the ease

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<sup>97</sup> *TDA*, bk. 4, ch. 4, § 3: 732; *CDA*, III, d. 9, q. 4, § 6: 160. This is why Suárez, also in the *De Anima*, defends the Scholastic belief that confused cognition, *quoad nos*, anticipates the distinct cognition of substance: "substance by itself [is] prior in cognition, still not with regards to us [*quoad nos*]. According to what we said, the distinct and quidditative cognition of the substance is prior to that of the accident, because the latter depends on it both in being and in knowing perfectly, [but] actually, in confused and imperfect cognition, the accident is prior in cognition, being the first one to be presented to the senses" (*TDA*, bk. 4, ch. 4, § 6: 733; *CDA*, III, d. 9, q. 4, § 8: 164-166).

and the difficulty of knowing material things depend directly on the greater or lesser sensibility of things for our perception, and not from the confusion that Fonseca held to be the mark of sensory perception, and so of our “simple” and primarily knowledge. As Suárez points out in *DM* 9, section 3:

...they [the philosophers] would not have taken that distinction [between confused and distinct knowledge] from perfection or imperfection, but from the fact that things were more or less sensible, or more or less joined with sensible things. For indeed, we more easily know the confused and simple cognition of colors, first qualities and the like, because they are at first sensible by themselves. Afterward, size and other common sensibles by themselves, secondly [...]. After this, the sensibles by accident, which in themselves are joined with the sensibles, and so among them it is easier to know the whole than the parts, since it is more sensible, and among all of them, those which are closer to the senses<sup>98</sup>.

Confusion and distinction, for Suárez, do not coincide, respectively, with less or more perfect knowledge; they are just properties of representations at work in the power of knowing, both in the sense or intellect. Overall, ease and difficulty do not correlate with, respectively, sensory perception and intellectual knowledge, but rather, with what is more or less easy to know for the nature of cognitive power. Indeed, among spiritual things, one can know some more easily and others with greater difficulty. This is why Fonseca’s twofold identification of ease with confused sensory perception, and the obstacles with the confused perception of non- or less-sensible objects, collapses entirely.

For Suárez, ease and difficulty have nothing to do with confusion and distinction, but rather with the entirety of our knowledge and with sensibility or non-sensibility. Our knowledge, indeed, is wholly organized according to the greater or

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<sup>98</sup> *DM*, 9, s. 3, § 6.

lesser degree of the sensibility of things, which is a quality wholly independent from the confusion or distinction of our perceptions. This happens both at the level of sensory perception and at the level of the distinct concepts we get from it.

Now, as it was for Aquinas, the entire problem of the “difficulties” ultimately lies in the fact that our overall knowledge depends on the senses. Indeed if from the side of our soul, whose main source of knowledge are the senses, such an order is easier, it is not such for the intellect taken in itself. This ease is exactly what forces our intellect to start from the cognition of less self-evident beings, namely from sensible things which are only potentially knowable.

This account of sensory cognition seems to be the reason why Suárez, criticizing again Fonseca’s approach, classifies material beings in the second group rather than in the third group:

we are not only dealing with confused cognition, but simply with the difficulty in grasping the truth and with the ease of becoming mistaken, and so material things should also be considered as belonging to the second order [...], since they are intelligible not in act, but only in potency. For that reason, the same qualities [which are] sensible by themselves, as far as it concerns their essence and nature, are also known with difficulty. And even the rational soul, which is by itself very proportioned and adequate knows, itself so poorly since it is the material form of the body, which implies that, in some way, it distances itself from the perfection of the things which are intelligible in act<sup>99</sup>.

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<sup>99</sup> *DM*, 9, s. 3, § 7. However, our dependence on the senses is so strong that we even derive our (few) cognitions of immaterial substances from them, as Suárez suggests in this passage: “in that mode by which the thing separate from the sensible matter can be known by us, they are known more easily as they have a more and more intrinsic conjunction with the sensibles. And so, God is known more easily than angels in the cognition of that genus, and among angels, those who are movers of orbits more easily than the others” (*DM*, 9, s. 3, § 7). As Suárez states in *Disputation I*, while the existence of angels is proven by biblical revelation in particular (and then investigated

It is especially worth noting that Suárez refuses to think of the inner potentiality of sensory perception as a power, and conceives it mainly as a limitation. The inner potentiality of things is a less self-evident condition. Thus, material objects are easier for us to cognize simply because our intellect is bound to the senses, which are naturally proportioned to material things, but this does not imply that they are, ideally, the best raw matter from which to start. The ease of perceiving sensibles, which is due to the union of the intellect with the body, prevents our minds from grasping the most self-evident objects, i.e. the immaterial ones, by turning the attention of the mind solely to potential beings, which are by themselves quite opaque for every created intellect.

I suppose that this divergence lies in an element which is strictly connected with the problem of the “difficulty” in knowing the truth, i.e. their different understandings of the epistemological dependency of our intellect upon the body and the senses. While Fonseca believes, with Aquinas, that access to knowledge from the senses realizes and actualizes the natural potentiality for our intellect, Suárez holds, like Scotus, that such a potentiality is imposed upon our intellect by its participation in a soul which is the form of the body<sup>100</sup>.

One can already find a proof of this approach again in the Commentary on the *De Anima*, where Suárez stresses that the dependence of our intellect upon the senses is a consequence of a status, i.e. of a union, which does not depend on the intel-

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philosophically), God’s existence and essence can be inferred from the very, empirical fact that the world exists, namely from His sensible effects. Even among angels, the celestial movers can be more easily known because of their action on sensible things, i.e. celestial bodies (*DM*, 1, s. 5, § 27). For more on this doctrine, see Guidi 2019c (now in this book, see *infra*, 155-184).

<sup>100</sup> Regarding Suárez’s Scotism, especially the soul’s natural appetite for the body, and his divergences with his Coimbra colleague Baltasar Àlvares, see Guidi 2018: 180-184 and 2019a.

lect *qua* intellect, but on a need entailed by the soul's condition as the form of the body:

our soul, according to its natural condition, requires to be in the body of which it is the form; from which our intellect also has, by itself, to understand through the species received from the senses; therefore, by itself, it only has to know sensible things proportionate to it<sup>101</sup>.

Being one power of the human soul, our intellect receives “only from these things [...] the species by the means of the senses, since only these things impress the species upon the senses themselves”<sup>102</sup>. Therefore, the way of knowledge that the union imposes on the soul is not, if absolutely speaking, the best for the benefit of our intellect; though, it is best for the whole cognitive *continuum* into which the intellect is now rooted, which entails that the intellect starts from sensory perception.

Thus, Suárez's idea is that our intellectual powers are forced, by virtue of the soul being the form of the body, to approach external realities by the means of sensory perception. Such knowledge is the only possible access to science for human souls. Yet at the same time, its preeminence over our knowledge prevents us from having freer and more distinct immediate knowledge.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *TDA*, bk. 4, ch 1, § 5: 714; *CDA*, III, d. 9, q. 1 § 5: 70.

<sup>102</sup> *CDA*, III, d. 9, q. 1 § 5: 72. See also *TDA*, bk. 4, ch 1, § 5: 714. For the Spanish Jesuit, such things are primarily sensible accidents and, broadly speaking, material substances (*TDA*, bk. 4, ch 1, § 6: 714; *CDA*, III, d. 9, q. 1 § 6: 72).

<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, returning to the *DM* 9, Suárez resorts to evoking the Augustinian notion of reminiscence, by supposing from a theological point of view that the very possibility of *falsity* stems from Original Sin, which deprived us “of the justice which demolishes all falsity” (*DM*, 9, s. 2, § 3), and that it forced our souls to turn their sight towards information provide to us by the senses rather than by drawing directly from the truths of faith. Here, Suárez anticipates Descartes by explaining that falsity is mainly a consequence of hasty intellectual judgment. Even in the case of pairs of

Suárez pairs this approach with his defense of Aquinas' general account for the "difficulties" of *Metaphysics*  $\alpha$ . Regarding "lower things", the cause of the difficulties is entirely in them. This is proven by the fact that we know these imperfect things with great difficulty, whereas we are able to more easily know other things that are more perfect. It follows that the cause of such a difficulty lies not in our cognitive powers, but in the imperfection of those things. The same, though, does not apply when one talks of spiritual things. As for this point, Suárez must take into account a *sententia*, according to which the weakness of our intellect is not the cause of the obstacle at all, and that spiritual things are partially responsible for the difficulties, as they are unable to produce representations of their species in our intellects<sup>104</sup>. The Spanish Jesuit rejects this idea and appeals to the *impedimentum corporis* theory and the knowledge of the soul once it is separated from the body<sup>105</sup>:

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singular terms whose mutual connection is not clear, the main source of our errors is our sinful will. Indeed, one should join these terms *per modum quaestionis* rather than *per modum enuntiationis*, and so "there will not be the falsity we are discussing [that of composition and division] if not mixed together with some judging composition, because that apprehended proposition is judged [to be] possible, or uncertain" (*DM*, 9, s. 2, § 4). Therefore, falsity mainly comes from "the free motion of the will" which inclines our intellect to judge beyond evidence. By itself, the intellect "cannot generate any false judgment, since it is founded in the thing itself as it is known in itself or it must necessarily be broken down into principles which are known and evident [*manifesta*] by themselves" (*DM*, 9, s. 2, § 6).

<sup>104</sup> "Among material qualities, those which cannot impress their species upon the senses are called insensible, not because of the weakness of the senses, but because of their nature, and, simultaneously, also because of the weakness of the powers which have to efficiently form the species and (so to speak) to make it visible to itself; but also the created beings, although immaterial, are unable to make themselves intellectually visible (so to speak) and to make [the intellect] produce their species; therefore, it must be attributed to a weakness (*defectus*) on their own behalf" (*DM*, 9, s. 3, § 8).

<sup>105</sup> On Suárez's theory of the separated soul, see South 2018 and Guidi 2019a.

if we hold that those substances are productive of species that represent themselves to other intellects, it must consequently be said that the fact that they do not act in this way on the human intellect, especially if this is united to the body, does not depend on their [of the spiritual substances] ineffectiveness, but because that [intellect] is not able to [receive] such species, especially in that state; indeed, if in the state of separation it [intellect] could receive them [species], those intelligible objects could also impress themselves, according to the recipient's capability. If, instead, we hold that those substances cannot impress their species, it must be said that this [lack] does not come, properly, from an imperfection in them [substances], but rather from some perfection, although limited and finite<sup>106</sup>.

As Aquinas already argued (though to different ends), the separated human soul can directly receive the influx or the species from spiritual substances themselves<sup>107</sup>. This shows, for Suárez, that the main difficulty lies in the present status of the union with the body, which prevents us from apprehending these species. The body literally hinders the soul from realizing its cognitive potentiality, which can only be fulfilled once the obstacle is removed.

Despite such a possibility in the other life, the body does not bear the sole responsibility for this difficulty. Indeed, Suárez draws from Aquinas<sup>108</sup> the idea of a structural disproportion

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<sup>106</sup> *DM*, 9, s. 3, § 12.

<sup>107</sup> *ST*, I, q. 89, art. 1, ad 3: "The separated soul does not understand by way of innate species, nor by species abstracted then, nor only by species retained, and this the objection stands; but in that state, the soul understands by way of participating species via the influence of the Divine light, shared by the soul as by other separate substances, though to a lesser degree. Hence as soon as it ceases to act by turning to corporeal (phantasms), the soul turns at once to superior things" (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948). On this point, see Guidi 2018 and 2019a.

<sup>108</sup> *ST*, I, q. 88, art. 1, ad. 3: "There must be some proportion between the object and the faculty of knowledge; such as of the active to the passive, and of perfection to the perfectible. Hence that sensible objects of great power are not



between the absolute perfection of immaterial substances and our knowledge, both in the case of lower and higher things:

Thus it remains that the difficulty originates from the disproportion between our intellect and the intelligible object; though, that disproportion is founded in both, namely the intellect and the object, but not in the same way; indeed, as regards the lower things, it is founded in the disproportion between them, together with the imperfection of the intellect, not having [sufficient] power to seize (so to speak) the minimal intelligibility of such things; instead, in the higher things, it is based upon a surplus of perfection, which our imperfection cannot grasp, and so it happens that in all things, it is difficult for us to find the truth<sup>109</sup>.

Hence, in the case of lower entities, the disproportion is twofold, both from the side of poorly intelligible things and from the side of our soul, whose powers are insufficient to grasp those things. Conversely, in the case of separate substances, the lack is ascribed entirely to our intellect and to the relative unintelligibility (for us) of such substances. Is very hard to say whether or not Suárez thinks that such a disproportion is caused by the union of the soul with the body; but this possibility is at least not implausible in light of his overall argumentative scheme and reading of Aquinas.

## 11. Conclusion

Fonseca's and Suárez's readings show a significant convergence of the two most important early Jesuit authorities, both

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grasped by the senses, is due not merely to the fact that they corrupt the organ, but also to their being disproportionate to the sensitive power. And thus immaterial substances are disproportionate to our intellect, in our present state of life, so that it cannot understand them" (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

<sup>109</sup> *DM*, 9, s. 3, § 13.

of whom aim to reestablish that science is a justified prerogative of human knowledge. The entire Scholastic tradition engages with a textual corpus, that of Aristotle, which prevents them from affirming a natural immediate apprehension of the principles, and places the entire discussion on what the Latin Aristotelianism calls the *cognitio confusa*. Notwithstanding the limits of our soul, and the peculiar process of our knowledge, which necessarily starts from confused cognition, man can nevertheless build a science, including the highest and most difficult among the sciences, as it possesses the basic tools for it.

Despite such agreement, there are remarkable divergences in their understandings of the obstacles that prevent us from easily grasping the objects of metaphysics, and their overall understanding of Aquinas' attribution of such difficulties to the body. From these differences contrasting strategies follow for addressing the limits imposed upon our souls by our embodied state, and in the way to affirm the possibility of metaphysics as science.

Fonseca holds that dependence on the senses is a natural potentiality of our intellect, which serves as the "simple and confused" starting point of human knowledge; the latter, even though it is non-distinct, is indisputably true. Fonseca states this by treating sensory perception as the primary form of trustworthy knowledge, prior to scientific knowledge. He then isolates the sources of the difficulties in the interaction between the human intellect and immaterial beings (which for it are disproportionate realities), and with potential, weak entities (less intelligible in themselves). According to Fonseca, we can reasonably take sensory cognition for granted and starting from it, proceed all the way to distinct cognitions in metaphysics. He goes on to say that while the immediate distinct cognition of universal wholes is impossible for us, it is possible for us indirectly through the traditional process of abstraction. This process is nonetheless based upon the trust on the senses that Fonseca defended by the delimitation of his third group of things.

In supporting this view, the Portuguese Aristotle stands for a very traditional Scholastic idea, i.e. the full continuity of the cognitive process going from sensory perception to intellectual abstraction, and from intellectual abstraction to the foundation of the most difficult among the sciences, i.e. metaphysics. And since sensory perception is true, and mostly flawless, the universal concepts that we extract from it are just as true, and thus it serves as the foundation of a true science of the highest things.

Despite the many similarities with the account of his fellow Jesuit, Suárez's solution seems to privilege metaphysical investigation as the conclusive result of human striving to overstep the natural limits of our primary knowledge. In Suárez's Scotistic view, our ease in sensory perception can be considered the main source for the difficulties in immediately knowing the truth. The very dependence on the senses forces our souls to turn towards less self-evident beings than towards those which are more self-evident. This then triggers an interaction between our intellect and those things which are by themselves partial causes of error. Nevertheless, for the Uncommon Doctor, metaphysics is such only when starting from an already constituted distinct knowledge of the universal essences, although still raw and imperfect. Like Fonseca, and the entire Scholastic tradition, Suárez holds that those universal notions are the result of a process over which our souls preside, which is all the same able to grant, from the quite poor knowledge got from the senses, reliable representations. Such knowledge, which is still confused, is not the starting point of metaphysics. Simple and confused knowledge must indeed be refined by the intellect, bringing these representations to the level of more distinct and evident universal concepts. Thus, sensory cognition looks, for Suárez, like "a ladder to throw away", after our cognition has ascended to the level of true universal concepts, the basic tools of Late Scholastic metaphysical science. In doing that, Suárez seems to conceive science as fundamentally *a priori* knowledge, even if still not in a modern sense.



## 2. The Truth We Know. Reassessing Suárez's Account of Cognitive Truth and Objective Being<sup>1</sup>

1. Introduction: Aristotle and the Truth of Incomposites – 2. Aquinas and the Simple-Complex Truth – 3. Henry of Ghent, the True and the Truth – 4. Formal Truth and Objective Being: Medieval and Renaissance Dominican Accounts – 5. Suárez and the Cognitive Truth – 6. Cognitive Truth and Simple Apprehension – 7. Suárez, Truth, and Objective Being: Remarks on a Widespread Interpretation – 8. Conclusions

### 1. Introduction: Aristotle and the Truth of Incomposites

This article aims to reassess a widespread reading of Suárez's account of truth, and especially an 'essentialist' interpretation of his use of the concept of *esse obiectivum*. In order to do that, I reconstruct the main passages which constitute the background of Suárez's overall theory of truth, which he enumerates in the *DM* 8. Besides that, I also argue that this important text cannot be rightly understood if it is not considered in light of a group of problems which arises in the texts of Aristotle and which, throughout the centuries, the Scholastics gathered and interlaced<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was published for the first time in A. Robiglio, I. Zattero, P. Silva (eds), *Finzione nel pensiero filosofico medievale, Mediaevalia. Textos e estudos*, 39 (2020).

<sup>2</sup> In such a reconstruction, I will take advantage of some passages written for two previous essays that I published, Guidi 2019b and Guidi 2020a. In paragraph 1, I reworked especially some parts from Guidi 2019b: 42-44; in paragraph 2, I used parts of Guidi 2019b: 44-46; in paragraph 4, I used

Broadly speaking, the Schools subscribe to Aristotle's account of truth<sup>3</sup>, which relies on a correspondence theory<sup>4</sup>, so defined in *Metaphysics*  $\Theta$ , 10 and to a famous passage of *Metaphysics* *E*, 4<sup>5</sup>. In these respective passages, Aristotle maintains that: "he who thinks the separated to be separated and the combined to be combined has the truth, while he whose thought is in a state contrary to that of the objects is in error"<sup>6</sup>, and that "truth bears the affirmation in the case of what is compounded and the negation in the case of what is divided, while falsity has the contradictory of this apportionment"<sup>7</sup>. Truth and falsity only belong to *judgments* which are produced by the discursive  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$ , namely verbal combinations which link terms in complex propositions (affirmations or negations). Such combinations express an alleged state of affairs (what, in being, is actually compounded or divided).

As is well-known, this doctrine is complicated by the fact that still in *Metaphysics*  $\Theta$ , 10, Aristotle considers the case of 'incomposites' ( $\acute{\alpha}\sigma\upsilon\nu\theta\epsilon\tau\alpha$ )<sup>8</sup>, i.e. non-composed substances

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parts of Guidi 2019b: 46-47 and 50. In paragraphs 5-6 I used some parts of Guidi 2019b: 53-57.

<sup>3</sup> On Aristotle's account of truth, see especially Wheeler 2019; Long 2010; Crivelli 2004; see, by Crivelli, 2016, 2009, and 1996. See also Cosci 2014; Pearson 2005: 201-231; Modrak 2001, Pritzl, 1998 and 1993, Graeser 1981. A critical discussion is that of Künne 2005: 93-174.

<sup>4</sup> Most scholars agree in applying this definition to Aristotle's theory, at least with respect to the definition of *E*, ch. 4. Regarding  $\Theta$ , ch. 10, it can be defined as (full) correspondence theory depending on the interpretation of the case of the incomposites. For a history of the correspondence theory, see Marian 2016, § 1, and especially Long 2010: 21-48. According to Crivelli 2004: 135, "Aristotle's theory of truth can be regarded as a correspondence theory of truth based on an isomorphism between the assertion and an object which corresponds to the whole assertion".

<sup>5</sup> *Metaph.* *E*, ch. 4, 1027b17-1028a8 and  $\Theta$ , ch. 10, 1051a34-1052a14.

<sup>6</sup> *Metaph.*  $\Theta$ , ch. 10, 1051a34-1051b17.

<sup>7</sup> *Metaph.* *E*, ch. 4, 1027b17-1028a8.

<sup>8</sup> On the problem of Aristotle's  $\acute{\alpha}\sigma\upsilon\nu\theta\epsilon\tau\alpha$ , see especially Berti 1978. See also Owen 1965; Lloyd 1969-1970: 261-74; Harvey 1978 and 1975;

which are neither true nor false in the sense of standard correspondence theory<sup>9</sup>, valid for the *διάνοια*. In this case, the extra-mental reference of our assertion is not the unity or division of variable components, but rather simple beings, which are only actual and never potential, and cannot qualify the correspondent mental terms as false (since there is no composition that can be invalidated). The truth of incomposites is nevertheless a different one, since incomposites have a different kind of being and, accordingly, a different kind of truth, i.e. that of simple terms<sup>10</sup>, which are grasped at the level of the *νοῦς*. The truth of simple beings lies just in “contact [*θιγεῖν*] and assertion [*φάναι*]”<sup>11</sup>, whereas falsity lies at most in ignoring them and in not grasping them (mentally, of course). Nevertheless, simple terms just assert (*φάναι*) and never affirm (*κατάφασις*); so, there is no mental or verbal composition that can be falsified by extra-mental beings<sup>12</sup>. For Aristotle, this establishes an analogy (*ὁμοιωζδὲ καὶ*) between incomposites and essential natures (*τα τίέστιν*) to which we appeal when explaining “what a thing is” (*e.g.* ‘a horse’). Assertions

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Sorabji 1982; Fattal 1996; Pritzl, 1984, and again 1998; Denyer 1991; Long and Lee 2007.

<sup>9</sup> *Metaph. Θ*, ch. 10, 1051b18-1052a3.

<sup>10</sup> *Metaph. Θ*, ch. 10, 1051b18-23: “With regard to incomposites, what is being or not being, and truth or falsity? A thing of this sort is not composite, so as to be when it is compounded, and not to be if it is separated [...] In fact, as truth is not the same in these cases, so also being is not the same” (trans. Aristotle 1984-1985). Regarding what such *ἀσύνητα* are, one can distinguish three groups of interpretations: 1) those (the most of the scholastic commentators of Aquinas) who hold that they are non-propositional enunciations, such as the ones in *On Interpretation* (see below); those (Berti and Sorabji, appealing to Owen) who think that they are essences or definitions, or rather statements whose subject is identical with its essence; 3) others (Crivelli), who identify them with God and the incorporeal substances, which are non-composite being forms deprived of matter.

<sup>11</sup> *Metaph. Θ*, ch. 10, 1051b24.

<sup>12</sup> *Metaph. Θ*, ch. 10, 1051b24-25.

concerning both do not entail any reference to physical beings and, accordingly, are not affected by changes in concrete reality (e.g. 'a horse' remains a nature and a definite meaning even if all horses disappear). Therefore, as Aristotle claims with respect to simple elements, "it is not possible to be in error, but only to think them or not to think them"<sup>13</sup>.

This problem famously recurs in other works by Aristotle. A passage from *On the Soul* *Γ*, 6, speaks of such simple terms as "simple objects of thought", which can be found "in those cases where falsehood is impossible"<sup>14</sup>. This impossibility derives from the fact that these objects are neither combined nor divided, and from the idea that "falsehood always involves a synthesis"<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, in *On Interpretation*, Aristotle sketches his notion of the connection between truth and *signs*, explaining that: (1) written symbols are signs of the voice's sounds; (2) the voice's sounds are signs of mental affections; and (3) mental affections are "the same for the whole of man-kind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies"<sup>16</sup>. Regarding the simple elements that make up complex judgment, Aristotle here reaffirms the possibility of a simple truth or falsity, by adding that

Just as some thoughts in the soul are neither true nor false while some are necessarily one or the other, so also with spoken

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<sup>13</sup> *Metaph.* *Θ*, ch. 10, 1051b25-26.

<sup>14</sup> *De An.* *Γ* § 6, 430a27.

<sup>15</sup> *De An.* *Γ* § 6, 430b27-430b33: "Assertion is the saying of something concerning something, e.g. affirmation, and is in every case either true or false: this is not always the case with intellect: the thinking of the definition in the sense of the constitutive essence is never in error nor is it the assertion of something concerning something, but, just as while the seeing of the special object of sight can never be in error, the belief that the white object seen is a man may be mistaken, so too in the case of objects which are without matter" (trans. Aristotle 1984-1985).

<sup>16</sup> *De Int.* § 1, 16a4-16a9 (trans. Aristotle 1984-1985).



sounds. For falsity and truth have to do with combination and separation. Thus nouns and verbs by themselves – for instance ‘man’ or ‘white’ when nothing further is added – are like the thoughts that are without combination and separation; for so far they are neither true nor false. A sign of this is that even ‘goat-stag’ [τραγέλαφος] signifies something but not, as yet, anything true or false – unless ‘is’ or ‘is not’ is added (either simply or with reference to time)<sup>17</sup>.

Therefore, Aristotle subscribes to the notion of the existence of *two* kinds of simple significant: the conceptual and the verbal, which are associated by virtue of their possible, simple conformity with the same extra-mental thing. Being nothing more than a purely verbal object, the word τραγέλαφος *means* a concept without predicating anything about it; likewise, the corresponding concept τραγέλαφος *means* something but does not assert anything. It is hard to say (and it is not the purpose of the present work) whether or not Aristotle attributed truth or falsity to in complex terms. At the same time, they are considered true because they are not false (according to *On the Soul*), but they cannot be considered true for correspondence theory (according to *On Interpretation*), since simple terms describe single things and do not predicate complex relations between multiple terms. This issue especially involves simple *thoughts*, given Aristotle’s peculiar account of understanding as the presence of a species in the soul. Does the simple presence of an in complex representation in the soul constitute a simple intellectual truth, even without any judgment? Is the intellect true, whenever it contains a correspondent simple species representing a being taken solely by virtue of its essence?

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<sup>17</sup> *De Int.* § 1, 16a10-16a18 (trans. Aristotle 1984-1985). On the τραγέλαφος see especially Sillitti 1980.

## 2. Aquinas and the Simple-Complex Truth

Among the Medieval accounts of the aforementioned questions, one of the most influential on Suárez was, of course, that of Aquinas<sup>18</sup>. As stressed especially by Joseph Vande Wiele<sup>19</sup>, two authorities are crucial for the progressive shaping of the Scholastic account on these topics, both of which were influential on Aquinas' conception of truth. On the one hand, there is Augustine, whose theory of illumination would have considerable influence on Anselm and on the rise of a theological account of truth<sup>20</sup>; on the other hand, there is Boethius, whose translation and commentary on *On Interpretation* comprehended Aristotle's 'triad' in light of a possible isomorphism between *res*, *vox* and *intellectus*<sup>21</sup>.

It is also worth recalling that the definitive medieval formulation of the doctrine of transcendentals includes the *verum* as

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<sup>18</sup> See especially VandeWiele 1954, and Wippel 1989-1990. See also Graeser 1981; Porro 2015: 59-68; Galluzzo 2000; Schulz 1993; Llano 1995; Floucat 2004; Gordon 2016, Aertsen 1992; Wood 2013.

<sup>19</sup> See Vande Wiele 1954. On the medieval conceptions of truth, see also Duthil 2013. For an overview on logical truth, see Moody 1953.

<sup>20</sup> On Augustine's conception of true knowledge, language and illumination, see especially Rist 1994: 23-91; Matthews 2001; Kirkwan 2001. See also the two chapters by King 2014a and 2014b. See also Gilson 1967: 27-111 and Galluzzo 1997-1998. Augustine's view would be developed both by Anselm's understanding of truth as *rectitude* – intrinsically connecting the truth of judgments with their intrinsic, moral function of representing a state of affairs wanted by God – and by the Franciscan tradition – which would think of truth starting from the conformity of things to the transcendental exemplars related to God's mind and known by God before the creation (see Visser and Williams 2004, and Noone 2010. See also Ippolito 2015). On Franciscan exemplarism, see especially the entire volume edited by Falà and Zattero 2018. But see already Conti 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Boethius, *Commentarii in Librum Aristotelis [E]p[ist]o[ph]i 'Epp[ist]o[ph]eias* [ed. 1880], I, ch. I: 20: "tribus his totus orandi ordo perficitur: rebus, intellectibus, vocibus. Res enim ab intellectu concipitur, vox vero conceptiones animi intellectusque significat, ipsi vero intellectus et concipiunt subiectas res et significantur a vocibus".

one of the three fundamental properties of the *ens*, such that the truth dwells simultaneously (although with different values) in extra-mental things (transcendental truth), in mind (cognitive and semiotic truth) and in God's mind. These three elements can be adequate to each other in several different combinations, by which conformity is understood as a three-sided relationship<sup>22</sup>. Nevertheless, the Schools sketch a more precise topography of the mind's operations, contributing to the elaboration of the intra-mental relationship between semiotic mental objects and cognitive mental objects. Starting from the thirteenth century, the Scholastics would indeed talk of three mental elements: the *conceptus* or *simplex apprehensio*, the *iudicium*, and the *ratiocinium*, meaning by them, respectively, the simple 'first' operation of 'grasping' concepts or sensations (corresponding to Aristotle's *θιγείν*); the 'second' operation of relating them in complex judgments referring to extra-mental realities; and the 'third' operation of getting new information by comparison and reasoning. In this picture, the question about Aristotle's "thoughts that are without combination and separation" especially involves the *simplex apprehensio*, as the operation through which our intellect grasps its representations before relating them to each other.

John Wippel has shown very well that Thomas overlapped all three aforementioned levels of truth – the intellective one, the truth of things and the adequation to God's mind – attempting to conciliate the Aristotelian tradition with elements from Augustine and Anselm. Regarding intellective truth, in the *Questions on the Truth* he defines it as the *aequalitas diversorum* between two different things falling into a relation of conformity<sup>23</sup>. This definition explains why truth lies *especially*

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<sup>22</sup> See De Libera 1996: 455-459.

<sup>23</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 3, *resp.*: "Just as the true is found primarily in the intellect rather than in things, so also is it found primarily in an act of the intellect joining and separating, rather than in an act by which it forms the quiddities

and *primarily* in composition and division. Here, indeed, the intellect contributes by something which properly belongs to it, the judgment, whereas in simple apprehensions the intellect adds nothing but a mental likeness of the extra-mental reality (the species)<sup>24</sup>. In his commentary on *On Interpretation*, Aquinas remarks that in simple apprehensions our intellect does not know the relationship of conformity between the thought and the thing, “but only apprehends the thing”. Yet, truth consists of *knowledge* of the relationship of conformity, which requires us to “judge that a thing is such or is not, which is to compose and divide”; hence, “the intellect does not know truth except by composing and dividing through its judgment”<sup>25</sup>, and the composition and division of the judgment is the only case in which the intellect knows the conformity between its representation and the thing.

Another interesting text by Aquinas is, of course, his reading of the *Metaphysics*. Here, Thomas states that “truth is not present in the same way in simple things and in composite ones”<sup>26</sup>, and he again accepts that there are two different kinds

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of things. For the nature of the true consists in a conformity of thing and intellect. Nothing becomes confirmed by will itself, but conformity requires distinct terms. Consequently, the nature of truth is first found in the intellect when the intellect begins to possess something proper to itself, not possessed by the thing outside the soul, yet corresponding to it, so that between the two – intellect and thing – a conformity may be found” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).

<sup>24</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 3, *resp.*: “In forming the quiddities of things, the intellect merely has a likeness of a thing existing outside the soul, as a sense has a likeness when it receives the species of a sensible thing. But when the intellect begins to judge about the thing it has apprehended, then its judgment is something proper to itself – not something found outside in the thing” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).

<sup>25</sup> *In De Int.*, lect. 3, § 9.

<sup>26</sup> *In Met.*, bk. 9, lect. 11, § 1901. The text continues: “it is evident that truth and falsity are not present in simple things in the same way as in composite things”.

of truth, in light of the principle that “truth follows being, because [...] the structure of things in being and in truth is the same”<sup>27</sup>. In the case of incomposites, the truth arises simply “because their quiddity [*quod quid est*] is known or not known”. This is because to acquire knowledge of that quiddity corresponds to the truth, whereas “when we fail to acquire knowledge of its quiddity, but attribute something else to it, the intellect is then false”. Accordingly,

to come in contact with simple things through the intellect and to express them constitutes truth; but not to come in contact with them is not to know them at all. For whoever does not grasp the quiddity of a simple thing is completely ignorant of it; because one cannot both know and not know something about it, since it is not composite<sup>28</sup>.

Therefore, because every quiddity automatically causes an apprehension in the intellect,<sup>29</sup> a simple term can be known or not known. However, Aquinas maintains that “with regard to such a thing the intellect is neither true nor false”; that is, there is no truth or falsity in a concept in the way there is a truth or falsity in judgments. It is no accident that this is the way by which Thomas connects *Metaphysics*  $\Theta$  with *On the Soul*, 3. He stresses that ‘simple’ truth is such “just as a sense is always true with regard to its proper object”<sup>30</sup>. Finally, Aquinas claims that one

<sup>27</sup> *In Met.*, bk. 9, lect. 11, §1903.

<sup>28</sup> *In Met.*, bk. 9, lect. 11, § 1905 (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1961).

<sup>29</sup> *In Met.*, bk. 9, lect. 11, § 1907: “Since a simple substance is its own quiddity, the judgment about the knowledge of a simple substance and the judgment about the knowledge of its quiddity are one and the same. But the intellect is deceived about a quiddity only accidentally; for either a person comes in contact with a thing’s quiddity through his intellect, and then he truly knows what that thing is; or he does not come in contact with it, and then he does not know what it is. Hence, with regard to such a thing the intellect is neither true nor false” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1961).

<sup>30</sup> *In Met.*, bk. 9, lect. 11, § 1907: “This is why Aristotle says in Book III of

may be accidentally deceived about quiddities “only as a result of combining or separating”, and, “about the quiddity of simple substances”, only “by combining a definition with something defined or by separating them”<sup>31</sup>. Hence, simple apprehensions can be mistaken just when we think of an assertion containing a subject and an impossible predication (*i.e.* ‘irrational angel’)<sup>32</sup>.

However, Aquinas’ Aristotelian approach seems to be mitigated if we consider the metaphysical background involving the possible transcendental conformity to the exemplars in God’s mind. According to Aquinas, truth properly belongs

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*The Soul* that, just as a sense is always true with regard to its proper object, in a similar fashion the intellect is always true with regard to its proper object-quiddity. And the fact that the intellect is not deceived about a thing’s quiddity applies not only in the case of simple substances but also in that of composite ones” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1961).

<sup>31</sup> For instance, “if someone were to say that an ass is a mortal rational animal, or that a man is not a mortal rational animal, both would be false”.

<sup>32</sup> Aquinas seems to hold that such simple elements actually are virtual proto-judgments. See *DV*, cit., q. 1, art. 3, *resp.*: “truth is found primarily in the joining and separating by the intellect, and only secondarily in its formation of the quiddities of things or definitions, for a definition is called true or false because of a true or false combination. For it may happen that a definition will be applied to something to which it does not belong, as when the definition of a circle is assigned to a triangle. Sometimes, too, the parts of a definition cannot be reconciled, as happens when one defines a thing as ‘an animal entirely without the power of sensing’. The judgment implied in such a definition – ‘some animal is incapable of sensing’ is false. Consequently, a definition is said to be true or false only because of its relation to a judgment, as a thing is said to be true because of its relation to the intellect”, and *CG*, I, ch. 59, § 3: “the incomplex intellect in understanding what a thing is apprehends the quiddity of a thing in a certain relation to the thing, because it apprehends it as the quiddity of that thing. Hence, although the incomplex itself, or even a definition, is not in itself true or false, nevertheless the intellect that apprehends what a thing is, is always said to be through itself true, as appears in *De anima* III although it can be false by accident, insofar as a definition includes some composition either of the parts of a definition with one another or of the whole definition with the thing defined” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954 and 1975).

to the human intellect, but only *secondarily*, since “properly and primarily” it can only be found in the divine intellect<sup>33</sup>. Nevertheless, all natural things are artifacts whose reason lies in the art contained in the divine intellect; so, “a thing is said to be true insofar as it has its own form, according to which it represents divine art” (i.e. false gold is, nevertheless, true copper). And, Aquinas adds, “it is in terms of this that being and true are converted, since any natural thing conforms to divine art through its form”. Besides that, where he speaks in the *Contra Gentiles* of God’s simple apprehension, Aquinas even concedes that an incomplex apprehension, although it is not true or false in itself, causes the intellect to be true:

the incomplex intellect, in understanding what a thing is, apprehends the quiddity of a thing in a certain relation to the thing, because it apprehends it as the quiddity of that thing. Hence although the incomplex itself, or even a definition, is not in itself true or false, the intellect that apprehends what a thing is, nevertheless, is always said to be through itself true, as appears in The Soul III, although it can be by accident false, in so far as a definition includes some composition either of the parts of a definition with one another or of the whole definition with the thing defined<sup>34</sup>.

### 3. Henry of Ghent, the True and the Truth

After Aquinas, Henry of Ghent is certainly one of the most influential figures in the debate, and, as I shall argue, a hidden reference for both the Late Dominicans and Suárez. Nevertheless, as is shown by Steven Marrone<sup>35</sup>, Henry’s view is also a genuine synthesis of Augustine and Aristotle. He shows, against the most radical interpretation of Augustine, that the human

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<sup>33</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 4, *resp.*

<sup>34</sup> *CG*, I, ch. 59, § 3 (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1975).

<sup>35</sup> See Marrone S. 1985, 2001 and 2010. See also Porro 2014, § 2.

soul is able to acquire the truth independently of divine illumination. For Henry, such restrictions should be understood just as referring to “those who claim that judgment is co-extensive with sensation”<sup>36</sup>, and “one must therefore concede, in an absolute sense, that through his soul man can know something without any special divine illumination, on the basis of what is purely natural”<sup>37</sup>. The definition of truth accepted by Henry is, nevertheless, that “the truth of a thing is that by which it is known and understood, that is, that by which it is a proper object of intellect”<sup>38</sup>, and such a definition also applies to the knowledge we acquire through natural power.

What Henry retrieves from Augustine is, indeed, the distinction introduced in the *Soliloquy* between what is true (*id quod verum est*) and truth itself (*veritas*)<sup>39</sup>. As is well-known, Augustine used this to establish a hierarchy of knowing between ‘the true’ and ‘the truth’<sup>40</sup>. One can know that something is true, i.e. an adequate, truthful representation, perfectly resembling a thing; or one can know the truth which is expressed by what is true, namely the essence of the object represented by it. As Marrone remarks, Henry blends Augustine’s distinction with “Aristotle’s dichotomy between nominal knowledge of a thing and knowledge of its essences – or what the Scholastics liked to call its ‘quiddity’”<sup>41</sup>. Accordingly, two levels of truth are given:

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<sup>36</sup> Porro 2014, § 2.

<sup>37</sup> Henricus de Gandavo, *Summa (Quaestiones ordinariae) I-IV* [ed. 2005], art. 1, q. 2: 35 (trans. Porro 2014).

<sup>38</sup> Henricus, *Summa...* [ed. 2005], art. 2, q. 6: 235 (trans. Porro 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Augustinus, *Soliloquiorum libri duo* [ed. 1845a], I, 15, §§ 27-28: “aliud tamen est scire de creatura id quod verum est in ea; et aliud est scire veritatem: ut alia sit cognitio qua cognoscitur res; alia qua conosciuto veritas eius”.

<sup>40</sup> Henricus, *Summa...* [ed. 2005] art. 1, q. 2: 36: “it is one thing to know that which is true about a creature, and quite another to know its truth. By the first kind of knowledge the thing is perceived, but only by the second is its truth laid hold of” (trans. Porro 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Marrone S. 2010: 217.



1) the knowledge of *id quod res est*, namely the ‘true’, which is especially attached to a *simple* presentation of the object in the mind and which is sufficient *simplex intelligentia*; and 2) the knowledge of the *quid sit*, which allows one to know the object distinctly, but depends upon the efforts of the mental process of composition and division in the judgment<sup>42</sup>.

As regards the *quid sit*, namely the knowledge of the truth, Henry talks of a *duplex veritas* and establishes that “the intention of truth in a thing cannot be apprehended without apprehending its conformity to its exemplar”<sup>43</sup>. Yet, going beyond Aristotle, he establishes *two* correspondent kinds of exemplar, with which the *res* must be adequate to have the truth: one is the intelligible species caused in mind by the extra-mental object; another is the ideal reason of the thing in God’s mind<sup>44</sup>. For the first type of knowledge of the truth – the adequation of the intelligible species and the truth – Henry entirely accepts the Aristotelian model, without getting back to Augustine’s illumination. For Henry, this conformity can be grasped by the dividing and composing intellect, and not by the simple apprehension, limited to the true. This – following again Marrone’s reading – because the true, which only ‘embodies’ the truth, never knows it, and a second-level knowledge is required to pass from the *id quod verum est* to this first, natural, grasping of the *veritas*. The intellect forms, what he calls, a ‘concept’ or a ‘mental word’, in conformity with the intelligible exemplar; a process in which the species actually acts as means of knowledge, an *esse formalis* activating the intellectual power, and never as a mental operation comprising the content for which the species is the vehicle<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Marrone S. 2010: 218.

<sup>43</sup> Henricus, *Summa...* [ed. 2005], art. 1 q. 2: 39 (trans. Porro 2014).

<sup>44</sup> Marrone S. 2010: 219-220.

<sup>45</sup> Marrone S. 2010: 220-222. See Henricus, *Summa...* [ed. 2005], art. 1, q. 5, ad 2 and art. 35, q. 5.

The second kind of knowledge, which Henry calls ‘pure truth’ (*sincera veritas*), lies instead in the adequation of the *res* with the divine idea<sup>46</sup>, which is also the formal cause of the creatural essence, making the *res* metaphysically adequate to the divine exemplar<sup>47</sup>. However, the cognition of this kind of truth is supernatural and it entails the direct illumination of the mind by God, according to the Scholastic traditional model. Henry describes the mechanism lying behind it, as the generation of a second-level mental word, which works as the sign of the knowledge of the pure truth<sup>48</sup>.

#### **4. Formal Truth and Objective Being: Medieval and Renaissance Dominican Accounts**

As I will argue, Suárez’s view stems especially from an internal debate among the Dominicans, who received Henry’s Augustinian influences and integrated them with Aquinas’ account. They especially shape an important distinction between material and formal cognitive truth, which retrace and complete that distinction (which they could find in Aquinas)

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<sup>46</sup> On Henry’s exemplarism see Marrone F. 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Marrone S. 2010: 223-224.

<sup>48</sup> Henricus, *Summa...* [ed. 2005], art. 1 q. 3: 84. It is worth noting that Henry further developed his doctrine after 1279 (see Marrone S. 2010: 229-234). For the purposes of the present discussion, it will suffice to point out two relevant novelties he introduces at this stage. On the one hand, Henry maintains that simple intellect seizes the object in its quiddity, a prerogative previously reserved for the composing and diving intellect. On the other hand, Henry gives up the idea of intelligible species and explains the passage from the true to knowledge of the truth in a different manner. Indeed, the true is already a mental word or concept – an idea that Henry would further give up in his last works. This mental work is stored by the mind in memory and can be called up to be compared with extra-mental being. Establishing the conformity of the true mental word with the thing, the mind creates a second mental word, representing, as in the previous model, the truth.

between simple and complex truth. These overlapping notions would allow them to understand cognitive truth as a formal and deliberately formulated true judgment (Henry's 'truth') which is, ultimately, internal to the mind and directed toward the objective being in the intellect. At the same time, such a complex truth is possible only thanks to previous material, semiotic correspondence (Henry's 'true') between our mental representation (the species) and the extra-mental thing.

In this sense, one important position is that of Hervaeus. Starting from his famous conception of second intention<sup>49</sup>, he holds that truth is a relation of reason, generated by the thing which is understood, "inasmuch as it indwells objectively in the intellect"<sup>50</sup>. By this formulation, Hervaeus means that truth is not the conformity of our concept with the extra-mental thing, but rather the conformity of the known thing with itself, considered as it exists objectively in our intellect<sup>51</sup>. Accordingly, Hervaeus argues that the truth and the falsity which lie in our intellects "not subjectively, but rather objectively", are the reason why the conception of our intellect, as well as the very proposition, are true in the same way signs are true<sup>52</sup>. Materially, the extra-mental thing is hence the founda-

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<sup>49</sup> See Hervaeus Natalis, *A Treatise on Second Intentions* [ed. 2008].

<sup>50</sup> Hervaeus Natalis, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1647], I, d. 19, q. 3, art. 1.

<sup>51</sup> For example, if a man is judged to be a horse, falsity lies in the fact that the man is not adequate to himself, inasmuch as he is conceived objectively to be a horse. In the words of Hervaeus, "truth is not some relation established between the understood thing and the intellectual act" (*In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1647], I, d. 19, q. 3, art. 1), since "truth does not consist in the fact that the cognitive act is produced such as the thing itself is" (this, for him, is impossible). Rather it "consists in the fact that the thing, according to what it is, is adequate to what is attributed to it; that is to what of it is understood" (*In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1647], I, d. 19, q. 3, art. 1).

<sup>52</sup> "Because [...] they are signs of the said truth, so that the entity of the thing is the foundation of the truth, being the foundation of the conformity which the truth is said to be". Hervaeus, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum*[ed. 1647],

tion of cognitive truth, whereas the formal truth of signs (i.e. to be a true representation) is founded in the intellect:

almost materially and fundamentally the truth lies in things: but the conformity of those very things with what is understood or meant about them, is, formally, the truth itself, which [truth] is nothing but a being of reason, or of the second intention conveying to the thing just as it is objectively in the intellect. Still, the truth of the sign lies in the rectitude of the concept or proposition which signifies such truth<sup>53</sup>

Starting from this view, Hervaeus rereads Aquinas' idea that the truth indwells especially "in the composing and dividing intellect, or in the intellect which understands the enunciabile [propositions]". According to the given definition, truth can indeed be twofold: 1) a truth which is merely factual, i.e. a cognition falling in conformity with the thing without deliberate intention (corresponding to Henry's *id quod verum est*); and 2) a truly formal truth, i.e. conformity which follows from an aware cognition of the intellect, concerning the fact that the intellect knows, says or signifies the truth (according to Henry's concept of *veritas*). These two options reflect the aforementioned opposition between material and formal truth. For Hervaeus, indeed, the first one is the truth considered as materially and effectively, whereas only the second is the truth in its formal reality<sup>54</sup>.

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I, d. 19, q. 3, art. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Hervaeus, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1647], I, d. 19, q. 3, art. 1.

<sup>54</sup> On the one hand, it is the truth caused by "the conformity [which] stems from the cognition itself". And this is the truth which flows out of the immediate conformity of the thing with the presence of a second intention that represents it in the intellect. In this fashion, truth or falsity are in every cognition, since every cognition either is or is not adequate to the known thing; this case also includes the senses and simple intellection. On the other hand, truth "can stem from the known thing, not because the conformity itself stems [from the thing's existence], but rather because

Hervaeus' account seems to be the matrix of the solution proposed by Durandus, which is a crucial reference for understanding Suárez's *DM* 8. The latter agrees with Aquinas and Hervaeus that only the composition and division of judgment or enunciation founds formal truth. Also for Durandus, incompositities are set aside<sup>55</sup> and treated by the intellect as terms or words, whose truth ultimately depends upon those of their complex concepts or definitions<sup>56</sup>. Like Hervaeus, Durandus also links truth with objective being<sup>57</sup>, even though he understands the conformity between intellect and thing in a slightly different way. For Durandus, truth is a being of reason, which is not generated either by the conformity of the mental representation with the thing or by the conformity of the thing with the mental representation<sup>58</sup>. According to Durandus, the truth is rather the conformity between two sides of a 'thing' (broadly understood as the thing insofar as it is cognized and the thing-in-itself): on the one hand, the thing taken in itself (the extra-mental thing), and on the other hand, the thing as it is objectively present in the intellect (the intra-mental thing)<sup>59</sup>. This allows Durandus to argue that cognitive truth lies not in the intellect, but rather in the conformity between two sides of the thing, "the conformity of the [thing] with itself, according to one

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the conformity is understood [*intelligitur*] or said, or signified; and so it happens in the intellect that knows the enunciabiles" (Hervaeus, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1647], I, d. 19, q. 3, art. 2).

<sup>55</sup> Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1508], bk. I, d. 19, q. 5, § 14.

<sup>56</sup> Durandus, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1508], bk. I, d. 19, q. 5, § 13.

<sup>57</sup> Durandus, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1508], bk. I, d. 19, q. 5, § 12.

<sup>58</sup> Durandus especially rejects the idea that the mental representations – in their material, semiotic reality – play a role in the rising of truth, and he rather understands the objective being of the thing as a second aspect of the thing, which is taken inasmuch as it is conceived objectively by the intellect.

<sup>59</sup> Durandus, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1508], bk. I, d. 19, q. 6, § 10-11.

being and to another one, i.e. [according to] being understood [*intellectum*] and being real”.

Like Aquinas, Durandus maintains that the ‘first operation’ of the intellect is material and unrelated in itself to truth and falsehood. Rather, truth and falsity are strictly connected to the formal enunciation of the judgment or to the conformity between the thing, “understood by the enunciating intellect, composing or dividing”, and the real thing<sup>60</sup>. Hence, for Durandus, a proposition is *not* true by itself, but rather *signifies* the truth of the thing itself, understanding the latter in its twofold conformity, one with itself and one with the ‘objective’ concept which the intellect expresses and apprehends by enunciating it<sup>61</sup>. Whereas the simple ‘voice’ refers to this truth ‘materially’, only its enunciation is ‘formally’ true, such as when we claim to be true ‘that man is an animal’ (*dicimus* [...] *hominem esse animal est verum*) or ‘that man is not a donkey’ (*et [dicimus] hominem non esse animal est verum*). Hence, the formal dimension of truth follows only if the intellect, by enunciating a thing taken in its objective reality, composes or divides

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<sup>60</sup> Durandus, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1508], bk. I, d. 19, q. 5, § 13: “What is formally true is that which is signified by a true proposition; but the intellect’s object taken enunciatively is signified by the true proposition, therefore the truth is formally the condition of the object of the intellect, and not of something existing subjectively in the intellect, and the major [proposition] is understandable, since a sign is not said to be such, if not because it signifies what is such formally, like urine is not said to be health since it signifies the health of that animal, that is formally health”.

<sup>61</sup> Durandus, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1508], bk. I, d. 19, q. 5, § 13: “And the same is said of a proposition, of which it is not said it is true, if not because it signifies that which is formally true; and the minor [proposition] is understandable by itself, since a true proposition does not signify [anything] but what is enunciatively apprehended by intellect as its object, and so it is clear that the truth is the conformity of the intellect with the understood [*intellectam*] thing, inasmuch as what of the thing is enunciatively apprehended is consistent [*conformis*], or rather [it is] the same as the entity of the thing”.

it with the external thing, or actually enunciates its supposed truthfulness.

The distinction between these two levels, the material and the formal, can also be found at work in Aquinas' most influential Renaissance commentators, Tommaso de Vio, or Cajetan, who was very influential on early Jesuit Scholasticism. Commenting on Aquinas' *Summa*, Cajetan defends the doctrine that truth lies *mainly* in composition and division, denying that truth does not at all indwell in simple apprehension. To prove that, however, Cajetan's strategy lies in demonstrating that there is truth at both levels of our intellect. Therefore, Cajetan retraces Henry's opposition between *id quod verum est* and *veritas*, arguing that one should distinguish between: 1) the act of being true of what knows (*cognoscentem esse verum*), which regards the sense or the incomplex "voices" and which is enough to explain the truth as it indwells in the intellect *in actu secundo*; and 2) the case in which the knower understands something as a truth (*cognoscentem cognoscere verum*); which is the truth that we find in the composing and dividing intellect, and in the intellect *ut cognoscens*<sup>62</sup>.

By appealing to another distinction, Cajetan opens to identifying these two levels with Aquinas' simple and complex truth. He argues that the conformity that establishes the truth can be understood in a twofold sense: *in actu signato* or *in actu exercito*<sup>63</sup>. To know a conformity *in actu signato* means to simply have "a cognition concluding in a relation of conformity"; that is, to produce the conformity without a deliberate expression of the truth. To know the conformity *in actu exercito* is, by contrast, "to know something in itself insofar as it is known

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<sup>62</sup> Caietanus, *Summa Theologiae cum supplemento et commentaria Caietani* [ed. 1888-1906], I, q. 16, art. 2, § 2: 208.

<sup>63</sup> Caietanus, *Summa Theologiae cum supplemento et commentaria Caietani* [ed. 1888-1906], I, q. 16, art. 2, § 6: 209. For a good historical reconstruction about these terms see Nuchelmans 1988.

in the conformity”; that is, to know something by expressly meaning that our knowledge has some conformity with the real being. The truth of simple apprehensions takes place only *in actu signato*, whereas the ‘real’ truth, the one resulting from the composition and division of the intellect *ut cognoscens*, is the one which stems from the *actu exercito*. Thus, the latter represent the principal kind of truth, it being the only context in which our intellect really knows the truth<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> A few years later, Silvestri defended a similar view, arguing for a distinction *ex parte rei* between: 1) the incomplex in itself, which is nothing but the represented thing “formally and absolutely taken, which is apprehended by the first operation of the intellect”, and 2) the incomplex concept, which represents the object for the intellect and that the intellect uses to conceive it (Francesco de’ Silvestri, *Summa Contra Gentiles* [ed. 1918], I, ch. 59, § 5: 169). According to Silvestri, the incomplex, in itself, can be further considered, *ex parte rei*, as: 1.1) “absolutely and in itself”, when, for instance, one considers the concept of ‘rational animal’ in itself, without any comparison to extra-mental realities; and 1.2) the incomplex in itself, according to “what is apprehended by the intellect”, when, for instance, one makes up the concept of ‘rational animal’ with the intentional aim to mentally represent the quiddity of a man (Silvestri, *Summa Contra Gentiles* [ed. 1918], I, ch. 59, § 5: 169). It is not hard to see that this distinction partially retraces that between *in actu signato* and *in actu exercito*. In the first case, no comparison is entailed, and so the contemplation of the incomplex does not generate any truth; by contrast, in second perspective, the incomplex “includes a comparison to the concomitant thing” and, “it is understood with a comparison, and understood truly” (Silvestri, *Summa Contra Gentiles* [ed. 1918], I, ch. 59, § 5: 169), when the apprehension of the quiddity is adequate to the real essence of the object. Like Cajetan, Silvestri does not mean, by this argument, to say that the truth of the incomplexities has the same importance as the complex truth. Even in the case of incomplexities, which are deliberately aimed at representing a quiddity, the intellect does not *know* the truth, but it just falls in a true apprehension. To use Silvestri’s own words, the intellect is true “just as it has in itself the conformity to the understood thing”, and not “as it actually knows the truth” (Silvestri, *Summa Contra Gentiles* [ed. 1918], I, ch. 59, §5: 169).



## 5. Suárez and the Cognitive Truth

In light of the Dominican solutions, Suárez's account<sup>65</sup> can now be addressed more clearly. Opening section 1 of the *DM* 8, Suárez stresses a basic Scholastic distinction, which retraces a threefold meaning of the truth (and which the Spanish Jesuit attributes to Aquinas). The distinction is that between: 1) the truth *in significando* (the truth of meaning or material truth), concerning the verbal level, and therefore pertaining to dialectics; 2) the truth *in cognoscendo* (cognitive or formal truth), concerning the intellect, and therefore pertaining to physics; 3) the truth *in essendo* (transcendental truth) concerning the being and therefore, pertaining to metaphysics<sup>66</sup>. Throughout the first half of the *DM* 8, Suárez focuses especially on the truth of meaning and cognitive truth, leaving the discussion on the metaphysical level of truth *in essendo* to the end<sup>67</sup>.

Let us start from the truth of meaning. Suárez deals with it together taking advantage of a harsh refutation of Durandus' conception of the truth<sup>68</sup>. In section 1, Suárez presents the Dominican's view as grounded on the need of conformity *in repraesentando*, at the level of objective being<sup>69</sup>, and rejects reestablishing the canonical definition of truth as a judgment

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<sup>65</sup> On Suárez account of truth, see the initial remarks in Doyle 1987-1988 (especially 1987: 49-52) and Burlando 2014. In the first part of *DM* 8, Suárez partially follows the way paved by Fonseca. I reconstructed Fonseca's account for cognitive and transcendental truth in 2019b and especially in 2020a.

<sup>66</sup> *DM*, 8, *Prologus*.

<sup>67</sup> Suárez deals with transcendental truth especially in *DM*, 8, ss. 7-8, reducing it to an analogical denomination grounded on an intrinsic property of the thing. I indwell specifically on this topic in the essay "Is Truth a Property of Things? Suárez's Razor on Transcendental Truth", *infra*: 115-153.

<sup>68</sup> For Suárez, Durandus supports the conception of truth as the conformity of the *res* "understood as *obiecta* to the intellect"; i.e., as the conformity between the "objective concept of the enunciating intellect" and the *res* in its real being (*DM*, 8, s. 1, § 2).

<sup>69</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 1, § 2.

which adequately joins two terms. For Suárez, the conformity at issue is not that between the real being and the objective being, but more traditionally, that between the real being and a judgment which is produced or enunciated by the intellect<sup>70</sup>. To further elaborate upon his criticism, Suárez appeals to the issue of the meaning of the truth of the vocal proposition (or “of the image”), which he defines in light of Gregory of Rimini’s topography of mental contents<sup>71</sup>. Very clearly, Suárez again sides entirely against Durandus, and uses the case of the truth of meaning against him. The truth *in significando*, indeed, “does not consist in the conformity of the things, taken as signified, with [the things] themselves taken as existing”, as would stem from Durandus’ premises, but “it rather indwells in the immediate conformity of the signified voice to the signified thing”<sup>72</sup>. This means that in order to have the truth of meaning, the objective content of the *esse repraesentatum* need not be adequate to the real being; what is needed is rather (and simply) that the mental representation (i.e. the species) is ‘materially’, adequate to the real being of the extra-mental being.

The problem of cognitive truth is specifically at issue in section 2. Suárez first deals with the thesis according to which the truth *in cognoscendo* is something real and absolute, which indwells in the act of knowledge but also depends directly on the actual existence of the known thing<sup>73</sup>. According to Suárez,

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<sup>70</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 1, § 3.

<sup>71</sup> See especially Nuchelmans 1973: 272-242, and Nuchelmans 1980: 52-73. On the sources of Gregory’s theory (Wodeham), see Gál 1977. On its reception in the following debate, see especially Ashworth 1974 and Zupko 1994-1997. See also Ashworth 1981 and Gaskin 2002. I refer notably to the doctrine introduced by Gregory of Rimini’s *Prologus* [ed. 1981], q. 1, art. 3 (see Nuchelmans 1973: 227-229).

<sup>72</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 1, § 3.

<sup>73</sup> A view which it is not hard to identify with Capreolus’ account. Unlike Hervaeus and Durandus, Capreolus holds that the truth indwells “mainly in the intellect” and it is only secondarily in things, inasmuch “as they are

such an account cannot be accepted, being that propositions like “a chimera is a false being” are true claims, even though they do not relate to any real being<sup>74</sup>. Suárez’s own solution for cognitive truth, rather, is more complex and is as follows. On the one hand, cognitive truth does not add to our cognition of anything which is distinct *in re* nor to a relation of predication (that is, truth is a mere relation of reason)<sup>75</sup>; on the other hand, truth is not, strictly speaking, a relation of reason. In fact, truth simply adds a cognitive connotation to the extra-mental thing; that is, it adds a mental ‘label’ which signals that the object, which is known, is known adequately by the com-

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compared to the intellect” (Johannes Capreolus, *Defensiones theologiae divi Thomae* [ed. 1900-1908], vol. 2, d. 19, q. 3, *prima conclusio*). Capréolus thus adds to Aquinas’ account a distinction. Indeed, the truth can be understood in two ways: 1) as it is *in re*, where it is a *relation* of the thing with the species, and so truth is relative to (and, we should add with Thomas, it is accidentally of) the thing, namely it is the thing, taken as it is adequately known by the intellect; 2) as it lies in the intellect, where the truth is instead something *absolute*, namely it is nothing but the adequate mental representation of the thing. The truth, from the side of the thing, is “the essence of the thing”, and “a certain relation founded *in re* and terminated to the cognition or likeness which indwells in the intellect” (Capreolus, *Defensiones* [ed. 1900-1908], d. 19, q. 3, *secunda conclusio*). From the side of intellectual truth, truth is by contrast “not a relation of conformity [*relatio adaequationis*], but rather the understanding, or the species, or the adequate concept of the thing, or of the thing conforming itself [to the concept]”; though, in this case, truth “presupposes such an absolute which is in the intellect; but beyond that absolute, it expresses a regard [*respectus*] of conformity or of adequation to the known thing” (Capreolus, *Defensiones* [ed. 1900-1908], d. 19, q. 3, *tertia conclusio*). Intellectual truth is so defined as ‘absolute’ because the truth of the thing is totally relative to the existence of an intellectual representation, whereas the intellectual representation is what should be adequate to the thing to be true. Even though Capreolus does not claim that the intellectual truth exists already at the level of the simple apprehensions, Late Scholastics would attribute to him such a position (see for instance, *DM*, 8, s. 3, § 5).

<sup>74</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 2, § 2.

<sup>75</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 2, § 6.

posing and dividing judgment<sup>76</sup>. For Suárez, formal or cognitive truth is simply a cognitive qualification which consists in the act by which our intellect *knows* the very conformity (i.e. the truth of meaning) between our mental representation (the species) and the extra-mental thing. Once the intellect knows such conformity, it ‘labels’ the extra-mental thing as known truly by a mental representation<sup>77</sup>. This is why Suárez stresses that two elements are needed to have cognitive truth: 1) an intentional representation of the very act of cognition (the truth of meaning), represented as adequate to the extra-mental being; 2) the concomitance of the object, which really exists, and in the way it is represented by our act of cognition<sup>78</sup>.

It seems clear that Suárez can take Henry’s account together with Cajetan’s view herein, and he opposes all of them to Durandus’ model. The cognitive truth is not merely an adequate representation (that is, the ‘material’ truth of meaning, or Henry’s ‘true’), but rather consists in the ‘formal’ knowledge that such a representation is true (that is, Henry’s ‘truth’). Indeed, in the formal act which founds the cognitive truth, the intellect presents the representation *in significando* to itself, considering it as adequate to the concomitant object. The cognitive truth thus indwells in a cognitive act, adequate to the real being (that is, a true representation *in significando*), accompanied by an intentional representation of such an act and by its actual conformity with the real being. Such an in-

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<sup>76</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 2, § 9.

<sup>77</sup> For Suárez, this is, nonetheless, one of the fundamental prerequisites for the “transposition” of the cognitive truth to the things themselves (transcendental truth). See “Is Truth a Property of Things? Suárez’s Razor on Transcendental Truth”, *infra*: 115-153.

<sup>78</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 2, § 12. See *DM*, 8, s. 2, § 14 for a further distinction between *formal* and *radical* truth, which we cannot deal with in this article. Formal truth is that described above, whereas radical truth lies in the “perfection of the act from which it derives suchlike conformity with the object”, such as it happens in scientific evidence and in faith’s certainty.

tentional representation is really close to Henry's second-level mental word, representing the concept itself as known as true. Before the cognitive truth there is a truth of meaning which is nothing but the simple, adequate, mental representation of a being, and which can be involved in a second-level affirmation, stating that our representation is known as adequate to the extra-mental thing.

## 6. Cognitive Truth and Simple Apprehension

But what about the case of simple apprehension: is its truth limited to the truth of meaning or does it extend as far as cognitive or transcendental truth? Differently from his contemporary colleagues<sup>79</sup>, Suárez is actually quite cautious in anchoring the simple truth to God's ideas<sup>80</sup>. He maintains that truth should be restricted to composition and division, as Aquinas argued, only if speaking the truth is meant *speciali modo*. Indeed, Aquinas' restriction should only be read as referring to the 'formal truth' *in actu exercito*, when the intellect deliberately expresses the correspondence of a mental judgment with extra-mental reality<sup>81</sup>. Nevertheless, the truth *in actu exercito* is nothing but cognitive truth, where the intellect compares its representation with the external being. This does not happen in the case of a composition taken *in actu signato* or in simple apprehension, where, once more, the representation is true but the intellect does not really know this truth. According to Suárez, simple apprehension contains only a

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<sup>79</sup> I am especially referring to Fonseca, see Guidi 2020a.

<sup>80</sup> In *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 7, Suárez will conclude that transcendental truth is a denomination transposed on things from cognitive truth, and whatever intellect (included, but not necessarily the divine) is able to found it. See "Is Truth a Property of Things? Suárez's Razor on Transcendental Truth", *infra*: 115-153.

<sup>81</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 3, § 18.

*veritas signi*, but the latter should only be understood in the sense that simple truth is true *in essendo*<sup>82</sup>.

In addition to this thesis, Suárez addresses<sup>83</sup> another important question, regarding whether the truth of cognition already lies in the *notitia apprehensiva*, or it always needs a judgment. Authentic truth is only that in the “composing cognition”, which, according to what we said above, joins and divides the terms affirming a connection that was not pre-contained in simple apprehension. In order to have a truth, such a composition must also be known conceptually and cognitively, and it is not sufficient to merely associate two simple terms<sup>84</sup>. Suárez employs a famous Stoic paradox<sup>85</sup>, the sentence *astra sunt paria*. In this proposition, the mind connects two simple elements; that is, ‘stars’ and ‘even number’, of which it has two different notions independently. Though, at the same time, our intellect must also suspend judgment about the reality of such a composition, since it does not know the real connection between them. This, even if the mental assertion *astra sunt paria* has juxtaposed them in some way<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 4, § 19. For Suárez, the simples are true in the way in which things are true, that is by assuming simple concepts or perceptions or compositions and divisions as beings, which are adequate to their concepts or ideas in a mind. See *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 13 and “Is Truth a Property of Things? Suárez’s Razor on Transcendental Truth”, *infra*: 115-153.

<sup>83</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 4.

<sup>84</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 4, § 4-5.

<sup>85</sup> Implied by Fonseca too (*CMA*, I, bk. 4, ch. 2, q. 6, s. 5: 620). See *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* [ed. 1909], II, 25, § 65 (Chrysippus). See also Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrr. Hip.* [ed. 1912], I, 97; II, 90 and *Adv. Log.* [ed. 1912], I, 243. See also Nicolas de Oresme, *Quaestiones Super Physicam* [ed. 2013], bk. II, q. 13: 262r58ff.

<sup>86</sup> Suárez’s solution is inspired by Buridan, who solved a similar paradox by explaining that a chimera is composed by simple parts, each one provided with its own independent meaning, whose composition is, yet, impossible or uncertain. Buridan, *Sophisms on Meaning and Truth* [ed. 1966]: 72ff. See Roberts 1969, and Ashworth 1977.

However, it is worth stressing that for Suárez, even simple apprehension is capable of discerning some cognitive truth<sup>87</sup>. Although it is simple, simple apprehension is indeed any kind of knowledge and contains *implicit* judgments<sup>88</sup>. For instance, the simple apprehension of horse contains implicit judgments about its nature or about its accidents. In these implicit judgments, conformity is that between our intra-mental representations (the species) and the extra-mental things. According to Suárez, there are especially two cases of this kind: 1) the representations of the senses (for instance, when the lamb immediately recognizes the wolf and runs away, it actually knows the wolf, even without understanding it *in actu exercito* or without affirming a truth of the wolf); 2) the mental representation of *ficta*; when one imagines a gold mountain or a chimera, he does not apprehend them as true, but as possible, at least according to the figure by which we apprehend it or as possible meanings in vocal-verbal signs<sup>89</sup>. In both cases, such a truth of simple apprehensions is not the transcendental truth, but just the cognitive one.

As for the second case, it is worth recalling that for Suárez, beings of reason<sup>90</sup> have only an efficient cause (our intellect), by which they are made along with the aid of the imagination. The *esse* of the chimera is thus just the objective one in our

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<sup>87</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 4, § 6.

<sup>88</sup> This refers to a doctrine which was already in Aquinas and which would appear in Couto's commentary on the *Dialectics* (Collegium Conimbricense, *The Conimbricenses: Some Questions on Signs* [ed. 2001], q. 5, art. 4: 167). See above, n. 32.

<sup>89</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 4, § 7. See especially Doyle, 1987-1988, which concludes that Suárez's account of the truth of beings which depends only on the human mind "turns upon the significative cast of the words involved in the expression of beings of reason, especially so-called impossible beings. Because such words, unlike mere nonsense syllables, have signification, there is in their regard, and in regard to the beings of reason they express, the possibility of some statements being true even as others are false" (1988: 71).

<sup>90</sup> Suárez's treatise on the beings of reason is the *DM* 54. See Doyle 1987-1988 and Novotný 2015. See also Gracia 1991 and Canteñs 2003.

mind and it only possesses the lower degree of transcendental truth<sup>91</sup> (that is, it is true solely on the level of signification and cognition, as a mere fiction of the mind). Yet as Suárez himself remarks, the apprehensive compositions by which one considers two simple terms as related or divided can also be constituted without an actual judgment, if they are joined by a mere vocal or verbal enunciation (what Suárez calls “non ultimate” concepts<sup>92</sup>) which materially links them in a unique proposition, i.e. the proposition *astra sunt paria* considered as a mere verbal proposition. In this case as well, two possibilities are given: 1) in a first sense, we understand the sentence *astra sunt paria* as the object ‘stars even in number’, of which we know only that it is possible. In this case, the mental object is

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<sup>91</sup> For Suárez, beings have as much truth as they have entity. Accordingly, real beings are the only ones which are really transcendentially true, whereas beings of reason have only a minimal degree of truth. See *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 34, and “Is Truth a Property of Things? Suárez’s Razor on Transcendental Truth”, *infra*: 115-153. This is however why one can mark as true “the fact that a chimera is an imaginary being and that man is not a horse”. In s. 8, Suárez points out that the truth grasped in composition and division as the *primaeva significatio* of truth, and establishes that this type of truth is also the foundation for the extension of the qualification ‘true’ to real, actual beings and to beings of reason. However, for this kind of truth, beings of reason are not true by the truth which is a real *passio entis*. The extension of the qualification ‘true’ to them is due merely to the fact that they are things, even if they are mental ones. Hence, Suárez is open to the truth of beings afforded merely with objective being because they are mental objects, i.e. names supposing meanings and so able to found any proposition. Moreover, what is true is not, strictly speaking, the simple apprehension of the being of reason, but rather the entire complex proposition which composes or divides these terms, considering ‘chimera’, ‘man’, ‘horse’, etc. without any reference to the real being. This is a purely logical truth, close to identity or non-contradiction, given the definition of a ‘chimera’ is ‘an imaginary being’ and the definition of ‘man’ is not ‘a horse’. Such a theory aims at explaining why propositions like ‘I am imagining a winged-horse’, or ‘I believe that chimeras do not exist’ are true even if their objects have only objective being (see above).

<sup>92</sup> *DM*, 8, *Prologus*.



just the *possibility* of ‘even-numbered stars’, which we do not know if it is true or false. This means that *astra sunt paria* is actually a double simple apprehension, in which we say, on the one hand, that ‘stars even in number are possible’, and, on the other hand, we apprehend such a possibility by doubting, and not judging, its truthfulness; 2) in a second sense, we consider the two extremes of *astra sunt paria* – the stars and the even number – solely according to what is meant by the ‘non ultimate’ concept that ‘the stars are even in number’. In this case, for Suárez, the intellect does not apprehend something by affirming or denying, but it apprehends the voice as a simple voice, asserting that ‘stars are even in number’<sup>93</sup>.

## 7. Suárez, Truth, and Objective Being: Remarks on a Widespread Interpretation

As I mentioned, the aim of this paper was also to question a widespread reading on Suárez, legitimated in particular by Jean-François Courtine’s valuable work *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*<sup>94</sup> (however, one of the most relevant works on the Uncommon Doctor). According to this reading, Suárez, inspired by Durandus, pushed his use of the objective concept to the point of abandoning the Aristotelian model of truth as adequation; namely, Suárez would have replaced the traditional reference to the *esse realis* with that to the *esse obiectivum*, to the extent that the latter is understood as a mere ‘objectivity’ (*objectité*) that is able to found an ontology of the possible.

According to Courtine, Suárez understands the *res* just as an objective reference – in the form of an Avicennian common nature marked with a pre-phenomenological intentionality –

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<sup>93</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 4, § 8.

<sup>94</sup> Courtine 1990. My remarks ideally follow Pereira 2004 and 2006: 97-139. All English translations from Courtine are mine.

and it might do that thanks to the way paved by Durandus, an alleged supporter of a doctrine which asserts that truth is adequate “to the eternal reasons in the divine intellect”<sup>95</sup>; such an adequation would introduce indeed “a kind of intermediary between the *res extra* and its idea in the divine intellect”<sup>96</sup>, establishing an objective reality which is simultaneously an intentional reality and an *esse objective in anima*. The rehabilitation of Durandus would thus be the starting point of a modern overturning of the conception of truth, so that truth would be understood as “adequation to the unknown thing = x”, namely to a *res ad extra* which cannot be understood in itself, and which can be approached just in its “objectivity [*objectité*] for a human intellect”<sup>97</sup>. Accordingly, Suárez, as a continuer of Durandus, would establish even that “there is no *res*, if not insofar as it conforms itself to its *realitas*, which always lies on the level of objectivity (*objectité*), of the ‘real’ essence, or of the possible”<sup>98</sup>. The *res* would completely lose its real connotation to become a mere extrinsic reference. In light of this reading, Courtine even argues that the reference to the *concomitantia objecti*, to which Suárez refers while defining the truth *in cognoscendo*, is “fully deceptive” if one sees in it the traditional model of adequation: “we must pay attention, indeed, to not think that, by it, Suárez would try to go back to a classic determination of truth as *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*, where it is the *res*, and just that, that bears the entire reality [...]. To Suárez, instead, it is the intellect in itself which is eminently ‘real’”<sup>99</sup>.

The debate reconstructed in this article and the presentation of Suárez’s claims in *DM* 8 should be sufficient to prove that such an interpretation is quite hard to defend. Yet, the

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<sup>95</sup> Courtine, 1990: 177.

<sup>96</sup> Courtine, 1990: 177.

<sup>97</sup> Courtine, 1990: 177.

<sup>98</sup> Courtine, 1990: 178.

<sup>99</sup> Courtine, 1990: 181.

following, final paragraphs of the present text aim to further specify this remark by showing that this reading of Suárez – while it succeeds very well in showing how the *res* was already mainly a cognitive concept in Medieval Scholasticism – cannot be based on a reading of *DM* 8. Suárez never seems to claim the interchangeability of *esse obiectivum* and *esse realis* as it concerns the truth anywhere in this *Disputation*. Indeed, like Fonseca<sup>100</sup>, he rejects such a possibility while discussing simple concepts and he denies, with his Jesuit colleague, that simple apprehensions of beings of reason (so, a purely intentional ones), even if provided with their *esse obiectivum*, have some degree of transcendental truth (if not a minimal one).

Let us just address three specific textual examples which, according to Courtine, would justify the picture of an ‘inten-

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<sup>100</sup> See Guidi 2020a: 65-66. For Fonseca, the conformity of simple apprehension is that “between the thing and the intelligible species, or formal concept”. Yet this definition does not assume the thing in its *esse obiectivus* (as held by Durandus) but rather in its *esse realis*, “if not actual, at least potential, [...] because for the conformity in which the simple truth consists, it is not needed that things actually exist; but it would be enough if they could exist” (*CMA*, vol. I, bk. 4, ch. 2, q. 6, s. 8: 625-626). Indeed, Fonseca establishes simple truth as a kind of truth, and he cannot include in its content objective being, which would include everything, including non-existing apprehended beings. In the *ISD*, Fonseca deals with the chimera-issue also while discussing the extension and the modes of the *supposita* (*ISD*, ch. 37-38: 726-731). There Fonseca refuses to recognize the *imaginabilia* as a specific category of names, arguing that, in predicating them, monsters or winged horses are understood as real beings, or are imagined as false-real-beings (*ISD*, ch. 37: 728). However, the Jesuit opens up to an *amplatio* attributed to fictional beings, which are just objectively in the intellect. Indeed, they can be inflected in temporal dimensions like the past, the present and the future (*ISD*, ch. 37: 731). Thus, according to Fonseca that of a chimera is a name provided with full sense, since, as a name, it is nothing but a mental possibility. This makes us able to talk about a chimera, even if its concept is not adequate to any extra-mental reality (and so not true), the adequation being limited to the *potestas existendi*. As a being of reason provided just with objective being, the chimera is not a true being, because it cannot exist.

tionalist' Suárez, meant to leave aside real being. Our aim in presenting these texts is just to contribute to their best reading, and to contribute to the advancement of the knowledge on these topics. The first passage is that of *DM* 8, s. 1, § 4, where Suárez claims that

The thing, as known or as represented, when it is truly known and represented, does not have other objective being than that which it has in itself; and this is the reason why the object of such a cognition is said to be actualized by the cognition which terminates to it, just as an extrinsic denomination<sup>101</sup>.

Here Suárez seems to open up to the notion of a direct ad-equation to the concept and the *esse obiectivum*, making the external thing into nothing more than an external denomination added to knowledge which, internally, is already complete. Still, such a claim comes in *DM* 8 just to enhance the view, opposed to that of Durandus, according to which the complex truth of cognition lies only in the conformity between judgment and the extra-mental thing. This claim is nevertheless an *ad hoc* argument against Durandus, placed in a sequence that had already defined the truth *in significando* as the semiotic conformity of the mental or vocal representation to the object.

Suárez's argument is rather the following: if we take the *res* inasmuch as it is known or represented, and assuming such a knowledge or representation is true – that is, adequate to the extra-mental object – the objective being known through that representation does not differ at all from the objective being of the object in itself. Hence, Suárez argues, Durandus' doctrine is fully useless, since he cannot really claim that the adequa-

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<sup>101</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 1, § 4: “res ut cognita vel ut repraesentata, quando vere cognoscitur et repraesentatur non habet aliud esse obiectivum praeter illud quod in se habet; quod solum dicitur actu esse obiectum tali cognitioni per denominationem extrinsecam a cognitione quae terminatur ad ipsum”.

tion which grants the truth is that between the objective being of the *res* and the *res* in itself. Indeed, the objective being known by the intellect, and the objective being of the thing, are rather identical and no adequation can be established between identical terms.

For Suárez, the *res* is actually the object of a cognition only according to an extrinsic denomination, insofar as the latter is the extrinsic *terminus* of an entirely mental cognitive operation, which corresponds to it *thanks to the adequate representation* in significando *on which it is grounded*. For instance, Suárez argues, let us consider a seen thing taken strictly in its objective being and with respect to the faculty of sight. In this case, the extra-mental thing does not add anything to the sensation describing it as bright and colored. To the faculty of sight (but just to this faculty), the object is nothing but what the faculty perceives. So, Suárez explains:

the object, taken as such or insofar as it is known or represented, cannot be said to be adequate [*conforme*] to itself in real being, if not because the same form through which it is known or represented, has an immediate conformity with the thing known or represented *secundum se*<sup>102</sup>.

This passage states that the objective being of the *res*, also on the level of the truth *in cognoscendo*, is equivalent to the thing itself; but it also states that such an objective being cannot be grasped if not through a previous representation, which is intrinsically and immediately adequate to the extra-mental being. Only once the intellect has grasped this representation does it have an adequate intentional representation of

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<sup>102</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 1, § 4: “obiectum sic sumptum ut cognitum vel repraesentatum, non potest alia ratione dici conforme sibi in esse reali, nisi quia ipsa forma qua cognoscitur vel repraesentatur, habet immediatam conformitatem cum re cognita vel repraesentata secundum se”.

the extra-mental reality, such that the known representation is exactly the same as the thing itself on the cognitive level.

Nevertheless, this happens on the cognitive level because in no way does Suarez deal here with metaphysical truth or truth *in essendo*, with the substitution of real being with objective being, or with the deposition of the Aristotelian model of truth as *adaequatio*. The required condition of Suárez's statement is indeed that the thing "is truly known and represented"; that is, the truth *in cognoscendo* is a mental operation which already takes place under the premise of a semiotic adequation between the intellect and the thing on the level of the mental representation, as the adequation of the truth *in significando*. Only if the latter is true, can the cognitive act grasp the objective being as equivalent to the extra-mental thing from it. Hence, it seems to be right to say that according to Suárez, cognitive truth has no need of the extra-mental object, if not as an extrinsic term. Such independence is granted by the fact that the intra-mental representation is already adequate to the extra-mental thing, which remains a fundamental, basic reference for the entire mental construction of truth.

A second excerpt which Courtine calls into question is *DM* 8, s. 2, § 12, the direct continuation of the text in which Suárez explains that the truth *in cognoscendo* lies in an intentional representation of the representation *in significando* as adequate to the concomitant object:

for truth, representation is not sufficient by itself, if the object does not exist such as it is represented: nor can the concomitance of the object be sufficient to the denomination of the truth, unless the said representation is presupposed, or rather included; this because the truth is not just that extrinsic denomination, but it includes an intrinsic condition [*habitudinem*] of the act, directed [*terminatam*] at the object, which exists in this way<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 2, § 12: "ad veritatem nec sola repraesentatio sufficit, si

According to Courtine, Suárez here reveals a double insufficiency, namely, that of the representation, which cannot be an independent foundation for the truth, and that of the external thing, converted into a mere *obiectum*, that is, reduced to its objective being. This might be true even if, in this passage, the Jesuit's view seems much less draconian where he is discussing the truth *in cognoscendo*. On the one hand, he does stress that representation is insufficient, by itself, to found the truth *in cognoscendo*; and yet he remarks that such insufficiency is such only if the representation is not fully adequate. On the other hand, the reference to the object (*terminatam ad obiectum*) is not a reference to the objective being. Here, Suárez is simply claiming that not even the mere concomitance of extra-mental things, which on the level of cognition is an extrinsic denomination, can grant the truth, if the representation is not already adequate to the correspondent object. So, one more time, the *Eximius* is subscribing to the thesis that for the truth of cognition, the intellect must judge its representation *in significando* as adequate to the extra-mental truth; and, without such a judgment which 'knows' the mental representation as adequate (that is, *in actu exercito*), neither the mere conformity *in essendo* of the species, nor the mere concomitance of the object, can found the truth *in cognoscendo*.

A third and final passage under discussion is that of *DM* 8, s. 2, § 16, where Suárez remarks, against Durandus, that the truth is always accompanied by the concomitance of the object, but – Courtine especially stresses this aspect – such an object may also not exist *actualiter*:

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obiectum non ita se habeat sicut repraesentatur: neque concomitantia obiecti potest sufficere ad denominationem veritatis, nisi praesupposita praedicta repraesentatione vel potius includendo illam; quia veritas non est sola illa denominatio extrinseca, sed includit intrinsecam habitudinem actus terminatam ad obiectum taliter se habens”.

I grant that the truth as such never is, formally, in the real relation; still, I deny that what follows from that is the non-inclusion of the concomitance of the object to which the knowledge is conformed. Nor is it important that in this way the truth of cognition does not always require the object as actually [*actu*] existing, because we do not claim that the real existence of the object is included in the concept of truth, but only that it exists such as it is represented and judged by cognition, or that it has the being such as it is known<sup>104</sup>.

In light of the previous considerations, the matter in this passage can be resolved easily. Indeed, “we do not claim that the real existence of the object is included in the concept of truth” because it suffices that the *terminus* of the judgment is “such as it is represented and judged by cognition, or that it has the being such as it is known”. Still, such being, as Suárez adds in the following, “is not always the being of existence”, but it is also what “is sufficient for the truth of enunciation”; that is, the truth of the previous mental representation, which is true *in significando*. Hence, for a true cognition, all that is required is the concomitance of the object and a conformity of the signifying representation, not necessarily with its real, actual existence but at least with its formal reality, or its full meaning. That is, the representation on which we ground cognitive truth must be in some way adequate to a possible meaning, according to the scheme presented above.

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<sup>104</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 2, § 16: “concedo veritatem ut sic nunquam consistere formaliter in relatione reali, nego tamen inde sequi non includere concomitantiam obiecti cui cognitio conformetur. Nec refert quod huiusmodi veritas cognitionis non semper requirat obiectum actu existens, quia non dicimus realem existentiam obiecti includi in conceptu veritatis, sed solum quod ita se habeat sicut per cognitionem representatur seu iudicatur; seu quod habeat tale esse quale cognoscitur”.



## 8. Conclusions

Suárez denies all *direct*, metaphysical and transcendental reference of the intellect to objective being. Such a possibility is granted only by the previous presence of a mental representation, which, nevertheless, must be semiotically adequate to the external reality, or, as in the case of beings of reason, to intentional being. Fictional beings, however, are mere verbal beings or images, provided with a full meaning on the level of the truth *in significando*, which makes it possible to consider them as abstract possibilities and to use them in the context of the truth *in cognoscendo*.

However, Suárez never dismantles the Aristotelian model of the *adaequatio*. Of course, this does not necessarily imply that the entire reconstruction of Suárez's metaphysics as grounded on the concept of the objective being would entirely collapse. To discuss such a complicated topic was not the purpose of the present article and I will just limit myself to one final remark. Even in the remote case that Suárez (as it has been often represented) was a forerunner of Leibniz or Wolff's essentialism, in saying that existence is only that which does not imply contradiction, this does not allow one to claim that, for the Uncommon Doctor, all which is possible is transcendently true. Objective being is the primary tool for the foundation of ontology, but this does not imply that Suárez thinks of objective reality and truth as mutually convertible. He never dismantled the idea of extra-mental reality, to which our concepts must be adequate, as the foundation of the truth *in repraesentando* and *in cognoscendo*. Cognitive truth especially is strictly dependent upon previous and adequate representations, and its objective intra-mental content is not directly convertible with divine exemplars or with abstract, essential possibilities.



### 3. Is Truth a Property of Things? Suárez's Razor on Transcendental Truth

1. Introduction – 2. Aquinas and Transcendental Truth – 3. Can Truth be a Property of Things? – 4. Cognitive and Transcendental Truth: The Problem of Priority – 5. Overview and Conclusions

#### 1. Introduction

This essay analyzes Suárez's treatment of the concept of transcendental truth. By this expression, the Jesuit understands the truth insofar as it is an intrinsic property of extra-mental things; an interpretation which takes *strictu sensu* the traditional Scholastic definition of transcendental truth<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For Suárez, transcendental truth is indeed the truth understood as a transcendental. According to Aquinas, a transcendental is that which is common to everything and which can be predicated of every being (*ST*, I, q. 93, art. 9, *resp.*: "since 'one' is a transcendental, it is both common to all, and adapted to each single thing, as is the good and the true"). Some examples of transcendentals are *res*, *aliquid*, *unum*, *verum*, and *bonum* (*DV*, q. 1, art. 1). All transcendentals are convertible with the *ens*, and also mutually, since they all consider the same thing (the *ens*) from different perspectives (*DV*, q. 1, art. 1). Truth as a transcendental is traditionally associated with the truth of God, according to Anselm's approach and to Aquinas' overall strategy in the *DV* (q. 1, art. 4) and the *ST* (q. 16, art. 5), which is aimed at making the Aristotelian definition of truth into a cognitive relationship with something absolute and predicabile of the *ens* as one of its properties (see Wippel 1989-1990, Aertsen 1992, and *infra*). For Suárez, in line with a popular tradition of his time, the transcendentals are three-fold: *unum*,

The Uncommon Doctor provides an extended discussion of this popular Scholastic problem in *DM* 8, sections 7-8, where he presupposes the Aristotelian correspondence theory of truth, defended in *DM* 8, sections 1-5<sup>2</sup>. The aim of Suárez's treatise, then, is to address a pivotal epistemological problem within the Schools, i.e. that of establishing how the truth, a cognitive phenomenon, belongs to things themselves.

In order to do that, Suárez must deal especially with the Thomistic account of the matter, which in its turn is deeply rooted in Anselm of Canterbury's and Augustine's views. It is not accidental that Suárez addresses two leading issues (respectively, in the last two sections of *DM* 8), which were already discussed in the first four articles of Aquinas' *Questions on the Truth* and in question 16 of the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*. They are 1) to understand whether truth is a property of things themselves; and 2) to understand whether the truth of things comes before or after the truth of cognition.

In this paper, I will follow Suárez's exposition by trying to show that his entire discussion of transcendental truth seeks to retain the formal definition of truth as provided by Aquinas – especially his account of the convertibility between *ens* and *verum* and his extension of cognitive truth to things –, while also reassessing the limits of Thomas' idea of a primary meaning of transcendental truth, anchored in the divine mind. Throughout all of section 8, Suárez sharpens his Ockhamist razor to reduce

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*verum*, and *bonum*. A complete overview of Suárez's doctrine of transcendentals is provided by Gracia 1992, and by Gracia and Novotný 2011. A stunning reconstruction on the debate on transcendentals (which yet points especially towards Fonseca), is in Martins 1994: 235-284.

<sup>2</sup> On Suárez's theory of truth in *DM*, 8, ss. 1-5, see especially Doyle 1987-1988, Burlando 2014 (approaching the entire *DM* 8, both from the side of the semantic and the transcendental meaning of truth), and the essay "The Truth We Know. Reassessing Suárez's Account of Cognitive Truth and Objective Being", see *supra*: 77-114.

transcendental truth to the entity of the thing *denominated*<sup>3</sup> as true, turning the truth of things into nothing more than an analogy with the truth of cognition. Such analogy is, though, well founded in an intrinsic property of things themselves.

The aim of the present discussion, then, is not only to present Suárez's doctrine of transcendental truth and his reductionist move against Aquinas. In the background, I would like to reassess, from the side of this problem, the popular (mis) representation of Suárez as an Avicennist who supports the notion of a direct convertibility of logical possibilities (*non repugnantiam*), essences and transcendental truth, based on the immediate correspondence between objective being and exemplars in the mind of God<sup>4</sup>. For Suárez, it is not only the "primeval definition" of truth which consists in the Aristotelian conformity between extra-mental things and mind; even

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<sup>3</sup> On Suárez's concept of "denomination", which is pivotal in the context of *DM*, 8, s. 7-8, see again Gracia 1992: 129-130, which carefully distinguishes relations and extrinsic denominations. According to Gracia, "(1) relations and extrinsic denominations are not the same things; (2) real relations imply the extrinsic denominations of their terms (not their subjects); and (3) real extrinsic denominations imply real relations, on which they are founded". Hence, "the difference between a real extrinsic denomination founded on a relation and a real relation is that the real extrinsic denomination applies to the term of the real relation on which the denomination is founded and not to the subject of that relation". For example, a wall and a cat are denominated "seen" as they are "seen", and not since a wall is denominated as a cat, or conversely; whereas, in relations, T is directly similar to the subject S, because of a common property. For Gracia, "it could not be otherwise, for if it were, a real extrinsic denomination would posit in the thing it denominates, namely, in the subject of the relation, a form really distinct from it, which is impossible according to Suárez". A complete reconstruction of Suárez's concept of *denominatio extrinseca* remains to be articulated (see Doyle 1984 and also Rangel Rios 1997). Suárez presents his doctrine of extrinsic denomination especially in *DM*, 54, s. 2, §§ 10-14 and *TDA*, bk. 6, ch. 3, § 24 (but see again Doyle 1984 for a complete recognition and analytic discussion of several other occurrences).

<sup>4</sup> This view has been defended by Doyle 1967 and Courtine 1990.

transcendental truth is not, properly speaking, a property of beings, but a denomination based upon a relational property which belongs to the thing itself. Hence, such a denomination intrinsically depends on the actual existence of “true” things, so that it could not be there if the things denominated “true” would not actually exist.

## 2. Aquinas and Transcendental Truth

To understand the peculiarity of Suárez’s account of the question, it is important to recall a few elements about the problem of transcendental truth in Scholastic philosophy. The Scholastic concept of transcendental truth primarily originates in Anselm of Canterbury’s Augustinian concept of *rectitudo*<sup>5</sup>. According to this notion, the truth of things lies amidst what Alain de Libera calls a “semiotic triangle”<sup>6</sup>; that is, between the truth of our intellect and the absolute truth of God. Both truths are, for Anselm, adequate to God’s primary and transcendental truth, which is the only truth in itself and, as is well-known, one of the transcendentals of God. Starting in at least the twelfth century, this view had to be reconciled with two Aristotelian ideas: on the one hand, the notion of ἀλήθεια as a cognitive fact, i.e. as the conformity between intellect and things<sup>7</sup>, and on the other hand, the metaphysical

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<sup>5</sup> On Anselm’s theory of truth, see especially Visser and Williams 2006, Noone 2010. On Augustine, see Rist 1994: 23-91, Matthews 2006, King 2014.

<sup>6</sup> See De Libera 1996: 455-459.

<sup>7</sup> On Aristotle’s account of truth, see especially Wheeler 2019, Long 2010, Crivelli 2004, 2009a, 2009b 2016. See also Cosci 2014, Pearson 2005: 201-231, Modrak, 2001: 52-83, Pritzl 1993 and 1998, Graeser, 1981 (on Aquinas too). Most of these scholars agree in their definition of Aristotle’s correspondence-theory. According to Crivelli 2004: 135, “Aristotle’s theory of truth can be regarded as a correspondence theory of truth based on an isomorphism between the assertion and an object which corresponds to the whole assertion”.

doctrine of the direct convertibility of *ens* and *verum*<sup>8</sup>. If the first view obstructed the possibility of thinking the truth as transcendental, the second generated many issues related to the Avicennian idea of being as the *primum cognitum* of our mind. Is everything which is thinkable, then, true?

Already in the *Questions on the Truth*, Aquinas<sup>9</sup> proposes a rather complex account of transcendental truth, in which he tries to resolve this doctrinal puzzle. According to Thomas, the attribute of “true” describes a being not inasmuch as it is a being, but only insofar as that being is considered in its agreement with something else; which, in this case is the intellect:

*True* expresses the correspondence of the being to the power of knowing, for all knowing is produced by an assimilation of the knower to the thing known, such that assimilation is said to be the cause of knowledge. Similarly, the sense of sight knows a color by being informed with a species of the color. The first reference of being to the intellect, therefore, consists in its agreement with the intellect. This agreement is called “the conformity of the thing and the intellect.” In this conformity is fulfilled the formal constituent of the true, and this is what the true adds to being, namely, the conformity or equation of thing and intellect<sup>10</sup>.

The formal constituent of truth is, hence, nothing but the conformity of the thing and the intellect, which adds to the *ens* the qualification of being in agreement with the knowing intel-

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<sup>8</sup> *Metaph. α*, ch. 1, 993b20-993b30, but especially *Metaph. Θ*, ch. 10, 1051a34-b17: “It is not because we think that you are white, that you are white, but because you are white we who say this have the truth. If, then, some things are always combined and cannot be separated, and others are always separated and cannot be combined, while others are capable either of combination or of separation, being is being combined and one, and not being is being not combined but more than one”.

<sup>9</sup> On Aquinas’ conception of truth, see Wippel 1989-1990 and Aertsen 1992. See also Llano 1995, Wood 2013, Shia Gordon 2016.

<sup>10</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 1, *resp* (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).

lect. This means that, to be true, it is not enough that a being simply is itself. It must at least be known, and be known truly. Accordingly, the truth designates the being only insofar as it is known by the intellect. It “is a state of being even though it does not add any reality to being or express any special mode of existence”, and “something that is generally found in every being, although it is not expressed by the word *being*”<sup>11</sup>.

For Aquinas, such a definition allows for a kind of general agreement between the many definitions of truth provided by the authorities of the Schools.<sup>12</sup> But can things also be true in the transcendental sense; i.e., in themselves and not with reference to any intellect? In order to reply to this question, Aquinas devised the complex “mirror effect” by which he ultimately saved Anselm’s overall framework. First of all, Thomas established that “a thing is not called true [...] unless it conforms to an intellect. The true, therefore, is found secondarily in things and primarily in the intellect”<sup>13</sup>. Though, at the same time, he distinguished between two different kinds of intellects, the human and the

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<sup>11</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 1, ad 4 (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).

<sup>12</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 1, *resp.*: “Consequently, truth or the true has been defined in three ways. First of all, it is defined according to that which precedes truth and is the basis of truth. This is why Augustine writes: ‘The true is that which is’; and Avicenna: ‘The truth of each thing is a property of the act of being which has been established for it’. Still others say: ‘The true is the undividedness of the act of existence from that which is’. Truth is also defined in another way – according to that in which its intelligible determination is formally completed. Thus, Isaac writes: ‘Truth is the conformity of thing and intellect’; and Anselm: ‘Truth is a rectitude perceptible only by the mind’. This rectitude, of course, is said to be based on some conformity. The Philosopher says that in defining truth we say that truth is had when one affirms that ‘to be which is, and that not to be which is not’. The third way of defining truth is according to the effect following upon it. Thus, Hilary says that the true is that which manifests and proclaims existence. And Augustine says: ‘Truth is that by which that which is, is shown’; and also: ‘Truth is that according to which we, judge about inferior things’ (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).

<sup>13</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 4, *resp* (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).



divine, which are related to the things as, respectively, a speculative and a practical intellect, and which determine different relationships of “measure” and “measured”:

Since the practical intellect causes things, it is a measure of what it causes. But, since the speculative intellect is receptive in regard to things, it is, in a certain sense, moved by things and consequently measured by them. It is clear, therefore, that [...] natural things, from which our intellect gets its scientific knowledge, measure our intellect. Yet these things are themselves measured by the divine intellect, in which all created things are – just as all works of art find their origin in the intellect of an artist. The divine intellect, therefore, measures and is not measured; a natural thing both measures and is measured; but our intellect is measured, and measures only artifacts, not natural things<sup>14</sup>.

For Aquinas, our created intellect is true only as it conforms to extra-mental realities, which, in themselves, conform to the divine intellect. Hence, a natural thing is “true” in two different ways, depending on the intellect to which it is adequate. On the one hand, “it is said to be true with respect to its conformity with the divine intellect in so far as it fulfills the end to which it was ordained by the divine intellect” (Anselm’s *rectitudo* and Avicenna’s idea that “the truth of anything is a property of the act of being which has been established for it”). On the other hand, it is true for our intellect, “insofar as it is such as to cause a true estimate about itself”<sup>15</sup>. Now, in things, “truth is found especially in the first, rather than in the second sense”, because “its reference to the divine intellect comes before its reference to a human intellect”. Hence, its primary truth stems from God’s intellect and knowledge.

Such a hierarchy prevents the twofold signification of truth from breaking down into two independent segments. As pred-

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<sup>14</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 2, *resp* (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).

<sup>15</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 2, *resp* (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).

icated by Augustine and Anselm, truth is one and unique, and such a unity lies entirely in the divine intellect:

it is clear that truth is properly found in the human or divine intellect, as health is found in an animal. In things, however, truth is found because of some relation to the intellect – just as health is said to be in things other than animals in so far as they bring about or preserve animal health. Truth, therefore, is properly and primarily in the divine intellect. In the human intellect, it exists properly but secondarily, for it exists there only because of a relation to either one of the two truths just mentioned. Therefore, the truth of the divine intellect is only one, from which derive many truths in the human intellect, just as from one man's face many likenesses are reflected in a mirror, as it is said in [Augustine's] gloss on these words [of *Psalm* 11, 2], "Truths are decayed from among the children of men".<sup>16</sup>

Hence, Aquinas' account anchors the very notion of truth to the transcendental truth which is generated by the reference of a thing to the mind of God, which is the preeminent and supreme definition of what is "true". Such a move also consists in treating human truth as accidental and secondary to the things; that is, as a kind of extrinsic denomination (such as Cajetan especially would understand it) based only upon the cognitive act of a knowing intellect, but not on an intrinsic status of things themselves:

truth predicated of things because of their relation to the human intellect is, as it were, accidental to those things; for, supposing that the human intellect did not or could not exist, things would still remain essentially the same. But truth predicated of things because of their relation to the divine intellect is inseparably attendant on them, for they cannot exist except by reason of the divine intellect which keeps bringing them into being. Again, truth is

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<sup>16</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 4, *resp* (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).

primarily in a thing because of its relation to the divine intellect, not to the human intellect, because it is related to the divine intellect as to its cause, but to the human intellect as to its effect in the sense that the latter receives its knowledge from things<sup>17</sup>.

In the following paragraphs, I will contend that Suárez aims precisely to dismantle the latter position presented above. The Jesuit refuses to treat transcendental truth as primarily anchored in the divine intellect, and tries to define it as a denomination based on an intrinsic property of things themselves. According to this model, as Suárez maintains, that which is granted by God's cognition would only qualify as transcendental truth *maxime spectanda*, but not as transcendental truth in itself.

### 3. Can Truth be a Property of Things?

In light of Aquinas' account, the leading question of *DM* 8, section 7 is that of how truth can also be attributed to things.<sup>18</sup> In Suárez's text, this question arises in the form of a puzzle. There are, indeed, just two ways to understand the denomination "true" as belonging to things, neither of which can be proven.

On the one hand, "true" might mean something absolute and intrinsic to the thing, and "in this manner nothing can be added to this being, but can only be explained by the entity and the reality of it"<sup>19</sup>. For Suárez, though, this account cannot be

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<sup>17</sup> *DV*, q. 1, art. 4, *resp* (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1952-1954).

<sup>18</sup> See *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 1.

<sup>19</sup> For instance, to be true gold, consists in not being just apparent or false gold, and having the proper and real nature and essence of gold (*DM*, 8, s. 7, § 2). On this matter, Suárez remarks that "to be gold; therefore, to be true gold in the way that such a denomination does not add over being gold" (*DM*, 8, s. 7, § 2). For the same reason, "to be a true real being (*verum ens realis*) means no other concept than being a real being (*ens realis*), that is, not false nor chimeric".

validated, since “the intellect [and not the thing] is said to be true from the fact that the thing is or is not”. On the other hand, the denomination “true” may very well be treated not as something absolute and intrinsic, but as coming from elsewhere; “in this manner it cannot be but a denomination extrinsic to the thing, namely that this can be truly enunciated or is enunciable”<sup>20</sup>. And yet, the second formulation is just as insufficient, because it implies that truth is an “extrinsic denomination”, given that “the fact that the intellect is adequate to the thing adds nothing to the thing save for that it is known truly”<sup>21</sup>.

Suárez tries to solve this dilemma by first establishing the *an sit* of transcendental truth. He consequently provides a definition of it and argues for its existence as follows:

The denomination “true”, which is usually attributed to the thing, consists in the following: in such a way, indeed, we use to say that gold is true as we distinguish it from the apparent, and the true man as we distinguish it from the portrayed one, and the true God as we separate him from the false ones [...]. From which it follows clearly that the same attribution of “true” can be attributed to whatever real being; or as it is separated from the false and imaginary, or as in its species and reason it is judged to be the proper essence of such being [...]. And hence, in turn, is also evident that truth under some reason is attributed to the being (*entis*) and is converted (*converti*) with it<sup>22</sup>.

This definition mediates between the two mentioned above, but also indicates Suárez’s overall aims. For him, transcendental truth is not something absolute which belongs directly to the thing, but rather an attribution and denomination of something. At the same time, however, it is not merely an extrinsic attribution, but something based on the actual existence of the

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<sup>20</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 3.

<sup>21</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 3.

<sup>22</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 4.

being called “true”. But what exactly does the relation of which we are speaking consist? Suárez takes into account four possible *sententiae* he finds in the Scholastic tradition.

The first view is that of “some modern Thomists”, who attribute it to Aquinas<sup>23</sup> along with all of his commentators (i.e. Capreolus, Barbo, Javelli). According to these authors, transcendental truth refers to a certain real and absolute property which is considered by reason (*ratiocinata*), and which is distinct from the being (*ab ente*)<sup>24</sup> itself. One crucial caveat to this definition, however, is that, “talking of all that includes the truth in being (*veritas in essendo*) is not the same as talking of what adds the truth to the entity”<sup>25</sup> (*entitatem*) or (what is the same thing) to the being (*ens*). In the first manner, Suárez remarks, one says that the truth of the actual being is a real perfection. According to this view, truth is not only an extrinsic reason constituted by our intellect, but rather the very entity of a being or, taken from another perspective, by adding something to it<sup>26</sup>. In this manner, such a sentence is actually that of Aquinas and Capreolus, and it can be accepted, although, for the “moderns” it means “more”.

This same view can be understood in a different way as well; namely, that truth adds the true being of an absolute and real property to the *ratio essentiae*. Such a reading, however, is false, specifically because the distinction between the being (*ens*) and such a property can be neither real nor modal. By contrast, the actual foundation of the truth of a being is, for Suárez, the very being of such an entity itself (and not any added property):

since no thing is thought to be true by addition (*per modum superadditum*), but by its own entity; which, if given, even

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<sup>23</sup> Suárez’s reference goes to *ST*, I, q. 16.

<sup>24</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 5.

<sup>25</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 6.

<sup>26</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 6.

though you were to subtract all other modes, you understand that it remains a true thing, by reason of the being (*entis*) [in general], or by reason of this being (*entis*), which is apt to constitute this entity<sup>27</sup>.

Hence, entity and transcendental truth cannot be thought of as distinct things, since transcendental truth is nothing more than the intelligibility of the being, as adequately conceived by an intellect:

The being (*ens*), taken precisely, is thus intelligible insofar as it is [such] by itself; both because it is conceived by the intellect through a direct and proper concept, and because a thing is intelligible in proportion to how much being (*esse*) it has [...]; therefore, the being in that precise concept [already] includes all real perfection which is required for the truth (*ad rationem veri*), because a being which is intelligible is true; indeed, the object of the intellect is called true, and [it is called so] also because there can be a conformity between all intelligible being and all intellect<sup>28</sup>.

The second view introduces the idea that truth adds a relationship of conformity of the intellect to the being. Nevertheless, this doctrine can be understood in a variety of ways. The first way lies in understanding it as conformity in act (*actualis*). Another way to understand it is as an attitudinal type of conformity, as if transcendental truth were nothing more than the intelligibility of the being itself (*entis*); indeed, if taken from the side of the intellect, intelligibility is an extrinsic denomination coming from the intellectual faculty, whereas, if taken *ex*

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<sup>27</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 7: "...and this account [...] also proves that truth cannot be added over entity as a perfection conceived by reason (*ratione ratiocinata*) and mutually distinct from entity; indeed, if so they are mutually distinct, as if none of the two terms would include the other in its precise concept, truth would be distinct by reason from the being".

<sup>28</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 7.

*parte rei*, it is an aptitude which allows the thing itself to be understood. Such an aptitude marks the thing with a relationship to the intellect which it can be adequate to. Regarding the matter of the intellect to which the thing is made adequate, there are some, Suárez says, who limit this possibility exclusively to the divine mind; that is, there are those who maintain that only God, on whose intellect all things depend, is the ultimate measure of truth. Others, however, maintain that any intellect whatsoever can be the basis of such conformity. Finally, there are those who consider this relationship to be real, and who conceive truth as a real property; besides them, there are those who consider this relation to be a relation of reason<sup>29</sup>.

According to Suárez, one aspect of this doctrine must be specified, namely that the said relationship (between things and intellect) is a predicamental one. Conversely, “if one understands this relation broadly, as all transcendental habit or any denomination which arises from the conjunction of many things”, this view coincides with the first one<sup>30</sup>. However, Suárez claims that transcendental truth entails neither a relation of reason nor a real one. A real property cannot consist of a relation of reason, it neither includes a real property formally, and such a relationship only exists to the extent that it is considered or imagined by our mind. In either case, such a thing cannot be the foundation of any definition of truth. For instance, God knows all transcendental truth from eternity, but He does not imagine any relation by way of reasons<sup>31</sup>. Likewise, transcendental truth cannot consist of a real relationship, which would be the same for both created and uncreated beings<sup>32</sup>. Indeed, in God “there is no relationship of conformity which truth can consist of, and accordingly nei-

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<sup>29</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 9.

<sup>30</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 10.

<sup>31</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 11.

<sup>32</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 12.

ther the truth of being abstracted from being created or uncreated can require such a relationship”<sup>33</sup>.

Finally, Suárez makes an important remark in which he rejects the idea that a peculiar form of exemplarism (the real relationship of conformity between things and divine ideas) can be the foundation of transcendental truth. As he notes, transcendental truth cannot consist of a real and proper predicable relationship of beings with their correspondent ideas in the divine mind:

Although, more strictly, we talk of created being and its transcendental truth (as seems to be claimed by those who say that the truth of such being [*entis*] consists in its conformity to the divine intellect as it contains in itself the exemplars or ideas of all created beings) although, I say, we are talking just of this being I do not think that this truth consists in some real and proper, predicamental relationship of such a being to the divine idea<sup>34</sup>.

Theologians defend this proposition in two ways. A first way, which for Suárez is a weak one, lies in simply showing that truth cannot be a real relation. Suárez maintains that this way should be rejected, since it assumes a false premise: “a creature considered only in its *esse essentiae* does not receive the truth of its essence from the conformity to God’s mind or idea”<sup>35</sup>; indeed a man, Suárez remarks, “is not this essence because it is known as such by God”, but rather “this essence is known since it [the man] is, essentially, as such”<sup>36</sup>. Only once

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<sup>33</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 12.

<sup>34</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 13.

<sup>35</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 13.

<sup>36</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 13. Such a claim corresponds with the famous passage from *DM*, 31, s. 12, § s. 7, § 40: “those enunciations are not true because they are known by God, but rather they are thus known because they are true; otherwise no reason could be given why God would necessarily know them to be true” (trans. Suárez 1983: 200). I do not deem that, from both



this relation is established is it said to be real, even if this definition is taken “proportionally”; indeed, “in a created being which is only in potency, the truth exists also just in potency;

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this sentences, one can infer a Suárezian essentialism, as if God himself was subjected to eternal essences (non repugnances) of possible things. This passage in *DM*, 8 should rather read in the light of Suárez’s “existential integralism” (Pereira 2004 and 2006). For Suárez, the essences conceived by our minds, which abstract and thereby separate essences from existence, are not distinct *in re* from the actual existence of a singular thing. Hence, an existing man does not coincide with his essence because God knows such an essence, but because the man exists in such way. The mind of God, in its turn, knows this essence as one thing with its existence. Nonetheless, God’s mind is not directly the formal cause of all existing things. He is such only by means of His efficient act of creation. As an efficient creator, God follows His ideas, but He does not create essences in themselves. He creates many individual entities sharing the same way of being, according to the formal representations in His mind. The essence as a formal unity is generated only by the speculations of our minds. As regards, instead, the passage of *DM*, 31, it raised, as is known, an intense debate after Cronin 1966: 39 pointed out that it is quoted by Descartes in his famous letters to Mersenne on the creation of the eternal truths (*AT*, I: 149, *CSMK*, III: 24). This coincidence legitimated Marion 1981’s: 174, and already Kenny 1979’s supposition that Descartes is criticizing Suárez’s alleged Platonism. It seems to me that especially Walski 2004 has shed light on this point, making clear that Mersenne, and not Descartes, is who actually quotes the *DM*. I added some remarks to Walski’s analysis in Guidi 2021, where I argued that, in *DM* 31, Suárez faces exactly the problem of the possible independence of essence from existence, a view that he openly denies. He thereby subscribes to the doctrine by which the essences of things are created by God. The passage of *DM*, 31, s. 12, § 40 belongs to an appendix of his treatise, where he deals with the problem of the logical meaning of necessary logical truths, reflecting, for the sake of the argument, on what would happen to such logical truths if God would annihilate the existence of actual individuals, and, accordingly, the essence itself. Hence, what Suárez discusses in *DM*, 31, s. 12, § 40, is not the truth of the essence in itself (depending just upon the real existence of the beings existing in the way described by that essence), but rather the truth of the logical propositions (*enuntiationes*), such as ‘man is a rational animal’ or ‘triangle is a three-sided figure’, expressing a necessary identity between a subject and an essential predicate, and whose value is logically self-evident, but, in its truth, dependent on the correspondence with the actual existence of its terms.

in the same way there can be in it a real relation in potency; but, just as in the same being existing in act there is real truth (*veritas realis*) in act, so there can be a real relation in act”<sup>37</sup>.

For Suárez, the “exemplarist” way cannot be proven by appealing to a relation of similitude or to a cause-effect relation. Indeed, no formal convenience exists between God’s ideas and creatures, which would necessitate a true relation of similitude, particularly given that divine ideas only have an “intentional or ideal” likeness with their object (analogously to an intentional species and a visible thing). Similarly, God’s exemplar does not have, in creation, any direct causal efficacy save for that of guiding the action of the creating agent. The only relation that an effect has with its cause is that which it has with its efficient cause, which the exemplar is not. Therefore, things do not have any true “real relation of conformity or dependency with the exemplar”<sup>38</sup>.

According to the last two view (the third and fourth), then, transcendental truth adds nothing more than a negation to being, and such truth consists merely in an extrinsic denomination. According to the third sentence, truth only adds the negation of falsity or appearance to a being. Suárez actually sympathizes with this account (“this manner of speaking is not improbable at all”), although he rejects it for its novelty (“yet, since it appears new, it is not be proven by us”). Nevertheless, the common *ratio* of truth “somehow includes or connotes a habit of the intellect or of its knowing power”, not *per modum negationis* but rather *per modum conformitatis*, “which is conceived as something positive”<sup>39</sup>.

Finally, the fourth view is that of Cajetan, who holds that transcendental truth is nothing other than an extrinsic de-

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<sup>37</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 13.

<sup>38</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 14.

<sup>39</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 18.

nomination in created beings<sup>40</sup>. According to Cajetan, created beings are only true to the extent that they are extrinsically denominated as such, “both from Divine truth, so far as they are signs of it and imitate it, or from created truth as speculatively conceived [*intellecta*], so far as they [the things] are or can be the cause of it [the truth]”<sup>41</sup>. Thus, the transcendental truth of beings depends on God’s intrinsic truth or on the true judgments of our intellect, as these things are “the signs or the causes or the truth of intellect”. Once these sources of truth are removed, transcendental truth disappears altogether. Suárez also appreciates this account, even though he describes it as “difficult”. And, while he can accept the idea that truth adds to the being “nothing but a concomitance of something extrinsic”, he also argues that the denomination of something as true is not merely extrinsic. Indeed, he argues that transcendental truth is “something intrinsic and not only an extrinsic denomination”, which cannot be a property of beings<sup>42</sup>.

In the light of the previous analyses, Suárez’s own account is very close to that of the first view. Transcendental truth, he claims, is nothing but the entity itself, thereby raising the whole issue of the broader use of the term *veritas*:

perhaps the difficulty arose from the fact that, in the usage of such words, we do not distinguish enough what in virtue of which the imposition of them [the words] is assumed or trans-

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<sup>40</sup> Cajetanus, *Summa Theologiae cum supplemento et commentariis Caietani* [ed. 1888-1906], I, q. 16, art. 6, § 7: “all thing are said to be ‘good’ in a twofold manner, intrinsically or extrinsically [...] though [they are said to be] ‘true’ only by an extrinsic denomination, so that there is no formal truth in things, but [only] imitatively or expansively with respect to the divine intellect, and, causally, with respect to our speculative intellect. Indeed, if there were no intellect, no thing would be true, and in no sense could a thing be said to be true, if not equivocally”.

<sup>41</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 19.

<sup>42</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 21.

posed (*translata*), from what which it is imposed to mean for; indeed, it could happen (and this is plausible) that all attributions of “truth” stem from the truth of cognition [...]. Still, notwithstanding, the name “truth” does not mean in things just a denomination borrowed from the truth of cognition, but something more, which the name [“true”] is imposed to mean<sup>43</sup>.

Hence, transcendental truth is called “truth” with an implicit reference to cognitive truth, from which the transcendental meaning of “truth” is assumed or transposed<sup>44</sup>. However, such a term is not implied to be a mere improper use of this qualification. When applied to things, the term “true” means nothing more than the very being of the thing denominated as true, and taken in its relationship with the concept by which it is represented to any intellect:

transcendental truth intrinsically refers to the real entity of the thing itself which is denominated as “true”, and beyond it does not add anything intrinsic (either absolute or relative) to it, nor does it add anything distinct from the nature of the thing or only by reason<sup>45</sup>. [...] Transcendental truth means the entity of the thing as it connotes the cognition or the concept of the intellect which such an entity is adequate to, or in which such a thing is represented or by which it can be represented exactly as it is<sup>46</sup>.

The very concept of a true being is indeed “virtually comparative of one thing or nature to the proper concept of that thing, which is said to be true”<sup>47</sup>, and it is precisely in this

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<sup>43</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 24.

<sup>44</sup> See *infra* for a more precise explanation of such a *translatio*, which Suárez discusses in *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 11.

<sup>45</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 24.

<sup>46</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 25.

<sup>47</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 25. This account, nevertheless, has purely theological implications: “for instance, while officiating the mystery of the Eucharist, we use to say that the consecrated bread is the true body of Christ Lord where, with

virtuality that transcendental truth dwells. The latter refers to the entity itself, which is considered in light of its conformity with a representative concept in the mind. This concept is, in turn, properly true according to the truth of a cognition which represents the essence of a thing as it actually exists. Hence, Suárez's account consists in anchoring transcendental truth to the truth of cognition, attributing an epiphenomenal truth to extra-mental things.

But, what kind of intellectual concept should the entity of the thing be adequate to? Suárez maintains that his own account also helps to resolve the doctrinal divergences between the three great Dominican Masters, namely, Durandus, Aquinas and Hervaeus. Suárez claims that both Hervaeus' solution (according to which truth is the conformity of the being to itself as it is objectively conceived)<sup>48</sup> and that of Durandus (by which truth is the conformity of the thing according to the objective being to the thing itself according to the real being)<sup>49</sup> are wrong only because they understand such proportion or conformity between intellect and thing, as founded "in the objective concept, whereas we [found it] by the formal one; it is they understand to the traditional definition of truth as the conformity between *intellectus* and *res*, but this does not imply that there is a direct conformity between the thing and the objective concept. It is rather the conformity between

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"true body", we do not mean anything but the very body which is represented by the proper and true concept of Christ's body. And similarly, revealing the mystery of the Incarnation, we say that God is the true man, that is. He has that nature that, through the essential species of man, we conceive to be true".

<sup>48</sup> Hervaeus Natalis, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum Commentaria* [ed. 1647], I, d. 19, q. 3, art. 1. See the essay "The Truth We Know. Reassessing Suárez's Account of Cognitive Truth and Objective Being", *supra*: 77-114.

<sup>49</sup> Durandus de Saint-Porçain, *In quatuor libros Sententiarum* [ed. 1508], I, d. 19, q. 5, § 11-14. See the essay "The Truth We Know. Reassessing Suárez's Account of Cognitive Truth and Objective Being", *supra*: 77-114.

the thing and the formal concept or idea<sup>50</sup>. Thus, in line with Suárez's previous investigation on cognitive truth<sup>51</sup>, the objective concept is excluded from the definition of truth, both in the cognitive and in the transcendental sense.

Another implicit issue is that of conformity; namely, does this account respect the traditional definition of truth as the conformity between intellect and thing? And if so, of what does such conformity consist? Suárez attributes his own view to "those who say that truth adds to the being a relation of reason of the conformity of the being to the intellect", as Aquinas would have claimed<sup>52</sup>:

indeed, for there be truth, this [relationship] should not be understood as a proper and actual relationship, but as a mutual connection between the thing and the concept, and as the connotation of one as corresponding to the other; which we call "relation of reason" because we conceive it in the way of a relation (*per modum relationis*). And then, in this sense, it is easy to apply to this truth that usual definition, which is *the conformity between intellect and thing*; indeed, that conformity is not meant to be any relation [...], but a denomination assumed from the conjunction of many existing in the way that one is such as it is as represented by another<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 25. The objective concept, indeed, does not add anything to the thing but a denomination to the term of the formal concept.

<sup>51</sup> See the essay "The Truth We Know. Reassessing Suárez's Account of Cognitive Truth and Objective Being", *supra*: 77-114.

<sup>52</sup> Suárez refers to *In Sent.* I, d. 19, q. 5, art. 1, which in fact claims that the truth "has its foundation in the things, but its reason is provided by the intellect's action, namely when [the thing] is understood in the way it is. Whence the Philosopher says that truth and falsity are in the soul; but good and evil [are] in things. However, given that a thing's quiddity and being (*esse*) are in it, the truth is founded in the thing's being more than in its quiddity [...]; and in the very operation of the intellect, which grasps the being of the thing such as it is by a certain similarity to itself, is founded the relation of conformity, in which consists the reason of truth. Whence I say that the thing's being itself is the cause of truth".

<sup>53</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 25.

In transcendental truth, conformity is only a denomination attributed to the thing, and it is grounded on the actual correspondence between the formal concept representing the thing to mind, plus the fact that the thing exists in the way as it is represented by the true formal concept.

It remains to be clarified, however, as to upon which intellect such conformity depends. Starting from the previous definition, Suárez reconceives another important doctrine of Aquinas; namely, the idea that the truth of things must be considered *maxime* in relation to the divine intellect. Indeed,

such an appellation or conformity, should mostly and by itself be assumed in accordance to the divine intellect [...] because the conformity to that intellect is ultimately in all things. Certainly in created things, according to the dependency which they have upon it; and in the very true uncreated being, according to the intrinsic and essential identity with his own intellect and actual intellection. Henceforth, because in divine intellect indwells the supreme and infallible truth and the absolutely perfect reason or representation of all the things, things are said to be true especially when they can be adequate to the concept that God has of such things<sup>54</sup>.

God's formal concepts are the most perfect representations of things and they afford a maximum degree of transcendental truth to things themselves. It is worth noting that Suárez does not stand up at all for an exemplarist model, by which God's mind would be the metaphysical and ultimate foundation of transcendental truth. For him, the divine intellect simply provides a supreme order of this truth (it is *maxime spectanda* with respect to God's intellect), but the foundation of such truth keeps being the entity of the things insofar as related to their correspondent and cognitively true representations in an intellect.

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<sup>54</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 28.

Nevertheless, below God's mind, the created intellect also generates a lower level of transcendental truth:

this conformity which is called "truth" can be understood not only of the actual, but also of the attitudinal [cognition]; but actually, according to attitude, all being (*ens*) is born to have its true estimation in every intellect, not only the divine, but also in the created. For, if we would like to conceive this denomination in the way of a relation, we understand that whatever being has this relation of intelligibility not only to the divine intellect, but also to whatever created [intellect]. Likewise (since the created intellect is a certain participation in the divine intellect, to which [created intellect] is born to conform in understanding) if [the created intellect] understands truly; therefore, that same being which is said to be true because it can be adequate to the divine intellect, can also be said to be true because it can be adequate to the created intellect which understands it truly. Finally, this is proven by that argument, for which we not always know the truth of things for the conformity to the divine idea, but for the conception that we have of such thing<sup>55</sup>.

The divine intellect then, is the supreme instantiation of transcendental truth, which nevertheless remains dependent on the true cognition of any intellect whatsoever. The cognitive truth of created intellects is perfectly capable of obtaining a less noble, but just as true, *veritas*. It is not by chance that, immediately after this passage, Suárez proposes a broader definition of conformity which grounds truth in both the uncreated and created intellect. Broadly speaking, the "conformity of truth in common" is just "the conformity of the knower and the known"; a broader conception of conformity which is especially (*maxime*) the core of transcendental truth (whereas God's cognition was only truth conceived as *maxime spectanda*):

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<sup>55</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 29.



in the way in which one needs to assume [such a truth] if talking of the transcendental truth in all its extension, truth is given especially if that conformity is assumed only by the reason of the knower and the known. This because, in God, one cannot understand any other kind of conformity [beyond that of the knower and known], since He is neither a depending nor a caused being [...]: neither He can be said measured in His truth by any science; not just because, according to his supreme identity, there cannot be in Him any reason of measure, but also because, in the way in which they [God's truth and science] can be distinguished and measured by reason, God's essence is rather true by measure of His own science, and conversely; indeed, God is not true God because He knows himself as such, but rather, since He is true God, He knows himself as such. Therefore, the transcendental truth, assumed in all its extension, cannot be said a conformity to intellect as to a cause or to a measure, but only as [adequate] to a representing or knowing [intellect], in act or by attitude<sup>56</sup>.

Even in God, transcendental truth has a purely cognitive dimension, independent of any relation of causality or proportionality. Thus, such truth is merely the very entity of a being, to the extent that it is known by an intellect through a cognitively true formal concept. Still, is this definition so different from Cajetan's notion of transcendental truth as extrinsic denomination? Suárez stresses that on the one hand, transcendental truth is not only a "mere" extrinsic denomination; but on the other hand, Cajetan's claim should be understood in the light of the correct account. Transcendental truth, then, is somehow intrinsic to true things, since "it includes or connotes the conjunction, which it results from, with the other thing"<sup>57</sup>. And since the truth of a thing includes its own being, it cannot be a merely extrinsic denomination.

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<sup>56</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 30.

<sup>57</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 34.

Such an intrinsic link between transcendental truth and entity is the basis of Suárez's moderate restriction of truth to real beings. Given that beings have as much truth as they have entity, real beings are the only ones which are transcendentially true, whereas beings of reason have only a minimal degree of truth:

fictitious beings are not true beings and, far differently, are intelligible as true beings; indeed, they are born to be apprehended and known as they are; actually very little, but it is required that, by the artifice and the power of the intellect, they be dressed in some species or shadow of reality. And also for that reason, things have more truth as much as they have being; and because a being is more perfect insofar as it is said to be more intelligible<sup>58</sup>.

Therefore, beings of reason, having no entity and not being intelligible in and of themselves, are thereby *not* transcendentially true (however, they are designated as such only with respect to the truth of cognition)<sup>59</sup>.

#### **4. Cognitive and Transcendental Truth: The Problem of Priority**

At the end of section 7, Suárez states two cornerstones of his own view: 1) all real beings, created or the uncreated, are true, since there is no being which is not adequate to any intellect, at least the divine one<sup>60</sup>; 2) truth is a property (*passio*) of the being, not according to the definition of *passio* as “a real property distinct by nature from the being”, but “according to

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<sup>58</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 34.

<sup>59</sup> For more on Suárez's account of the truth of beings of reasons, see again Doyle 1986-1987 and more recently Novotný 2015. See also Shields 2012 and Canteñs 2003. See the essay “The Truth We Know. Reassessing Suárez's Account of Cognitive Truth and Objective Being”, *supra*: 77-114.

<sup>60</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 35.

the broader way”, “only because it is a certain attribute which is convertible (*reciprocatur*) with being and is distinct in some way from it, at least by reason or by connotation<sup>61</sup>.

However, in the light of the previous definition of transcendental truth, Suárez must still explain whether truth is first and foremost the truth of cognition or, conversely, the truth of things which comes before cognitive truth. On the one hand, indeed, truth seems to be attributed first and foremost to things and then to cognition, as all acts of the intellect presuppose truth and because, being transcendent, the truth of things is more universal. On the other hand, though, the Aristotelian definition of truth implies that, in things, truth is something analogous, whose main *analogatum* is the truth of cognition (which, accordingly, comes first)<sup>62</sup>.

On this matter, three prior opinions should be taken into consideration. The first, which Suárez does not refute, is that of Aquinas and Cajetan. Both Dominicans argue that “truth, first and especially is found in cognition, and secondary in things: indeed [truth] is intrinsically and formally only in cognition, though in things [it is there] causally and objectively”<sup>63</sup>. Things are true just as they are adequate or can be adequate to a true concept that the intellect can have of them, and transcendental truth is true only by its denomination as such. According to this sentence, there is no such thing as a common *ratio* of truth, shared by cognition and things. Like signs, things are only true analogically, as they refer to true cognition in the intellect. Thus, that which is true *simpliciter* is the intellect, whereas things themselves are only true *secundum quid*; that is, simultaneously with a judgment of intellect which declares that this gold is the “true” one.

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<sup>61</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 36.

<sup>62</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 7, § 36.

<sup>63</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 2. Aquinas reference goes to *ST*, I, q. 16, art. 1, 3 and 6 and *DV*, q. 1, art. 3.

The second opinion is that of *alii*, who distinguish two manners of denominating things as true: by the measure of cognition, and by what is measured by cognition<sup>64</sup>. Things are true by way of the measure of cognition to the extent that they are objects of speculative cognition, and inasmuch as they are adequate to it or, at least, suitable to be adequate to it. In this case, the object is the measure of cognition, particularly if it is its primary object. Things are true as they are measured by cognition when they follow from an intellectual exemplar or idea, and they are adequate to it as their measure. According to this claim, transcendental truth is above all the adequation of that which is measured to the measure itself; that is, truth is either between things and cognition or between cognition and things<sup>65</sup>. But, truth conceived as the adequation of the measure to the measured cannot be understood as properly transcendental truth, save for by way of analogy. Suárez readily dismisses this opinion as he maintains that according to this model, God would not even be true as a being, but solely by way of the reason of science or of speculative science; likewise, divine practical science would not actually be true if not analogically. Moreover, the essences of creatures, considered according to their *esse essentiae*, cannot be said to be “true” if not by way of analogy<sup>66</sup>. Finally, and absolutely speaking, there is no order of priority between transcendental truth and cognition. Rather, such priority can be found in the relationship between the truth of the measure and the measured which is said to be true; formally speaking, this relationship qualifies as truth. Yet, such a relationship between the truth of the measure and the measured is not the truth of the things or of the

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<sup>64</sup> This terminology was used already by Aquinas in *DV*, q. 1, art. 2, *resp.* See above, note 13.

<sup>65</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 3. Thus, this refers to when cognition is adequate to its primary object or when things are adequate to their intellectual exemplars.

<sup>66</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 4.

intellect, but just a relation of measuring, which is said “truth” only analogically, that is assuming a previous truth.

Supporters of the third opinion distinguish, by contrast, the first origin or “imposition” of the term *verum* or *veritas* from its proper meaning. Indeed, the imposition of the adjective *verum* follows truth of cognition alone, or more precisely, the truth of intellective composition and division, which is the proper form of truth and that which we know better. The meaning of such a term is later extended “not by metaphorical translation”, but “for a property, in order to signify the truth of the things, which [truth], by reason of truth also can be more perfect than the truth of cognition”<sup>67</sup>. For instance, this is the way in which theologians use the nouns “mercy” *et similia*, which are imposed first to mean properties of creatures and later are extended to signify properties of God, “not metaphorically, but for the supreme property and analogy, in which the first and primary *analogatum* is God as He has such properties”<sup>68</sup>.

For Suárez, this sentence is based upon the principle that “the conformity of the intellect to the thing is as much perfect and proper as the conformity of the thing to the intellect; therefore, from that side nothing obstructs that the *ratio* of truth could be equally attributed to both”, the intellect or the thing. Indeed, as Suárez emphasizes, the traditional definition of truth as the conformity between thing and intellect does not explain whether or not this conformity follows from a measure-measured relationship, nor does it prescribe anything about the two terms by which one must be adequate to the other. Hence, likewise in the second claim, the distinction between *verum* as related to the truth of cognition and its extended use based on the properties of the thing, cannot be accepted. Despite that, Suárez wants to emphasize the fact that whatever type of conformity between intellect and things

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<sup>67</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 5.

<sup>68</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 5.

is responsible for generating truth, “although we use the name of the truth firstly according to cognition, this does not imply that the truth of things is said analogically”<sup>69</sup>.

Thus, over these preliminary statements Suárez has prepared and introduced the main principles for his own account, which stem from a synthesis of those different doctrinal positions. First of all, Suárez remarks that “truth in a more special way is found in composition and division, rather than in simple concepts or things”. But, he also states that such truth “actually is not the transcendental truth of that act or judgment which in composition and division is called true”; indeed, transcendental truth is something “immutable and inseparable from being (*ab ente*), whereas the “special” truth we find in composition and division continuously changes, if not when it is directed toward immutable things<sup>70</sup>. Thus, transcendental truth is a form of truth that we find in things, but even in composition or division, where it accompanies the “special” truth of judgement:

in one same judgment or act of composition and division can be found a twofold truth, one transcendental, another special, which we might call truth of cognition or accidental, and which others call formal [truth]. Which is declared and proven as follows: indeed, when the judgment is changed from true to false, it admits some truth and does not admit all, but it retains something necessary; therefore, there is a twofold [truth]. The major [premise] is known by itself, indeed falsity, being opposite to truth, excludes some truth from the act when it is changed from true to false. The minor [premise] is also clear, because, as we said, the true is convertible with the being; but that judgment which changed from true to false nevertheless is still a real judgment and a real being (*ens*). Therefore, it must be the case that truth remains, by way of transcendental truth. This consists in the following: because of the

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<sup>69</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 6.

<sup>70</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 7.

intellect's judgment, that act [of judgment] has a true essence, and species of judgment and the conformity with his own concept or idea of intellectual judgment<sup>71</sup>.

Hence for Suárez, truth in the special way is only that of composition and division. Nevertheless, he maintains that there is also a secondary truth, i.e. a transcendental one, which pertains to beings *qua* beings. Such truth regards not only things, but even judgments inasmuch as they pertain to beings or linguistic objects. For instance, as Suárez explains, in a sentence like “all men are white”, there is no conformity in the meaning of composition and division, and “in this sense is said to be simply false”. Yet, at the same time,

if you consider just the definition or essence of a proposition, and its conformity with the rules of the dialectical art, or with the idea of a proposition, it is clear that it has its own truth, almost transcendental, according to which it can be said to be a true proposition, in the way in which gold is said of golden things, and in the way in which a syllogism is said to be a true syllogism if the assumption is true, even if its conclusion is false<sup>72</sup>.

As a proposition, the sentence “all men are white” is adequate to the very notion of a proposition and despite the fact that it is false as a judgment, it is transcendently true as a being. This remark is not introduced to Suárez in order to make all possible judgments transcendently true, but only to state that transcendental truth belongs to judgments as well. It is not by chance that by starting from these premises, Suárez establishes the pillars of his own account by stating that

firstly, truth in its primeval meaning is said of the truth of cognition, which is found in particular (*specialiter*) in composition

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<sup>71</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 8.

<sup>72</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 8.

and division. [...] Indeed, for this reason, Aristotle often claims that truth is in the intellect, or in composition and division. Likewise, due to this cause, the judgment containing this truth is said to be simply true. If, yet, it lacks it, it is said to be simply false, although it has some transcendental truth in the way I said above. In short, the reason for that is that it seems that such truth [that of composition and division] is known better by us and it is more formally in our cognition<sup>73</sup>.

Suárez's first pillar is thus that truth, in its *primaeva significatio*, is the cognitive one, by way of composition and division. A judgment which composes and divides things as they are or are not in extra-mental reality is true or false *simpliciter*, even if it is true transcendently as a linguistic object. Once stated that, the Jesuit can proceed with the second pillar of his account, by which “from this truth of cognition, the things which are known can be said to be true by way of extrinsic analogy or denomination; yet, according to that reason or denomination, it is not taken as the truth if [the latter] is said to be a property of the being (*entis*)”<sup>74</sup>.

Suárez supports such a statement with the aid of an important semiotic distinction, between: 1) the judgment expressing a true or a false composition and division (“God is three and one”); 2) the vocal proposition which signifies that truth (the sound “God is three and one”); and 3) the thing itself, inasmuch as it causes and founds the truth (God, who is three and one). Accordingly, when considering the truth of the sentence “God is three and one”, one is confronted with three different levels of truth. On the one hand, indeed, one claims that believing both the judgment and the vocal proposition combining “God” and “three and one” are true; still, on the other hand, he also means that the *res* itself is true, namely that the concept

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<sup>73</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 9.

<sup>74</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 10.



“God is three and one” is true. Such a notion is nothing more than an objective being in the intellect; “that is [the thing] insofar as it is known complexly and truly and as it is judged”<sup>75</sup>.

By this remark, Suárez thus aims to admitting that, from the truth of cognition, it stems also any truth which could be attributed to the thing; though, this truth does not belong to the thing itself, but only to its objective conception, indwelling in our intellect. This form of transcendental truth based upon the truth of cognition is very weak and improper, and founded entirely on an extrinsic analogy and denomination, which is built upon the truth of cognition. This is why Suárez stresses that

about such truth or denomination of truth, Aristotle also says that it does not dwell in the thing, but in the intellect. From which follows that this denomination of truth can also be ascribed to non-beings; in such a way, indeed, we say to be true both that the chimaera is a fictional being and that man is not a horse. And hence it is clear the posterior part, that such a denomination is not the truth which is a property of the being (*entis*). And this is also confirmed by the fact that the true is the object of the intellect; for, although some [authors] say that truth is a condition pertaining only to the object of intellect, which does not precede but rather follows the act of the intellect [...], yet in this way the object of the intellect would be said to be true very improperly<sup>76</sup>.

Transcendental truth as extrinsic denomination is nothing more than a denomination, and this is why it encompasses both real beings and linguistic objects as beings of reason. Starting from this, some authors believe that transcendental truth is precisely nothing other than an objective extrinsic denomination, which is enough to found the very truth of the thing. Yet, such an attribution of truth is extremely improper, and it is not the ultimate truth of things for an important reason:

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<sup>75</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 10.

<sup>76</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 10.

the object of the passive potency as such is required by the act [of cognition of the knowing intellect], and so those conditions which are proper to the object must be premised, not pursued [respect to the act]; therefore, the attribution of truth as it said of the object of the intellect, is not insofar as it is denominated by the very act [of cognition], but according to any other reason, for which it can precede the act<sup>77</sup>.

Even if it is possible to attribute to the things an extrinsic form of truth, based on the truth of cognition and valid also for the objective beings existing only in the intellect, the authentic transcendental truth remains a crucial premise for our cognition. All of the properties of things must precede, and not follow, the act of cognition of the intellect's passive potency. This proves that transcendental truth, i.e. the truth of beings, is *not* that of extrinsic denomination based on the truth of cognition, rather being something which precedes cognition by itself.

The core issue of section 8 is thus resolved: although cognitive truth is the *primaeva significatio* of truth, formally speaking, transcendental truth does not depend on the truth of cognition as it even precedes the act of cognition. Indeed, the extrinsic truth attributed to things based on the truth of cognition is not the actual transcendental truth that is a property of all beings (and which Suárez defines in section 7 as the very entity of that which, at least to the divine intellect, is denominated true, insofar as it is taken in its intrinsic relationship with the concept that truly represents it); a concept that the things' entity connotes as true (given that it is adequate to it) and so as the source of the very transcendental truth. As an intrinsic property of a thing, transcendental truth formally refers to the truth of cognition, but this does not entail that it is just an extrinsic denomination, stemming from the truth of cognition. Rather, they are distinct (albeit not fully inde-

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<sup>77</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 10.

pendent) forms of truth: a special one of the truly knowing intellect, and another which refers to the property of a thing.

Despite that, the very word ‘truth’, understood as an intrinsic property of things, is not the *primaeva significatio* of truth, but is rather a “transposed” use of it. This is nevertheless the third and final pillar of Suárez’s account, which finally reprises the core statement of section 7 (transcendental truth is denominated as such by a usage assumed or transposed from truth of cognition). As the Jesuit stresses:

this name of the truth is transposed from the truth of cognition, meaning that property of any real being (*entis*), which is the conformity with an intellect that conceives the things under such reason of the real being, in act or in potency<sup>78</sup>.

Therefore, in the case of transcendental truth, the word “truth” is borrowed from the notion of cognitive truth, in order to speak of the intrinsic relationship that all real beings (thereby excluding non-beings and beings of reason) have between their entity and the actual or potential true knowledge of an intellect. As I indicated above, this is at least the knowledge of the divine mind which hence “universalizes” transcendental truth to the entire domain of real beings.

Such a definition of transcendental truth, however, is connotative, and it might even be mistaken for Cajetan’s “extrinsic denomination for which the thing is said to be true, since it can found or cause the truth of the intellect”<sup>79</sup>. According to Suárez, though, this is not the case, since the denomination is directly attributed to the intrinsic entity of the thing:

that denomination [the extrinsic one] is taken precisely from extrinsic truth, as it denominates the object or its cause; but this

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<sup>78</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 11.

<sup>79</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 11.

truth [the transcendental one] is not taken from that denomination, but rather from the very entity of the thing as it conforms to something else. Accordingly, as well as the cognition or judgment is said to be true because it is adequate to the very being (*esse*) or non-being of the things, and yet it is not denominated as true from the truth of the thing itself, but from its own being (*esse*) [of cognition], connoting at the same time the being (*esse*) of the very object such as it is represented by the judgment, so in the present case the thing is said to be true because it has a being (*esse*) which is adequate or adequate to such concept. And this denomination is not taken extrinsically from the truth of the concept, but from the intrinsic entity [of the thing], as it is under the disposition, or an almost-disposition towards something else<sup>80</sup>.

Whereas Cajetan's extrinsic denomination is attributed to the extrinsic truth of things, actual transcendental truth reflects a property in the very being of the things, which is, or at least can be, adequate to the intellect that truly knows it.

Having established the different domains of the two kinds of truth, the question of their mutual relationship remains to be clarified. This requires further examination of the transposed use of the word "true", and the equivocal or analogical relation between the truth of cognition and transcendental truth. According to Suárez, at best (*ad summum*), the two genera of truth stand in an analogy of proportion, based on their respective formal structures (i.e. they are two kinds of adequation between concepts and things). Indeed, there is no common form which intrinsically pertains to some of the *analogata*, and the term "true" is used equivocally according to two different *rationes*:

therefore, it can only be a certain analogy of proportion (*proportionalis analogia*), which consists in the following: as well as the

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<sup>80</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 11.

truth of composition requires conformity between the thing's being (*esse rei*) and the judgment, so the transcendental truth requires such entity of the thing which can be adequate to its proper concept or idea, or to the intellectual representation of such a thing<sup>81</sup>.

Hence, both the truth of cognition and transcendental truth require conformity between the being of the thing and a judgment or a concept. This structural likeness is the only reason for establishing an analogy of proportion between them which is the ultimate foundation and legitimization of the aforementioned "transposition" of the meaning of truth from the truth of cognition to the transcendental one:

though such an analogy does not impede transcendent (*sic*) truth from being a property of the being, because, albeit the transposition of the name is assumed from that proportionality, it does not formally mean it, but a property which can be considered in it<sup>82</sup>.

The common usage of "truth" for both forms does not attest to any common essential structure. Indeed, the analogy of proportion just legitimates the attribution of this name to transcendental truth, without identifying them as the same kind of truth (thus amounting to nothing more than an extension of the use of the word). Accordingly, transcendental truth can be defined as a *passio*, a property of the thing, following and confirming the traditional Scholastic definition of it.

It is worth making a final remark, concerning the mind's simple concepts and the simple perceptions of the senses. Indeed, for both of these forms of cognition, the definition of cognitive truth is not valid, since they are simple apprehensions independent of composition or division. The same is true

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<sup>81</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 12.

<sup>82</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 12.

even for composition and division when they are understood as acts of an intellect. According to Suárez, these simples are true in the way in which things are true, that is assuming simple concepts or perceptions or compositions and divisions as beings, which are adequate to their possible concepts or ideas:

in all of them, there is truth in the same way as in the transcendental truth, and it properly consists in the adequation of such a thing to the idea, or relation, which one can make of them; this [happens] even though in sense or in the intellect [the truth] sometimes is explained by the reference (*per ordinem*) to the object, because the object is like the form of the act or of the concept, which from it [the object] takes the species. And often that transcendental truth is explained by intrinsic principles and especially by the form, such as it is called true fatherhood that which terminates with a true son generated by the father, although the formal reason of truth, even in fatherhood itself, consists of the conformity to the intellect<sup>83</sup>.

Hence, in simple things, transcendental truth consists of the adequation of things to their possible concept in a mind. This is true even if they are often explained by referring to their likeness with the object they represent, and of which the intellect constitutes the form by an intellectual act.

## 5. Overview and Conclusions

Because of the length and complexity of Suárez's discussion, it is worth providing a final overview of his account in the guise of a few conclusions.

First, according to Suárez, transcendental truth is a property of things. Such a truth is neither a relation of reason nor a real relation. Rather, it consists intrinsically in imposing the

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<sup>83</sup> *DM*, 8, s. 8, § 13.

adjective “true” upon the very real entity of a thing which is designated true by an intellect, inasmuch as such an entity connotes the cognition or the concept of the intellect, which the entity is adequate to in its extra-mental existence. This complex definition establishes nothing more than that transcendental truth is a property of thing’s entity, in the extent that it is intrinsically related to an intellect that knows it truly.

Suárez’s effort lies in showing that his own account does not reduce transcendental truth to an extrinsic denomination made by the intellect, as Cajetan did. On the one hand, transcendental truth is understood by way of analogy (or, better, by “transposition”) to the truth of cognition, which is the only proper sense of truth and the meaning of which can be extended to things. On the other hand, the reference to the knowing intellect which justifies this imposition is *intrinsic* to a thing’s being, such that this imposition is legitimized by a property belonging to the thing itself. Such a property remains the property of being or can be adequate to an intellect which knows or can know it truly. In short, transcendental truth is the property of a thing to be liable to (actual or possible) true knowledge.

This definition is the very reason why transcendental truth belongs, ultimately, to all *actual* and *real* beings, excluding beings of reason and non-beings. However, much being a thing has, is the same extent to which that thing is true; beings of reason are only true to the extent that they are linguistic objects. Yet, all beings can be known by God’s intellect, whose knowledge grants a foundational level of transcendental truth to all real things. However, the truth founded by the divine mind should not be conceived as an immediate adequation of all possible being or of all being which can exist objectively in the intellect, as if Suárez would have aimed at establishing a metaphysical essentialism grounded in the mind of God. Transcendental truth is linked to a real entity, and it is an intrinsic property of actual beings alone. Thus, there can be

no transcendental truth without the actual and real existence of real beings. Hence, the reference to God's or to the human intellect only grants the property of adequacy to any form of knowledge, and thus the possibility of being "true". The mind of God in no way founds the intrinsic truth of all conceivable entities, which regards cognitive truth instead and whose limits were established by Suárez in the previous sections.

Secondly, transcendental truth does not depend on the truth of cognition, even though the truth of cognition is the primary and proper kind of truth, and even though transcendental truth somehow consists of an extension of its meaning to things. The truth of things belongs to things themselves, judgments, vocal propositions, simple apprehension and terms (which have, insofar as beings, some truth of this kind). Yet, there are two different ways of applying the qualification of 'truth' to an object. The first, which is very improper, is obtained by extending the truth of cognition to beings as they are objectively in the intellect, including beings of reason. According to Suárez, this approach is particularly incompatible with the process of cognition, which requires there to be a prior truth of things in-themselves for them to be true in turn. Thus, transcendental truth of things cannot follow from the truth of cognition, but it must anticipate it, so that the things known by intellect are already somehow true. The second way is, by contrast, that as obtained by the aforementioned transposition of the name 'true' from the truth of cognition to the truth of things. This is, for Suárez, the right way to think of transcendental truth, consisting just in transferring the proper definition, which is that of cognitive truth, to things. The truth of cognition and the truth of things are, hence, in a mutually analogical relationship, which permits the *transposition* of "true" from cognition to things. Despite that, Suárez limits such an analogy to an analogy of proportion, meaning that there is no common form between the two *analogata*.



Properly speaking, this means that the two kinds of truth remain independent forms and not two instances of a broad or universal form of truth; one is not the special instance of the other. Between them, however, one can identify a structural likeness, based upon the fact that both follow from the conformity between things and cognition.

Apart from his own doctrinal choices, it seems evident that Suárez tries to formulate a non-reductive definition of transcendental truth in sections 7 and 8, without anchoring such a conception of truth to exemplars in the mind of God, or without maintaining that truth consists of things existing objectively for the mind. Nevertheless, truth (broadly, and so transcendental truth too) is just an attribution or a connotation, both from the side of cognition and from the side of things. Truth in no way consists of a substance, a real relation or a relation of reason that adds something to the entity of a being. Nor does it consist in the mere cognition of a thing. Truth is a metaphysical, but non-substantial, dimension, generated by the interaction between cognition and things, whose denomination is extended on the basis of a property intrinsic to the things themselves. Things, including mental beings, and the very acts of judging and uttering, are “true” in this way, to the extent that they are possibly knowable by true representations or concepts to which the thing is intrinsically adequate.

Once more, Suárez not only does not dismantle the Aristotelian theory of truth as correspondence, but he even tries to use it in the context of transcendental truth, thereby turning the truth of beings into a legitimate extension of cognitive truth to extra-mental things.



#### 4. *Solo lumine naturae utens*. Suárez and the *ratio angeli*: Remarks on *DM 35, 1-3*<sup>1</sup>

1. Introduction – 2. *Ex rerum multitudine et varietate*: Rational and Cosmological Proofs of the Existence of Angels – 3. *Per conceptus negativos, aut connotativos*: is Man Able to Know Intelligences? – 4. Suárez and the Essence of Angels – 5. Conclusion

##### 1. Introduction

“Toutes les religions ont admis l’existence des anges, quoique la raison naturelle ne la démontre pas”: so writes the abbey Mallet (1713-1755) in his entry for *Ange* in Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*<sup>2</sup>. On the way to dismissing the very idea of a “rational theology”, he effectively codifies the end of a traditional and problematic dialogue, namely, that between natural reason and angelology.

While Mallet considered it impossible for there to be a stable *ratio* for immaterial created substances, as of the late seventeenth century, this was not taken as a foregone conclusion. Until this point, the possibility of a ‘translation’, and thus of an ‘explanation’ in the language of rationality, was considered possible via the notion of a *κόσμος* that was, since the time of

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<sup>1</sup>This essay is an English translation of the chapter (which was originally written in Italian), “*Solo lumine naturae utens*. Suárez e la *ratio angeli*: note su *DM 35, 1-3*”, published in *Francisco Suárez (1548-1617): alle soglie della modernità*, ed. by S. Langella, C. Faraco, Capua, Artetetra, 2019: 83-109.

<sup>2</sup>D’Alembert & Diderot, *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* [ed. 1751-1772], I: 458-459.

the Middle Ages, conceived as the mark of a structural coexistence between the natural and the supernatural<sup>3</sup>.

As is well-known, ‘natural reason’ played an auxiliary role at the crossroads of this debate; namely, that of explaining the truths of faith. However, such a task did not exclude the possibility of engaging in an autonomous metaphysical debate, which attempted to undertake a rational investigation about these truths, or at least, to articulate their intangibility to man. Thus in twelfth-century thought already, those two registers, theological and rational, constituted two independent paths towards the same conclusions.

The case of angelology is emblematic of such a relationship, starting especially from the great Medieval synthesis of the Schools. This tradition inherited and enhanced the overlap between the theological notion of the ‘angel’ and the metaphysical notion of a ‘separate substance’ or ‘intelligence’. The latter notion played an important role of cosmological and ontological mediation in Greek metaphysics, especially in the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic-Dyonisian traditions. Thus, while Angels were seen as a theological mystery, they also played an important role in the cosmological order to which our reason can access by way of its own powers, and the existence of which was almost grasped already in Pagan thought.

Thirteenth-century thought, especially that of Aquinas<sup>4</sup>, was heavily influenced by the work of Peter Lombard in this respect<sup>5</sup>, which thereby led to a rethinking of the whole tra-

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<sup>3</sup> Within the extensive secondary literature on the continuity between the natural and the supernatural in Catholic Reformation thought – an issue closely linked with the dispute *de auxiliis* and the debate between the schools of Bañez and Molina – see especially Vansteenbergh 1929, de Lubac 1946 and 1965. See also Esposito 2020.

<sup>4</sup> For more on Aquinas’ angelology, see especially Faes de Mottoni and Suarez-Nani 2002. Suarez-Nani 2002a-b and 2005; but see also Vernier 1986 and Klünker 1989. I take the liberty to also mention the remarks I made in Guidi 2018: 41-110.

<sup>5</sup> Petrus Lombardus, *Quatuor libri Sententiarum*, [ed. 1855], II, ch. 4, § 1:

dition of Scholastic angelology in the context of the larger doctrine of “intellective substances”. Aquinas’ approach to this matter – passing through the opposition of the Scotists and the Nominalists and through the major Dominican commentators – left an indelible impression on sixteenth and seventeenth-century philosophy through his conception of angels. On the one hand, he understood angels to be those creatures which are cosmologically necessary for the highest goodness, perfection and rationality of created reality<sup>6</sup>, and as intellective, immaterial creatures, play the role of an intermediate element between the monolithic unity of God’s rationality and immateriality and the multiplicity of the human intellects, individuated by the bodies; on the other hand, they are ministers of God’s goodness, spontaneously tending (as Peter Lombard already claimed) to the realization of the good<sup>7</sup>, appointed<sup>8</sup> for protecting and maintaining that very order, simultaneously good and rational, in the created world.

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“Therefore, the rational creature has been made. And because its existence, which takes part in blessedness, is not worth any if not for its intelligence, whereby as much one understands, as much it has a full existence, God made the rational creature, which will understand the supreme good and, understanding, it will love and in loving it will possess it, and in possessing it, will enjoy it”.

<sup>6</sup> *CG*, II, ch. 46 and *ST*, I, q. 50, art. 1, *resp.*

<sup>7</sup> Petrus Lombardus, *Quatuor libri Sententiarum* [ed. 1855], II ch. 4, § 5: “Thus, since it is asked how or for what the rational creature is made, one can reply very briefly: according to God’s goodness and his usefulness. It is truly useful to them to serve God and to enjoy him. Therefore, the angel or man is said to be made for God: not because the Creator, God and supremely blessed, would need the office of either of them, since He is not lacking in goodness; but to serve Him and enjoy him, serving which is to reign. Indeed, in this the servant is the one who is accomplished, not the one who is served”. See Aquinas’ equivalent passage in *ST*, I, q. 59, art. 1, *resp.*

<sup>8</sup> *CG*, II, ch. 46, § 4: “in order that creatures might perfectly represent divine goodness, it was necessary, as we have shown, not only that good things should be made, but also that they should contribute to the goodness of other things by their actions. But a thing is perfectly likened to another in its operation when not only the action is of the same specific nature, but also the

In the modern age, Aquinas' work was inherited especially by Suárez and two of his most famous opponents, Domingo Bañez<sup>9</sup> and Gabriel Vázquez<sup>10</sup>, who are main characters in the last great cycle of angelological debate in the Schools. This final attempt that – in opposition to Mallet's remark, which represented a widespread and common tendency in the late-seventeenth century – was broadly defined in its effort to provide a rational account of angels, even if within the limits of the *raison naturelle*. Suárez's effort thus repeats and elaborates upon Aquinas' framework just a few decades before the debate over “separate intellective substances” was definitively substituted for that of *res cogitantes* and monads<sup>11</sup>, and was later archived under the label of “dogmatic theology”.

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mode of acting is the same. Consequently, the highest perfection of things required the existence of some creatures that act in the same way as God. But it has already been shown that God acts by intellect and will. It was therefore necessary for some creatures to have intellect and will” and 7: “in all things becoming ordered, the relation of the first to the last via the things intermediate between them imitates the relation of the first to all the others, both intermediate and last, though sometimes deficiently. Now, it has been shown in Book 1 that God embraces all creatures in Himself. And in corporeal creatures, there is a representation of this, although in another mode. For we find that the higher body always comprises and contains the lower, yet according to quantitative extension, whereas God contains all creatures in a simple mode, and not by extension of quantity. Hence, in order that the imitation of God, in this mode of containing, might not be lacking to creatures, intellectual creatures were made which contain corporeal creatures, not by quantitative extension, but in simple fashion, intelligibly; for what is intellectually known exists in the knowing subject, and is contained by his intellectual operation” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1975).

<sup>9</sup> See Domingo Bañez's *Commentaria in primam partem angelici doctoris D. Thomae* [ed. 1591], col. 701-994.

<sup>10</sup> See especially Gabriel Vázquez's mighty treatise on *De angelis*, in *Commentariorum in primam partem S. Thomae* [ed. 1598]: 367-659.

<sup>11</sup> Several studies tried, in recent times, to reconnect the angelological debate to the genesis of some specific and important topics of Early Modern thought. See especially Schmutz 2002, Scribano 2006, Geretto 2010, Guidi 2018.

Suárez's primary attempt to rethink angelology can be found in the *De Angelis*. This work is a mighty commentary on the *prima pars* of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (qq. 50-64) which Suárez left to his colleagues after his years in Coimbra (1597-1607), and which was published posthumously in Lyon in 1620. The composition of the text is somewhat stratified and it includes many references to the *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, but Suárez most likely already started writing it during his years of teaching in Spain and Italy (1575-1597), before 1597.

Because of its Thomistic inspiration, the *De angelis* is a fundamentally theological and doctrinal work, the metaphysical core of which is independently treated in the *DM* 35, entitled *De immateriali substantia creata*. In this context, which is eminently theoretical, Suárez grapples with the most important *quaestiones* concerning angels under a metaphysical point of view, therein offering one of the most interesting overviews of early modern angelology.

In the following pages, I will refer especially to the *DM* 35, a more synthetic and peculiar work, with some reference to *De Angelis* as well. I will focus especially on sections 1-3 of *DM* 35, and try to reconstruct Suárez's views on the following points: *a*) the cosmological necessity of angels, their rational demonstrability and the possibility of man's knowing them (sections 1-2); *b*) the immaterial essence of angels (section 3).

## **2. *Ex rerum multitudine et varietate*: Rational and Cosmological Proofs of the Existence of Angels**

The great peculiarity of *DM* 35 is obvious at first glance. Here, Suárez confirms the strictly metaphysical approach of his investigation, by openly signaling his aim to dedicate a "brief and concise" treatment to the issue, by drawing only from those things which the "human mind [*ingenium*], using

only its natural light, can investigate of these substances [...] from natural principles and effects”, namely: 1) if there are angels; 2) what angels are and 3) what their essential properties, causes and effects are:

Theologians disputed extensively incorporeal substances under the name of angels; here we actually do not pursue at everything said by them, nor do we want to precipitate a long-winded disputation, but a brief and concise one, dealing just with those things which the human mind, using only his natural light, can investigate of these substances, namely, if they are, what they are and which features and causes or effects they have<sup>12</sup>.

Thus, in the Scholastic context, such a limitation separates the angelological issue from both its biblical roots and – because of Suárez’s peculiar and well-known approach – frames the commentary around Aristotle’s texts. Hence, *DM* 35 is – as Suárez himself indicates – a treatise which focuses on and frames the question about “separate substances” as a wholly metaphysical problem, in a way that was traditionally only associated with Neoplatonism<sup>13</sup>, but that is also in accordance with the Jesuits’ *Ratio Studiorum*<sup>14</sup>.

This does not mean, however, that Suárez quickly disposed of traditional Scholastic tools. Rather, he reappropriated them

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<sup>12</sup> *DM*, 35, *Proemium*. This passage is comparable with *De Ang.*, *Proemium*, p. XII, § 1: “The disputation about spiritual creatures, considered by itself, pertains to natural theology or metaphysics, whose *proprium* is in those things which in their being (*esse*) are abstracted from matter”. Suárez defines such a metaphysical perspective as lower, as opposed to the “higher way” of theology.

<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting, though, how Suárez appropriates some elements from the Platonic tradition, particularly Ficino’s Commentary on Plato’s *Banquet*, which can be found in *De Ang.*, I, *Proemium*: XII, § 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Jesu* [ed. 1965]: “It is not a duty of the theologian, but of the metaphysician, to explain whether angels and heaven are necessary and immutable beings” (*Catalogus aliquot quaestionum ex prima parte Sancti Thomae*, ad q. 9).



to an investigation which was in part, eccentric with respect to the tradition, while also being in continuity with it. Even if subjected to the “razor” of the *Disputations*, Suárez’s answer to the the first, pivotal question still recuperates Aquinas’ framework – especially that of the *Contra Gentiles*<sup>15</sup>, which was placed in a theological context but still tried to rationally motivate the need of angels on the basis of the perfection of the universe – and Aristotle’s approach, according to whom celestial movers had been widely identified with biblical angels by the Scholastics.

Therefore, although they had different aims, both Aquinas and Aristotle conceived the rational approach to separate substances as an attempt to explain and clarify the truth of faith or of a cosmological hypothesis, keeping in mind the passage from *Metaphysics* *α* that forbids access to the quiddity of immaterial substances to human intellect<sup>16</sup>. But just from the extra-rational certainty of the existence of angels, reason can explain the latter,

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<sup>15</sup> *CG*, II, ch. 46.

<sup>16</sup> *Metaph. α*, 993b: “as difficulties are of two kinds, the cause of the present difficulty is not in the facts but in us. For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all” (trans. Aristotle 1984-1985). This text is the source of a crucial Scholastic debate on the possibilities of human knowledge. According to Aquinas (*In Met.*, II, 2), the two kinds of “difficulty” of which Aristotle speaks are the limitations of our access to the intelligibility of the things themselves, in the case of potential or imperfect beings, and the limited powers of the intellect to cognize separate substances. By contrast, Scotus (*Sc. Met.*, q. 2, e q. 3, §§ 26-27) follows Averroes’ lesson, according to which the deficiency of human intellect in both respects impedes the right conditions. Among the Jesuits of the sixteenth-century especially Fonseca, before Suárez, discusses this issue (see *CMA*, I, bk. 2, ch. 1 q. 1, s. 3), defending more or less Aquinas’ account, but also establishing the existence of a category, that of material beings, which from the point of view of the confused cognition (a view which is opposed by Suárez in *DM*, 9, s. 3, § 6) is fully knowable without obstacles by man. However, Suárez (*DM*, 9, s. 3) also defends the thomistic idea of a twofold cause of the difficulty, emphasizing that the human intellect is incapable, by itself, to know separate substances.

accounting for how it happens. Suárez's ambition, however, at least in the *Disputations*, is different. By an approach which was not taken up by his contemporaries or by posterity<sup>17</sup> he tries to show that the existence of angels is not only rationally explicable, but fully demonstrable *a priori*. Accordingly, human reason is capable of constructing a *ratio angeli* which is independent from that of theology. A position which, however, must take into account the structural limits imposed by the Schools to human reason; limits which force Suárez's investigation to a demonstration which is fully metaphysical, but also developed in an elliptical and progressive way.

Considering the Jesuit's arguments in detail, one will come to see how Suárez's "metaphysical machine" actually works, especially by identifying his demonstration for the idea that angels are at least *possible*.

The first, entirely *a priori*, reason, according to which angels are possible creatures and effects, states that "they are not self-contradictory from the side of the thing; nor [they are self-contradictory] from the side of the efficient cause that their potentiality could be lacking". This possibility is associated with the *probability* of the existence of angels, since immaterial substances, Suárez argues, are "more possible" than material ones. Indeed, an efficient cause "aims at assimilating its own effect within itself; from which it follows that the effect is more similar to the cause, as it is more apt to be constituted by it". But, since God is a spiritual substance, "it is more possible in some way, and more suitable to the cause, that

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<sup>17</sup> The possibility of a demonstration *ratione naturali solam* of the existence of angels is denied by, for instance, Rodericus de Arriaga, *Disputationes Theologicae in primam partem Divi Thomae* [ed. 1643], II, d. 1, s. 5: 5, and by Nicolas Ysambert, *Disputationes in primam partem S. Thomae* [ed. 1643], d. 50, art. 2, § 8: 464-466. Likewise, by Franciscus de Araújo, *Commentariorum in primam partem Divum Thomae*, [ed. 1647], II, q. 50, art. 1: 394. Suárez's own view, then, is openly opposed by Petrus Hurtado de Mendoza, *Universa Philosophia* [ed. 1624], III, d. 12, s. 2: 873.

from such a cause come immaterial substances, rather than material ones”<sup>18</sup>. According to this very paradigm, then, these substances must be finite, given that an infinite substance – which would constitute the more proximate effect to such a cause – is not causally producible<sup>19</sup>.

Conversely, the second *ratio* follows from effects, specifically from the spiritual nature of our rational soul. Even though the soul is an incomplete immaterial substance because of its tie to matter and function as *forma hominis*<sup>20</sup>, the very existence of the soul shows the possibility of the existence of more perfect immaterial substances. In the rational soul, one does indeed find, *inchoatus*, the entire order of immaterial substances, and this becomes all the more clear “from the operation of thinking or reasoning”. If the intellectual operation of the rational soul is there in an imperfect way, i.e. mixed with the lower functions of the soul, “it is not contradictory” the possible existence of substances in which intelligence is more perfect and independent from the *consortio corporis*, thus being more complete in its own genus<sup>21</sup>.

Such two orders of reasons prove that it is at least *possible* “for natural reason” to demonstrate the existence of immaterial created substances, in accordance with, as Suárez explains, Aquinas’ argument in his *Contra Gentiles* and in the *Summa*. For Suárez, it is especially possible to accept Aquinas’ proof presented in the *Contra Gentiles*, which the Jesuit considers “at the maximum grade *a priori*”. As established by the previous *ratio a priori*, the perfection of the Universe implies the likeness with its cause, God, and thus He would have created some intellectual substances which look like him in this respect. Also,

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<sup>18</sup> *DM*, 35, 1, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *DM*, 35, 1, 3.

<sup>20</sup> On Suárez’s account of the soul as the form of the body, see Des Chene 2000a; South 2015, Guidi 2019a.

<sup>21</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 4.

from a perfect, supremely good and omnipotent cause, perfect effects will follow. Thus, since God himself aimed at showing his perfection by creating the world, he provided it with a specific order and a plurality of degrees, including angels. Moreover, such a proof is compatible with God's freedom in creation, because, "presupposing the possibility of the effect", it serves as a reason for God's actualization of such creatures<sup>22</sup>.

In a set of replies to the following objections, Suárez explains some of the crucial aspects of his proofs. First, he argues that degrees of perfection to which he refers are not those of God, but rather of natural beings, among which the genus of intellectual beings is higher, because they more closely imitate God "in the supreme degree of life".

An interesting element in this discussion, then, is that the proof for the existence of angels – which, already in Aquinas, followed the model of the fourth and fifth of his *viae* for the demonstration of God's existence<sup>23</sup> – is shaped by Suárez (through a quote from Cajetan) according to a structure which is analogous to Aquinas' "first way". The "perfection of the universe which follows from the degrees of things", cannot involve any infinite regress, and it must come "to a supreme [degree], which among natural [things] is the intellectual degree"<sup>24</sup>. Thus, for the divine will that realizes a specific order, immaterial created substances are contingent, they are absolutely necessary for the fulfillment of that order.

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<sup>22</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 5. The cosmological and metaphysical "necessity" of angels, which derives from the very nature of God, was already sketched by Aquinas in *CG*, II, ch. 46, 2 ("cum igitur intellectus Dei creaturarum productionis principium sit, ut supra ostensum est, necesse fuit ad creaturarum perfectionem quod aliquae creaturae essent intelligentes"); Aquinas himself, in *ST*, I, 61, art. 1 and especially in art. 2, ad. 1, points out that divine will is not compelled by or towards any specific nature in the act of creation. On this point, see Porro 2015: 146-150, and Wippel 1990.

<sup>23</sup> *ST*, I, q. 2, art. 3, *resp.*

<sup>24</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 7.

One relevant objection to which Suárez must reply, then, proceeds as follows: in angels, “divine perfection is imitated to the maximum”; so, why did God also create *other* beings, i.e. material ones? According to Suárez, the imitation of divine perfection cannot just be realized on the level of intellect. If creation was restricted to intellection – which Suárez explains by a duo of terms introduced by Cajetan and which were famously employed by Galilei<sup>25</sup> – the world itself would be an *intensive* similitude (*intensivam*: namely, in the same subject), which one could not observe in created reality. By contrast, we observe an almost *extensive* similitude (*extensivam*, namely in the multiplicity of subjects), based on the possible variety from a quantitative point of view. Reaching his metaphysical apex, Suárez remarks that

because no creature is by itself sufficient to represent God, it needs a perfect universe to be instituted as an effect which comes adequately from God, in order that this representation at least provides for the plurality and variety of things, insofar as this can be done, or rather according to the order of divine wisdom. Indeed, although the more perfect thing, by itself, represents God more perfectly, it often happens that a less perfect thing, in another way, or according to a distinct perfection, represents God<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> See Galilei 1967: 103: “to answer the objection it is best to have recourse to a philosophical distinction and to say that the human understanding can be taken in two modes, the *intensive* or the *extensive*. *Extensively*, that is, with regard to the multitude of intelligibles, which are infinite, the human understanding is as nothing even if it understands a thousand propositions; for a thousand in relation to infinity is zero. But taking man’s understanding *intensively*, in so far as this term denotes understanding some proposition perfectly, I say that the human intellect does understand some of them perfectly, and thus in these it has as much absolute certainty as Nature itself has” (trans. Galilei 1967). The *intensive/extensive* duo had been already implied, in such a way, by Cajetan in his Commentary on Aquinas’ *De Ente et Essentia* [ed. 1934], ch. 6, q. 15, § 127, and reprised by Fonseca (*CMA*, I, bk. 2, ch. 1, q. 2, s. 7).

<sup>26</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 8.

Since it is impossible to adequately imitate God's infinity solely on the level of intellection (this seems to be an important point of divergence between Suárez and Aquinas' *Contra Gentiles*), the created universe takes the most variegated and plural form it possibly can, setting itself within an order which precisely imitates that of the divine science.

Starting from a further objection, Suárez states an important cosmological principle which he attributes to Aquinas<sup>27</sup>; that for which, in the scale of the intellectual substances, angels play the role of linking the supreme intellectuality of God and that of man. Still in this case, the hierarchy of intellects must be placed in a larger scale of creatures, which also includes the segments of vegetative and sensitive beings, which by themselves prove the existence of a vertical order of creation<sup>28</sup>.

One last comment allows Suárez to make another crucial remark. He maintains that angels are, in fact, not necessary to uphold the perfection of the *theological* order of reality (*gratiae et gloriae*), but rather, for the benefit of the *natural* order. For the Spanish Jesuit, angels are indeed immaterial but

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<sup>27</sup> The idea that angels' immateriality is the intermediate element between created bodily substances and the uncreated spiritual substance of God, does not seem to be openly formulated by Aquinas, if not in the already mentioned way of *CG*, II, ch. 46, § 7. However, this fits with the synthesis that Aquinas provides of the conciliar provision of 1215 (v. *Concilium Lateranense IV, Constitutiones*, 1. *De fide catholica*, in Alberigo *et alii* [ed. 1962]: 206) and of the pseudo-Aristotelian heritage of the *Liber de causis* (see especially § 2, ll. 7-9), already in the *Scriptum super Sententiis*, III, *Proemium*, when he defined man, a being in the middle between the spiritual forms and the material forms as "almost an horizon and a boundary between the spiritual and the corporal natura, as an almost-intermediary between both the two". Suárez also makes the argument for the perfection of creation, with an open reference to Aquinas, in *De Ang.*, I, ch. 3, § 17, and in which he also reports the provision from the Fourth Lateran Council – against Silvestri and Vázquez –, according to which (notably the second) Church has no resources for determining when angels were created – in *De Ang.*, I, ch. 3, § 12.

<sup>28</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 9.

they are also natural creatures, whose existence and actions cannot influence the greater or lesser perfection of the order which is the “over all order of nature”, i.e. Grace<sup>29</sup>.

In the subsequent paragraphs, Suárez deals with the second order of natural reasons for believing in the existence of angels via the openly Aristotelian argument<sup>30</sup> for celestial movers. According to Suárez, this proof “is not a demonstration” but rather “a probable conjecture”<sup>31</sup>. From celestial motion alone, one can infer that the heavens should be moved by a mover which is distinct “from heaven itself” and “from God”. Such a view, however, is compromised by the possibility (already formulated by ancient Philosophers) that the heavens are animated<sup>32</sup>, and thus the possibility of an *intrinsic* cause of motion that would make angels’ cosmological function wholly superfluous. For Suárez, who implies a classic argument, the motion of the heavens does not attest to any “action of life”, but rather to an ‘extrinsic’ relationship between the movers and the moved, which allows us to exclude such a thesis<sup>33</sup>.

Likewise (and this is especially interesting for the connections between theology and physics) we can exclude the possi-

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<sup>29</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 10.

<sup>30</sup> The reprise of Jewish angelology in the context of Aristotelian metaphysics was made possible especially by the famous discussion of *Metaph. A*, ch. 8, 1073a14-1074b14, wherein Aristotle argues for the existence of a multiplicity of super-sensible substances which he considers responsible for the movement of celestial spheres.

<sup>31</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 13.

<sup>32</sup> In the Scholastic context, the possibility of the heavens being intrinsically animated (an idea which will feature prominently in Renaissance natural philosophy) was widely discussed, but mostly rejected. In the Middle Ages, some of the high points of this debate include Bonaventure’s Commentary on the *Sentences* (II, d. 14, pt. 1, art. 3, q. 2) and Aquinas’ *Responsio ad lectorem Venetum*, i. e. a collection of sentences which he composed as a reply to a consultation he received from John of Vercelli, together with Albert the Great and Robert Kilwardby. See also *ST*, I, q. 70, art. 3.

<sup>33</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 15.

bility that the heavens are moved by an “innate impetus”, similar to that which pushes heavenly bodies downward<sup>34</sup>, or that the generating cause impresses on the generated. Suárez – who lacks modern concepts such as ‘mass’ or ‘gravity’ and touches but does not grasp a premonition of the Newtonian model – denies such a possibility. This detail is, once again, rooted in an argument by Aquinas<sup>35</sup>, according to which the circular motion of the heavens does not change (thus, in the Aristotelian meaning, it does not increase or decrease) the heavens themselves. Nevertheless, motion is “necessary, or useful or intrinsic” only if it happens “in view of a term”; that is, for a local movement which, in the case of heavens, happens only for their *parts* and never for the heavens themselves. Hence, celestial motion does not happen “for itself” but rather “for the action of it, namely as it is applied to act in different places or bodies”. Such an action is thus not designed to improve or enhance the heavens. Rather, it is part and parcel of the universe which is constantly influenced by such movement. This explains why the heavens cannot have an *intrinsic* tendency towards such a movement and why they need “need an extrinsic mover”<sup>36</sup>.

Despite that, a group of questions remains in order to explain: *a*) why God did not impress upon the movement of the heavens by “creating and giving the heavens themselves any quality such as an impetus from the beginning” and *b*) why God does not impress such a perpetual movement with the same continuous action by which he creates and sustains the world; moreover, even admitting that God “wanted the heavens not to be moved by Himself, but by the office of some intelligences”, why are these intelligences a *plurality* and not simply *one*?

According to Suárez, no explanation can be found in the order of creation. Although God is the efficient cause of such

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<sup>34</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 16.

<sup>35</sup> *CG*, III, ch. 23 e *CG*, IV, ch. 97. See also *Quaest. De Pot.*, q. 5, art. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 17.



a movement, “it is not appropriate to His providence” to deal with motion directly, and is rather, much more appropriate for him to appoint “some creatures subject to Him”<sup>37</sup> to carry out such a task. Thus, these reasons would exclude God from assigning Himself the task of moving the prime mover<sup>38</sup>, whereas the multiplicity of intelligences is explained by the need of an exclusive relationship of each one with their heavens. Indeed, angels exercise upon his heaven “not only motion, but also an influence, or better a proper and inner property and perpetuity” so that “one intelligence cannot be joined if not by a single heaven”<sup>39</sup>.

### **3. *Per conceptus negativos, aut connotativos:* is Man Able to Know Intelligences?**

Once having shown that there are indeed angels, Suárez’s investigation proceeds – according to a traditional Scholastic conceptual path – by trying to establish whether and what our natural reason can know “in this life” about separate substances. One issue which was widely discussed in the Schools, and which took its inspiration from *Metaphysics α*, is that for a soul in a body, it is impossible to quidditatively know angels<sup>40</sup>.

However, as Suárez argues, we can “in some way determine their [angels’] quiddity by negative, connotative, or confused concepts”<sup>41</sup>. Before Suárez, several theologians, albeit with different arguments, agreed with such a possibility, as they converged on the idea that quidditative cognition could be grounded in a confused or negative concept. The roots of such

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<sup>37</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 19. Likewise also *De Ang.*, I, ch. 1, § 8.

<sup>38</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 20.

<sup>39</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 21.

<sup>40</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 2, § 2.

<sup>41</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 2, § 3.

a position could already be found in Scotus<sup>42</sup>, according to which quidditative knowledge could not be achieved through the adequate knowledge of a single quidditative predicate that disregarded all the others. The Thomists, especially Cajetan<sup>43</sup>, sought to find an alternative to Scotus, who had himself focused on the distinction between *cognoscere quidditatem rei* and *cognoscere rem quidditative*. Suárez then appropriated this distinction in the *DM* 30 in order to provide an *a priori* demonstration of God's existence<sup>44</sup>. Indeed, according to Cajetan, even if we do not have quidditative cognition of a *res*, we can still know its quiddity starting from complete knowledge of its essential predicates (genus, species, specific difference, etc.).

In the Jesuit *milieu*, this position was widely defended, especially by Fonseca, who remarked on the distinction between quidditative *cognition* and the *comprehension* of such quiddity<sup>45</sup>. Indeed, we can confusedly rebuild the quiddity of separate substances – including God, to which fully negative cognition is applied – without comprehending this quiddity in a complete manner. However, for Fonseca, three fundamental conclusions can be drawn: *a*) in this life, we know many more predicates of God than we do of angels, as we

<sup>42</sup> *Or.*, I, d. 3, q. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Cajetanus, *Summa Theologiae cum supplemento et commentariis Caietani* [ed. 1888-1906], I, q. 88, art. 3, § 4 and Cajetanus, *In De ente et essentia commentaria* [ed. 1934], ch. 6, q. 15, § 124: 196. On this important issue, see especially Agostini 2016: 276-281.

<sup>44</sup> On this point, see Agostini 2016: 339-355.

<sup>45</sup> *CMA*, I, bk. 2, ch. 1., q. 2, s. 1: 312: “even if all comprehensive cognition is quidditative, not all quidditative cognition is comprehensive; because, it only comprehends what is known inasmuch as it is knowable; and it can happen that even if we know all quidditative beings, we do not yet entirely grasp its meaning (*potestatem*) and, so to speak, we penetrate it; in this way, although all Blessed souls quidditatively know the divine essence, created intellects never comprehend it, such that [intellects] do not entirely penetrate its virtue; that is, they do not perceive all to which they extend their power and ability”.

only legitimately know that they are substances and that they are immaterial; *b*) angels' quidditative predicates are, however, known much better than those of God, which we can attain only negatively and analogically; *c*) among the two knowable predicates of God, we can only quidditatively know their substantiality, given that the attribute of incorporeity is, at least in this time, entirely precluded<sup>46</sup>.

As I will show, Suárez aligns himself with Fonseca's denials, by upholding the impossibility of knowing anything about separate substances. On the other hand, however, he tries to bypass these limits in the attempt to build a rational science of angels. As Suárez himself points out, in continuity with his claims in *DM* 9<sup>47</sup>, we take the 'indirect' way since we depend upon material representations and lack any natural principle by which we can approach angels<sup>48</sup>. Similarly, we neither have any natural experience "from the power of whose effects we can probably know that those substances exist, even confusedly and in common". Thus, the Jesuit asks as follows: "how can we know their [angels'] quiddities via effects to determine their proper differences?"<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> *CMA*, I, bk. 2, ch. 1., q. 2, s. 5: 321-322. It should be noted that Fonseca opposes (324-327) a widespread Scholastic thesis, according to which we can deduce a concept of immateriality starting from our own soul. This doctrine, which, as stated above, Suárez reorganized and reprised in the proof *ex effectibus* of the possibility of angels, was defended especially by Cajetan (*In De ente et essentia commentaria* [ed. 1934], ch. 6, q. 15).

<sup>47</sup> See *DM*, 9, s. 3. Here Suárez defends the possibility, for the soul *corpori unita*, of knowing separate substances, ascribing the origin of such a *difficultas* to the dependency of the soul on material *species*. Such dependency, though, is not conceived as an original structural deficiency of our intellect as it was for Aquinas, but rather as an irresistible cognitive preeminence, which darkens and inhibits the possible cognition of separate substances. Indeed, by its own nature, the soul is more directly and easily impressed by material beings, which are less knowable by themselves, and this distracts it from the cognition of immaterial forms.

<sup>48</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 2, § 3.

<sup>49</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 2, § 4.

The paradoxical situation of the *scientia de angelis* also lies in the fact that while we at least know some effects of God (which is itself incomprehensible) to trace quidditative representations, in the case of angels “in nature there is no [...] effect depending on any immaterial substance which cannot be done by another, more perfectly, or less”<sup>50</sup>. This issue, then, converges on a classic Scholastic topic; namely, that of the soul in its status of separation. Indeed, if the latter, as all theologians say, can quidditatively know (though not understand) angels, why can such cognition not also happen when the soul is united to the body?<sup>51</sup>

Suárez solves such a dilemma by recalling the classic Scholastic principle of *unibility*, understood in a philo-Scotistic way<sup>52</sup>. According to this notion, as a form of the body, the soul is an immaterial substance that is essentially imperfect, which needs the body as an instrument for acquiring informations. Accordingly, when all bonds with the body are broken, such an imperfection does not cease to exist, although the dependence upon the body disappears for the “influence of a

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<sup>50</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 2, § 4. Such a claim is indeed the continuation of what Suárez argues in *DM*, 1, s. 5, § 27: “That one thing can be different from another can be understood in two ways, namely by perfection or entity, and by causality or connection of the cause and the effect. In the first way God is more different from material things than from created spirits; instead, in the secondary way the created spirit is more different from all created beings than from God. Indeed, [created spirits] all essentially depend on God, not on other spirits, and, taken by themselves, all imitate God, and have in themselves some likenesses and traces of Him; from this results in any similitude or convenience [of God] with angels is actually secondary and accidental. Therefore, because we ascend to contemplate separate substances from sensible things, not considered in whatever way, but as effects, it follows that, naturally, we achieve a more certain cognition of God than of angels”.

<sup>51</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 2, § 6.

<sup>52</sup> Again, see Guidi 2018: 130-158 and 2019a, for a deeper discussion of the strong Scotistic inheritances that can be found in Suárez’s interpretation of the Scholastic principle of the *unibilitas*.

higher cause”, that is for the action of God, who compensates for the absence of *species* achieved by the senses with “more immaterial species”<sup>53</sup>.

Thus arises the following question: what of created immaterial substances are we allowed to know in this life? Suárez’s solution is that, despite the essential limits of the soul, we are able to know their quiddity, being that “at least in common, we understand that they are possible, and even that they can actually exist”. Moreover – and here Suárez employs all the implications of the new Scholastic instruments – we understand that such substances “are similar to God in the complete intellectual and spiritual degree: but this is, to some extent, to know their quiddity”<sup>54</sup>.

Despite this ‘epistemological’ acknowledgement, the structural incapability of the human intellect to achieve any quidditative comprehension of immaterial substances is and remains the same, also in the context of the supernatural knowledge of blessed souls. Also in this case, quidditative cognition of angels “is not possible for man via his nature”. However, if one talks of “imperfect cognition” or of “quidditative cognition”

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<sup>53</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 2, § 7.

<sup>54</sup> It is noteworthy that Suárez does not deduce the intellectuality of angels from the soul – which is impossible, *in haec vita*, to quidditatively grasp – but from the intellectuality of God. Likewise, even if with remarkable differences, in his *Third Meditation*, Descartes would also argue for the possibly factitious nature of the ideas of men, animals or angels as ideas that one can compose *a priori* – therefore, as simple *possibilia* – starting from the ideas that the mind has of itself, of material beings and of God: “As far as concerns the ideas which represent other men, or animals, or angels, I have no difficulty in understanding that they could be put together from the ideas I have of myself, of corporeal things and of God, even if the world contained no men besides me, no animals and no angels” (*AT*, VII: 43; *CMS*, II: 29). It must be noticed that the mind, at this stage, still does not *distinctly* know the immaterial essence of thought (see Guidi 2018: 320-333). Despite that, the mind can come up with the idea of an entirely intellectual creature, i.e. the angel, thanks entirely to the *idea Dei*.

in the aforementioned sense, it is all the same for our soul, whether it is united or separated from the body<sup>55</sup>.

#### 4. Suárez and the Essence of Angels

In the *sectio tertia*, Suárez's analysis moves towards the problem of the essence of angels, as they are known by natural reason. Here Suárez, having established the *an est* of angels, tries to build a conceptual representation of their essences, however unattainable they may be for man directly.

The first assumption, which is ontological, allows for the possibility of knowing *naturaliter* that such intelligences are “real beings, existing by themselves and accordingly that they are substances”<sup>56</sup>. There remains, however, a doctrinal dilemma concerning this thesis. On the one hand, Scotus claims<sup>57</sup> that we can quidditatively know that intelligences are *beings*, whereas a quidditative definition of them as *substances* is precluded for us. On the other hand, others (for instance Fonseca) argue that the concept of being can never be known quidditatively by human intellect, whereas that of substances can be<sup>58</sup>.

According to Suárez this is, first of all, a false problem, since we do not have any knowledge that is authentically quidditative, properly speaking, but rather, confused knowledge of quiddity “by negation”<sup>59</sup>. With respect to a being, we know that it is *id quod est*, but we never know quidditatively what it is. Likewise, we do not achieve quidditative knowledge of material substance, “which is more proportioned to us”; therefore, why one should be surprised about the impossibility of knowing immaterial substances?<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 2, § 9.

<sup>56</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 1.

<sup>57</sup> *Or.*, I, d. 3, q. 1.

<sup>58</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 2.

<sup>59</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 3.

<sup>60</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 4-5.

Despite the fact that we are forced to think by supposition, angelology cannot establish two fundamental assumptions by the use of reason, namely that angels are intellective creatures and that they altogether lack matter. The latter point can be proven, for Suárez, in two ways: on the one hand, the cosmological position of angels includes their placement above man and a more perfect essence than that of worldly beings<sup>61</sup>; on the other hand, their participation in divine perfection requires that *quantitas molis*, which determines bodily extension, is not at all included in their essence<sup>62</sup>. In no way – Suárez claims this in seven paragraphs<sup>63</sup> aimed at clarifying a long-standing Patristic issue<sup>64</sup> – are angels corporeal<sup>65</sup>. Nevertheless, as is well-known, they can occupy shell-bodies which would explain many different occurrences in the Bible<sup>66</sup>. Regarding the first point, i.e.

<sup>61</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 7.

<sup>62</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 8. On the (impossible) relationship between angels and the so-called *quantitas molis*, and with reference to the discussion on the latter issue in *DM*, 13, see also Suárez's remarks in *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 16: "From this part of the conclusion another attribute of intelligences can be deduced, namely, that angels are immaterial, i.e. not composed of matter, or from actually distinct essential parts, of which one can be the potency and the other the substantial act. Such an assumption is consistent with another principle, which is proven by the *DM* 13, namely that this composition is not found if not in quantitative and corporeal things; since, therefore, angels have been shown to not have either any bulk (*quantitas molis*) or extension of parts, it is rightly concluded that they are immaterial".

<sup>63</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, §§ 10-16.

<sup>64</sup> A constant polemic target, which finds a crucial formulation in *ST*, I, q. 50, art. 1, *resp.*, is the position of the Sadducees (*Mt*, 22, 23 and ff.; *Mt*, 22, 18 e ss; *Lc*, 20, 27 and ff.), who were guilty of having refused the existence of immaterial substances. Regarding the possibility that angels would be naturally joined to bodies, and thus that they are composite substances, the most important Patristic views are revived and discussed in *ST*, I, q. 51, art. 1. Cfr. *De Ang.*, I, ch. 1, § 1.

<sup>65</sup> In the Scholastic tradition, angels' corporeity is a widely discussed issue. Regarding discussions of this matter in the Early Modern Age, see especially Hallacker 2008.

<sup>66</sup> The possibility that angels could assume aerial bodies is discussed in *ST*,

angels' intellectuality, Suárez defends another ancient Scholastic assumption, namely the conceptual 'convertibility' of intelligence and immateriality. To this aim, he again emphasizes that the perfect order of angels requires that their intellectual functions take place on a level which is immanent to the substance itself and entirely within the spiritual domain<sup>67</sup>.

At the same time, Suárez revives the idea from Capreolus that immateriality is the *ratio* of intellectuality not as an essential specific difference, but *radicaliter*. Actually, intellectuality and spirituality are the same, but if one considers the intellectual faculty, it clearly looks as though this can be attributed to spiritual substances. Immateriality, Suárez explains, is not the *ratio* of intelligence "in the sense of being its own principle and cause", save speaking of that "a condition entails the other" or that "one concept is the reason of the other, just as in God we say that one attribute is the reason of the other"<sup>68</sup>. Having established the immateriality of angels, their intellectual nature thus follows from the premise as a necessary and natural implication.

Another feature of created intellectual substances that our natural reason can know with certainty, then, is their finitude. This follows as a matter of fact from the very condition of created beings, and from the principle that "all [...] substances distinct from the first one were necessarily created, because, in the nature of things, the being which is necessary by itself can only be one"<sup>69</sup>. In this regard, Suárez discusses the view of those who hold that, although angels are essentially finite, their intelligence can be considered infinite. Against such a doctrine, Suárez establishes that infinity can be understood in two senses: in a "formal" sense or *secundum quid*; that is, that of an infinite

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I, q. 51, art. 2-3. Suárez, instead, extensively deals with this in *De Ang.*, IV, ch. 33-39.

<sup>67</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 20.

<sup>68</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 21.

<sup>69</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 23.



degree of operation (for instance, an infinite heat or an infinite line) which yet contradicts all created entities and cannot be attributed to angels; or else in a “virtual” sense, namely or basing on the relative preeminence that higher beings have on the lower ones (a definition which yet is not infinite “if not only for the name”, or in order to the effect, that is basing on the fact that it can last endlessly. Only in the latter sense can one claim that angelic intelligence is “infinite”, although such a definition is “very improper” and actually finite<sup>70</sup>. Similarly, Suárez analyzes the possibility of an infinite angelic power of motion, which Aristotle suggested himself<sup>71</sup>. It is possible to understand such an infinity in a twofold sense: on the one hand, it can be taken as a “tireless virtue” which allows angels to work for an infinite period of time (meaning that, for Suárez, an infinite effect does not allow one to infer the existence of an infinite virtue); on the other hand, it could be meant to refer to the speed of the movement of an angel; and the latter view seems to be much harder to defend, since, strictly speaking, the angelic motive power is not understood here as the application of an infinite virtue, but rather as the application of another tireless motive energy, protracted over the time<sup>72</sup>.

Finally, a fourth attribute of separate substance which is clear from natural reason is that of the simplicity and actuality of the angelic substance; a question about which Suárez defends a position close to the famous one taken by Aquinas on

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<sup>70</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 29.

<sup>71</sup> *Metaph. A*, ch. 7, 1073a5-10.

<sup>72</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, §§ 30-31. Do Aristotle claims in *Metaph. A* refer to an “infinite virtue” which is found in celestial movers, even if it is not *formaliter* in all of them? Suárez takes this possibility into account, for which the infinity would belong, properly speaking, to the Prime Mover, to which the other movers would somehow lean on. Also, however, the Jesuit discards this account by openly declaring that “I do not find that I am satisfied in explaining Aristotle in this part” (*DM*, 35, s. 3, § 32).

metaphysical hylomorphism<sup>73</sup>. Although angels are simple beings in both substantial and physical senses, they are not “metaphysically simple at all”, given that “they are not pure acts, but potential ones”. Nevertheless, as the theologian remarks, intellective substances are not constituted by the σύνολον of matter and form; that is, they are characterized by neither of the integral parts of material compounds. Rather

metaphysical substantial composition is plural: one from the nature and the substratum (*supposito*), another from being (*esse*) and essence, and these two, whatever they are (i.e. modal, or real, or of reason) is found in all created intelligence, as follow from what said above about the existence and the subsistence in all created things<sup>74</sup>.

Again, the creatural condition determines that angels, while physically simple, can be understood in a two-fold sense from a metaphysical point of view: both as a unity of nature and individual, and as a unity of being and essence. Suárez, however, still has to deal with another metaphysical issue, concerning the possible composition of angels with respect to genus and difference. Indeed, it seems that by virtue of the very nature of pure forms, it is impossible for the genus (metaphysically identical with matter) to instantiate a difference (metaphysically connected to the form itself)<sup>75</sup>. This also happens to be the view of Averroes, which was pursued by Durandus and Marsilius of Padua. In this regard, Suárez once again agrees with Aquinas’ position, by establishing that angels have “a univocal proportion (*convenientia*) with the other created substances” and thus belong to the broader genus of created substance. Such a composition does not need a σύνολον of

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<sup>73</sup> See especially *CG*, II, ch. 52-54 but overall *ST*, I, q. 50, art. 2. For more on that, see Lottin 1932, Berto 1939, and Porro 2015: 255-258.

<sup>74</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 33.

<sup>75</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 34.

matter and form, since “the genus is not taken from physical matter, but it is said to be taken from a certain proportion to it, or according what in the thing is conceived as a potential and actuable something”<sup>76</sup>.

However, Suárez departs from Aquinas when he explains that the composition of genus and difference cannot be understood, in the way that Thomas does, as a composition of being and essence, taken as analogous to a unity between potency and act<sup>77</sup>. Aquinas, as is well-known, understands the distinction between *esse* and *essentia* as real; an assumption which Suárez denies, given that it is not required for the foundation of a composition between genus and difference:

Indeed, by whatever reason finite essence is understood, it is understood as capable of some proper constitutive difference, and of some univocal, and limited, and determined proportion (*convenientiae*) with other things, and this is enough for the composition of genus and difference. And in this way, that composition is founded by the limitation of finite essence, which is always potential and it does not actually have necessary existence, or by itself, it is said rightly also that this composition of genus and difference does not depends on a previous composition of being and essence, whatever it would be<sup>78</sup>.

Another unavoidable issue linked with the metaphysical nature of angels, then, concerns their individuality, which leads Suárez to make another important caveat connected to the innovative discussion of the principle of individuation he provides in *DM*, 5. Indeed, does the metaphysical composition of

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<sup>76</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 36.

<sup>77</sup> Suárez’s criticism seems to be directed especially to *ST*, I, q. 50, art. 2: “... although in angel there is no composition of form and matter, there is yet in it [a composition] of act and potency...”. The doctrine of metaphysical hylomorphism is also the polemical target of *De Ang.*, I, ch. 7, § 8, with direct reference to *DM*, 35, s. 3.

<sup>78</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 36.

immaterial substances follow as a consequence of a single genus-difference duo, or is it a combination between one a genus and various specific differences? According to Suárez, the thesis that there is a specific and essential difference among angels – a thesis traditionally agreed upon by most important theologians –, must only be considered “simply more probable”. By the power of natural reason, indeed, one cannot just claim that

it is not self-contradictory that such an essential difference is given in intelligences. Albeit, they all share an intellectual degree; since they do not have it in the supremely perfect way, they can participate in it according to various and different essential ways. And neither one could find out any explanation by which such a multiplication of the species in the intellectual grade would repugnant<sup>79</sup>.

Thus, the multiple individuation of angels seems to be yet another consequence of the relationship between the divine essence and the order of creation. Since intellectual substance is higher than material essence, a possible ultimate species formed in the “grade” of immaterial substances would generate a supreme species among those producible by God, which thing contradicts the divine omnipotence. Therefore, according to Suárez the multiplicity of angels is the necessary consequence of the unsurpassable divine power, which, again, finds a “mirroring” of its infinity in the maximum possible variation of finite beings:

Therefore, God could create several essentially different species in that intellectual degree. Thus it is very plausible, and more appropriate for the perfection of the universe, that there be many essentially different species of intelligences in that degree; indeed, such a variety aims at the perfection and the elegance of universe. For, the multiplication of individuals habitually takes place almost by accident; yet the variety of species is much more by itself, according to their perfection<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 43.

<sup>80</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 43.

From such an assumption, it is thus possible to infer a further consequence, namely that angels are given a subordinate genus placed between the supreme one and the lowest species. Hence, the single angelic species is made of at least a double genus and a double difference; or – which is equivalent –, it consists of a supreme genus, a subaltern difference and a lower one. Substance, indeed, constitutes the supreme genus of all intelligences, in which all of them converge “in the reason of spirit, which is the proximate genus mutually distinct from body”. That is, “they all converge in the reason of intellectual substance”. Such a subordinate difference, then, is further “determinable in various ways and differences of participation in the intellectual grade”, constituting the lower difference that individuates the single intellectual substance<sup>81</sup>.

Once having established how angelic individuation happens, Suárez explains that intellectual substances are not locally limitless<sup>82</sup>, and in fact, that they are physically located in space. Angels’ spatial limitation can, nevertheless, be understood in two ways: “formally” or “materially”. The first case is that of a substance that, although not determined by spatial location in nature, can, as it wishes, limit itself in space; the second case describes an essential relationship, by which a substance is ultimately determined in spatial presence<sup>83</sup>. The space of angels refers to a “formal” location, since intelligences “being abstract forms, are in no way tied to bodies by their own nature”, and the latter “does not determine unto itself any specific body to which they must necessarily be present”<sup>84</sup>. Angels, though lacking any physical limitation, can nevertheless move themselves through space, especially because of their function as celestial movers. From the physical and corporeal perspective, these

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<sup>81</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 44.

<sup>82</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 46.

<sup>83</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 47.

<sup>84</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 47.

substances should be defined as “immobile”, “according to their higher and proper and spiritual way of presence”. They are neither completely immobile, nor “from their nature they are chained to their orbs”; rather, they are naturally inclined to constantly assist the heavens, moving them by a uniform movement, by a “special ordination from the first cause”.

Finally, Suárez deals with the important question of the eternity and necessity of angels<sup>85</sup>, establishing that incorruptible<sup>86</sup> immaterial substances “are not nor can be actually eternal”; that is, “their duration is not in eternity”. For Suárez, such a claim is true, even in light of the notion of the creation of angels (and other *res*) *ab aeterno*, discussed in *DM* 20<sup>87</sup>. Must, however, intelligences be seen as cosmologically necessary when starting from the premise of incorruptibility? On this aspect, Suárez’s position again ends in a dialogue with Aquinas on the possibility – which the Jesuit attributes to him<sup>88</sup> – of inferring the necessity of angels from their incorruptibility.

Starting from duration is not the correct path, Suárez argues, to deduce true eternity, which is rather a “necessity of being, not only negative, but also positive and immutable, not only for an intrinsic potency, but also for an extrinsic one”. These are features reserved to God alone. As Suárez remarks, such an argument only pertains to eternity by virtue of essence, which

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<sup>85</sup> This is a problem that Suárez also faces in *De Ang.*, I, ch. 2, by establishing that “angels are not intrinsically eternal, either essentially or from absolute necessity”, since “they do not have being (*esse*) by themselves, but by an efficient cause, therefore they do not have any necessity to be by themselves, and thus not eternity” (§ 2) and because the eternity of angels “cannot originate either from the nature or condition of the efficient cause itself, or from the nature of the angels themselves” (§ 3).

<sup>86</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 52. See also *De Ang.*, I, ch. 9.

<sup>87</sup> See especially the *DM*, 20, s. 5, devoted to the discussion of the concept of *aevum*. See also *De Ang.*, I, ch. 3, where Suárez openly opts for the simultaneity of the creation of angels and the physical world.

<sup>88</sup> Suárez’s reference here specifically is *ST*, I, q. 50, art. 5.

cannot be bestowed upon angels in any way. And yet, the possibility remains of recognizing a “participated” eternity which does not ask for a grade of independency and intrinsic necessity at the same level of God’s eternity. In this case, Suárez specifies, “it is just a matter of way of speaking”. Namely, it is all about establishing if it is possible to define – by the locution “participated eternity” or by the word *aevum*<sup>89</sup> – an entity (the angel itself) which is necessary and essentially dependent on another<sup>90</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

Can one claim that for Suárez, created natural reason is able to understand the existence and the essence of angels? Absolutely speaking, a reply to this question can be found in the end of *DM* 35’s section 3, where the Jesuit openly defends the natural *comprehensibility* of angels, not only for their Creator, but “also for other creatures”, including for themselves and other angels. The angel does not possess infinite perfections and, strictly speaking, cannot be considered incomprehensible or invisible to the eyes of an intellect equipped with equal or greater cognitive powers. Despite that, spiritual substances are still inaccessible in a direct manner for the natural powers of a soul joined to a body. However, the intrinsic comprehensibility of angels comes “indefinitely and through maintaining a proportion”, and “not absolutely and in general”, because an intelligence is intelligible by itself. But such intelligibility seems to be always-already-disposed to a particular order. Within this order, lower

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<sup>89</sup> For more on this important notion, see especially Porro 1996. See also Carvalho 1999 and Esposito 2001b.

<sup>90</sup> The open textual reference is to *DM*, 50. Here, Suárez deals with creaturely temporality, by presenting the concept of “*aevum*”, namely of a created duration, which is nevertheless permanent and immutable. In this context, Suárez specifically opposes the view of Bonaventure, who denied that the *aevum* is a permanent duration.

intelligences are unable to actually grasp angelic essence. To them, there remains the epistemological space for metaphysically and hypothetically (re)constructing the natural knowledge of angels and their quiddity. This is a possibility, however, that is already on the way to being a *ratio a priori*, founded on pure possibility. Such a possibility attempts, just a few decades before the great metaphysics of the seventeenth century, to proceed towards the heavens by the sole powers of reason.



## 5. Suárez's Metaphysical Investigations on Angelic Intellects. A Comparative Reading of *DM 35, 4* and *De Angelis, II*

1. Introduction – 2. The Adequate Objects of Angels' Intellects – 3. The Metaphysics of Angelic Cognitive Acts – 4. The Principles of Angelic Intellection: the Self and God – 5. The Puzzle of the Angelic Knowledge of Material Things – 6. *Addendum*: the Angelic Habit of the Principles – 7. Conclusion

### 1. Introduction

The first three sections of *DM 35* focus on angels; that is, creatures whose existence we know of chiefly thanks to the Book of Revelation. In this work, Suárez follows, but also surpasses, a centuries-old Scholastic tradition of engaging with this topic, by testing a new methodology. He dismantles the traditional arguments in favor of the existence of angels, and substitutes them with a purely metaphysical investigation of spiritual created substances. The Jesuit first and foremost aims to demonstrate, by a sequence of *rationes a priori* and solely by the power of natural reason, that angels are *possible* creatures whose existence is necessarily connected with an adequately “extensive” likeness of Creation to God's essence<sup>1</sup>. But, he also tries to infer the quiddity of such spiritual substances by a new methodology; namely, one based on “negative, or connotative, or confused concepts”<sup>2</sup> and their very possibility<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 8. See Guidi 2019c (now in this book, see *supra*: 155-184).

<sup>2</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 2, § 3.

<sup>3</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 3.

Among the most important features of angels, of course, are their immateriality and wholly intellectual nature, the certainty of which stems from a cosmological necessity that follows from God's act of creation. The following question, however, arises: to what extent is it possible, *ratione naturali*, to know more about the peculiar powers of such immaterial beings and, more specifically, about their intellects? Suárez holds that it is indeed possible, and he subsequently organizes the discussion of *DM* 35 around three preeminent questions about the powers of angels: one about their intellective power (section 4); one about their will (section 5); and, finally, one about the *vis agendi* by which they execute their function as celestial movers (section 6).

In the present reconstruction, I will address especially section 4 in order to present Suárez's discussion about the angelic intellect. To properly address the aforementioned questions, one cannot help but address Suárez's metaphysical treatise with his angelologic doctrinal masterpiece, the *De Angelis*, where he extensively discusses many of these issues in the order of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*<sup>4</sup>. Such a comparison is important especially to show the methodological differences between these two contexts and to stress how Suárez's *DM* 35 is an innovative work in which the Jesuit tests his new metaphysical method of investigation based on the power of natural reason in angelology.

In *DM* 35, section 1, Suárez demonstrated the metaphysical possibility of angels, based upon the fact that their existence does not contradict itself, and also on the indisputable existence of our soul, from which we can trace back the order of all immaterial substances. This is especially clear "from the operation of thinking or reasoning"<sup>5</sup>, since our human ability to think and will, justifies the possibility of the existence of creatures with a more perfect expression of such power. According to this

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<sup>4</sup> *ST*, I, q. 50-64.

<sup>5</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 1, § 4.

same methodology, Suárez can now describe the intelligence of angels starting from the fact that “they understand whatever we understand, in a more perfect way than us, and, accordingly, also many more [objects] than us”<sup>6</sup>. While we know that angels are more perfect souls, it remains unknown for us, however, how much more perfect they are than our souls. Nevertheless, man can grasp at least some features of angelic intellects, as are already established by Aquinas’ doctrine in the *Summa*. For Suárez, there are at least three such properties we can know: 1) the object of angelic intellection; 2) the angels’ act of intellection; and 3) the principle of such an act.

This order, which I will try to follow in the next paragraphs, proceeds according to Suárez’s investigation *more metaphysicum*. In Aquinas’ *Summa* and, accordingly, in the *De Angelis*, the section devoted to angels’ act of intellection, was nonetheless the first<sup>7</sup> to deal with the ontological status of the intellective power of angels. Such a discussion proceeds based on the priority of things, which Suárez’s peculiar method, based solely on natural reason, cannot pursue. By contrast, the methodology found in the *Metaphysical Disputations* aims to pass from what we know more easily to what is more difficult to us<sup>8</sup>. And what is more known by us if not our own intellectual experience?

## 2. The Adequate Objects of Angelic Intellects

Regarding the problem of the object of angelic intellection, it would be useful to start from the account that Suárez provides in the *De Angelis*, where he deals with angels from a doctrinal perspective.

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<sup>6</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 1.

<sup>7</sup> See *De Ang.*, II, ch. 1, corresponding to *ST*, I, q. 54, art. 1-3.

<sup>8</sup> See the essay in this book, “The Order of Knowledge: Fonseca and Suárez on the Confused and Distinct Starting Point of Science”, *supra*: 21-76.

After having discussed the issue of angelic substance in the second book, Suárez deals with the problem of the adequate object of the intellective power of angels, then establishing that the first material object of angelic cognition is the *ens simpliciter*, as it is convertible with the *verum*. From a doctrinal perspective, this move is wholly alien to Aquinas' approach and it clearly replants a Scotistic metaphysical approach<sup>9</sup> in the body of theological Thomism<sup>10</sup>. However, from the side of the *esse rei*, Suárez's angelic intellect finds its object in the being (*ens*) "taken in all its extension, insofar as it is true". Such a principle applies to the angelic intellect since it applies to any intellect whatsoever, including the human intellect, making it even more true of angels. Nevertheless,

the angelic intellect can know all beings; therefore, everything is contained under its adequate object, because whatever is known by a power pertains to its object, since to cognize something objectively [*obijci*] is nothing but knowing it. But all the intelligible beings do not receive a real convergence from the angel[ic

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<sup>9</sup> It seems that Suárez applies Scotus' three first objects (or primary adequate objects) to angels: the moving cause of cognition (in the case of angels, itself); God (which is precluded for us in this life), and the *ens* itself. See especially the clear reconstruction by Noone 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Suárez ascribes this view to Aquinas, who never actually formulated it. The Jesuit hints at *ST*, I, q. 52, art. 2: "there is a twofold class of action; one which passes out to something beyond, and causes passion in it, as burning and cutting; and another which does not pass outwards, but which remains within the agent, as to feel, to understand, to will; by such actions nothing outside is changed, but the whole action takes place within the agent. It is quite clear regarding the first kind of action that it cannot be the agent's very existence: because the agent's existence is signified as within him, while such an action denotes something as issuing from the agent into the thing done. But the second action of its own nature has infinity, either simple or relative. *As an example of simple infinity, we have the act "to understand", of which the object is "the true"; and the act "to will", of which the object is "the good"; each of which is convertible with being*" (emphasis is mine, trans. Thomas de Aquino 1961).

mind], if not in the common reason of the being; therefore the being, taken in that way, is the adequate object of such power<sup>11</sup>.

It is noteworthy that Suárez treats the *ens* as the first object of the angelic intellect, but he also limits such a category to its convertibility with the *verum*<sup>12</sup>. Despite its powers, the angelic intellect does not extend beyond the same limits that are common to all created intellects, including the human intellect. Likewise, its first object is the very same upon which our lower intellects ground the entire edifice of metaphysics<sup>13</sup>. What actually differentiates human and angelic intellective power is rather their different cognitive structures, due to their different essential natures: the angel is wholly immaterial, while the human soul is united with the body as its form.

Having defined the *ens* as the primary object of angelic intellect, it is by no accident that the *De Angelis* proceeds by pointing out that, *respectu sui* (i.e. in its concrete act of cognition), the adequate object of the angelic intellect is nothing other than itself. This is one more interesting doctrinal element from Aquinas' account about which Suárez tries to advance. According to Aquinas (and even more in Cajetan's<sup>14</sup> elaboration of this doctrine), angels are indeed capable of immediately grasping themselves, as they are both an intellect and intelligible in themselves

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<sup>11</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 2, § 6.

<sup>12</sup> On Suárez's understanding of truth, see Burlando 2014, and the two essays in this book devoted to this question: "The Truth We Know. Reassessing Suárez's Account of Cognitive Truth and Objective Being", *supra*: 77-114 and "Is Truth a Property of Things? Suárez's Razor on Transcendental Truth", *supra*: 115-154.

<sup>13</sup> On Suárez's concept of *ens*, see García López 1966, Doyle 1969, Courtine 1990 and 2005: 291-365; Martins 1994: 130-190. More recently, see Heider 2007 and 2017, Pereira 2007: 73-78, Esposito 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010; Llamas Roig 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Cajetan, *Summa Theologiae cum supplemento et commentariis Caietani* [ed. 1889], I, q. 56, art. 1, § 3-4.

at the same time<sup>15</sup>. Though, it should be noted that Aquinas did not make self-knowledge the first act of angelic minds; he simply recognized such possibility as a consequence of the immanent nature of angelic thought, within a model of angelic cognition shaped especially on the function of infused and innate species. For Suárez, by contrast, not only angelic self-cognition, but the very primacy of angelic self-awareness, follows as a natural consequence from the immateriality of angels:

any angel, being a spiritual substance, is intelligible in act by itself, and it is chiefly united to its intellect, and is commensurate to it; therefore, an angel can fundamentally understand itself. And rather, such self-cognition is almost the foundation

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<sup>15</sup> *ST*, I, q. 56, art. 1: “In a transient action the object or matter into which the action passes is something separate from the agent, as the thing heated is from what gave it heat, and the building from the builder; whereas in an immanent action, for the action to proceed, the object must be united with the agent; just as the sensible object must be in contact with sense, in order that sense may actually perceive. And the object which is united to a faculty bears the same relation to actions of this kind as does the form which is the principle of action in other agents: for, as heat is the formal principle of heating in the fire, so is the species of the thing seen the formal principle of sight to the eye. It must, however, be borne in mind that this image of the object exists sometimes only potentially in the knowing faculty; and then there is only knowledge in potentiality; and in order that there may be actual knowledge, it is required that the faculty of knowledge be actuated by the species. But if it always actually possesses the species, it can thereby have actual knowledge without any preceding change or reception. From this it is evident that it is not of the nature of knower, as knowing, to be moved by the object, but as knowing in potentiality. Now, for the form to be the principle of the action, it makes no difference whether it be inherent in something else, or self-subsisting; because heat would give forth heat none the less if it were self-subsisting, than it does by inhering in something else. So therefore, if in the order of intelligible beings there be any subsisting intelligible form, it will understand itself. And since an angel is immaterial, he is a subsisting form; and, consequently, he is actually intelligible. Hence it follows that he understands himself by his form, which is his substance” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

of all other cognition, in particular the natural kind [...]. Thus, whatever angel, both by its own substance or by all its accidents, is contained under the adequate object of its intellect<sup>16</sup>.

According to the conceptual framework of the adequate object, Suárez reassesses Aquinas' doctrine, which was based upon the immediate convertibility between the intellect and the intelligibility of angels. Being intelligible in act, the angel can (*potest*) understand itself, and such a possibility lies in being a structural and permanent adequate object of its cognition. Despite that, such primary self-knowledge does not blind angels' cognitive powers and prevent it from grasping all other objects. Going beyond Aquinas, Suárez rather thinks of it as a kind of transparent and permanent consciousness<sup>17</sup>, through which the angel intellectually sees all other cognitive objects:

that power is spiritual, and therefore is reflexive in itself; so, it can be a faculty of understanding and one for the reality of its objects at the same time. Though, it is true that it is not a primary object to which the very power by itself, and first, is directly brought, but it is a cognition which is concomitant to the angel with its own substance, which it seizes (*intuetur*) and grasped (*comprehendit*) primarily<sup>18</sup>.

I will later deal with the question of how such self-knowledge takes place, and how it accompanies all of the angel's cognition. According to the *De Angelis*, indeed, the angelic in-

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<sup>16</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 2, § 6.

<sup>17</sup> In Guidi 2018 I argued in favor of the indirect derivation of Descartes' model of consciousness, as described especially in the *Principles*, I, § 9 (*AT*, VIII-1: 7; *CSM*, I: 195): "By the term 'thought' (*cogitationis nomine*), I understand everything which we are aware of as happening within us, in so far as we have awareness (*conscientia*) of it. Hence, thinking is to be identified here not merely with understanding, willing and imagining, but also with sensory awareness".

<sup>18</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 2, § 6.

tellec also has a third adequate object, which is God himself. Suárez does not specify whether such cognition is natural or supernatural. It is crucial to point out that angels have at least one of these types of cognition, but that in either case, God is an adequate object of the angelic intellect<sup>19</sup>. Likewise, angelic minds have a fourth adequate object, namely, material things. Indeed, even if angels are spiritual substances wholly distinct from bodies, nothing prevents them from knowing lower realities such as material beings<sup>20</sup>.

Having established this preliminary reading, it is now possible to return to *DM* 35, where Suárez not only aims to present his angelologic doctrines, but where he even aims to prove them *ratione naturali*. This entails especially that the entire doctrine is inferred from what we already know by natural reason, in a true argumentative (even if not exactly demonstrative) chain. Now, for Suárez, at this stage, all we know is simply that angels exist and that they are immaterial, intellectual substances; but, this seems to be a sufficient premise to infer a whole sequence of deductions. First of all that,

since any intelligence is spiritual, by itself it is an intelligible act and it is proportioned to the intellect; therefore, it chiefly can be understood itself, and even more seize (*intueri*) and grasp (*comprehendere*) itself<sup>21</sup>.

This conclusion is, in turn, the pivotal point for a further inference, i.e. that

therein, having grasped the effect, it is somehow necessary that one knows the cause; therefore, if the intelligence knows itself perfectly and by itself, it can know its author. Indeed, if we are able to get a cognition of God from the effects, it is evident that

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<sup>19</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 2, § 13.

<sup>20</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 2, § 13.

<sup>21</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 4.



whatever created intelligence can know God from itself, in a more perfect way<sup>22</sup>.

Elsewhere<sup>23</sup>, I dwelled on the surprising similarities between Suárez's metaphysical angelology and the path followed by Descartes in *Meditations Two* and *Three*, where the mind, once having demonstrated its indisputable existence by the *cogito*, starts a *propter quid* proof of God's existence, based on the fact that the mind itself is an effect needing an ultimate cause<sup>24</sup>. There, I also stressed that such a possibility (as, not by chance, Suárez himself reminded in his text) was a prerogative of both the separated souls and angels, openly recognized by Aquinas in several places and in many different ways<sup>25</sup>. Thus, it is no surprise that the Jesuit here attributes such a possibility to angels.

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<sup>22</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 4.

<sup>23</sup> See again Guidi 2018: 340-360.

<sup>24</sup> See *AT*, VII: 51; *CSM*, II: 35: "it must be concluded that the mere fact that I exist and have within me an idea of a most perfect being, that is, God, provides a very clear proof that God indeed exists".

<sup>25</sup> *CG*, III, ch. 49, which regards not only angels but "separate substances and the soul after death": "it is possible to know a cause from its effect, in many ways. One way is to take the effect as a means of finding out, concerning the cause, that it exists and that it is of a certain kind. This occurs in the sciences which demonstrate the cause through the effect. Another way is to see the cause in the effect itself, to the extent that the likeness of the cause is reflected in the effect; thus, a man may be seen in a mirror, by virtue of his likeness. And this way is different from the first. In fact, in the first way there are two cognitions, one of the effect and one of the cause, and one is the cause of the other; for the knowledge of the effect is the cause of the knowing of its cause. But in the second way there is one vision of both, since at the same time that the effect is seen the cause is also seen in it. A third way is such that the very likeness of the cause, in its effect, is the form by which the effect knows its own cause. For instance, suppose a box had an intellect, and through its form, knew the skilled mind from which such a form proceeded as a likeness of that mind. Now, it is not possible in any of these ways to know from the effect what the cause is, unless the effect is adequate to the cause, one in which the entire virtuality of the cause is expressed. Now, separate substances

Despite this, it is important to emphasize Suárez's method. He is not only interested in presenting his own doctrine, but rather, in deriving conclusions as to what we know for sure about angels; that is, nothing other than their ontological *possibility*. The entire discussion of *DM 35* is somehow hypothetical and *a fortiori*, and such is the deduction of the features of the angelic intellect in section 4. This is why, unlike in *De Angelis*, in *DM 35*, Suárez stresses now that angels *can* know themselves, and so they *can* know their ultimate cause, i.e. God.

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know God through their substances, as a cause is known through its effect; not, of course, in the first way, for then their knowledge would be discursive; but in the second way, according as one substance sees God in another; and also in the third way, according as any one of them sees God within itself. Now, none of them is an effect adequately representing the power of God [...]. So, it is impossible for them to see the divine essence itself by this kind of knowledge". See also *ST*, I, q. 56, art. 3 (regarding angels alone): "angels can have some knowledge of God by their own principles. In evidence whereof it must be borne in mind that a thing is known in three ways: first, by the presence of its essence in the knower, as light can be seen in the eye; and so we have said that an angel knows himself; secondly, by the presence of its similitude in the power which knows it, as a stone is seen by the eye from its image being in the eye; thirdly, when the image of the object known is not drawn directly from the object itself, but from something else in which it is made to appear, as when we behold a man in a mirror. To the first-named class that knowledge of God is likened by which He is seen through His essence; and knowledge such as this cannot accrue to any creature from its natural principles, as was said above. The third class comprises the knowledge whereby we know God while we are on earth, by His likeness reflected in creatures. Hence, too, we are said to see God in a mirror. But the knowledge, whereby according to his natural principles the angel knows God, stands midway between these two; and is likened to that knowledge whereby a thing is seen through the species abstracted from it. Since God's image is impressed in the very nature of the angel in his essence, the angel knows God inasmuch as he is the image of God. Yet he does not behold God's essence" (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1975 and 1947-1948). Suárez attributes such feature to the separate soul too in *TDA*, bk. 4, ch. 6, § 1: "the soul is not only an effect but a certain image and similitude of God; the soul, therefore, seizing itself, seizes a certain similitude of God; thus, through it, it knows God, although in an imperfect way". On angelic self-knowledge in Aquinas, see Suarez-Nani 2002: 36-44 and Guidi 2018: 99-101.

It is quite likely that the Jesuit excludes all references to *ens* being the first adequate object of angelic intellect from his rigorous analysis for the very same reason. Suárez automatically includes self-knowledge among the “negative or connotative or confused concepts” of angels that one employs in purely metaphysical investigation. By contrast, in the *De Angelis*, Suárez identifies being as the first object of the angelic intellect merely as a consequence of the assumption that “the angelic intellect can know all beings”; a theological assumption, which is not based upon the pure possibility of angels.

However, Suárez can still contribute to a long-standing Scholastic issue in an *a priori* manner. He establishes that the knowledge of God which an angel can acquire is not comprehensive, intuitive or quidditative (as Scotus famously held), but simply quidditative and non-comprehensive<sup>26</sup>. Indeed, for all created intellects, it is impossible to have complete quidditative cognition of God’s essence, as they cannot proceed beyond a representation of Him based on effects.

Likewise, Suárez argues that angels can *naturaliter* know all “lower things”; that is, things below their essence. In knowing the highest spiritual beings, the angelic intellect possesses a greater power than one requires to know these things. Hence, being that lower things are included under the adequate object of whatever intellect, i.e. the *ens*, it must at least be possible for angels to know such things (as they are even known by men, whose intellects are much weaker than those of angels)<sup>27</sup>. One more time *a priori*, Suárez goes on to argue that angels cannot know contingent effects, given that they stem from free causes (the agent’s freedom). If anything, they can deal with such things by plausible conjectures they make from signs, as demons do in their divinations<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 4.

<sup>27</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 7.

<sup>28</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 9.

There are, however, a group of specific angelic objects that Suárez's metaphysical method cannot grasp; those qualities of angels that can only be known theologically, mainly by Revelation. They are as follows: 1) that an angel cannot know another's free acts and thoughts<sup>29</sup>; 2) that angels cannot know the mysteries of Grace<sup>30</sup> and 3) that angels cannot know the essences of merely possible things<sup>31</sup>. Suárez dwells on these issues from a doctrinal perspective over many pages in the *De Angelis*, but as for the metaphysical context of the *DM* 35 he claims, that metaphysics can, at most, provide a *nihil obstat* in agreement with the most plausible conclusion that follows from theologians' instructions.

### 3. The Metaphysics of Angelic Cognitive Acts

Having established such points, Suárez's treatise proceeds by engaging with angelic cognitive acts, taken again from a purely metaphysical perspective. As for this question, the *DM* 35 dwells especially on two interrelated problems: are angels' cognition the same with their substance, and are they "true things" or are they just one mode of their substance?<sup>32</sup>

Again, Suárez follows in the wake of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*<sup>33</sup>, from which he already drew in the *De Angelis*. For the Jesuit, indeed, angelic cognition is not the same as angelic substance, but rather "something accidental and added" to

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<sup>29</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 5.

<sup>30</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 7.

<sup>31</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 8. See *infra*.

<sup>32</sup> Limiting his inquiry to these two problems, Suárez omits a pair of important and controversial issues from his metaphysical discussion with which he instead deals in his *De Angelis*: the problem of the singularity of the knowing power of angels, and the question about the distinction between a possible and actual angelic intellect.

<sup>33</sup> *ST*, I, q. 54, art. 1-3

angelic substance. This proposition can be demonstrated by natural reason, because

created intelligence is intrinsically mutable in its intelligent act and it is not intrinsically mutable in its substance; therefore, the intelligent act is not its own substance, and thus it is an added accident<sup>34</sup>.

It is worth noting that in the *DM* 35, Suárez tries to explain, *ratione naturali*, why angelic cognition is mutable, while their substance is absolutely immutable. The reason for this lies in the fact that “since angels are finite powers, it is impossible that they simultaneously know all the things that fall under the [adequate] object”. For Suárez, this is especially true with respect to higher and lower things, because

even if, perhaps, there is some angel that can actually simultaneously contemplate all created natural things in act, not everything that is above it can be multiplied *ad infinitum*, and so it necessarily has a mutable intellection; thus, it does not necessarily persist always and intrinsically in the contemplation of one thing; therefore, it is moved from the consideration of one thing to the consideration of another; and so it is mutable according to its intellective act<sup>35</sup>.

Angelic minds are not immovable networks of concepts, in a perpetual state of contemplation. Despite the fact that their intellects could in principle embrace all created natural things, angels cannot immediately contemplate all higher things in a single act. Hence, angels must also know over the course of time, by passing from one object to another.

Yet, having confirmed that the angelic intellect is not its substance, a new question arises: is the angelic intellect a *vera*

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<sup>34</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 10.

<sup>35</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 10.

*res* or is it, rather, just a mode of the angelic substance? This is a question that, strictly speaking, Aquinas did not address<sup>36</sup>, and that follows especially from Suárez's peculiar account of individuation as being dependent on entity<sup>37</sup>. The Jesuit however deems that, in angels, intellect is a real thing, which is really distinct from angelic substance. This is because

intellection is a perfect form; thus, it is not only a mode, but rather a true form. Similarly, since it does not arise from the only intelligent [being], but also from the object, or from the object that takes its place, to which the intentional representation of the very object participates; though, the object does not meet the angelic substance by itself, but rather by an accidental form emanated by it [the angelic substance] and by the object; this thing can hardly be understood as just [coming from] a distinct mode, and thus it is better to consider it as a true entity, really distinct [from substance]<sup>38</sup>.

Again, note that Suárez's demonstration of such a feature of angels starts from a general principle, and as a hypothetical account that must be accepted *a fortiori*. Given certain premises, which are in turn inferred from the very confused concept of "angel", the fact that angelic intellect is not the same as its substance stems, indeed, as a reasonable conclusion.

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<sup>36</sup> Instead, Aquinas establishes that an angel's intellectual act is neither its substance (*ST*, I, q. 54, art. 1), its being (*ST*, I, q. 54, art. 2), nor its essence (*ST*, I, q. 54, art. 2).

<sup>37</sup> As is known, Suárez attributes to the being's being alone the role of the principle of individuation. This allows a true metaphysics of the singular, for which each entity is by itself an *hoc aliquid*. From such a view derives Suárez's wider tendency to "entify" the intellect's powers, also in human intellect. See *TDA*, bk. 2, ch. 3, § 10. For more on this Suárezian model, see Rozemond 2012 and Heider 2019d. For more on Suárez's principle of individuation, see especially the *DM*, 5, which is also available in English translation (Suárez 1982). See Gracia 1982 and 1984.

<sup>38</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 12.

Yet, another question arises: if the angelic intellect is really distinct from its substance, and it continuously changes, how can an angel fall under the Aristotelian definition of being perpetually and immutably intelligent? According to Suárez, the perpetuity of angels is not eternal, but in time<sup>39</sup>; and both angelic intellect and cosmological action can perpetually endure in time, even if they remain accidental<sup>40</sup>, to the point that angels can, for the sake of hypothesis, even freely relinquish their function as celestial movers. Nevertheless, for Suárez, angels can suspend or change their own intellection by way of their freedom<sup>41</sup>, even if they probably have “natural intellection which is so necessary that it is not subject to freedom, but which almost results from their nature”. Indeed, if an angel would be completely and absolutely free, it could cease to be from all its duties at the same time and thereby subvert the order of Creation<sup>42</sup>.

#### 4. The Principles of Angelic Intellection: the Self and God

Let us now address the third side of Suárez’s metaphysical inquiry, i.e. the principles of angelic intellect. According to the Jesuit, such principles might be three or four in number, namely: 1) the principal one; 2) the proximate principle on the side of intelligence, or angel’s very cognitive power; 3) the proximate principle according to the side of the object, or the species, to which one could add 4) the habit of the princi-

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<sup>39</sup> For Suárez, angels are perpetual but not eternal. See *DM*, 35, s. 3, § 52 and *De Ang*, I, ch. 9. See also *DM*, 20, s. 5, devoted to the discussion of the concept of *aevum*. See also *De Ang*, I, ch. 3, where Suárez openly opts for the simultaneity of the creation of angels and the physical world. On angelic time, see Porro 1996 and, on Suárez, Carvalho 1999.

<sup>40</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 13.

<sup>41</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 14.

<sup>42</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 14.

ples<sup>43</sup>. It is again noteworthy that Suárez's discussion in the *DM* 35 is entirely metaphysical, and, as I will argue, only in part arrives at the doctrinal conclusions of the *De Angelis*.

Regarding the first kind of principle, i.e. the intrinsic and principal one, Suárez firmly establishes it as the angelic substance, just as the soul-form is that of the human intellect. Given that angelic substance “does not have a form”, as the human compound does, “but rather wholly is a pure form”, angelic substance must be the main principle of their proper cognitive operation. The second principle, by contrast, is not at all evident by natural reason and one can at best conjecture that it is the angel's cognitive power<sup>44</sup>; this is one of the rare conclusions in *DM* 35 which Suárez establishes on the basis of authority.

However, those principles which accord “to the side of the object” are for sure the most challenging for Suárez, who deals with this topic extensively in the second book of the *De Angelis*. Though, if one can talk about the inner contents of the angelic mind by a doctrinal approach, what can one say about it, *ratione naturali*? According to Suárez, we are forced to deal with this problem “only by analogy and in proportion with the things we suppose about the species of the senses, or about our intellect”, adding the perfection to the angelic species, which is appropriate to its higher rank, and subtracting imperfections in us that follow from our natural conjunction with the body<sup>45</sup>. However, by this method, one cannot deduce a true demonstration, but only infer certain conclusions which theologians (and not metaphysicians), argue are simply “more probable”.

The first and most pivotal among these conclusions is that an angel does not require any accidental species to enact its self-cognition. For the Jesuit, angelic substance is sufficient by itself to trigger an immediate coincidence of the intellect and

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<sup>43</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 16.

<sup>44</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 16.

<sup>45</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 17.



the intelligible; therefore, an additional and accidental species would be wholly useless in this respect. This account actually dates back to Aquinas<sup>46</sup>, and it is the one upon which Suárez dwells more exhaustively in the *De Angelis*. There the Jesuit not only remarks about the uselessness of an accidental species for angels' self-knowledge, but he also explains how angelic substance falls under angelic cognition as a first act of its intellect:

by itself, the angel's essence constitutes its own intellect in proximate potency, and thereupon in its own way in first act, bringing it to understand itself; and, immediately after, it flows into the act by which it understands itself<sup>47</sup>.

The very essence of the angel is, for the angelic intellect, a proximate potency, which automatically falls under a cognitive first act, coinciding with an immediate understanding of the essence itself. But is such immediate cognition merely intuitive or is it also abstractive? Against a doctrine supported by Scotus and few others<sup>48</sup>, Suárez denies that angels need any additional species to know themselves abstractively, beyond their intuitive capacities. Indeed,

although we allowed that it can be, in the angel, abstractive quidditative cognition of the singular thing existing in act, and, accordingly, that it can know itself abstractively, it does not need to know any intelligible species distinct from its substance. This is proven because, evidently, such cognition may be understood

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<sup>46</sup> See above, note 15.

<sup>47</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 4, § 9.

<sup>48</sup> *Or.*, II, d. 3, q. 10, § 16: 257: "it is said there that an angel knows himself through his own essence, but I say that an angel can know any quiddity at all (other than himself and even his own) through a species of it and through the essence of it; he can know it through the essence indeed when he knows it with intuitive knowledge (namely under the idea under which it is present in actual existence); he can also know it through a species when he knows it with abstractive knowledge".

to be twofold, in the angel: [1] simultaneously with the intuitive cognition, or [2] successively, i.e. following from the intuition of itself by substance. The first way is impossible or at least rather superfluous and not pertinent; therefore, it is not plausible, given that, in the angel, there is a connatural species for such simultaneous cognition, since nature abhors the superfluous. Moreover, if those two cognitions can take place at the same time, the same principle suffices for them both: indeed, by the same species, an angel that intuitively knows another actually existing angel would know it abstractly in the case that it does not exist; therefore, in the case it can have simultaneously both the cognitions about the existing angel, it will have them by the same species, using that species in different ways, according to its free will<sup>49</sup>.

Hence, by the same cognitive act, an angel can know itself intuitively and abstractively, deriving either notion from its own quiddity.

Let us now return to *DM* 35. Apart from its self-knowledge, there is only one other object which the angelic intellect can know through its own substance, i.e. God. Of course, such cognition is far from being quidditatively complete, and rather reflects knowledge which follows from the effects discussed above. Hence, Suárez's remark is now aimed at indicating that the aforementioned knowledge of God is in fact natural, and that it happens entirely by substance, i.e. without the aid of any representative species (a doctrine which Aquinas already supported with respect to both angels and separate souls<sup>50</sup>). This possibility, however, is wholly based on the fact that creatures reflect the likeness of their Creator:

God can be seen, in itself, by no creature, either by its essence, or by its proper species; therefore, in no way He can be known naturally by a created intelligence; though, it can be known, much

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<sup>49</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 4, § 18.

<sup>50</sup> See above, note 25.

less, by the proper essence of the intelligences, since they very imperfectly and analogically represent the divine nature. Because it is true that its effect essentially depends on it [the divine nature], an intelligence that knows itself, it naturally arises in the knowledge of God by its substance and potency, insofar as a cognized medium and the most noble effect is made in the image of God. This does not mean that [the angel] knows God only from its effects, but that this is the first medium and that which is highly compliant with its cognition, and that, by its substance, without any added species, it achieves that cognition<sup>51</sup>.

In reading this text, it is important to note that Suárez attributes the role of a *medium cognitum*, through which the angel is able to form a non-quidditative representation of its cause, to angelic substance. Suárez dwells on this important matter in much greater detail in the *De Angelis*, especially in his explanation of why angelic substance works as a cognized medium and not as a direct principle for knowing God, as the latter is an immediate object of angelic knowledge. Indeed,

an angel cannot know God by its own substance without knowing itself; hence, if for the sake of the argument, the angel did not know itself, it would not be able to know God by its substance; and this indicates that angelic essence, by itself, is not a principle for knowing God, but that it is such only insofar as it is known<sup>52</sup>.

Suárez especially wants to stress that angelic substance or essence is not a sufficient principle for knowing the Creator. The angel cannot immediately formulate a concept of God by its substance; rather, it can start from primary knowledge of its own substance, and then infer God's existence from it through an intermediate term. Such a mechanism grants the highest possible "certain and evident" (again, note the prefor-

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<sup>51</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 19.

<sup>52</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 18, § 3.

mation of a Cartesian lexicon) cognition of God to the angel. This certainty and evidence is due to the fact that the angel knows God by simultaneously knowing itself:

the angel's first cognition of God by substance is the one through which the angel, without using any intelligible species of another thing, knows certainly and evidently that God is; but it would be impossible that such evident cognition of God is, if God is not seen in itself, or in any of his effects; though, He cannot be evidently known in Himself as existing, because He is not known in Himself, nor as He is in Himself, and neither quidditatively; therefore, that certitude and evidence must be founded on the cognition of some effect, since it is not distinct from the angel itself; so such evident cognition of God essentially presupposes, or includes, the cognition of the angel itself; [which] therefore is a cognized medium, and only as such can it be God's *ratio cognoscendi*<sup>53</sup>.

In knowing itself, an angel mediately knows an effect of God, from which necessarily follows certain and evident cognition of Him. Moreover, this very coincidence allows the angel to know God without the use of a representative species; or, even better, it allows it to use its own essence as a species:

it can also be said that the angel knows God by its substance as by a species, i.e. by its very substance concurring like a species. This is proved since, apart from its substance, an angel does not have another species by which it can, *per se*, know itself, or God; therefore, that substance plays, regarding the cognition of God, the same role that the species of an effect [play] for the cognition of the cause<sup>54</sup>.

Another relevant caveat of the *De Angelis* regards, finally, the already Thomist belief that angelic substance serves as a likeness

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<sup>53</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 18, § 4.

<sup>54</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 18, § 7.

of God, starting from which the angel can achieve a non-*quid-*ditative and imperfect representation of its Creator. According to Suárez, angelic substances are likenesses of God, which is not to say that they are intentional representations of God, which would lead to an immediate cognition of God. Angelic substance can indeed play the role of a species to represent God, but can never actually be a species (expressly made for this purpose). Suárez defends such a conclusion by means of a twofold argument. On the one hand, indeed, he remarks that

although it is, in real being, just an imperfect likeness of God, the angelic essence perfectly represents God in His intentional being, since such is the mode of representation of an intentional species; and this can be simultaneous to the imperfect natural likeness, as it is for the other species<sup>55</sup>.

On the other hand, however, he emphasizes that

angelic essence is not made as though it was almost an instrument of the divine substance, supplying it as the intelligent object, which would be the function of an intelligible species; it is rather of such nature that it is, in its natural being, somehow formally similar to God: thus, it is not a species. And this can be confirmed, since the angelic substance can never represent God according to those things proper to God, but only insofar as it participates in the likeness of God; therefore, that substance can never play, regarding God, the function of species by which it immediately conceives the proper concept of God<sup>56</sup>.

Angelic substance can, therefore, serve as a substitute for a true species, but its nature is not that of a representative species. This explains why angelic substance does not represent God according to His unique attributes, but simply by way of a remote likeness of its Creator.

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<sup>55</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 18, § 5.

<sup>56</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 18, § 5.

Nevertheless, Suárez accompanies this view with a distinction between two possible ways of knowing God by a created intellect: 1) by a “nearly-respective concept”, by which God is known just as the cause of any effect is known “and so it is known evidently, as regards the answer about whether he exists (*an sit*)”, since, “by knowing evidently the effect, and the dependency of the effect from something else, it is known evidently that that on which it depends, exists”; 2) by an “absolute concept”, as God is known as infinite, omnipotent, etc., by excluding all attributes He shares with created beings<sup>57</sup>.

Now, according to Suárez, only “in the first way does the angel know God by the same act by which he knows itself”; indeed, it is impossible for any intellect whatsoever to culminate in absolute knowledge of a cause by starting only from the effect<sup>58</sup>. Indeed, from effects, one can infer the existence of a cause (the *an sit* of God), but not what and how this cause is (the *quid sit* of God). By their substance, then, angels are simply capable of acquiring evidence and the certainty that God exists, by way of a weak analogy between the angel’s intellectual nature and the nature of its Creator. In the first kind of knowledge, God is simply a secondary object, and He is conceived only as a term of the intrinsic dependency the angels itself has upon him<sup>59</sup>. In no way can an angel reach an absolute conception of God by starting from its self-knowledge.

Suárez subscribes to the view that the quidditative knowledge of God is progressively shaped by the angel, by an act distinct from its self-cognition. But how can an angel engage in such an act, by which it deviates from its first and primary object, i.e. itself, and which accompanies all of its other cognitive acts? Suárez only proves *a posteriori* that angels are able to think of God by abandoning their ability to simultaneously

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<sup>57</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 19, § 2.

<sup>58</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 19, § 2.

<sup>59</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 19, § 2.

thinking about created things, first of all themselves; indeed, this is the only possible explanation in light of the sentences previously approved.

As for how angels can produce such an act, Suárez provides more a network of explanations than a precise description of the process. First of all, he stresses that an angel needs to know itself in order to “ascend” to the cognition of God; indeed, “it cannot naturally ascend to Him primary and immediately, since it does not have the principle by which to ascend” and it can first ascend by way of an effect taken as a cognized medium<sup>60</sup>. Once it has ascended from the effect, the angel does not necessarily find an absolute representation of God associated with its own self-knowledge, as these two acts are entirely distinct from each other. Hence, angelic self-knowledge is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for knowledge of God<sup>61</sup>. Secondly, when the angel knows itself, it knows God by an “nearly-respective” concept, implying that it is something which it does not understand, but which it must try to know more perfectly and comprehensively<sup>62</sup>. Thirdly, such a secondary act is not produced by the intellect alone, but it is rather an effect of the angelic will:

the secondary act requires a special application of the mind, and an angel’s attention, as I explained; however, that application is free and depends on the will, since it cannot be ascribed to a need of an angel; therefore, it depends on an angel’s freedom that, once cognizing itself, it does not apply its intellect to another peculiar way to think of God; and, accordingly, the angel could have a cognitive act of itself without that absolute act of contemplation being of God<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 19, § 9.

<sup>61</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 19, § 5.

<sup>62</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 19, § 5.

<sup>63</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 19, § 5.

Thus, having “ascended” to the notion of God insofar as it is a cause of a given effect (a notion which is necessarily included in an angel’s natural self-cognition as its first object), nothing demands that the angel go further and conceive God “absolutely”. What pushes the angelic intellect to that point is just a choice of its free will, which, by a secondary and distinct act, shapes a non-quidditative representation of God’s essence.

## 5. The Puzzle of the Angelic Knowledge of Material Things

According to the schema provided above, among the principles that facilitate angelic intellection, one can also find a proximate principle on the side of objects, that is of species; to which one could add, for Suárez, the habit of the principles. These two items pertain especially to the knowledge that angels possess of non-spiritual objects, i.e. material things, given that, as we read, it needs no species distinct from its substance to know itself and God.

Like Aquinas, Suárez agrees that the angelic intellect knows such objects thanks to innate species, infused in them by God in the very act of creating them. Also this item can be demonstrated *a priori*, starting from the very possibility of angels, and by a rather evident inference. On the one hand, indeed, all created intellects need access to the object either in itself or through its intentional representation in a species. On the other hand, it is more appropriate to the angelic nature that its intelligence always be in act, and so that it does not need to acquire these species from somewhere outside of itself<sup>64</sup>. Such is the angelic nature, which is fully immaterial and altogether distinct from bodies. Thus, angels are unable to grasp species from sensation. This is also why Suárez agrees with Aquinas<sup>65</sup> that angels have

<sup>64</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 20.

<sup>65</sup> *ST*, I, 58, art. 1, *resp.*: “As the Philosopher states [in *De anima*, 3 and in



no agent intellect, as it would be altogether useless, given that angels have no object from which to abstract species<sup>66</sup>.

However, to find a more detailed explanation of this doctrine, one should turn again to the *De Angelis*, which contains a very precise discussion of this issue. There, Suárez implicitly deals with a serious problem; namely, the fact that the connatural notions placed in angelic minds by God prevent angels from having an actual experience of things in present time (as we do). How can angels interact with things in the present if their minds are closed boxes, and if it is impossible for material things to have any causal effect on them?

Let us reconstruct Suárez's complex account in a linear fashion. First of all, as Suárez argues, angelic species do not represent all beings, including those which are only possible and will never come to be in the future. Only possible objects are unnatural for angelic knowledge, which is entirely oriented toward the aims of its nature and its cosmological mission, and thus limited to what actually exists or can be<sup>67</sup>. On the other hand, Suárez stresses that *possibilia* are not, strictly speaking, the first objects of any act of cognition, and God does not know them, as He merely contemplates His own

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*Physics* 9], the intellect is in potentiality in two ways; first, 'as before learning or discovering', that is, before it has the habit of knowledge; secondly, as 'when it possesses the habit of knowledge, but does not actually consider'. In the first way an angel's intellect is never in potentiality with regard to the things to which his natural knowledge extends [...] In the second way an angel's intellect can be in potentiality with regard to things learnt by natural knowledge; for he is not always actually considering everything that he knows by natural knowledge. But as to the knowledge of the Word, and of the things he beholds in the Word, he is never in this way in potentiality; because he is always actually beholding the Word, and the things he sees in the Word. For the bliss of the angels consists in such vision; and beatitude does not consist in habit, but in act, as the Philosopher says [in *Ethic.* I, 8]" (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

<sup>66</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 21.

<sup>67</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 13, § 10.

essence<sup>68</sup>. The crucial discussion in the *De Angelis*, however, pertains to the question of how angels are able to know present, past and future material things. It would be impossible, in the present essay, to deal with Suárez's numerous arguments and positions herein, but I will start from the problem of present material things in order to deal with the others later. At the same time, indeed, Suárez's account of this problem sheds light on his whole understanding of angelic innatism.

One of the fundamental questions, which is remotely connected with the problem of morning/evening angelic knowledge<sup>69</sup>, is that of the causal role of singular material objects in the formation of a correspondent species in the angelic mind. Since angels are immaterial and essentially disembodied, material bodies cannot in any way directly and physically transmit their species to them, as it happens for our souls, which receive them through the body. How, then, can angels interact with physical reality and obtain knowledge of singular present things?

In the Scholastic tradition, Suárez found two accounts of this problem. One solution was very popular in the Thomistic school. According to Aquinas, direct intellectual knowledge can only be of the universal, whereas knowledge of the singular is always indirect and secondary<sup>70</sup>. Despite that, Aquinas rejects the view that angels know singulars only by means of their universal, quidditative species, insofar as angels need to know not only the essence of singulars (shared by many individuals

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<sup>68</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 13, § 10.

<sup>69</sup> Suárez links the two issues in *De Ang.*, II, ch. 3, § 6. He also briefly deals with the morning/evening cognition of angels in *De Ang.*, II, ch. 40. For more on Aquinas and Bonaventures with respect to this issue, see especially Faes de Mottoni 1992a, 1992b, 1995. On Augustine, see Klein 2018: 26–45.

<sup>70</sup> *ST*, I, q. 86, art. 1: “our intellect cannot directly and primarily know the singular in material things [...] what is abstracted from individual matter is the universal. Hence, the intellect only directly knows the universal. But indirectly, and as it were by a kind of reflection, it can know the singular” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947–1948).

and unable to provide the angel with a complete knowledge of the material being), but also their *hic et nunc*<sup>71</sup>. Angels should therefore have received the species of all singulars from God<sup>72</sup>:

The manner in which an angel knows singular things can be considered from this, that, as things proceed from God in order that they may subsist in their own natures, so likewise they proceed in order that they may exist in the angelic mind. Now it is clear that there comes forth from God not only whatever belongs to their universal nature, but likewise all that goes to make up their principles of individuation; since He is the cause of the entire substance of the thing, as to both its matter and its form. And for as much as He causes, does He know; for His knowledge is the cause of a thing, as was shown above [*ST*, I, q. 14, art. 18]. Therefore as by His essence, by which He causes all things, God is the likeness of all things, and knows all things, not only as to their universal natures, but also as to their singularity; so through the species imparted to them do the angels know things, not only as to their universal nature, but likewise in their individual conditions, in so far as they are the manifold representations of that one simple essence<sup>73</sup>.

Thus, Aquinas allows not only for angelic innate knowledge of universal quiddities, but even of singulars. Unfortunately, he

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<sup>71</sup> *ST*, I, q. 57, art. 2: “Consequently others have said that the angel possesses knowledge of singulars, but in their universal causes, to which all particular effects are reduced; as if the astronomer were to foretell a coming eclipse from the dispositions of the movements of the heavens. This opinion does not escape the aforesaid implications; because, to know a singular, merely in its universal causes, is not to know it as singular, that is, as it exists here and now. The astronomer, knowing from computation of the heavenly movements that an eclipse is about to happen, knows it in the universal; yet he does not know it as taking place now, except by the senses. But administration, providence and movement are of singulars, as they are here and now existing” (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

<sup>72</sup> *DV*, q. 8, art. 11.

<sup>73</sup> *ST*, I, q. 57, art. 2 (trans. Thomas de Aquino 1947-1948).

does not explain how such innate knowledge, which is eternal, can be coordinated with the correspondent processes in space and time with which the angel should interact. How can an angel experience the singular species of “Socrates, who plays the flute”, exactly when and where Socrates actually plays the flute?

I will show that Suárez aims to solve this puzzle, in order to retain Aquinas’ general scheme, but effectively completes the Thomistic view with that of certain Franciscan theologians. The latter think that angels are able to generate a species of the singular within themselves, thereby composing innate universal species. In this case, such a process is solely initiated by the presence of the object, either as an effective cause or as a merely objective final term of the cognitive act.

The matrix of this theory can already be found in Bonaventure, who held that angels seize the presence of the extramental thing *applicando et appropriando*, and from this seizure are able to reconstruct the quiddity of the singular material substance in their mind, by combining the universal species infused by God and without acquiring new species:

by appropriation [*per appropriationem*] [the angel] knows properly and distinctly, and there is neither any need for the reception of new species, nor must they be infinite, since the singulars lead back to the finite number of universals; but finite species can be composed in infinite ways. And thus the angel never knows many singulars, indeed it can even know many [things] without the reception of a new species, still not without turning its sight towards the thing. From that reception [the angel] does not receive the species from the knowable [thing], since it is [already] in act by the species it has; but, turning its sight it appropriates [of the thing’s] species, and appropriating it composes it, and knows and perceives the singular thing under its proper nature<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Bonaventure 1882-1902, II, d. 3, p. 2, art. 2, q. 1, ad. 3, col. 120b. On Bonaventure’s angelology, see especially Gilson 1943 (pp.192-216) as well as Keck 1998 and 2014. On this specific problem, see Noone 2011.

According to such a model, an angel therefore turns its mental sight toward the thing, and its mind is able to generate a corresponding concept of it in the intellect, without any efficient cause from the material thing.

Suárez, who does not quote Bonaventure, does not reject this view, but rather its weaker version, for which the material things cause efficiently in angels the generation of a new species<sup>75</sup>. A good example of this perspective can be found in Scotus' account of the issue:

An angel can advance in the cognition of things by receiving some actual notice from things. And I say that a notice can be received from a thing in three ways. The first notice is the [notice] of a singular. I prove this, by the fact that that an angel can know this singular as a "this", [and it can do this] because such cognition is not disproportioned, nor does it repugnates to the created intellect. But it cannot know the singular as "this" [singular] from universal reason [...] because this nature as a "this" is not determinately contained under the universality as a "this"; therefore, if something is known singularly as a "this", this happens for a proper species; but it is not probable that [in angels] are, concreated, all the species of every possible singular it can know, because, as they are infinite, [the angel] would have infinite species in act, of whatever being it can know<sup>76</sup>.

For Scotus, the only possible source of angelic knowledge of singulars are the things themselves, which participate in the generation of species as a partial cause<sup>77</sup>.

In turn, Suárez agrees with Aquinas, even if in a quite original way. He subscribes to the notion that angels naturally need

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<sup>75</sup> Suárez attributes this theory to Alexandre of Hales (*In Sent.*, II, q. 23, § 3-4), Richard of Middleton (*In Sent.*, II, d. 23, q. 2), Duns Scotus (*Or.* II, d. 3, q. 11), Gabriel Biel (*In Sent.*, II, d. 3, q. 2), Hervaeus Natalis (*In Sent.*, II, d. 3, q. 2 and *Quodlibet*, V, q. 6), Marsilius (II, q. 7, art. 1).

<sup>76</sup> *Or.*, II, d. 3, q. 11: 278.

<sup>77</sup> *Or.*, II, d. 3, q. 11: 279-280.

knowledge of the singular, but he also maintains that they do not receive any such species from material things<sup>78</sup>. In no way can a material substance act on a spiritual one as an efficient cause, either from the outside or as the final term to the representations of a thing in the angelic mind<sup>79</sup>. Therefore, one must believe, *a fortiori*, that the only possible cause for angelic knowledge of singulars is God himself<sup>80</sup>, insofar as He is the cause of angelic concreated species of material things.

From this perspective, Suárez is wholly an innatist and he believes that all angels' cognitions are infused or cocreated by God in angelic intellects. Though, by "cocreated", Suárez does not only think of innate species, which are created from the beginning together with the angel. Instead, he advances the possibility of there being a subsequent creation of other angels or creatures (say, for instance, a new human soul) by God. How can an angel have adequate notions of such a new beings' essence? This is just an epistemological hypothesis, but it is enough to argue that innatism does not exclude God's action even after the creation of an angel:

yet, it is true that such a *ratio*, although it rightly concludes that only God is the author (*effectorem*) of those species in the angel, it does not conclude immediately that such species are concreated together with the angel. Indeed, someone could say that they are made by God at a later time, as the object is progressively made appropriate to be intuitively known, at least by actual existence. [They would say so] because, by this way, one avoids the difficulties placed above, which stems just from the cocreation of those species, and [this account] fulfills angel's natural need to know the thing only intuitively, as soon as the thing exists [...]. Just as not all rational souls, although they cannot be made if not by God alone, are made from the beginning, but they are rather created gradually in bodies, depending on the occasion.

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<sup>78</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 6, § 9.

<sup>79</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 6, § 10-13.

<sup>80</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 7, § 4.

And I certainly approve this account [...] [namely that when] it is said that such species are cocreated with the angels, [this should be understood] more in this manner rather than they are received from the material things<sup>81</sup>.

From Suárez's perspective, angelic innatism is thus not the view according to which angels receive their possible and universal knowledge from God in the beginning. Rather, it is simply the view that angels receive all of their knowledge from God. It does not preclude the possibility that new singulars and their respective notions in angelic minds are created by God *successively*.

This doctrine should be understood as a reply to the claim that God creates new beings, and not as a doctrine concerning the ways that angels receive new knowledge about singular material things. Like Aquinas, Suárez thinks that angels have cocreated species of all existing singulars, and this explains why they have quidditative knowledge of those singulars<sup>82</sup>. Note that Suárez insists on this point about angelic innatism much more adamantly than does Aquinas. In fact, he claims that there are no peculiar species of universal predicates, genera or specific differences in angelic minds, but rather, only the species of all singulars<sup>83</sup>. This is, nonetheless, the most complete way in which a mind can know universals, i.e. by knowing all the individuals contained in it<sup>84</sup>. Despite this, it is not impossible for angels to disregard the singularity of the species it knows and to formulate universal common notions (i.e. "man", "substance", "quantitative being", etc.). Such notions are, however, very imperfect and confused ones, and are quite inappropriate to angelic intellects<sup>85</sup>, whose power nonetheless lies in being in act with respect to all existing intelligibles.

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<sup>81</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 6, § 14.

<sup>82</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 8, § 3.

<sup>83</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 8, § 3-4.

<sup>84</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 8, § 4.

<sup>85</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 8, § 11.

When angels know singulars, they know them by species representing their particular quiddity. Strictly speaking, however, there are no species of actually existing individuals in the angelic mind, but rather, general species, which Suárez calls *universalis in repraesentando seu causando*, through which it can know many by one single mental representation<sup>86</sup>. For instance, an angel does not need to possess the distinct species of “Socrates” and “Plato”, containing all their common parts (i.e. man, animal, rational). Rather, it possesses common notions (universals *in causando* that represent singulars) instantiated in many individuals by their specific reasons.

Besides that, the quidditative knowledge of a singular not only includes its essence, but also its existence, being that the latter is not distinguished *in re* from its essence. These are the two sides of the coin that our mind can formally distinguish, but which angelic intuitive knowledge cannot separate, insofar as angelic knowledge is entirely intuitive. For Suárez, while “perfectly seizing, for instance, heaven, an angel knows it as it is in itself, and thus such an essential vision of an object is quidditative; hence, it is a cognition of the thing according to the being of its essence (*esse essentiae*), and simultaneously, is the cognition of its existence, because it is an intuitive cognition”<sup>87</sup>.

Suárez’s reference to the intuitive nature of angelic knowledge is worth emphasizing, particularly in light of his account of how angels cognize the presence of individuals (beyond their quiddities and existence). Such cognition or “experience”, does not entail the production of any new species, but just the “specification” of the innate species of a singular toward a terminative object, i.e. the present thing. According to Suárez, the act of experiencing the present thing is nothing more than a *cognitio intuitiva*, i.e. a cognition of the thing as simultaneous to its presence outside the angelic mind. Hence, it seems that

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<sup>86</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 6, § 22.

<sup>87</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 8, § 2.



Suárez reasons between intuitive and abstract cognition in the wake of the Scotistic distinction<sup>88</sup>, and that the presence of the object alone is already enough to define angelic cognition as intuitive. As I will show, the cognition of the present, together with the experience of the past, is the only actual knowledge in the angelic mind, the innate notions of which are activated by the things present around them. However, the Jesuit does not provide any explanation of the causal link between the presence of the object and the acquisition of its species in the angelic mind. In fact, he just seems to retrieve the Franciscan account, and appears to deny any causal interaction between the angelic intellect and material things: whenever an object is present, its mind triggers an intuitive cognition of it.

But, what does the cognition of present things add to the innate knowledge of their quiddity? As I emphasized, a reconstruction of the whole process is important to understand Suárez's account of the angelic knowledge of past and future things, and this is especially true of angelic knowledge of the past. For Suárez, thanks to the experience of present things, angels also acquire mnemonic species too, by which they recall "the science of such truth desires by experience"<sup>89</sup>. Such knowledge is not, however, scientific or quidditative (which would remain immutable and which would be provided by the species), but is rather the experience of the current existence (or non-existence) of the things whose essence they know<sup>90</sup>. Otherwise, Suárez argues, an angel would not be able to know whether a

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<sup>88</sup> See *Qu. Quod.*, q. 7: 290: "abstract cognition can be of the non-existing as well as of the existing; the intuitive, instead, is only of what exists, insofar as it is existing". For more on such an important Scotistic distinction, see Langston 1993, Cross 2014 (pp. 43-45). On its usage among the Late Scholastics (Suárez, Poinsot, Francisco de Oviedo), see Heider 2016. See also Scribano's (2006: 144-160) remarks about Descartes.

<sup>89</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 6, § 23.

<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, any experimental acquired cognition must even be attributed to Christ himself, as Suárez remarks in *De Ang.*, II, ch. 12, § 13.

thing has past out of existence or if it remains to enter existence. But, such knowledge is not distinct from the knowledge of the presence of the thing, which in turn is actually known only when it is “recorded” in angelic memory:

it is necessary that, by the cognition of the present thing, something new, and real, is aroused in the angelic intellect, or to its species, so that it can successively know that such a thing was at any time. [...] This sentence is proven [...] because, after a thing passed by, an angel cannot know, by its infused species, things as they precisely are, that the thing was, or the time in which it was; therefore, it is necessary that such vision of the thing in its presence would bestow something to [angelic] knowledge, that the thing has been, because, if it conveys nothing, it is required superfluously. But it cannot bestow something, if not after that the angel reminded of having seen that thing, and from the power of such a memory it knows that the thing was<sup>91</sup>.

For Suárez, the experience of the presence of a thing does not add any new knowledge to the angelic mind, but a *mutatio aliqua* in the angelic mind. Such a change consists in nothing but in the fact that now, the angel recollects having experienced the object as present, but in the past. Without such an alteration of the species, the experience of the thing’s presence would be entirely lacking effect.

Regarding what such a *mutatio* concretely is, Suárez provides us with a more detailed account in the following paragraphs, where he identifies it with a true new species, generated by the experience of the angelic mind. However, this generation is not inconsistent with Suárez’s view of innatism as the principle that all angelic knowledge comes from God. Indeed, they do not provide any actual new knowledge to angelic minds, but are rather inner mental species that represent the very act of seizing the present thing (so, they do not represent things, but merely trace the cognitive act):

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<sup>91</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 12, § 9.

I answer that it is a certain species, proper to the past vision, that certainly does not represent immediately and directly the thing previously seen, since the angel already has a permanent species of such and object, and it cannot naturally have a new species of the same object [...]; therefore, that species represents immediately, and directly, the past act of vision; the act itself, indeed, is a spiritual thing, and accordingly it is an object intelligible in act, and so is representable through a species<sup>92</sup>.

The angelic act of cognizing the present thing is entirely spiritual, so it can be perfectly transfigured as a new mnemonic species in the angelic mind<sup>93</sup>. Once such a new species is formed, the angel is finally able to know not only the object's quiddity, but also its own experience about the object which it concretely seized. Such a memorization is thus a pivotal cognitive process in the angelic mind, since it allows the angel to build its own personal memory:

although such a species is not necessary for the act, while it is present, to be seen by the angel (because it can know it by itself), it is nevertheless necessary so that the angel can store it in its memory as a species, and only its track remains [in the angelic mind]. Indeed, so that the act may be known through such a species – not only according to its essence or possibility, but also according to the existence it once had (i.e., so that it is known that it was) – it is necessary that that species by which it is known be received [in the intellect] from the act itself, so that it represents the act not only as an object, but also as its cause<sup>94</sup>.

Finally, there is an important caveat with respect to the angelic knowledge of future things. Through engaging with this caveat, Suárez advances his discussion of how angelic knowledge happens in time and, overall, how angels can learn (so to

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<sup>92</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 12, § 13.

<sup>93</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 12, § 13-14.

<sup>94</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 12, § 14.

speak) despite all of their mental content coming from God. This problem gives rise to two main questions, the first of which concerns whether or not angels know future things through innate species. Herein, Suárez again follows Aquinas by denying such a possibility, relegating this mode of knowledge solely to God<sup>95</sup>. But, how can an angel shift from knowledge of the present to knowledge of the future which will soon be present?

Suárez deals with the issue by replying to the second question, which focuses on the possibility that angels cannot know future things because they can only know things in the present. Here he emphasizes the principle that time changes the intelligible species only in a relative sense, i.e. in their relationship with knowable things, as represented by the species changing in time. The angelic species does not represent objects “complexly” as changing in time, but rather “simply”, i.e. just in their quiddity. Accordingly, a thing which already does not exist is cognized by the angel solely by virtue of its essence, and as a possible (even if not merely possible, as we know) being.

Now, for Suárez, the species of possible future things do not represent anything concrete in the angelic mind, but rather, a confused possibility which is indifferent to whether or not a thing is actualized, and they remain as such until the thing is actually generated or created. Once this happens, the angel is able to know them as present and to thereby experience them intuitively:

if a thing does not exist, its essence is known through the species in a non-complex way, and its existence [is known] as possible in this or that time, if it is true that it will be at any future time; and it is not represented by the power of the species, nor does it appear in the object itself, while it is not in act; rather, it depends upon the extrinsic causes of the thing and from the habit to it, the habit of which is not determinately represented by the

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<sup>95</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 10, § 8.

species, but generally, under the reason of the possible, and also as indifferent to its future being or not being [...]. Yet, actually, once the thing already exists, it has intrinsically in itself an actual existence, which can be seen, and thus the same species that, in itself, represents the thing as indifferent, is [now] the sufficient principle of that act by which the thing is seen to be existing; [this] because the very act of knowledge, when it terminates in the thing, finds it (so to speak) as existing in act [...] and it sees in it the determination of the cause which is producing it<sup>96</sup>.

Therefore, Suárez employs Aquinas' framework by retracing his idea that angelic knowledge is entirely innate. Yet at the same time, he distances himself from Aquinas by introducing the anti-Thomistic views that angels have innate knowledge of all singulars and that they instantiate such abstract knowledge through concrete experiences of things in the present. Without increasing their innate knowledge, angels can interact with present material things, whose presence is, nonetheless, even the (not efficient) cause of a different act of cognition. In the latter, the innate species are used to compose a concrete experience of things as the present *termini* of the act; such an act, as we read, is nothing more than the memorization of a species corresponding to the act of seizing the present thing.

It may be superfluous to point out how Suárez's reassessment of angelic cognition seems to plant the seed of the many crucial novelties of Descartes' (though not only his) dualism and innatism,<sup>97</sup> which may very well have, directly or indirectly,

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<sup>96</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 11, § 10.

<sup>97</sup> *AT*, XI: 47; *CSM*, I: 97: "I do not wish to suppose any others but those which follow inevitably from the eternal truths on which mathematicians have usually based their most certain demonstrations – the truths, I say, according to which God himself has taught us that he has arranged all things in number, weight and measure. The knowledge of these truths is so natural to our souls that we cannot but judge them infallible when we conceive them distinctly". But see also *AT*, VI: 41; *CSM*, II: 131: "I have noticed certain laws which God has so established in nature, and of which he has

stemmed from it<sup>98</sup>. As for this item, there is yet another interesting feature of Suárez's account of angelic knowledge, which seems to anticipate Leibniz's idea of a complete essential concept of a singular, which includes all of its predicates. For Suárez, indeed, the already-non-existing thing even contains the whole of its "circumstances", and this is why the angel is able to collocate it in space and time once the thing comes to actual existence:

indeed, before the thing is, we do not say that it is known only abstractly, and according to its essence by such a species, but that it is known together with all of its circumstances, such as its place, time, etc., but only as possible, and abstracting from the exercised<sup>99</sup> (so to speak) actual existence, because it is not in the cognized object; though, once the thing exists, all of that is understood, by mean of the species, as existing in act, since such is found [now] in the thing<sup>100</sup>.

Hence, by their species, angels virtually know everything that currently exists and which will come into existence, including their specific coordinates in space and time, along with other "circumstances". Such knowledge lies in the angelic mind until the presence of the thing comes to be actualized via an act which terminates in the objective being of the external, existing thing:

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implanted such notions in our minds, that after adequate reflection we cannot doubt that they are exactly observed in everything which exists or occurs in the world". On Descartes' innatism, see Boyle 2008 and Nelson 2008.

<sup>98</sup> Many scholars recently contributed to point out angelology as one important, though neglected, source of modern philosophy. They are especially Schmutz 2002, Scribano 2006, Geretto 2010. In Guidi 2018: 243-258, I argued that Descartes' very innatism comes from Jean de Silhon's open adoption of the angelic model in his *L'immortalité de l'ame* (1634).

<sup>99</sup> On the duo *actus exercitus / actus signatus*, see the complete reconstruction provided by Nuchelmans 1988.

<sup>100</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 11, § 14.

when the thing already exists, the very thing's actual existence objectively determines a representation of the species, not causing any change in it, by which the act makes an almost formal an express representation of the thing as present. And so, the existing object in act, although it does not change the species, and neither efficiently contribute to the act, nonetheless is just as the necessary condition by way of the proportioned object, or matter, towards which the proper and determinate intuition of the actual existence of the thing can be turned<sup>101</sup>.

The presence of a thing alone is thus able to “attract” the innate species that represents it to the angel, determining an act of knowledge whose ending term is the objective being of the external thing as currently present. In this way, the angel can somehow “learn” without acquiring new knowledge; that is, it can experience something which it is possible as present and actually existing. Despite that, for Suárez, such species do not bestow any “clear and distinct” knowledge of future things to angels, until they actually come into existence. By means of these species, indeed, angels do not know that some things, whose distinct species it grasps but which are still not realized, will come into existence in a given time and space, and in a particular way. It knows such things, however, in a confused manner and without a distinct knowledge of their mutual connection:

that cognition is not produced by mean of the species, neither by an only uncognized medium, but through a very extrinsic cognized medium, such as that principle is, for which the angels has not the species of the possible thing, but only of the future ones. Whence, by mean of such medium it is not known clearly and distinctly when and how the thing is future, but absolutely and confusedly, that it is at any time future<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 11, § 14.

<sup>102</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 11, § 17.

Thus, angels have, from such innate species, only conjectural and uncertain knowledge of future things:

I say that such knowledge is not certain, but conjectural, because that principle, i.e. that *I do not have species, if not of things at any future time*, is not evident by the nature of the thing, nor the angel is certain, since it is not the natural principle, from which follows that it is evidently linked to and dependent on God's will, which is not necessary revealed to them. And indeed, in the thing itself it is enough uncertain<sup>103</sup>.

## 6. *Addendum: the Angelic Habit of the Principles*

I will make one last remark about Suárez's account of angelic knowledge, regarding the angelic cognition of principles; an issue which is only addressed in *DM* 35<sup>104</sup>. Do angels, which only possess the innate species of singulars, infer the habit of first principles from things or does God cocreate them together with their minds?

Suárez replies to this question by distinguishing between those principles which are necessary to intellectual cognition and those principles which are only known by conjecture. As for the first category, they must be purely innate, being indistinct from the natural light itself and thus, from the faculty of understanding. Indeed,

those habits are necessary only because of the potency, or due to some opposite inclination, it does not have enough proclivity to act, or to the fact that, for some imperfection, it is not sufficient to easily and promptly exercise the act [...]. Indeed, if none of these issues intervene, there is not reason to add a habit; other-

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<sup>103</sup> *De Ang.*, II, ch. 11, § 17.

<sup>104</sup> See also *De Ang.*, II, ch. 38, where Suárez defends the same views, which contains an open reference to *DM*, 35 (see *De Ang.*, II, ch. 38, § 8).



wise, it should place a habit even in operative natural powers. However, nothing of the said cause is found in the intelligences, regarding the said act of intellectual virtues, because their intellectual light is entirely inclined and it is even brought necessarily [...] in such an act, and in anyhow it is altogether uncumbered in operating; to such an extent that in such acts it does not need discourse or composition to know the conclusions from the principles, the effect from the cause, the property in essence, and thus it neither needs those habits, nor it is cause of them<sup>105</sup>.

By contrast, regarding what an angel knows by conjecture (i.e. contingent futures or heart cogitations), Suárez allows for the possibility of the acquisition of principles by habit, which though do not depend on intellective power, but on “our opinion or human faith”<sup>106</sup>.

## 7. Conclusion

As is true for many aspects of his thought, Suárez’s theory of the angelic intellect mediates between an expansive doctrinal heritage, received from the Middle Ages, and the modern need for new methodologies and accounts. In making such an attempt, in *DM* 35, the Jesuit formulates a rather original doctrine about how immaterial substances, which are wholly distinct from bodies, can be known by us. Besides that, he constructs an original and important account of how angels know not only themselves and God as pure and immutable forms, but even material things, which change and must be known progressively in time.

Suárez elaborates very complex accounts of all these items, together which seem to anticipate important concepts which

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<sup>105</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 24.

<sup>106</sup> *DM*, 35, s. 4, § 24. See also *De Ang.*, II, ch. 38, § 12.

would later be used by early modern philosophers, especially Descartes. First of all, Suárez's new methodology which he introduced in his angelology pivots on the possibility of putting together a non-quidditative discourse on angelic existence and essence, starting from our own experience as spiritual substances. Such an experience is the only access our intellect has to the realm of immaterial substances, which requires us perfecting the notion we already have of ourselves. It is by no means accidental that Descartes would employ such a strategy in his *Third Meditation*, in order to say how our mind could have factitious ideas of angels, but not of God<sup>107</sup>. Nevertheless, Suárez breaks the boundary between the theological and the metaphysical, by arguing for the possibility of building a *scientia de angelis* on the ground of his new metaphysical methodology.

However, Suárez's angelology goes even beyond Descartes in thinking of the angelic substance as the first proper object of a disembodied mind. It is true that the Medieval masters had already extensively discussed angelic self-knowledge. Nevertheless, Suárez's peculiar approach treats self-knowledge as the primary object of the angelic intellect, in a fashion entirely novel to the Scholastic context. Thus, for Suárez, angelic self-cognition is not only an effect which follows from the immediate overlapping of the intellect and an intelligible form, but from the primary way in which angels know other things. Like looking through a window, angels see all of reality by looking into themselves and by contemplating the connatural ideas with which God provided them.

Such a feature of angels generates the path applied by Descartes to the meditating mind in *Meditation Three*: from

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<sup>107</sup> *AT*, VII: 43; *CMS*, II: 29: "As far as the ideas which represent other men, or animals, or angels are concerned, I have no difficulty in understanding that they could be assembled from the ideas I have of myself, of corporeal things and of God, even if the world contained no men besides me, no animals and no angels".

the immediate grasping of angelic substance (in the case of Descartes, the *cogito*, of course) follows the necessary, if mediated, knowledge of its creator, i.e. God. Such a notion is not (as Descartes would argue in the *Meditations* and then partially withdraw<sup>108</sup>) a “clear and distinct” idea of God, but non-quidditative, confused knowledge, which allows the angel to know that its Creator exists and to progressively formulate a negative representation of Him. It is crucial to stress that, exactly as it is in Descartes, self-knowledge and grasping God as necessary are two moments of a unique inference (which

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<sup>108</sup> In *Meditation Three* Descartes simultaneously announces that the idea of God is yet “utterly clear and distinct”, and, that God’s infinity cannot be grasped by our minds (*AT*, VII: 46; *CSM*, II: 32). Descartes’ statement was criticized especially by Caterus (*AT*, VII: 96; *CSM*, II: 69) Descartes’ reply can be found in *AT*, VII: 113-14; *CSM*, II: 81-82: “In the case of infinity, even if we understand it to be positive in the highest degree, nevertheless our way of understanding it is negative, because it depends on our not noticing any limitation in the thing. But in the case of the thing itself which is infinite, although our understanding is positive, it is not adequate, that is to say, we do not have a complete grasp of everything in it that is capable of being understood. When we look at the sea, our vision does not encompass its entirety, nor do we measure out its enormous vastness; but we are still said to ‘see’ it. In fact if we look from a distance so that our vision almost covers the entire sea at one time, we see it only in a confused manner, just as we have a confused picture of a chiliagon when we take in all its sides at once. But if we fix our gaze on some part of the sea at close quarters, then our view can be clear and distinct, just as our picture of a chiliagon can be, if it is confined to one or two of the sides. In the same way, God cannot be taken in by the human mind, and I admit this, along with all theologians. Moreover, God cannot be distinctly known by those who look from a distance as it were, and try to make their minds encompass his entirety all at once. This is the sense in which St Thomas says, in the passage quoted, that the knowledge of God is within us ‘in a somewhat confused manner’. But those who try to attend to God’s individual perfections and try not so much to take hold of them as to surrender to them, using all the strength of their intellect to contemplate them, will certainly find that God provides much more ample and straightforward subject-matter for clear and distinct knowledge than does any created thing”.

Suárez, however, does not demonstrate). Angelic substance, then, knows itself by way of a non-representative species, this species being the *medium cognitum* by which the separate substance initiates a necessary inference, i.e. the existence of God.

Suárez's account of angelic knowledge of material things merits a final independent remark. Here, Suárez faces a traditional Scholastic embarrassment in explaining how angels – whose knowledge does not stem from the efficient action of bodies and comes entirely from God; God being the author of all of the content of the angelic mind – can know not only universal definitions, but also actual existences, of material things. Suárez accepts this challenge by elaborating solutions that might have provided posterity with a model to conceive the interaction between disembodied minds and material things. The Jesuit's strategy seems to consist of merging two models which he found in the Scholastic tradition, i.e. the Thomistic and the Franciscan. On one hand, indeed, he maintains that angelic minds know only by virtue of cocreated species, but he thinks of these species as representing the material object singularly and only under their essential predicates; moreover, he understands angelic innatism strictly as the doctrine by which angelic species come to God, thereby allowing the possibility of God introducing new such species to angelic minds. On the other hand, he subscribes to the possibility of there being a true angelic "experience" of such notions, i.e. the instantiation of such universal notions in cognitive acts terminating in the intuition of the presence of such objects. It is especially impressive how Suárez solves the problem of how this process takes place in time. The angelic mind is a virtual container of the connatural ideas of all things, currently existing and to come. These species, as Leibniz conceives representations in monads, represent such things in a confused manner, but nevertheless include all possible "circumstances" which concretely individuate them, at least in space and time.

According to Suárez, the present has the non-efficient virtue of extracting these notions from the status of pure potentialities and to trigger the act of experience of the singular thing's presence in the angelic mind. While the angelic mind has such an experience, its intellective act plays the role of generating a new intelligible species, which terminates in angelic memory, allowing angels to have a progressive conscience and experience; a notion precluded by previous Scholastic accounts.



## 6. Suárez's Entitative Extension and its Reception Until Descartes<sup>1</sup>

1. Historiographical Remarks – 2. Suárez and Prime Matter – 3. *Quantitas continua* – 4. Pedro da Fonseca's Extension *per se* – 5. Suárez's Scoto-Ockhamist Polyphony – 6. *Res extensa*: Descartes Against Suárez's *extensio entitativa* – 7. Internal Extension: Suárez among the Iberian Scholastics – 8. Internal Extension: Suárez among the French Scholastics – 9. Conclusion

### 1. Introduction

Sixteenth-century Scholastic theories of extension are certainly among the most interesting topics in Late Aristotelianism. They update the hylomorphic model in the face of the rise of Renaissance Naturalism, and reaffirm a crucial continuity between metaphysics and physics, paving the way for the rise of a 'pre-historic' mechanism<sup>2</sup> in the early seventeenth century.

Starting from this assumption, contemporary scholars looked at Late Scholasticism as a direct source for Descartes' concept of *res extensa*. Such an approach is credited especially

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<sup>1</sup>This is a revised version of the essay "Quantity Matters. Suarez's Theory of Continuous Quantity and its Reception Until Descartes", which was published for the first time in *Francisco Suárez: Metaphysics, Politics and Ethics*, edited by M. S. de Carvalho, M. Pulido, S. Guidi, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra 2020: 229-261. In reworking this text, I aimed especially at clarifying the writing style and making some passages more perspicuous.

<sup>2</sup>I borrow this expression from Garber 2013; I have discussed Garber's definition in Guidi 2017b.

with handing down two misleading historiographical premises: Descartes' isolation from his contemporaries, and his direct opposition to Aquinas' metaphysics (and, as regards his physics, to the hylomorphic model). Especially Dennis Des Chene has shown the complexity and the heterogeneity of the debate flowing into Descartes' direct sources (the Jesuits and Eustachius a Sancto Paulo), stressing the relevance of the Scotistic and the Occamist paradigm in the Aristotelian debate<sup>3</sup>.

This approach has produced many interesting results over the years. But its validity on the establishment of Descartes' sources still depends upon our actual and accurate knowledge of the Scholastic debate. The latter is so rich and heterogeneous that it is difficult not to miss the differences within the internal debate among the Scholastics, as well as to misunderstand the function of some major or minor characters.

This risk especially regards Suárez's metaphysics, on which historians of Philosophy have intensively focused their work in the last decades. Indeed, his uniqueness – also because of the lack of knowledge about other authors – remains hard to isolate from a more general context. In the light of Suárez's authority – which is sometimes overrated, portrayed as total and unquestionable on all the topics of the Scholastic debate – his account of matter and continuous quantity sometimes has been considered a direct source of the debate in Early Modern France, and especially of Descartes' theory<sup>4</sup>. But is such a conclusion based on a direct and detectable correspondence between the two authors, beyond all historiographical myth? Or is it rather based on a general resemblance, that would make Suárez's at most one of the possible perspectives, within a more complex topography?

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<sup>3</sup> Des Chene 1996; but see also 2000 and 2008.

<sup>4</sup> I am referring especially to Specht 1997. See also Specht 1987. On Suárez's theory of continuous quantity see also Secada 2012 and Schmaltz 2020. On quantity and spatial bodily individuation, especially regarding Eucharist and the concept of 'figure', see Caciolini 2017.



In this paper, I will attempt to show that Suárez's account of matter and quantity was original and peculiar, even though its reception was very complicated. Moreover, I shall argue that he cannot be considered a direct source (if not as a polemical target) of Descartes' concept of *res extensa*. To this aim, it is crucial to first circumscribe Suárez's theory, stressing what is the core of his perspective and what is new in it. Such an investigation needs to focus on Suárez's account of the relationship between space, matter, and the category of 'continuous quantity'. These are elements that the Aristotelian tradition traditionally linked to each other<sup>5</sup>, and which the Schools, es-

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<sup>5</sup> Aristotle's main discussion of quantity is the one in the *Cat.*, 4a20-5a35. Aristotle's account is quite ambiguous and can be summarized in the following points: 1) quantity can be distinguished into *discrete* and *continuous*; 2) discrete are "number and language", in which the unities keep their individuality in the continuum; 3) continuous are "lines, surfaces, bodies, and also, besides these, time and place"; 4) "some quantities are composed of parts which have position in relation to one another, others are not composed of parts which have position". Aristotle seems to attribute the 'mutual' position especially to the parts of *spatial* continuous quantities (lines, surfaces, solids, space), even if not to all continuous quantities (Aristotle openly rejects mutual position for time's parts). 5) Aristotle links the parts' mutual position to the *place* in which these parts are situated. The parts have different mutual positions as they have different places in space. The Philosopher, however, leaves it quite unsolved whether that place has to be understood as originally extended or not. It is known, however, from the *Physics* that place is not understood by Aristotle as a pre-containing already-self-quantitative space; place "has magnitude, but it has no body" (*Phys.* 209a16), since its right definition is "the innermost motionless boundary of what it contains" (212a20), and "a body is in place if, and only if, there is a body outside it which surrounds it". The extension of place depends thus upon the 'primary' extension (continuous quantity) of the body and the surrounding bodies. What is undecided is hence *what* the primary extensions of bodies are. See *Phys.* 187b14-21 for Aristotle's theory of *minima naturalia*, the "components into which a whole can be divided and which are actually present in it", as the source for the integral parts theory (see below, trans. Aristotle 1984-1985). Aristotle's minimal parts have a definite size and can be further divided. A widespread interpretation of this passage is that, for Aristotle, there is form that can act, and organize

pecially after the Council of Trent, related to the problem of Christ's body in the Eucharist<sup>6</sup>.

In the following paragraphs, I will try to provide a general overview of Suárez's theory of continuous quantity or extension, identifying its peculiarity within the Scholastic tradition<sup>7</sup>. It is thus crucial to deal with: *a*) Suárez's view about prime matter's metaphysical status; *b*) Suárez's position about the formal reason for continuous quantity in material substances.

## 2. Suárez and Prime Matter

An extended presentation of Suárez's theory of prime matter can be found especially in *DM* 13, which is entirely dedicated to material causality. It is widely known that in the Scholastic tradition one can find at least three broad ways of understanding the reality of prime matter (that is, matter, taken insofar as it is not involved in material composites):

- $A_M$ : the Dominican view, held especially by Aquinas (who took it from Averroes' reading of Aristotle). Aquinas thought of prime matter as entirely potential and not pro-

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in order to generate the bodily substance on any size, however small, of the material substratum. In the Middle Ages, this text had traditionally been read as allowing corpuscularianism. On Aristotle's concept of place see especially Sorabji, 1988, pp. 125-215. On Aristotle's minima see Murdoch 2001.

<sup>6</sup>What matters to the Scholastics is to prove that, in Transubstantiation, Christ's substance replaces the bread's substance while conserving the accidents, including quantity, which would remain unchanged (that is, the body keeps the bread's appearance while the substance changes into that of Christ). A brief history of the question is provided by Armogathe 1977: 3-40; see also Caciolini 2017.

<sup>7</sup>The most complete overview on Scholastic theories of matter and extension is Pasnau 2011: 17-95 (on matter) and 279-398 (on extension). The next paragraphs follow Pasnau's distinction between "Simple View", "Extensionless Parts View" and "Extended Matter Theories" (53-76).

vided with its own existence. Matter is fully dependent on the reality of form and composition<sup>8</sup>;

- S<sub>M</sub>: Scotus' doctrine (rooted remotely in the Franciscans' reception of Ibn Gabirol), which claims that prime matter has its own being. However, the latter should be understood mereologically, as matter's being is that of a part inside a whole, made up of matter and form<sup>9</sup>;
- O<sub>M</sub>: Ockham's account, according to which prime matter has its own actual reality even if it is potentially inclined to all forms<sup>10</sup>.

In *DM* 13, Suárez follows especially Scotus in considering matter as provided with its own ontological reality<sup>11</sup>. Suárez's solution renounces Aquinas' direct transmission of the being by the form, but not Scotus' idea of actual existence as a part of a mereological whole<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, Suarez holds that matter has an "actual existence distinct from form, even though it depends on it"<sup>13</sup>. Matter's being is not a merely potential one, but its existence is rather "incomplete", since it comes into

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<sup>8</sup>This is Aquinas' position at least from the *De principiis naturae ad fratrem Sylvestrum* [1976]. But see for instance *ST*, I, q. 7, art. 2, ad 3: "Primary matter does not exist by itself in nature, since it is not actually being, but potentially only; hence it is something concreated rather than created" (trans. Thomas de Aquino, 1947-1948). On Aquinas' theory of matter see especially the precious work by Petagine (2014); but see also Faitanin 2001.

<sup>9</sup>*Or.*, II, d. 12, q. 1, p. 560. On Scotus' theory of matter see especially Cross 1998: 14-33, but also Gilson 1952: 432-444. A recent, complete overview on the Medieval Franciscan theories on matter is Petagine 2019 (on Scotus: 29-62).

<sup>10</sup>On Ockham's theory of matter see especially Goddu 1984: 99-111. See again Petagine 2019: 143-164.

<sup>11</sup>Not differently from O<sub>M</sub>, Suárez still thinks of matter as specifically the same for both the celestial and sublunar bodies. See *DM*, 13, s. 11, § 10, where Suárez argues for a specific unity but a *numerical* distinction between celestial and sublunar matter.

<sup>12</sup>See Suárez's theory in *DM*, 4 (on unity) and *DM*, 5 (on individuation). On Suárez's theory of individuation see Gracia 1982 and 1985; see also Faitanin 2011. On Leibniz's use of Suárez's theory see Di Bella 2010. On Suárez's theory of prime matter see Åkerlund 2015 and 2019.

<sup>13</sup>*DM*, 13, s. 4, § 9. But see *DM*, 13, s. 5 too.

being as a part of a hylomorphic whole, and it is intrinsically “disposed toward the form”. According to Suárez, in its being, matter is essentially connected with continuous quantity. Suárez focuses on this crucial point especially at the end of *DM* 13, where he defines the relationship between quantity and matter as “inseparable and mutual, since in every being composed of matter quantity is needed and all quantitative bodies are necessarily composed of matter”<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. *Quantitas continua*

But where, for Suárez, does continuous quantity or extension come from in material substances? Or rather, what is the metaphysical element which makes a body something quantitative and continuous, i.e. physically extended, and definable under the *praedicamentum* of ‘continuous quantity’? This element is what the Scholastics used to call the ‘formal reason’ of quantity<sup>15</sup>.

Touching in *DM* 13 upon the source of continuous quantity, Suárez speaks of a “natural connection” that makes matter the very “root and the ground” of continuous quantity<sup>16</sup>. Matter itself provides the ontological basis for the fact that a body is quantitative and continuous, and takes place in the category

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<sup>14</sup> *DM*, 13, s. 14, § 15. Here Suárez is also retracing Aquinas’ idea that the so-called ‘dimensive quantity’ represents matter’s first disposition. According to Aquinas, quantity is the first accident of material substances; hence all other accidents must pass through its intermediation in participating in bodily substance (see *ST*, III, q. 77, art. 2, *resp.*: “the first disposition of matter is dimensive quantity, hence Plato also assigned ‘great’ and ‘small’ as the first differences of matter. And because the first subject is matter, the consequence is that all other accidents are related to their subject through the medium of dimensive quantity”, trans. Thomas de Aquino, 1947-1948).

<sup>15</sup> For a definition of the concept of formal reason see Chrysostomus Iavellus, *Quaestiones in Aristotelis XI Metaphysices libros* [ed. 1576], bk. 5, q. 20: “by ‘formal reason’ I mean the quidditative concept, given through predicates *per se* and *in primo modo*”.

<sup>16</sup> *DM*, 13, s. 14, § 15.

of continuous quantity. Quantity is, in turn, a “true and real feature, that has its own entity and is naturally and necessarily joined with matter’s entity”<sup>17</sup>.

Unfortunately, the Jesuit does not provide us with more information about this connection, sending us to the following discussion on continuous quantity in *DM* 40<sup>18</sup>. Here Suárez develops his own position discussing and criticizing the entire Scholastic tradition. Thus, it will be useful to quickly recall some of the previous accounts that the School provided for continuous quantity’s formal reason in material substances (that is, in those substances in which matter is already combined with form). One can follow the tripartition below:

- $A_{MQ}$  [Matter + Quantity = Divisibility]: According to Aquinas<sup>19</sup> (but especially to the following Thomists), quantity is concomitant with divisibility. The latter, thanks to quantity, naturally and potentially resides in matter. Quantity is imposed on matter by form, and it makes matter divisible into parts in act. Thanks to quantity, each part of matter can be identified as ‘this’, and is thus able to receive different forms. Accordingly, divisibility can be defined as the essence of *quanta* bodies, but not of matter itself, which becomes divisible in act only for the action of quantity. Thus, everything that is quantitative is divisible, i.e. has parts, and everything that has parts is *quantum*. But what does ‘being extended’ and ‘divisible’ ultimately mean? The wrong attribution of the treatise *De natura loci* pushed many theologians to attribute to Aquinas the idea that the ultimate *ratio* of quantity is measurability<sup>20</sup>. Despite that, the Thomistic tradition devel-

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<sup>17</sup> *DM*, 13, s. 14, § 15: “quantity is a true and real property, whose entity is naturally and necessarily joined with the entity of matter”.

<sup>18</sup> Which precedes and introduces the discussion on discrete quantity in *DM* 41.

<sup>19</sup> On Aquinas’ theory of continuous quantity see especially Lang 2002. See also Petagine 2014: 123-160.

<sup>20</sup> Pseudo-Thomas Aquinatis, *Opuscula theologica et philosophica tam certa quam dubia* [ed. 1864], *De natura loci*, § 52, *resp.*

oped a theory according to which quantity is primarily divisible and extended. As for this doctrine, an especially important account is that of Capreolus, followed by several Renaissance Thomists like Soncinas<sup>21</sup> and Javelli<sup>22</sup>. Against Scotus, Capreolus developed a crucial view of the relationship between divisibility and quantity. For him, quantity bestows on matter only a specific kind of division. It consists in having different parts in the sense that each part is not the other, and not in the sense that the parts are separated in act. Such parts are nothing but potential ones, which can be identified in the continuum by the fact that each of them is not the others. Yet this kind of division is, for Capreolus, internal to quantitative being, in which one can distinguish from each other different parts, and not a real separation or distinction in act. At the same time, what is intrinsically divisible is, strictly speaking, quantity itself, and not the *quantum* body as such. For Capreolus a body becomes divisible insofar as it is subject to the action of quantity (which is divisible in itself), and not insofar as it is *quantum*, i.e. quantified by that action<sup>23</sup>.

- $S_{MQ}$  [Matter  $\rightarrow$  Divisibility + Quantity]: The account of Scotus<sup>24</sup>, who deals with the issue relating it especially to the Eucharist, is probably the hardest to reconstruct. Indeed, its presentation is often incomplete and scattered over many of his works. Scotus argues that divisibility is the “first property (*passio*) of quantity”<sup>25</sup> but not its essence. Matter actually has essential divisibility<sup>26</sup> into pre-categorical parts, which does

<sup>21</sup> Paulus Barbus, *Quaestiones Metaphysicales acutissimae* [ed. 1579], bk. 5, q. 21.

<sup>22</sup> Chrysostomus Iavellus, *Quaestiones in Aristotelis XI Metaphysices libros* [ed. 1576], bk. 5, q. 20.

<sup>23</sup> Johannes Capreolus, *Defensiones theologiae divi Thomae Aquinatis* [ed. 1900-1908], II, d. 19, q. 1, art. 3, § 1, *Ad argumenta Scoti*, ad 2: 166, col. 2.

<sup>24</sup> On Scotus’ metaphysics of continuous quantity see especially Cross 1998: 116-158.

<sup>25</sup> *Sc. Met.*, q. 9: 252.

<sup>26</sup> *Rep. Par.*, II, d. 12, q. 2, § 7: 17.

not depend upon quantity and is infinite in potency. These non-*quanta* parts are not exterior to each other. The peculiar role played by continuous quantity is indeed that of arranging these parts *unam extra aliam*, generating extension, but also entailing the divisibility of the extended continuum into quanta parts. Furthermore, the extension and distinction between the parts is not understood by Scotus circumscriptively. *Quanta* parts are potential, and each one is infinitely divisible, but such a division is always internal, i.e. it is relative to the whole they are involved in. The ultimate cause of the parts' distinction is indeed their own internal arrangement within the whole, which is dependent on quantity but which God could separate from quantity. In Eucharist, the parts of Christ's body thus keep their own internal and reciprocal "ordering (*positio*) of the parts to the whole"<sup>27</sup>, being extended, even though not locally extended.

- O<sub>MQ</sub> [Matter = Quantity]: According to Ockham, quantity is not an accident lying between substance and its qualities, but rather a direct quality of the material substance<sup>28</sup> (this doctrine is often criticized by other Scholastics as it affirms the identity of what is *quantum* and *quantitas*). Matter is essentially quantitative, impenetrable, and extended and not even God's absolute power could remove quantity from matter<sup>29</sup>. Furthermore, such extension is understood by Ockham as circumscriptive, since matter is extended in place, with *partes extra partes*. For Ockham, quantity is hence directly the reason for the mutual impenetrability of bodies.

In *DM* 40, Suárez stands in his defense for S<sub>MQ</sub>, attacking O<sub>MQ</sub><sup>30</sup>. According to Suárez, Ockham's account removes all

<sup>27</sup> *Or.*, IV, d. 10, q. 1: 184-186.

<sup>28</sup> William of Ockham, *Tractatus de Quantitate* [ed. 1986], X, p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> William of Ockham, *Summa logicae* [ed. 1974], I: 143-144.

<sup>30</sup> See Schmaltz 2020: 169-177. As Schmaltz remarks (170), Suárez is con-

distinction between the material substance and its *quantitas molis* (namely, bulk). Such a doctrine must be rejected notably for theological reasons. Indeed, “reason cannot properly demonstrate”<sup>31</sup> this necessity, which however appears clearly if considering the sacred mystery of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, two different substances (the bread and, then, Christ’s body), share the same accidents, including quantity. Thus, Transubstantiation requires thinking of quantity as an accident of matter, and not as its essence.

However, there are also natural reasons to reject  $O_{MQ}$ . In *DM* 40, section 2, Suárez stresses that quantity should be distinct from substance, which is directly responsible for the immediate and direct cause of bodies’ impenetrability. According to Suárez, matter is not immediately quantitative, meaning (as Ockham did) that continuous quantity immediately causes the impenetrability of material bodies<sup>32</sup>. However, it is worth noting that, rejecting  $O_{MQ}$ ’s idea of possible identification of matter and categorical quantity, Suárez does not reject at all the possibility of a material primary extension. This remains an option, in the case that such an extension was non-categorical (such is, as I shall argue, Suárez’s solution to the issue).

As for  $A_{MQ}$ , it is at issue and then rejected, especially in section 4. Here Suárez takes issue with those who identify quantity’s formal reason in the divisibility into parts. Suárez’s disputation here becomes crucial, as it binds together, and then follows, Scotus’ and Fonseca’s criticism of  $A_{MQ}$ . Once again, it might be useful to say a few words on Suárez’s premises, and especially about Pedro da Fonseca’s discussion of the Dominican doctrine that continuous quantity stems from divisibility, introduced in matter by form.

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cerned especially with defending the ‘realist’ understanding for which quantity is a real being, distinct from material substance itself.

<sup>31</sup> *DM*, 40, s. 2, § 8.

<sup>32</sup> *DM*, 40, s. 2, § 11-13.



#### 4. Pedro da Fonseca's Extension *per se*

In his Commentary on the *Metaphysics*<sup>33</sup>, Fonseca reported and rejected  $A_{MQ}$ , the doctrine that divisibility is the mark of and the reason for quantity, i.e. everything that is divisible into extended parts is such by virtue of quantity, which is intrinsically divisible. This view, as I mentioned, was defended by many Dominicans, especially Capreolus. Fonseca discarded it, arguing that divisibility is rather an *effect* of an already present quantitative nature of a body, and not vice-versa. The body's aptitude for divisibility follows its already quantitative nature. Rather, for Fonseca, the primary feature of quantity, and so of all quantitative bodies, is to be extended *per se*, before being divisible<sup>34</sup>. Only from such a primary extension stems that divisibility into parts which many Scholastics point to as the formal reason of quantity.

Rejecting the Dominican identification of divisibility with quantity, Fonseca's account was hence characterized by two elements. The first one is a primary extension of the body, caused only by the addition of quantity to matter. This extension is previous to and independent of divisibility and shows that continuous quantity is the ground of divisibility. The second element is some non- and pre-quantitative parts of the substance (*partes substantiae*), which Fonseca called "integral parts", and that are organized by quantity.

As for these parts, Fonseca drew most of his account from Scotus, according to whom, as I mentioned, matter is divisible (that is, it has parts) not because of quantity but "in essence"<sup>35</sup>. These parts were also accepted by Domingo de Soto<sup>36</sup>, a major reference of Fonseca. But once more disagreeing with Capreolus and the Dominicans, Fonseca seems to maintain that they are not potential, but real and in act<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> *CMA*, II, bk. 5, ch. 13, q. 1, s. 2: 648-649.

<sup>34</sup> *CMA*, II, bk. 5, ch. 13, q. 1, s. 3: 649-650.

<sup>35</sup> *Rep. Par.*, II, d. 12, q. 2, p. 17.

<sup>36</sup> Domingo de Soto, *In Porphyrii Isagogen* [ed. 1574], q. 2: 441.

<sup>37</sup> Schmalz 2020: 184, n. 56, reports the opposite, referring to *CMA*, II,

With special regard to Suárez's later account, it is worth pointing out that Fonseca's integral parts are not *partes extra partes*, i.e. locally extended parts, differentiated based on the external place they occupy. As with Scotus, for Fonseca the parts which constitute a material substance can be arranged in both of two ways. The first one is  $S_{MQ}$ 's order with respect to the whole. In this case, many parts are reciprocally ordered "before" or "after", being internally extended and without any relationship with place<sup>38</sup>. The second way is a local order, which is external and relative to the place<sup>39</sup>. Fonseca maintains that the integral parts, which under the action of quantity compose the primary and internal extension of a whole, do not have any kind of extension *per se*, either *in toto* or in place. This is why Fonseca, following especially Paul of Venice<sup>40</sup>, describes them as "*partes et partes*", opposing them to the *partes extra partes* that define the presence of a whole in a place after the intervention of quantity. Not unlike what Capreolus himself maintained, what organizes these parts is then continuous quantity. Quantity bestows on them an internal extension, relative to the whole. By contrast, the local extension, which is traditionally defined as *habere partem extra partem*, is nothing but that primary extension *in toto*, considered insofar as it is in place.

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b. 5, ch. 6, q. 6, s. 2: 350-351 (Fonseca's doctrine of distinction). Yet, in *CMA*, II, bk. 5, ch. 12, q. 1-2, Fonseca does not seem to understand the integral parts as potential, but rather as substantial, and in act. On the other hand, they are parts of what Cross (1998: 139-147) calls "H-unity" (unity of homogeneity), whose integral parts are all actual (141).

<sup>38</sup> Also the Coimbra Jesuits subscribe to this view (see Collegium Conimbricense, *Commentarii in octo libros Physicorum...* [ed. 1592], I ch. 2, q. 2, art. 3). See Schmaltz 2020: 172, n. 17.

<sup>39</sup> *CMA*, II, bk. 5, ch. 13, q. 2, s. 3: 649-650.

<sup>40</sup> *CMA*, II, bk. 5, ch. 13, q. 2, s. 3: 649: "in iis est Paulus Venetus cap. 12 sua *Meta.*".

## 5. Suárez's Scoto-Ockhamist Polyphony

Let us now come back to Suárez's discussion. Its main peculiarity is that of trying to combine Scotus' and Fonseca's primary internal extension with an original understanding of  $A_{MQ}$ , and to implicitly argue that, in turn,  $A_{MQ}$  can be reconciled with some aspects  $O_{MQ}$ .

First of all, Suárez backs up Scotus and Fonseca, and rejects  $A_{MQ}$ 's pre-eminence of divisibility over quantity. Later he introduces Fonseca's position, as if it claimed that divisibility stems from a "distinction of the parts" that lies *per se* in the nature of the material substance<sup>41</sup>. Yet, immediately afterwards, Suárez further tries to combine Capreolus'  $A_{MQ}$  and Fonseca's  $S_{MQ}$ , claiming that, even if the Scotistic account is *true*, it is actually *wrong* in understanding and criticizing  $A_{MQ}$ . Indeed,  $A_{MQ}$ 's divisibility, which would be the formal reason for continuous quantity, is actually nothing but the "extension or the division of the parts"<sup>42</sup>. The source of this claim is, for Suárez, Capreolus himself, and his definition of divisibility as a mutual negation of the parts<sup>43</sup>. This passage allows Suárez to equate  $A_{MQ}$  and  $S_{MQ}$ , claiming that continuous quantity or extension is preceded by the essential difference between non-quantitative parts, namely by *their reciprocal exclusion and difference*.

But how can reciprocal exclusion be effective before continuous extension or quantity? Does Suárez maintain that the parts are distinguished by a *negatio unius ab alia*, as Capreolus held? What is really crucial and new in Suárez's account is precisely the understanding of the difference and extension of the parts, or what he calls *extensio entitativa*. Distancing himself from  $S_{MQ}$ 's integral parts, which are relative to an already quantitative whole, Suárez maintains that  $A_{MQ}$ 's recipro-

<sup>41</sup> *DM*, 15, s. 4, § 3.

<sup>42</sup> *DM*, 15, s. 4, § 4.

<sup>43</sup> *DM*, 15, s. 4, § 4.

cal negation generates a pre-categorical extension of the body.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, negation is the mutual exclusion of the parts, based not on their internal position within the whole, but rather on the absolutely different *entity* that each part of matter has, independently of the others. Accordingly, Suárez goes as far as to argue that this exclusion gives the parts a *partes extra partes* difference<sup>45</sup>. The latter is indeed the reason for a primary, spatial (but still not properly local) extension. Each part is not only different, but also ‘outside’ the others, generating an entitative extension which anticipates that of categorial quantity (even though such extension is still not impenetrable).

Therefore, Suárez seems to move the core position of  $O_{MQ}$  (matter is intrinsically quantitative and extended) onto a pre-categorical level, introducing a pre-categorical and still-not-quantitative extension, the entitative one, which lies behind the extension caused by continuous quantity. Nevertheless, the latter bestows on material substances only the bodily extension or bulk that afterwards causes the aptitude to the place of a body.

What is, therefore, Suárez’s most original contribution to the Scholastic debate on continuous quantity? He disconnects the traditional association of extension and categorial quantity, introducing a pre-categorical extension of the parts. The material substance is *per se* divisible because of material, pre-categorical parts provided with their *extensio entitativa*, before being *quanta*<sup>46</sup>. Extension in this sense would be rather similar to  $O_{MQ}$ , except that Ockham’s matter is directly understood as categorially *quanta* and naturally impenetrable. By contrast,

<sup>44</sup> *DM*, 15, s. 4, § 7-8, 13-14, 27.

<sup>45</sup> *DM*, 15, s. 4, § 27. According to Suárez – who is mixing many different positions in order to get his own – the idea of many entitative *unam extra aliam* parts is inherited from the Dominicans, and especially from Domingo de Soto. Actually, Soto did not allow for such a scenario if not as a *metaphysical* possibility, for God’s *supernatural* action, to keep a still quantitative-like actual extension even after removing quantity (Domingo de Soto, *In Porphyrii Isagogen* [ed. 1547], q. 2: 441).

<sup>46</sup> *DM*, 15, s. 4, § 13.

Suárez's matter is intrinsically divided into parts, each one provided with a pre-categorical extension, which makes the parts be reciprocally different. It is no accident that the Spanish Jesuit attacks  $A_{MQ}$ 's demand that divisibility is an effect of categorial quantity and, at the same time, he also rejects  $S_{MQ}$ 's (and Fonseca's) notion of integral parts distinguished as *partes et partes*<sup>47</sup>. Indeed, Suárez argues that "having parts" is something that matter owns *per se*, but this also means that "it has by itself some extension", i.e. entitative extension.

Accordingly, at the end of his *tour de force* Suárez classifies *three* different kinds of extension: 1) pre-categorical *extensio entitativa*, "to which the effect of quantity does not pertain" and which is still not impenetrable; 2) "local extension", which is to be actually placed somewhere and which "follows quantity"; 3) categorial "quantitative extension", which is the "aptitude to a place" of a substance<sup>48</sup> and the ultimate cause of bodies' bulk and impenetrability<sup>49</sup>. According to Suárez, the relationship between matter and quantity follows this scheme ( $SZ_{MQ}$ ):

- $SZ_{MQ1}$ : matter has entitative, non-quantitative parts (1) extended "one outside the other";
- $SZ_{MQ2}$ : thanks to continuous quantity, a material substance receives physical extension and bulk (3), which is the formal reason for continuous quantity itself;
- $SZ_{MQ3}$ : thanks to  $SZ_{MQ2}$ , a material substance has the aptitude to place, and therefore local extension (2).

It is worth stressing that the formal reason for continuous quantity, i.e. the aptitude of a body to the place, is also understood by Suárez as an "aptitude to expel other bodies, or to resist" them, i.e. Ockham's impenetrability. But, whereas Ockham attributed it to a direct quantitative nature of mat-

<sup>47</sup> *DM*, 15, s. 4, § 12, 21-22.

<sup>48</sup> *DM*, 40, s. 4, § 15.

<sup>49</sup> See Schmaltz 2020: 172-179.

ter, Suárez attributes it to the action of quantity, which causes an aptitude to place. As for impenetrability, the Jesuit stresses that it cannot be considered the essence of continuous quantity, as Ockham maintained, but rather a property of *quanta* bodies, and a consequence of the bulk that continuous quantity bestows on material substances. Rather, the essence of continuous quantity is to be “a form, which bestows on things a bodily bulk, or extension”. Form hence transmits to already-extended matter, a quantitative aptitude to place, or extension, or bulk, which causes with impenetrability, and from which stems the local situation of bodies in the place.

## 6. *Res extensa*: Descartes against Suárez's *extensio entitativa*

Having specified Suárez's theory of extension, it is now possible to compare Suárez's and Descartes' accounts of extension, trying to answer the following question: is Suárez's *extensio entitativa* a source of Descartes' *res extensa*?

It is relevant to stress that what Suárez puts forward in the *DM* 40 is the pre-eminence of matter's extension over continuous quantity, as well as the physical extension and the physical divisibility of matter. Yet Suárez's theory clearly denies that such an entitative extension is coincident with its position in space (*locata circumscriptive*), or directly with bulk, which is the formal reason for quantity. Hypothetically, Suárez's *extensio entitativa* can be materially and spatially extended, without being, for that reason, also quantitatively and locally extended. Conversely, Descartes' *res extensa* is primarily extended, whereas matter's substance is fully reduced to what the Aristotelians called continuous quantity. The possible survival of matter without quantity is, in the view of Descartes, meaningless; first of all, because continuous quantity is the essence of matter. Stressing the extended nature of matter, Suárez's account of extension thus seems to be not only different from Descartes' *res extensa*, but even the opposite of it.

It might be worth noticing that already the young Descartes seems to be quite informed about the Jesuit debate. In *Rule 14* he indeed polemically advises his reader that

we are concerned with an extended object, thinking of it exclusively in terms of its extension, and deliberately refraining from using the term ‘quantity’; for there are some philosophers so subtle that they have even distinguished quantity from extension<sup>50</sup>.

According to the *Rules*, extension and continuous quantity should be understood indeed as absolutely identical. It is hard to say if Descartes’ passage is here addressed directly to Suárez, but (as I will show) this possibility is confirmed especially in the light of the reception of Suárez’s account in Spain and France.

However, another crucial reference to Scholastic quantity can be found again in *The World*, where Descartes states very clearly that – imagining the ‘new world’ he is recreating in the imaginary spaces<sup>51</sup> – one should *not* think of the matter he is introducing as

the ‘prime matter’ of the Philosophers, which they have stripped so thoroughly of all its forms and qualities that nothing remains in it which can be clearly understood. Let us rather conceive of it as a real, perfectly solid body, which uniformly fills the entire length, breadth, and depth of this great space<sup>52</sup>.

What Descartes underlines here is the total identity between matter and extension. Therefore, the very concept of ‘prime matter’, understood as matter existing independently from continuous quantity, does not make sense at all. According to Descartes’ famous rejection of vacuum, there is no room for any possible prime matter which does not immediately coincide with extension in place, so much so that to *be* material *is* to be both solid and extended, that is to be spatial (to be quantitative). Descartes recalls this concept immediately afterward:

<sup>50</sup> *AT*, X: 447; *CSM*, I: 62.

<sup>51</sup> *AT*, XI: 32 ff.; *CSM*, I: 90 ff.

<sup>52</sup> *AT*, XI: 33; *CSM*, I: 91.

Let us suppose, moreover, that God really divides it [matter] into many such parts, some larger and some smaller, some of one shape and some of another, however we care to imagine them. It is not that God separates these parts from one another so that there is some void between them: rather, let us regard the differences he created within this matter as insisting whole in the diversity of the motions he gives to its parts<sup>53</sup>.

As with the Scholastic model, one can think of separated parts of the *res extensa*, but these parts are never really separated. As in  $A_{MQ}$  and  $S_{QM}$ , for Descartes the parts are *not* separated with respect to an absolute containing space (or a pre-categorical entity). Descartes rather refers to their *mutual* already-quantitative position. Therefore, he can identify the source of the difference between the parts in their different *motion*, i.e. in a modal difference, or a difference of reason, within an entirely quantitative matter.

A few lines later, Descartes again repeats his warning against the Philosophers' account of 'prime matter' and quantity:

the philosophers are so subtle that they can find difficulties in things which seem extremely clear to other men, and the memory of their 'prime matter', which they know to be rather hard to conceive, may divert them from knowledge of the matter of which I am speaking. Thus, I must tell them at this point that, unless I am mistaken, the whole difficulty they face with their matter arises simply from their wanting to distinguish it from its own quantity and from its external extension – that is, from the property it has of occupying space. In this, however, I am quite willing for them to think they are right, for I have no intention of stopping to contradict them. But they should also not find it strange if I suppose that the quantity of the matter I have described does not differ from its substance any more than number differs from the things numbered. Nor should they find it strange

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<sup>53</sup> *AT*XI: 34; *CSM*, I: 91.



if I conceive its extension, or the property it has of occupying space, not as an accident, but as its true form and essence<sup>54</sup>.

It is crucial to notice that Descartes does not set another understanding of the concept of prime matter in opposition to the Philosophers' one. He simply denies the concept of a prime matter at all, as it would require thinking of a paradoxical matter-non-matter devoid of bodily quantity, or a matter which does not occupy external space. According to Descartes, matter can never be 'prime', as if it was previous to extension or continuous quantity. The latter is not (as in the Scholastic account), an attribute or an accident, it is rather its essence.

While Suárez's *extensio entitativa* is not already a quantitative body, Descartes' matter is perfectly reducible to physical bulk. It is essentially impenetrable and geometrical, as the Nominalists defined continuous quantity. It is no accident that, examining the idea of material things in *Meditation Five*, Descartes writes:

Quantity, for example, or 'continuous' quantity as the Philosophers commonly call it, is something I distinctly imagine. That is, I distinctly imagine the extension of the quantity (or rather of the thing which is quantified) in length, breadth and depth. I also enumerate various positions and local motions; and to the motions I assign various durations...<sup>55</sup>

This passage shows clearly that Descartes agrees to identify his notion of extension and continuous quantity. But, at the same time, Descartes also thinks that matter is entirely reducible to what he calls a "corporeal nature which is the object of pure mathematics", that is continuous quantity itself. Matter is nothing abstracted from extension, at the point that its essence is nothing but being actually extended. A definitive overview on the issue is furthermore provided by Descartes in the *Second Part* of the *Principles*, where he introduces a de-

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<sup>54</sup> *AT*, XI: 36; *CSM*, I: 92.

<sup>55</sup> *AT*, VII: 63, *CSM*, II: 44.

tailed account of the nature of matter. One can summarize Descartes' position ( $D_{MQ}$ ) as follows:

- $D_{MQ1}$ : matter and body are nothing more than synonyms<sup>56</sup> and the essence of both is extension<sup>57</sup>;
- $D_{MQ2}$ : the misunderstanding idea of a possible disjunction of matter and bodily extension stems only from rarefaction, which Descartes explains as connected with the filling and the emptying of bodies by other bodies<sup>58</sup>;
- $D_{MQ3}$ : quantity does not differ from the substance of the body and it cannot be separated from it if not by mental abstraction (quantity is *quantum*)<sup>59</sup>;
- $D_{MQ4}$ : both bodily substance and space are identical with the internal place, that is the internal extension of the body<sup>60</sup>.
- $D_{MQ5}$ : bodies actually do not occupy a previous existing space, but they even generate space with their extension (Descartes claims indeed that space is indefinite)<sup>61</sup>.

Hence, what account of quantity is Descartes supporting? The full identification of quantity, matter and extension ( $D_{MQ1}$  and  $D_{MQ3}$ ), would lead us towards  $O_{M(Q)}$ . Quantity is nothing but extension, and matter is always extended. Yet there are at least two objections to the direct identification of  $D_{MQ}$  and  $O_{MQ}$ . On the one hand, Descartes' *res extensa* seems to be primarily quantitative and, only because of that, it is material. Radically rejecting the idea of distinction between 'prime matter' and 'body', Descartes thinks indeed of the essential attribute of matter as being extended. But this means that matter is nothing but a being provided with continuous quantity. On

<sup>56</sup> *AT*, VIII-1: 41; *CSM*, I: 223.

<sup>57</sup> *AT*, VIII-1: 42; *CSM*, I: 224.

<sup>58</sup> *AT*, VIII-1: 42-43; *CSM*, I: 225.

<sup>59</sup> *AT*, VIII-1: 44-45; *CSM*, I: 226-227.

<sup>60</sup> *AT*, VIII-1: 45; *CSM*, I: 227.

<sup>61</sup> *AT*, VIII-1: 52; *CSM*, I: 232.

the other hand, Descartes' reduction of matter to quantity is enhanced by his identification between space, extension, matter and internal place ( $D_{MQ4}$ ). The only attribute of corporeal beings is to have extended parts (impenetrability is nothing but a consequence of bodies' primary extension). When presenting  $D_{MQ4}$  Descartes again treats the extension of the bodies (or their parts) as reciprocal, as if being 'one outside the other' was not being extended in space (which, for Descartes, is meaningless) but being rather 'one different from the other', or if the parts generate ( $D_{MQ5}$ ) a different part of space.

I maintain that these two elements point toward a possible affinity between  $D_{MQ}$  and a revised version of  $S_{MQ}$ , which rejects *all* the Scholastic accounts of prime matter and starts from ( $D_{MQ1-3}$ ) the direct identification of matter and quantitative body. But, is there any similar model among Descartes' possible sources? In the following and last paragraph, I will attempt to reply to this question presenting a very essential overview of the early seventeenth-century debate on continuous quantity. Within it, I will say something about the reception of Suárez's theory of *extensio entitativa*. My aim is to show that, among Descartes' direct sources, Scotus' and Fonseca's account has been embraced to a greater degree than Suárez's, which received a smaller and more critical acceptance.

## 7. Internal Extension: Suárez among the Iberian Scholastics

A first interesting case can be found in Rubio, who extensively deals with continuous quantity in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* (1605). Rubio clearly quotes Capreolus, Fonseca and the Conimbricenses, but does not mention Suárez. He nevertheless agrees with Scotus' theory of integral parts, attributing it to him, to the Conimbricenses and Fonseca too<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> Antonius Rubius, *Commentari in octo libris Aristotelis Physicorum* [ed.

An implicit reference to Suárez can however be found where Rubio deals with the relevant issue of the extension of these parts in place. Rubio openly states that having *partes extra partes* can be understood in two ways: 1) according to the entitative way, and 2) according to the manner based on bulk. But he stresses that both of them are caused by categorial quantity<sup>63</sup>. Rubio stresses that “about substance, it is true that in itself (*per se*) it does not have such an extension of the parts *secundum molem*, or a size which occupies place, and thus neither does it have impenetrability *per se*”<sup>64</sup>. He also agrees with the existence of entitative parts, which he calls, with Fonseca, “integral” and which he considers as not caused by quantity. But he never considers them as extended *partes extra partes*. Rather, Rubio agrees with Fonseca’s idea of non-quantitative “integral parts”, which he thinks of as actually divided *ad infinitum*. Still, for him, both continuity and divisibility remain an effect of continuous quantity.

In his treatise on place<sup>65</sup> Rubio then introduces, without ever mentioning Suárez, the doctrine of those who believe in a two-fold presence: a quantitative one, coincident with bulk, and an entitative one, which is “distinct from the quantitative”. According to such a doctrine, if God removed quantity from substance, there would however remain a substance provided with its own *ubi praesentialis*. This perspective, which is exactly what Suárez claimed in the *DM* 40, is for Rubio “singular” and “never heard in the Schools”, in addition to being even “opposite to Aristotle and reason”<sup>66</sup>. In material substances, Rubio argues, we can find only *one* presence that can primarily be attributed to it. In

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1610], bk. 1, ch. 3, q. 2: 40.

<sup>63</sup>Rubius, *Commentari in octo libris... Physicorum* [ed. 1610], bk. 1, ch. 3, q. 2: 40.

<sup>64</sup>Rubius, *Commentari in octo libris... Physicorum* [ed. 1610], bk. 1, ch. 3, q. 2: 41.

<sup>65</sup>Rubius, *Commentari in octo libris... Physicorum* [ed. 1610], bk. 4, q. 4: 473 ff.

<sup>66</sup>Rubius, *Commentari in octo libris... Physicorum* [ed. 1610], bk. 4, q. 4: 474.

corporeal substances, this presence is the same as being quantitatively extended. Hence, Rubio clearly rejects Suárez's demand that matter's entity and continuous quantity could be distinct forms of being extended (pre-categorially and categorially).

Remaining among the Jesuits, a really popular author who seems, by contrast, to accept Suárez's theory is Arriaga. In his *Cursus* (1632), Arriaga often quotes Suárez, notably as regards his account of the actual *esse* of primary matter<sup>67</sup>. However, the reason for this appreciation should be found in Arriaga's strong Ockhamism. For Arriaga, matter has its own real being and it does not depend upon form "in any way";<sup>68</sup> furthermore, it perfectly coincides with quantity and has place (as for  $O_{MQ}$ ). According to Arriaga, who again supports Ockham's view<sup>69</sup>, quantity is "the same as every material form, either substantial or accidental"<sup>70</sup>. Furthermore, the proper and first formal effect of continuous quantity indwells neither in actual extension (or actual mutual non-penetration of bodies), nor in measurement, nor in providing a basis for the extension of the parts. All of them are, indeed, effects of matter's impenetrability, which is essential to continuous quantity<sup>71</sup>. Matter is thus naturally and originally quantitative, and thus impenetrable; such impenetrability provides the body with an order or the parts *partes extra partes*, and hence with a local place that comes from non-penetration in act. For Arriaga, to be extended bestows on the body not only the multiplicity of the

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<sup>67</sup> Rodericus de Arriaga, *Cursus Philosophicus* [ed. 1644], *Disputationes Physicae*, d. 2, s. 5, subs. 1: 226.

<sup>68</sup> Arriaga, *Cursus Philosophicus* [ed. 1644], *Disputationes Physicae*, d. 2, s. 6, subs. 2: 231.

<sup>69</sup> Arriaga, *Cursus Philosophicus* [ed. 1644], *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, d. 5, s. 1, subs. 1-3: 775-779.

<sup>70</sup> Arriaga, *Cursus Philosophicus* [ed. 1644], *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, d. 5, s. 1, subs. 1: 775.

<sup>71</sup> Arriaga, *Cursus Philosophicus* [ed. 1644], *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, d. 5, s. 1, subs. 2: 777.

parts (which extension does not stem from), but also (and especially) the location of them in place, “which does not come from quantity formally, but rather radically”, that is by matter’s property of extension. Hypothetically, matter could be separated (by God) from continuous quantity, but this would not necessarily cause the reduction of matter to a point. This is possible, but it would not be necessary for that scenario<sup>72</sup>.

Hence, in Arriaga’s discussion, Suárez is often mentioned and appreciated, but this happens only because of its similarity to Ockham. Accepting the identity of matter and quantity, Arriaga is indeed even more radically Ockhamist than Suárez, who anyway retains a difference between entitative and quantitative extension. However, it is quite evident that Suárez’s theory had been received and discussed first of all among the Jesuits, who received it in the light of Scotus’ or Ockham’s doctrines, which in turn Suárez tried to merge.

Suárez’s perspective seems also to have been read and discussed by the Spanish Dominicans, which saw in it a dangerous attempt to change Aquinas’ doctrine into Scotus’ and Ockham’s. A very interesting case is that of Francisco de Araujo, a theologian from Salamanca, quite famous in his time but almost forgotten these days<sup>73</sup>. Araujo harshly attacks Suárez in his Commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. For the Dominican, the main threat is represented by  $O_{MQ}$ , which Suárez has revived. Fonseca’s version of  $S_{QM}$  receives, by contrast, a good welcome even among its historical opponents.

Araujo openly presents Suárez as an Ockhamist, based on the fact that the Spanish Jesuit identifies continuous quantity with bulk, and consequently he points to impenetrability as the formal reason for quantity<sup>74</sup>. For Araujo, the formal

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<sup>72</sup> Arriaga, *Cursus Philosophicus* [ed. 1644], *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, d. 5, s. 1, subs. 2: 778.

<sup>73</sup> On Araujo see O’Brien 1963, Beuchot 1980 and 1987, Novotný 2013, Wells 1983.

<sup>74</sup> Franciscus de Araujo, *Commentariorum in universam Aristotelis meta-*

reason for quantity lies rather in the extension of the parts *in ordine ad se*. Araujo attributes this perspective to Aquinas and Domingo de Soto, but also to Fonseca, who, for Araujo, took it from both Aquinas and Scotus<sup>75</sup>. Araujo's attempt is hence to show that  $A_{MQ}$  and  $S_{QM}$  are the same theory. Indeed, the parts of a material substance are provided with a primary extension that provides the basis for divisibility but that does not correspond with local extension. Like Fonseca, Araujo accepts a primary extension of the body, which coincides with that of parts divided absolutely, not as *partes extra partes*, but rather according to their mutual position within the whole. Basically, quantity's formal reason is the internal extension of integral parts, their internal divisibility, not understood in the sense of *unam extra aliam* difference.

In continuing his analysis of the notion of a substantial, non-quantitative extension, Araujo again attacks Suárez. Suárez would be the one who maintained the "extreme" view according to which matter's parts have their own extension, and that continuous quantity cannot add more than external, local extension. Araujo strongly rejects Suárez's position, claiming instead that the formal extension of the integral parts is an effect of continuous quantity. Before quantity, these parts have no extension. However, Araujo agrees with the "intermediate" thesis, which is Fonseca's again, according to which divisibility can be substantial – Araujo here employs the expression "radical extension"<sup>76</sup> – even though non-quantitative. Radical extension exists before and independently from quantitative extension, and it is nothing but the reciprocal, 'negative' difference between the parts that Suárez attributed to Capreolus.

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*physicam* [ed. 1617], I, bk. 5, q. 3, art. 1: 683.

<sup>75</sup> Araujo, *Commentariorum in... metaphysicam* [ed. 1617], bk. 5, q. 3, art. 1: 684 and 686.

<sup>76</sup> Araujo, *Commentariorum in... metaphysicam* [ed. 1617], bk. 5, q. 3, art. 1: 690.

Moreover, Araujo clearly denies that it can be already extensive before the action of quantity. Both the internal and the local extension are caused by continuous quantity, and there is no extension without it. Mentioning Aquinas, Soto, Fonseca and Capreolus, he argues that if one could remove quantity from substance it would remain indivisible and nowhere. Indeed, without quantity, substantial parts are neither *intra*, nor *extra* each other. They remain in an intermediate status, like the extension of inactive angels<sup>77</sup>.

## 8. Internal Extension: Suárez among the French Scholastics

Thus, it seems that Scotus' account was quite popular both among the Jesuits, who (including Suárez) used to merge it with  $O_{MQ}$  and even among the Dominicans, who considered it as adaptable to a revised version (Capreolus' and Soto's) of  $A_{MQ}$ . Nevertheless, Scotus' account plays a very relevant role in the development and then in the reception of Suárez's perspective in French Schools. It is especially the case of two fundamental authors in Descartes' contemporary context, Eustachius a Sancto Paulo and Abra de Raçonis.

Eustachius' *Summa* (1609) is another philosophical best-seller in the seventeenth century, well known by Descartes. Here Eustachius discusses continuous quantity, and describes as "very plausible"  $S_{MQ}$ 's idea that a primary extension of the parts is the *ratio* of continuous quantity<sup>78</sup>. Extension, indeed, comes before quantity, and grounds it. Like Scotus and Fonseca, Eustachius thinks of extension in two ways: 1) the external, "relative to place", and 2) the internal, *in ordine ad*

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<sup>77</sup> Araujo, *Commentariorum in... metaphysicam* [ed. 1617], bk. 5, q. 3, art. 1: 694.

<sup>78</sup> Eustachius a Sancto Paulo, *Summa Philosophiae Quadripartita* [ed. 1609], *Tr. De Categ.*, ch. 3, s. 2, *De quantitate*, q. 1: 107.



*se*<sup>79</sup>. Which one is the formal reason for continuous quantity? Eustachius calls into question Durandus' account (instead of Ockham), in presenting the possibility of a primary local extension, which would be the basis for continuous quantity. But, following "others", Eustachius rather opts for an "extension of parts outside parts, relative to the body itself (*ad se*), but not relative to place". From a  $S_{MQ}$  perspective, what sounds bizarre is especially Eustachius' demand to simultaneously understand the parts as positively extended "one outside the other" and internally extended *in ordine ad se*. But such a paradox could perhaps be solved by finding in the "others" a compromise between the accounts of Suárez and Fonseca.

Eustachius' perspective is clearer especially if understanding the role of what he defines as "integral and entitative" parts (another compromise between Fonseca and Suárez)<sup>80</sup>. According to Eustachius, the parts of a bodily substance can be hierarchically classified as follows: *a*) metaphysical or 'essential' parts; *b*) physical parts, that is matter and form; *c*) integral and entitative parts, causing the 'more' or 'less' in size. What Eustachius calls 'entitative' parts are thus nothing but already-physical parts (basically, corpuscles). The *munus quantitatis* is hence limited to level *c*), as it consists in placing the integral parts "one outside the other". Such extension is not circumscriptive either, since it is internal, as it is a primary extension of physical parts that simply differ from each other, and have different positions within the whole. This is why Eustachius claims that "the formal effect of quantity is such that, thanks to it, the integral parts of bodily substance have mutual (*inter se*) order and situation (*situm*)"<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Eustachius, *Summa Philosophiae* [ed. 1609], *Tr. De Categ.*, ch. 3, s. 2, *De quantitate*, q. 1: 108.

<sup>80</sup> Eustachius, *Summa Philosophiae* [ed. 1609], *Tr. De Categ.*, ch. 3, s. 2, *De quantitate*, q. 1: 109.

<sup>81</sup> Eustachius, *Summa Philosophiae* [ed. 1609], *Tr. De Categ.*, ch. 3, s. 2, *De quantitate*, q. 1: 109.

As we have seen, according to  $S_{MQ}$  (especially in Fonseca's version), the internal extension grants to the part a "part *and* part" distinction, that does not place the parts one outside the other in place. Hence, Eustachius seems here to be closer to Suárez's  $SZ_{MQ1}$  and  $SZ_{MQ2}$  in claiming that internal extension involves a *partes extra partes* presence. Yet for him is important to stress that such distinction should not be understood as between component parts, one outside the other in place, but rather as between integral parts, entirely relative to the whole extended (internally) by quantity. So, what saves Eustachius' Scotism from coinciding with Suárez's Scoto-Ockhamism is the fact that this "integral and entitative" parts are not primarily pre-quantitative extended parts. The internal *partes extra partes* arrangement is relative to the whole and comes already on a quantitative level, along with the internal continuity of the body. If God removed quantity from a body (and from substance too), the parts could indeed be reduced *ad punctum*<sup>82</sup>. Before quantity, they are indeed (as for Fonseca), "confused and mixed together"<sup>83</sup>, and only by attaining quantity do they start being one outside the other.

The fact that Eustachius stands for the core of  $S_{MQ}$  sets a difference with the position of the very influential French bishop Abra de Raçonis. Raçonis is another source for Descartes and his contemporaries, and, as I will argue, he could be a very important reference for him. In his much-read *Summa totius philosophiae* (1617), Raçonis argues the distinction between two different extensions: 1) an entitative one, which is non-quantitative but substantial, and 2) a local one, which stems from quantity and causes the impenetrability of bodies. It is worth noting that Raçonis openly mentions both Suárez and Domingo de Soto, and he agrees with Suárez about the possibil-

<sup>82</sup> Eustachius, *Summa Philosophiae* [ed. 1609], *Tr. De Categ.*, c. 3, s. 2, *De quantitate*, q. 1: 109-111.

<sup>83</sup> Eustachius, *Summa Philosophiae* [ed. 1609], *Tr. De Categ.*, c. 3, s. 2, *De quantitate*, q. 1: 109.

ity of an ‘entitative’ extension of a material substance, hypothetically deprived of quantity. Such an extension is however understood by Raçonis as an internal and mutual disposition of the parts, which is coextended with the external place and it is still able to remain even after the removal of quantity<sup>84</sup>. This happens because of the reciprocal continuity of parts. According to Raçonis, it is not necessary that, depriving a body of quantity, its parts would lose their internal order, which made them coextensive with the local place. The parts are not unextended with respect to the place, but this does not entail that they are locally coextended with it. Parts simply retain, for Raçonis, an ‘entitative’ extension *ad modum rei corporeae*<sup>85</sup> i.e. nothing more than a coincidence between “internal extension”, and quantitative, local extension. Hence, like Eustachius, Raçonis also attempts to reconcile Suárez’s and Fonseca’s account. But he also slants towards Suárez’s Scoto-Ockhamism, claiming (AR<sub>MQ</sub>) that:

- AR<sub>MQ1</sub>: internal extension is pre-quantitative;
- AR<sub>MQ2</sub>: the integral parts of the body are primarily extended, internally;
- AR<sub>MQ3</sub>: internal extension is a real, physical extension, not relative to the external place but coincident and coextended with it.

Therefore, even if slightly differently from Suárez’s, entitative extension is for Raçonis nothing but the impossibility that parts were reduced to a point after the removal of quantity. Even without accepting O<sub>MQ</sub>’s indistinguishability of *quantum* and *quantitas*, Raçonis thinks of a primary internal extension, formally different but spatially coextended with the external one, as the foundation of categorial, continuous quantity.

<sup>84</sup> For a correct evaluation of Raçonis’ view, is yet important to stress that this is what Scotus himself claims in *Or.* IV, d. 10, q. 1: 184.

<sup>85</sup> Charles-François Abra de Raçonis, *Summa Totius Philosophiae, hoc est Logicae, Moralis, Physicae et Metaphysicae* [ed. 1629], *Logica*, tr. 2: 235-236.

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, Abra de Raçonis' eclectic account seems to me to provide the closest model to Descartes'. Since Descartes, with Ockham and Arriaga, rejects the idea of a pre-quantitative prime matter, his concept of body looks immediately coincident with the Scholastic material substance, bypassing the very problem of distinguishing between *quantum* and quantity. This is the reason for Descartes' apparent adherence to  $O_{MQ}$ . Actually, Descartes' notion of *res extensa* seems to be nothing but a radical version of  $S_{MQ}$ , in which matter is fully reduced to space and to material, already-spatial, substance.

Within such continuity, the role of Suárez seems to be ambiguous. On the one hand, his demand for a distinction between extension and continuous quantity is one of the clearest targets of Descartes' criticisms. On the other hand, his idea of pre-categorical extension is crucial to pushing the notion of 'integral parts' beyond the limits of a pre-categorical non-extension, triggering, in a Scotistic environment, Abra de Raçonis' notion of extended internal space, coinciding with external space.

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This book collects six unpublished and published academic studies on the thought of Francisco Suárez, which is addressed through accurate textual analyses and meticulous contextualization of his doctrines in the Scholastic debate. The present essays aim to portray two complementary aspects coexisting in the work of the Uncommon Doctor: his innovative approach and his adherence to the tradition. To this scope, they focus on some pivotal, but often neglected, topics in Suárez's metaphysics and psychology – such as his theories of cognition and truth, angelology, continuous quantity – thereby developing an original inquiry into a crucial moment in the development of Western philosophy.

**Simone Guidi** (Rome, 1984) is currently a Researcher at the Italian National Research Council – *Institute for the European Intellectual Lexicon and History of Ideas* (CNR-ILIESI). His work focuses especially on the history of Early Modern Philosophy, with special attention to the Jesuit Scholastic context and its role in the genesis of the thought of Descartes. He has been an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Coimbra's Faculty of Arts and Humanities (FLUC), as well as an FCT Post-Doc Fellow at the University of Coimbra's *Instituto de Estudos Filosóficos*. He is the editorial coordinator of the international project *Conimbricenses.org* (directed by Mário Santiago de Carvalho), and the author of many academic volumes and articles.

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