

# THE THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION OF FRANCISCO SUÁREZ'S METAPHYSICS\*

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**ABSTRACT:** The common narrative concerning the metaphysics of Francisco Suárez among a diverse number of thinkers is that the Jesuit presents an «indifferent» ontology that neglects the traditional medieval conception of God as utterly transcendent and unique. Though the critiques leveled against Suárez are legion and equally as diverse as the critics from whom they derive, as I see it, there is a common, albeit unexpressed, conviction that the Jesuit's thought ultimately results in the secularization of metaphysics. By «secularization» I mean that, as frequently asserted, Suárez's analysis of the nature of being transpires entirely without the need for adverting to any overarching theological framework. In this essay, I challenge that view and argue that Suárez's metaphysics is thoroughly determined by his theological vision and project.

**KEY WORDS:** metaphysics; theology; analogy of being; secularity.

## *La orientación teológica de la metafísica de Francisco Suárez*

**RESUMEN:** La narración común sobre la metafísica de Francisco Suárez entre un grupo diverso de pensadores es que el jesuita presenta una ontología «indiferente» que descuida la concepción medieval tradicional de Dios como absolutamente trascendente y única. Aunque las críticas dirigidas contra Suárez son legiones e igualmente diversas como las críticas de las que derivan, tal como yo lo entiendo, hay una convicción común todas ellas, aunque no expresada, de que el pensamiento del jesuita finalmente resulta en la secularización de la metafísica. Por «secularización» me refiero a que, como se afirma con frecuencia, el análisis de Suárez sobre la naturaleza del ser ocurre por completo sin la necesidad de advertir sobre ningún marco teológico general. En este ensayo, cuestiono ese punto de vista y sostengo que la metafísica de Suárez está completamente determinada por su visión teológica y su proyecto.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** metafísica; teología; analogía del ser; secularidad.

## INTRODUCTION

The metaphysical thought of scholasticism's *Doctor eximius*, Francisco Suárez, has received a great deal of attention by a diverse number of interpreters, ranging from Étienne Gilson<sup>1</sup> to Martin Heidegger<sup>2</sup>, Hans Urs von Balthasar<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. GILSON, E., *Being and Some Philosophers*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, 1952, c. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. HEIDEGGER, M., *Basic Problems in Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1982, 94-99.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. VON BALTHASAR, H. U., *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 5, trans. Oliver Davies, et al., Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1991, 21-29.

to John Milbank<sup>4</sup>, Jean-François Courtine<sup>5</sup> to Jean-Luc Marion<sup>6</sup>, and many others in between<sup>7</sup>. With a growing number of recent studies also devoted to the philosophical thought of Suárez, new efforts to examine his metaphysical theory—among other dimensions of his thought—have yielded many new insights into the Baroque thinker<sup>8</sup>. The results of these various studies remain mixed, however, and, quite frequently, many interpreters fixate on Suárez's metaphysics not to bestow praise upon it but to identify it as one of the main wellsprings from which have issued numerous wrong-headed philosophical ideas that cultivated a problematic modernity and provided much grist for postmodern mills. The critiques leveled against the Suárezian metaphysics—both recent and those stretching back over the past century—are legion and equally as diverse as the critics from whom they derive. Nevertheless, as I see it, there is a common, albeit unexpressed, conviction operating at the heart of and governing these critiques, namely, that Suárez's thought ultimately secularizes metaphysics, which secularization in turn produces many problematic ontological and epistemological consequences.

By «secularization» I mean that, as is frequently alleged, Suárez's analysis of the nature of being (*ens*) transpires entirely without any overarching theological framework or sense of divine transcendence. As such, the Jesuit's thought stands in contrast—or in opposition—to much of medieval theology in which the ultimate resolution of being could only be had with (causal) reference to a creator-God. While Suárez does consider God to be the ultimate cause of creation<sup>9</sup>, it is argued that this recognition in itself does not place God at the pinnacle of metaphysics—as it does for someone like Thomas Aquinas, whose metaphysics concludes in attaining God (*ipsum esse subsistens*) as the transcendent, analogical, and

<sup>4</sup> Cf. MILBANK, J., *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1997, 40-41.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. COURTINE, J.-F., *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. MARION, J.-L., *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, Presses Universitaires du France, Paris, 1981, esp. c. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Here, the work of John P. DOYLE, Jean-Paul COUJOU, and Costantino ESPOSITO may be cited as brilliant examples of those who, though clearly appreciative of the Suárezian metaphysics, nevertheless remain fundamentally critical. See, e.g., DOYLE, John P., *Collected Studies on Francisco Suárez, S.J. (1548-1617)*, ed. Victor M. Salas, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2010; COUJOU, J.-P., *F. Suárez: Disputes Métaphysiques*, J. Vrin, Paris, 1998, 7-45; ESPOSITO, C., «Suárez and Baroque Matrix of Modern Thought», in eds. SALAS, V. M. and FASTIGGI, R. L., *A Companion to Francisco Suárez*, Brill, Leiden, 2015, 124-147.

<sup>8</sup> SEE, e.g., HILL, B. and LAGERLUND, H., eds., *The Philosophy of Francisco Suarez*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012; SCHWARTZ, D., ed., *Interpreting Suárez: Critical Essays*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012; SALAS, V. M. and FASTIGGI, R., eds., *A Companion to Francisco Suárez*, Brill, Leiden, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Disputationes metaphysicae* (hereafter *DM*) 20.prooem.; *ibid.*, 21.prooem. All citations of Suárez's work will be taken from the Luis Vivès edition, Paris 1856-1878, of the *opera omnia*. Volume and page number (when available) will be cited parenthetically.

sustaining creator-cause of being (*ens commune*)<sup>10</sup>. For Suárez, some argue, even the divine being itself is subsumed under a more basic ontological category of the objective concept of being (*conceptus entis objectivus*) and thus rendered a mere conceptual idol completely foreign to the biblical God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob<sup>11</sup>. The theologically rich and asymmetrical causal relationship between the 'creator' and the 'created' is replaced with the secularized and horizontally flattened disjuncts 'infinite' and 'finite.' But as 'infinite' and 'finite' are mere modes of being<sup>12</sup>, being itself—the common denominator, as it were, of all *inferiora*—emerges with a kind of ontological neutrality or, as Hans Urs von Balthasar puts it, «indifference»<sup>13</sup>. There is no metaphysical asymmetry between 'infinite being' and 'finite being' with respect to their *being* for it is precisely that in which both agree. In short, the Suárezian metaphysics, in celebrating the unity and indifference of being without respect to *created* being or *creator* being, emerges, one might say, as a secularized «univocal ontology»<sup>14</sup>.

John Milbank, persistent critic of modern philosophy and theological champion of Radical Orthodoxy, is one of Suárez's critics and argues that the Jesuit has indeed displaced God in his metaphysical doctrine:

[T]he new science of *ontology* which emerged in the seventeenth century, and which coincided with Suárez's use for the first time of 'metaphysics' to name a systematic discipline, finally occluded this contradiction [i.e., understanding first being through material being but understanding material beings through first being] by regarding ontology/metaphysics as first and foremost

<sup>10</sup> Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In de Trin.*, q. 5, a. 4; *In Metaph.*, prooem.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. MILBANK and VON BALTHASAR, *op. cit.* This criticism is nothing new. Rodrigo Arriaga, writing two generations after Suárez, notes that certain authors are «scandalized» when they hear that the concept of being is univocal to God and creature so as to think that God and creature are made equals. The Jesuit assures his readers that nothing could be further from the case, complains that such people do not listen to what is actually being said, and even points to the authority of John Damascene who holds that substance is a «genus» with respect to God and creature. Arriaga, *Cursus philosophicus*, Log., d. 11, sec. 4, n. 41 (Paris, 1639): «Unde obiter intelliges, quam sine causa nonnulli Auctores scandalizentur, dum audiunt, nos facere rationem entis Deo et creaturae univocam: putant enim (non enim attendunt quid dicere velimus) nos facere creaturas Deo aequales, aut aliquid derogare divinae Maiestati; a quo quam longe absimus, ex dictis hucusque constat. Imo D. Damascenus... expresse docet, substantiam esse genus respect Dei et creaturarum» (141).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *DM* 4.8.10.

<sup>13</sup> VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord*, 21-23.

<sup>14</sup> There is no end to those accusing Suárez of asserting a univocal concept of being. Jean-Luc Marion is particularly influential in this reading of Suárez and has been a source of inspiration for John Milbank (cf. n. 6 supra); Philipp Rosemann, who, in his *Understanding Scholastic Thought Through Foucault*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1999, argues that Suárez represents the end of the «scholastic epistēmē» on account of his appropriating univocity; and even in literary circles, Philip Lorenz follows Marion and argues that the crisis precipitated by the Oath of Allegiance, coupled with the political turmoil and questions of sovereignty, emerged as a result of the dissolving notion of analogy found in the work of the *Doctor eximius*. See Lorenz, «"Christall Mirrors" —Analogy and Ontotheology in Shakespeare and Francisco Suárez», in *Religion and Literature* (38, 3, 2006): 101-118.

a science of what constitutes 'being' taken as a possible object of knowledge which is *unproblematically comprehensible* without reference to any non-material or absolute beings<sup>15</sup>.

In other words, if God has been displaced as the ultimate (metaphysical) source of reality and intelligibility, then (created) being (*ens*) is autonomized, as it were, and any effort to come to terms with it must likewise accommodate that autonomy. Accordingly, a being (*ens*) can no longer be called «real» on account of its *esse*, for that would immediately place the being in question into an ontological relation of dependence upon another, which would be to neglect a proper consideration of what being as it is in itself is. If being is to supply its own meaning and intelligibility, that can only be through the internal constituents of its own essence, which are «unproblematically comprehended»<sup>16</sup>, to use Milbank's phrase. But, in turning to an essence as comprehended, there occurs a transition from the real to the conceptual which von Balthasar explains as follows:

The conceptualisation of Being in Scotus and Suárez annuls the experience of reality and encloses thought in a sphere which is characterised by bare, essential predications, by the play of analysis and synthesis of concepts, and accordingly the inner-subjective opposition of the act of thought (*noesis*) and the content of thought (*noema*)<sup>17</sup>.

The problem here is that in prescinding<sup>18</sup> from the actual experience of concrete existence, Suárez's metaphysics loses its traction upon reality and becomes, as Courtine suggests, a science of the «thinkable»<sup>19</sup>.

In the end, the Suárezian conception of being boils down simply to that—a concept, which is a function not of what is in fact real but of what is or can be conceived, which, as both Courtine and John P. Doyle see it, becomes the parthenogenesis of late scholastic and early modern «tinological» theories

<sup>15</sup> MILBANK, *The Word Made Strange*, 40-41.

<sup>16</sup> With respect to God, at least, Suárez himself thinks that the divine being is *not* comprehended at all. In fact, he is quite clear that no concept that one has is ever adequate to capture God as He is in Himself. Cf. *DM* 28.1.3 (vol. 26, 2): «... non possumus ea, quae sunt Dei propria, prout in se sunt, concipere, imo nec per positivos conceptus simplices ac proprios Dei...» For this reason, then, Suárez finds it necessary to employ a sort of negative theology. *Ibid.*: «... ideo negativis utimur, ut illud excellentissimum ens, quod maxime a caeteris distat, minusque cum illis convenit, quam ipsa inter sese, ab eis separemus et distinguamus». Milbank, unfortunately, seems to be unaware of this dimension of the Jesuit's thought.

<sup>17</sup> VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Suárez's notion of 'precision' is unique. Unlike Thomas Aquinas, who utilizes the term to indicate a denial of some particular aspect considered through abstraction, Suárez does not commit himself to such an exclusion or dismissal. His point rather is that in focusing on one particular aspect in abstraction, one leaves behind other peripheral objects not so as to reject them from consideration but so as not to focus one's attention upon them. For Thomas on precision see *De ente et essentia*, c. 2. For Suárez on the same see, e.g., *DM* 1.2.12.

<sup>19</sup> COURTINE, *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique*, 535-538.

of supertranscendentalism<sup>20</sup>. What cannot be doubted is the profound impact that Suárez's metaphysical vision would have upon succeeding generations of thinkers, especially within his own Society of Jesus. Both Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza (1578-1641) and Rodrigo Arriaga (1592-1667), for example, follow Suárez in thinking that a common concept of being, abstracting from God and creature, can be attained, which concept becomes the proper object of metaphysical speculation; again, ensuring, so the accusation goes, that God's centrality in metaphysics is permanently «displaced» in favor of «ontological neutrality»<sup>21</sup>.

Such, then, are the basic outlines of some of the more prevailing criticisms leveled against the *Doctor eximius*. They are by no means exhaustive for there are others (e.g., Alasdair MacIntyre) who claim that Suárez is himself a practitioner of Enlightenment forms of thought<sup>22</sup>. These latter critiques tend to be more historical and, to a certain extent, even philological, concerned instead with the tools and literary devices of Suárez's intellectual practices than with the content of his thought itself<sup>23</sup>. My concern here, however, is not to adjudicate Suárez's place in the history of philosophy as either a (late) medieval or (early) modern philosopher<sup>24</sup>. Rather, I intend to challenge those views of Suárez's metaphysics that operate under the assumption that the Jesuit secularizes metaphysics through the displacement of God in his «purely philosophical» account of being. I argue, instead, for an alternative reading of the Suárezian metaphysics, one that regards it as fundamentally theological in orientation and thus far from the secularized monstrosity that many take it to be. In substantiating this claim I do not intend to respond to every challenge mentioned above, nor do I argue that the problematic consequences they attribute to Suárez's metaphysics are not in fact problematic. I am willing to concede—if only for the sake of argument—that the consequences mentioned

<sup>20</sup> SEE *ibid.*; DOYLE, J. P., *On the Borders of Being and Knowing: Some Late Scholastic Thoughts on Supertranscendental Being*, ed. Victor M. Salas, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2012. It is worth pointing out, however, that though the term was already used by Pere Dagui, *Tractatus de Differentia* (Seville, 1500); Domingo Soto, *Summulae summularum*, lib. 1, cap. 6, n. 4 (Salamanca, 1554); and Pedro da Fonseca, *Institutionem dialecticarum*, c. 28 (Cologne, 1586), Suárez makes reference to supertranscendence only once in his *Disputationes metaphysicae* (viz., DM 48.1.5) and even then only as a summary of a position he argues against. I am grateful to Claus Anderson of Mannheim University for drawing my attention to Pere Dagui's text.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. HURTADO, *Universa philosophia*, Log., d. 9, sec. 3; ARRIAGA, *Cursus philosophicus*, Log., d. 11, sec. 1, subsec. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. MACINTYRE, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1990, 73-75.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. ROSEMANN, *Understanding Scholastic Thought With Foucault*, c. 6.

<sup>24</sup> José Pereira's work does an admirable job of precisely handling this kind of question and maintains that, at bottom, Suárez is really a liminal thinker who has a foot in both epochs. Pereira's work is both astute and historically insightful, but I would tend to locate Suárez in the developed tradition that evolved out of medieval thought. Cf. PEREIRA, *Suárez: Between Scholasticism and Modernity*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, 2008.

above (viz., essentialism, ontological indifference, thinkability, etc.) are indeed philosophically problematic. My claim, however, is that Suárez's actual metaphysical teaching unfolds along entirely different lines and does not in fact generate the conclusions his detractors suggest.

In what follows I intend to show that in the execution of his *Disputationes metaphysicae* Suárez's guiding motivation, practice, and self-understanding is entirely theological. That is, Suárez's metaphysics is ultimately meant to accommodate and advance a more fundamental theological project. For Suárez, theological and metaphysical truths are not only intertwined, they are also mutually enriching and co-validating. Having established the theological circumstances operating at the heart of the Suárezian metaphysics, I conclude that those who regard Suárez's metaphysics as an «indifferent» ontology of secularized being, misunderstand —grotesquely so— the actual teaching of the *Doctor eximius*. Indeed, if one were to view Suárez's metaphysics as simply an exercise in «pure philosophy» or as an embracing of the «thinkable» or «indifferent», then one cannot help but misunderstand the Jesuit's basic conception of the nature of metaphysics itself as unfolding upon a theological horizon.

I make my argument in response to four fundamental accusations against the Suárezian metaphysics. Suárez's metaphysical account of being can be considered as secular because of (1) its practice and philosophical form, (2) its strict separation of philosophy from theology, (3) its prioritization of philosophy above theology and philosophical justification of the latter, (4) a univocalized ontology that neglects divine transcendence and radical otherness, and reduces God to a mere conceptual idol. I argue that on each count, these accusations are based on an incorrect reading of Suárez's metaphysical project.

## 1. LITERARY FORM AND PEDAGOGICAL *PRAxis*

Theological discussions run throughout the entire *Disputationes metaphysicae* and address a wide array of topics such as the Eucharist<sup>25</sup>, Trinity<sup>26</sup>, and Mariology<sup>27</sup>, to name only a few. This would be an odd state of affairs for a text

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *DM* 5.3.16; *ibid.*, 7.2.10, 19; *ibid.*, 8.7.25; *ibid.*, 13.7.6; *ibid.*, 13.9.3; *ibid.*, 14.3.39, 40; *ibid.*, 14.4.1, 5, 7; *ibid.*, 16.1.2, 8; *ibid.*, 16.2.3; *ibid.*, 18.2.27, 29; *ibid.*, 18.3.15; *ibid.*, 18.5.5; *ibid.*, 18.6.2; *ibid.*, 18.7.25; *ibid.*, 21.2.8; *ibid.*, 22.1.27; *ibid.*, 30.4.27; *ibid.*, 30.17.13, 26, 27, 29; *ibid.*, 31.1.10; *ibid.*, 31.5.4; *ibid.*, 31.11.25, 28; *ibid.*, 31.12.4; *ibid.*, 31.13.25; *ibid.*, 32.1.15, 18; *ibid.*, 34.5.51; *ibid.*, 34.6.10, 12, 29; *ibid.*, 34.7.22; *ibid.*, 37.2.3, 10; *ibid.*, 38.2.12; *ibid.*, 40.2.2, 8, 9, 15, 17, 22; *ibid.*, 40.4.6, 14, 16, 19, 22; *ibid.*, 51.5.2, 3, 9; *ibid.*, 51.6.6.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *DM* 4.8.9; *ibid.*, 5.5.6; *ibid.*, 7.1.16; *ibid.*, 7.2.5, 27; *ibid.*, 10.3.7, 11; *ibid.*, 12.1.10, 21, 25, 32; *ibid.*, 12.2.6, 7; *ibid.*, 18.4.4; *ibid.*, 29.3.20; *ibid.*, 30.3.7; *ibid.*, 30.4.3, 4, 7; *ibid.*, 30.6.3; *ibid.*, 30.9.11; *ibid.*, 30.10.1; *ibid.*, 30.10.5; *ibid.*, 30.10.12; *ibid.*, 30.14.4; *ibid.*, 30.17.14; *ibid.*, 34.1.1, 6, 14; *ibid.*, 34.2.6, 10; *ibid.*, 34.3.16; *ibid.*, 34.4.22, 28; *ibid.*, 34.7.5-7, 10, 13; *ibid.*, 34.8.5.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *DM* 9.1.18; *ibid.*, 23.4.7; *ibid.*, 31.12.15, 22-24; *ibid.*, 47.12.9; *ibid.*, 47.16.29, 32; *ibid.*, 51.3.20, 21.

that is purportedly advancing a *pure* ontology. What is more, the very opening of the work itself reveals Suárez's manifest theological intention:

To the extent that no one is able to be a polished [*perfecta*] theologian unless he first establishes a firm foundation of metaphysics, so I have always understood a work would be of value, prior to writing the theological commentaries... [so] I send forward this work, which now, Christian reader, I offer to you diligently elaborated<sup>28</sup>.

This passage reveals a number of things. First, it clearly establishes the theological purpose of the *Disputationes metaphysicae*, which, as the Jesuit explains, is intended to facilitate one's theological formation. Implicit here, but of crucial importance, is the fact that the text—much like Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae* and unlike much early modern literature—has a pedagogical character, for which attention to and concern for 'tradition' are of paramount importance<sup>29</sup>. Second, this passage speaks to the nature of the relationship between philosophy—more specifically metaphysics—and theology, for the former is not being sought merely as an end in itself in (autonomous) isolation from the latter. Third, the Jesuit indicates that this metaphysical treatise is so necessary to his work as a theologian, whose task included commenting upon the *Summa theologiae*, that he could no longer carry out that professorial task without first making explicit the metaphysical principles utilized in his theological commentaries. Fourth, it indicates that the intended audience of the *Disputationes metaphysicae* consists of those who operate within a Christian framework and thus bring to bear on their reading the presuppositions of their professed faith. Suárez is not addressing his metaphysical treatise to a reader who, though perhaps Christian, is intended to suspend that belief so as to dispose himself to perceive the pure truth of the metaphysical principles under discussion. That is to say, Suárez does not intend to produce a *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* which will convince even «atheists... to put aside their spirit of contradiction»<sup>30</sup>.

Be that as it may, the *Doctor eximius* does speak of metaphysics as the «firm foundations» (*firma fundamenta*) for theology. Does this mean, then, that he intends metaphysics to support or justify theological claims? Or, what is the same, does metaphysics, on Suárez's view, provide epistemological justification for theological belief, which would thus render theology subsequent to and dependent upon philosophy? Such is the interpretation presented by some, such as Adrian Pabst, who writes, «Following Scotus, Suárez founds theology upon

<sup>28</sup> *DM*, ratio et discursus totius operis, ad lectorem (vol. 25): «Quemadmodum fieri nequit ut quis Theologus perfectus evadat, nisi firma prius metaphysicae jecerit fundamenta, ita intellexit semper, operae pretium fuisse ut, antequam Theologica scriberem Commentaria... opus hoc, quod nun, Christiane lector, tibi offero, diligenter elaboratum praemitterem».

<sup>29</sup> In other words, the *Disputationes metaphysicae* do not consist in the «timeless studies of the philosopher» that MacIntyre would make them out to be!

<sup>30</sup> DESCARTES, R., *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, charta ad facultatem Sacrae Theologiae, ed. Adam-Tannery; Léopold Cerf, Paris, 1904, vol. 7, 6: «... ut Athei... contradicendi animum deponent....»

metaphysics, making “metaphysical doctrine” an absolute prerequisite for all theological knowledge...»<sup>31</sup>. Similarly, John Montag, a present-day Jesuit, claims: «Whereas Aquinas sees “theology which pertains to holy teaching” founded on principles separate from philosophy, but able to use philosophy to sort out the difficulties of discourse..., Suárez sees theology itself as standing on the structure provided by philosophy, specifically an ontologically univocal metaphysics. In order to speak about God, one must begin with the clear foundation provided not by *sacra doctrina*, but the metaphysical structure of Being, which rises up to meet what is revealed»<sup>32</sup>. There is the clear view among some, then, that the nature of philosophical discourse found within the *Disputationes metaphysicae* prescind from any theological presuppositions and, if anything, precedes them so as to justify the possibility of any religious belief in the first place.

In light of such interpretations it is hardly surprising that some, such as Alasdair MacIntyre, regard Suárez as a sort of proto-modern philosopher, who, «both in his preoccupations and in his methods, was already a distinctively modern thinker, perhaps more authentically than Descartes the founder of modern philosophy»<sup>33</sup>. But just what are these methods with which Suárez is so preoccupied such that he is more «authentically» modern than Descartes himself? MacIntyre answers our question: «For Suarez the notion of working within a tradition had clear relevance in theology but not in what he took to be the timeless studies of the philosopher»<sup>34</sup>. What is more, as Philipp Rosemann argues, this neglect of tradition is formalized in the very literary character of the *Disputationes metaphysicae*, which abandons the «literary genre par excellence» of the Middle Ages, the *quaestio disputata*, in favor of more tractate-like (or monographical) form of exposition<sup>35</sup>. For Rosemann, the disputed question was thoroughly medieval precisely because its very structure was meant to accommodate authorities and resolve apparent conflicts and tensions among them. Opening with objections that oftentimes involve the conflicting opinions of authorities (viz., Aristotle, Augustine, St. Paul), that dilemma is overcome in the *respondeo* through which, in the development of the magisterial position, reconciliation or ‘synthesis,’ Hegel might say, is achieved<sup>36</sup>. In contrast, the monographic character of modernity presented in the *Disputationes metaphysicae*, claims Rosemann, disregards tradition completely—and along with it its inner tensions—so as to pursue a philosophical question as is proper to, as MacIntyre put it, the «timeless studies of the philosopher».

If Suárez is to be exonerated from these two accusations—namely: that of (1)

<sup>31</sup> PABST, A., *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2012, 309. Here, Pabst, it seems, is simply following Montag’s lead.

<sup>32</sup> MONTAG, J., «The False Legacy of Suárez», in eds., John Milbank, Catherine Pitstock, and Graham Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy*, Routledge, London, 1999, 54.

<sup>33</sup> MACINTYRE, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 73.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> ROSEMANN, *Understanding Scholastic Thought with Foucault*, 173.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

his making metaphysics the foundation for theological belief and (2) conducting his metaphysical practice in a sense that is truly modern—I shall have to show both how he does not establish metaphysics as the epistemological condition of theological belief and how his metaphysical project enjoys a fundamental continuity with earlier medieval practices insofar as it is subordinate to the higher science of theology.

Regarding the latter, to claim, as MacIntyre does, that Suárez's philosophy has the character of a «timeless study» is hardly a fair representation of what Suárez himself actually does in his *Disputationes metaphysicae*. As already indicated, the *Disputationes metaphysicae* serves a fundamentally pedagogical role for the theologian in which tradition, and the authorities contained therein, is crucial. Even Étienne Gilson, who himself bore a critical attitude towards the Suárezian metaphysics, admits that: «As *disputationes*, they [i.e., the *Disputationes metaphysicae*] still belong in the Middle Ages. Suarez has kept the mediaeval habit of never settling a philosophical dispute without first relating, comparing and criticizing the most famous opinions expressed by his predecessors on the difficulty at hand»<sup>37</sup>. Gilson of course goes on to describe the *Disputationes metaphysicae* as «modern» insofar as the work both breaks with the commentarial tradition on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and presents a «pure philosophy»<sup>38</sup>. I am in the process of disputing the latter claim by tracing the contours of the theological dimension of Suárez's metaphysics; but with respect to the *Disputationes metaphysicae* being «modern» because of its systematicity, I think focusing on that feature of modernity addresses something completely incidental to modern thought practices. That is, as has been duly noted in the literature, Suárez's *Disputationes metaphysicae* constitutes a turning point in metaphysics because it is the first comprehensive metaphysical tractate that organizes itself according to the logic and inner exigencies of metaphysical science itself<sup>39</sup>. In contrast, the medieval practice had been devoted to commenting on the *Metaphysics* according to the haphazard arrangement of the Aristotelian text itself. This practice was retained up through Pedro da Fonseca's immensely important *Commentaria in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis* and, one could also argue, even up to Suárez himself. Often overlooked but appended to the introduction of the *Disputationes metaphysicae* is the *Doctor eximius's Index locupletissimus* which text constitutes a brief commentary on the *Metaphysics* and, true to its name, indicates where the topics addressed

<sup>37</sup> GILSON, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 96-97.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. PEREIRA, J., *Suárez*, 14. Pereira is right to note that Diego Mas's *Metaphysica disputatio de ente et eius proprietatibus* (Valencia, 1587) preceded the *Disputationes metaphysicae* by about ten years. I agree with his assessment of the remaining historical novelty of Suárez's text, for Mas's work is not only briefer and thus less detailed than Suárez's, it also focuses simply on the transcendental character of being and thus lacks consideration of causality, accidental categories, and even beings of reason, all of which are fully detailed in the *Disputationes metaphysicae*.

in the Aristotelian work can be found further discussed and developed in the *Disputationes metaphysicae*.

Still, if the *Disputationes metaphysicae* can be considered «modern» precisely because of its systematicity, then so too must Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*, the express intention of which, as the Dominican explains in the *prologus*, was to overcome the chaos of the «multiplication of useless questions, articles, and arguments», and to organize the discipline «according what the [subject] matter will allow»<sup>40</sup>. Yet, to accord «modern» forms of *praxis* to Aquinas would, I suspect, run counter both to Gilson's and MacIntyre's sensibilities. Suárez's concern for systematic presentation stems from the demands of the science of metaphysics itself in the same way that the *Summa theologiae* emerged as a response to the concern for the scientific nature of *sacra doctrina* so as to become a *theo-logia*. What is more, both projects emerged as a function of pedagogical concern. In short, what is directing both projects (Thomas and Suárez) is exactly the same: the drive to develop thought along the lines of an Aristotelian science within a pedagogical context. Thus one could say, as José Pereira has suggested, that Suárez completes what was begun in the middle of the thirteenth century: the systematic organization of both theological and philosophical thought into a coherent «super-system»<sup>41</sup>.

The claim that the literary style of the *Disputationes metaphysicae* appropriates modern practices because of its abandonment of the *quaestio disputata* is also feeble. Again, Gilson's recognition of the continuity of the *Disputationes metaphysicae* with the Middle Ages follows upon the character of *disputatio*. If the task of the *quaestio* was to reconcile competing authorities<sup>42</sup>, as Rosemann claims, how can the *Disputationes metaphysicae* be regarded as a departure from that very practice?<sup>43</sup> If anything, the text signifies the creative evolution of pedagogical practices in Spain, running through the Dominican schools (especially Salamanca) of the fifteenth century and eventually bequeathed to the fledgling Society of Jesus, who in many cases received its intellectual formation from the Dominicans, in the early sixteenth century<sup>44</sup>. The *Disputationes metaphysicae*, no less than Thomas's great theological work, aims to reconcile philosophical discord with theological unity. In his thirty-first disputation, for example, Suárez takes up the vexing question concerning the

<sup>40</sup> THOMAS, *Summa theologiae* I, prologus (ed. Leonine, vol. 4, 5): «...secundum quod materia patietur».

<sup>41</sup> PEREIRA, *Suárez*, 58-59.

<sup>42</sup> ROSEMAN, *Understanding Scholastic Thought with Foucault*, 173.

<sup>43</sup> One might compare Rosemann's assessment with that of José Pereira, who writes, «In it [the *Disputationes metaphysicae*] we have a perfect consonance of literary form and logical structure». PEREIRA, *Suárez*, 52.

<sup>44</sup> For details of Dominican intellectual practices in fifteenth-century Spain vis-à-vis Suárez's intellectual practices, see my «Francisco Suárez: End of the Scholastic epistémē» in, ed., SGARBI, M., *Francisco Suárez and His Legacy: The Impact of Suárezian Metaphysics and Epistemology on Modern Philosophy*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2010, 14-16.

relationship between *esse* and essence. In the course of advancing his thesis, the *Doctor eximius* considers the various *sententiae* from the most important schools, namely, the Thomists and Scotists. The Thomists, Suárez recounts, think that there is a real distinction between *esse* and essence<sup>45</sup>, whereas the Scotists think there is only a modal distinction<sup>46</sup>. What is important, here, is not only that Suárez considers the cogency of the arguments as developed among the partisans within each respective school, showing what conclusions the various opinions generate, but more importantly that the Jesuit is concerned to reconcile metaphysical doctrine with theological belief. That is, one of the most fundamental reasons that Suárez holds the opinion that he does, that *esse* and essence are only rationally distinct, is because such a position alone, he thinks, is capable of accommodating the Christian notion of the Incarnation in which the Word assumes a truly real human nature. As Julio Söchting points out, Suárez's perennial concern in his understanding of the relationship between *esse* and essence is that the human nature of Christ should be preserved in terms of its integrity. Thus, if *esse* were really distinct from Christ's human nature, Christ would lack something proper to all humans and fail to enter into communion with humanity<sup>47</sup>. It is worth noting that when introducing his notion of a rational distinction, Suárez himself adverts to this Christological concern and notes that «All the theologians, who think that humanity would not be able to be assumed by the Word without its proper existence, can be adduced in favor of this opinion»<sup>48</sup>. What is true of the thirty-first disputation is true of countless philosophical arguments that Suárez makes throughout the entire *Disputationes metaphysicae* if only one would give them their due consideration!

## 2. *ANCILLA THEOLOGIAE*

Regarding the claim that Suárez subordinates theology to metaphysics, thereby giving priority to the latter, the whole question, as I see it, turns upon what the Jesuit means by *firma fundamenta*, which is his own description of the relationship between metaphysics and theology. At first sight, it does seem that the *Doctor eximius* is advancing a project along the lines of what Pabst and Montag have suggested, and that shares many similarities with other modern philosophical projects that, though sympathetic to religion and faith (e.g., Descartes), subordinate religious belief to philosophy. Nevertheless, I

<sup>45</sup> *DM* 31.1.3-10.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.1.11.

<sup>47</sup> SÖCHTING, J., «Perfecto en Humanidad: El misterio de la encarnación como problem ontológico en las *Disputationes Metaphysicae* de Francisco Suárez» Master's Thesis, Faculty of Theology, Catholic University of Chile, 2007.

<sup>48</sup> *DM* 31.1.12 (vol. 26, 228): «Possunt etiam in favorem hujus sententiae adduci omnes Theologi, qui sentiunt humanitatem non potuisse a Verbo assume sine propria existentia....»

think it wrong-headed to group Suárez together with such modern projects for the Jesuit has a different understanding of *fundamenta*, which does not mean epistemic justification as it does for someone such as Descartes. Rather, as Suárez explains, the so-called «foundational» character of metaphysics pertains to the satisfaction of a certain desire or need. He writes:

In time, however, I considered in clearer light, that this divine and supernatural theology wants and needs [*desideraret et requireret*] this human and natural [theology, i.e., metaphysics] to such a degree that I did not hesitate to interrupt the yet incomplete work, so as to give this doctrine of metaphysics its seat or, more preferably, to restore it to its proper place<sup>49</sup>.

Here, like Thomas Aquinas, Suárez speaks of theology's «need» for human science (i.e., metaphysics) as stemming not from some imperfection or want within itself, but owing to human intellectual weakness that struggles to understand what is in itself sublimely intelligible. Aristotle himself expressed this same conviction when he wrote, «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»<sup>50</sup>. For Thomas and Suárez, the implication of reason's inability to perceive what is most intelligible in itself has theological consequences, for, as Thomas puts it, our intellects are more easily led by «those things that are known through natural reason» to «those things which are above reason». Thus because the first principles of theology are received directly from God's own revelation, theology does not depend upon philosophy as though the latter were superior, but uses philosophy as that which is inferior and as a handmaid (*ancilla*) and by means of which theology can receive greater clarity of expression<sup>51</sup>. Suárez, as we shall presently see, is of the same mind and thus the 'foundational' character of metaphysics consists chiefly in establishing the grammatical framework, as it were, in which the intelligibility of theology can be disclosed through its practitioners' inquiry. Before one can hear the 'Word,' which theology considers through the rational reflection of the revelation it has received, one must first understand the formal structure in which that 'Word' is communicated. God discloses Himself in human terms, and it pertains to philosophy, most importantly metaphysics, to discern the meaning of that theological discourse, not to provide its epistemic justification.

Suárez explains this dynamic between philosophy and theology in his *De Deo uno et trino*, among other places. He opens that work with a twofold distinction concerning the nature of theology. On the one hand, there is that theology which is «natural» and, on the other, there is an «infused or

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., *ratio et discursus totius operis, ad lectorem* (vol. 25): «In dies tamen luce clarius intuebar, quam illa divina ac supernaturalis Theologia hanc humanum et naturalem desideraret ac requireret, adeo ut non dubitaverim illud inchoatum opus palisper intermittere, quo huic doctrinae metaphysicae suum quasi locum ac sedem darem, vel potius restituerem.»

<sup>50</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics* 2.1.993b9-11; trans. Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Random House, New York, 1941, 712.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. THOMAS, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 5.

supernatural» theology<sup>52</sup>. The former, bearing many points of similarity to Thomas's own distinction between natural and sacred theology found in the *De Trinitate*<sup>53</sup>, is rather straightforward. Thomas explains in his *De Trinitate* that 'natural theology' is simply what the «philosophers» called «metaphysics»<sup>54</sup>. I think it is significant, not only for Thomas, but also for Suárez that they use the term 'theology' qualified as 'natural' instead of simply 'metaphysics.' Metaphysics is the task of the philosopher, but as Thomas construed himself he was a theologian, whose own philosophical work would be conducted upon the larger horizon of theological discourse, which in turn provides the structure of philosophical thought itself. The same is true for Suárez. As he indicated in the opening to the *Disputationes metaphysicae*, it was for the sake of his theological work that he undertook the composition of his metaphysical treatise. Even in coming to a natural knowledge of God (viz., His existence and attributes), such knowledge emerges from within an overarching theological framework. Thus, appealing to the Psalms and Romans, as Thomas had done in addressing the issue of one's knowledge of the existence of God<sup>55</sup>, Suárez explains that natural (theological) knowledge of God can be attained from the world itself which «announces the glory of God» (Ps 19:1) and that «the invisible things of God can be known by the intellect through those things that are made» (Rom. 1:20)<sup>56</sup>. Thus the Christian's faith assures him not only of the efficacy of natural reason, which is able to discern intelligible structures within the world, but also assures the metaphysician that he can ascend to knowledge of the existence of the creator of that intelligible structure. It is not the case, then, that in its natural operation Suárezian rationality brackets-out any faith commitments or even produces what Gilson describes as a «pure philosophy»<sup>57</sup>. Rather, reason's warrant for pursuing knowledge of God stems precisely from the faith from which reason takes its point of departure. Thus, Suárez's view of the interrelation between faith and reason stands in continuity with the long line of medieval thinkers stretching back to Augustine and including

<sup>52</sup> *De Deo uno et trino*, prooem. (vol. 1, xxiii): «Universa fere, quae Deo, ut unus est, attribuantur, duplici theologia cognosci possunt, naturali, et infusa, seu supernaturali».

<sup>53</sup> Cf. THOMAS, *De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* (ed. Leonine, vol. 50, 154): «Sic ergo theologia siue scientia diuina est duplex: una in qua considerantur res diuine non tamquam subiectum scientie, set tamquam principia subiecti, et talis est theologia quam philosophi prosequuntur, que alio nomine metaphisica dicitur; alia uero que ipsas res diuinas considerat propter se ipsas ut subiectum scientie, et hec est theologia que in sacra Scriptura traditur» (emphases mine).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. THOMAS, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 2, a. 2, s.c. (ed. Leonine, vol. 4, 30): «Sed contra est quod apostolus dicit, ad Rom. I, *inuisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta, conspiciuntur*. Sed hoc non esset, nisi per ea quae facta sunt, posset demonstrari Deum esse, primum enim quod oportet intelligi de aliquo, est an sit».

<sup>56</sup> *De Deo uno et trino*, prooem. (vol. 1, xxiii): «Naturali quidem, quatenus, *coeli enarrant gloriam Dei*, quod de elementis, animalibus, et praesertim de ipsius hominis natura dici potuisset. Propter quod generalius Paulus dixit, *inuisibilia Dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellect conspiciuntur, sempiterna quoque ejus virtus, ac divinitas....*»

<sup>57</sup> GILSON, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 97.

Anselm and, in his own way, Thomas Aquinas, whose *modus operandi* could be described as ‘faith seeking understanding.’ That is to say, faith is the very condition for the possibility of understanding, for, as Anselm says, «I do not seek to understand so as to believe, but believe so as to understand. For I believe this: “unless I would believe, I shall not understand”»<sup>58</sup>.

Because reason, for Suárez, is already enveloped within the larger context or horizon of faith, the role that ‘supernatural’ theology plays in his philosophical vision unsurprisingly does not compromise the integrity of his metaphysics but coincides with and further enriches it. Supernatural theology, in contrast to natural theology, can only be attained through divine revelation<sup>59</sup>. It is the task then of philosophy, more specifically metaphysics, to illuminate the intelligibility contained in that revelation. Thus, Suárez, consistent with what he would later say in his *Disputationes metaphysicae*, states that natural theology is ancillary and subservient to supernatural theology, for natural theology is the «minister» to supernatural theology and only confirms its truths<sup>60</sup>. Again, this means that, for Suárez, natural theology (or metaphysics) does not serve as a kind of epistemic justification or foundational warrant for theology’s truth claims. Indeed, those supernatural truths are known, not by the natural light of reason, but, says Suárez, through the light of faith, without which those supernatural truths could not possibly be understood<sup>61</sup>, for such truths, he holds, transcend metaphysics entirely<sup>62</sup>. The truths of supernatural theology, made known by revelation and not through metaphysical insight, «have dependence on the light of faith without which that [supernatural] doctrine cannot be understood»<sup>63</sup>.

Returning to the preface of the *Disputationes metaphysicae*, we see that in marking a distinction between philosophy (metaphysics) and theology, one should pause before assuming that Suárez is thereby interposing a strong separation between the two and construing metaphysics as an autonomous

<sup>58</sup> ANSELM, *Proslogion*, c. 1, ed. F.S. Schmit, Edinburg, 1946, vol. 1, 100: «Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo: quia “nisi credidero, non intelligam”».

<sup>59</sup> *De Deo uno et trino*, proem. (vol. 1, xxiii): «Divina autem, et altiori theologia haec de Deo cognoscuntur, quando ex divina revelatione, et per illam percipiuntur....»

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* (vol. 1, xxiii): «Hinc factum est, ut theologia scholastici disputantes de Deo utramque theologiam promiscue tradiderint, quoniam licet per se, et ex instituto supernaturalem theologiam doceant, nam ex revelatis principiis procedunt, nihilominus naturali Theologia utuntur ut ministra, ad supernaturales veritates confirmandas, et ut ex utriusque theologiae consonantia animus fidelis in illis veritatibus facilius conquiescat».

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* (vol. 1, xxiv): «Si autem considerentur nostrae Theologiae proprietates, ut aliquo modo supernaturales sunt, habent dependentiam a lumine fidei, et sine illius doctrina intelligi non possunt....»

<sup>62</sup> *DM* 30.4.7 (vol. 26, 76): «Neque circa hanc veritatem occurrit difficultas specialis, praeter eas que spectant ad Trinitatis mysterium, quod metaphysicam considerationem transcendit». Cf. *ibid.*, 30.5.6.

<sup>63</sup> *De Deo uno et trino*, proem. (vol. 1, xxiv): «Si autem considerentur nostrae Theologiae proprietates, ut aliquo modo supernaturales sunt, habent dependentiam a lumine fidei, et sine illius doctrina intelligi non possunt....»

science over and even against theology, which is precisely the reading advanced by von Balthasar and Milbank. Suárez, as we have seen, maintains the exact opposite and, after noting the distinction between metaphysics and theology, insists that «our philosophy should be Christian and should be the servant [*ministra*] of divine theology»<sup>64</sup>. Suárez, here, in no way brackets out his Christian commitments or presuppositions in developing his metaphysical thought, for it is precisely that Christian worldview that is calling for metaphysical illumination. Metaphysics, then, helps make manageable the super-intelligibility of revelation and is therefore indispensable to the theologian, which is to say, metaphysics, for Suárez as for Thomas Aquinas before him, has a fundamentally *ancillary* character. Indeed, as we shall soon see, for Suárez, it is theology itself that can help illuminate and confirm those truths that pertain to metaphysics with a greater clarity and certitude than what human reason, left to its own devices, could ever attain.

### 3. DISTINGUISH SO AS TO UNITE

The ancillary relationship between philosophy (viz., metaphysics) and theology to which the *De Deo uno et trino* gives voice, had already received methodological formalization in the earlier *Disputationes metaphysicae*, in particular, within the *prooemium* to the first disputation, where, after noting that the principles of theology stem from God's own self-revelation, Suárez holds that (supernatural) theology is «aided» (*juvatur*) by «human discourse and reasoning», by means of which theological truth is «illuminated». Metaphysics is «utilized as an instrument» for the service of theology<sup>65</sup>, since without a proper grasp of metaphysics the more sublime divine theological mysteries could not be treated in a suitable manner<sup>66</sup>.

Given Suárez's understanding of metaphysics as ancillary, the idea that the Jesuit bases his theological project entirely on the «life of reason», as Montag suggests, is seriously suspect. Reason, according to Suárez<sup>67</sup>, certainly does

<sup>64</sup> *DM* (vol. 25): «... nostram philosophiam debere christianam esse, ac divinae Theologiae ministram».

<sup>65</sup> *DM* 1.prooem (vol. 25, 1): «Divina et supernaturalis theologia, quanquam divino lumine principiisque a Deo revelatis nitatur, quia vero humano discursu et ratiocinatione perficitur, veritatibus etiam naturae lumine notis juvatur, eisque ad suos discursus perficiendos, et divinas veritates illustrandas, tanquam ministris et quasi instrumentis utitur».

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* (vol. 25, 1): «Cum enim inter disputandum de divinis mysteriis haec metaphysica dogmata occurrerent, sine quorum cognitione et intelligentia vix, aut ne vix quidem, possunt altiora illa mysteria pro dignitate tractari....»

<sup>67</sup> This is true for Scotus, too, I would suggest. Unfortunately, space prohibits me from developing this claim further. Ever *persona non grata* among the Radical Orthodox faithful, even before Suárez, Duns Scotus is often regarded as subtly giving way to modernity because of his doctrine of univocity, which, some such as John Milbank and Catherine Pitstock contend, elevates thought over mystery and in subjecting God to the limitation of the human

not enjoy the same hegemony over faith and theology as it does for modern thinkers. In fact, he insists on more than one occasion that the divine mysteries of theology exceed the capacity of metaphysics, which is to say those truths exceed human science<sup>68</sup>. Suárez's purpose, then, for devoting his attention to a distinct metaphysical treatise is not to separate metaphysics from theology or reason from faith. Rather, like so many other medieval theologians, the Jesuit is convinced that metaphysics and the truths theology teaches are so united that to fail to grasp the one inevitably leads to a misunderstanding of the other; as he himself makes clear:

For thus these principles and truths of metaphysics are so bound with theological conclusions and discourse, that if the knowledge and perfect cognition of that [metaphysical] science be taken away, so also would [theological] science necessarily be greatly undermined<sup>69</sup>.

For Suárez, then, metaphysics and theology—just like the divine and human natures of Christ—are mutually enriching and form an integral unity<sup>70</sup>. For the Jesuit, the two sciences are distinct to be sure, stemming from the fact that, as already noted, they proceed from a «difference of light». Theology proceeds by the «light» of divine revelation wherein the contents of the principles of faith are applied through rational discourse to arrive at certain conclusions. Metaphysics, however, proceeds only by the natural «light» (of human reason), on account of which it lacks the same degree of certitude that theology enjoys<sup>71</sup>. Nevertheless, the two (metaphysics and theology) form such an integral unity that, on Suárez's reckoning, theology can actually serve to illuminate metaphysical truths, enriching them so as to give metaphysical principles an added strength and certitude.

The *Doctor eximius* makes this last claim while wrestling with the fact that mathematics seems to enjoy greater certitude over metaphysics. He notes that in itself and absolutely speaking, metaphysics, when conducted as the science of being as such, is more certain (*certior*) than mathematics since it (metaphysics)

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concept, makes of the divine a conceptual idol, the dreaded consequence of onto-theology. Radical Orthodoxy's view of Duns Scotus has received mountains of much-deserved criticism but some of the more notable interventions are those of Richard Cross and Thomas Williams. Cf. CROSS, «Where Angels Fear to Tread: Duns Scotus and Radical Orthodoxy», in *Antoniana* (76, 2001): 1-36; WILLIAMS, «The Doctrine of Univocity is True and Salutory», in *Modern Theology* (21, 4, 2005): 575-585.

<sup>68</sup> Cf., e.g., *DM* 30.4.7; *ibid.*, 30.5.6; *ibid.*, 30.13.5.

<sup>69</sup> *DM* prooem. (vol. 25, 1): «Ita enim haec principia et veritates metaphysicae cum theologicis conclusionibus ac discursibus cohaerent, ut si illorum scientia ac perfecta cognitio auferatur, horum etiam scientiam nimium labefactari necesse sit».

<sup>70</sup> Cf. SÖCHTING, «Perfeto en Humanidad», 34-38.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *DM* 1.1.5 (vol. 25, 38): «Ratio autem a priori reddi potest ex differentia inter supernaturalem Theologiam, et hanc naturalem; que ex differentia luminis, sub quo utraque procedit, sumenda est. Illa enim procedit sub lumine divinae revelationis fidei, quatenus mediate ac per discursum applicatur ad conclusiones in principiis fidei contentas.... At vero metaphysica procedit tantum sub naturali lumine, quod non eodem modo nec eadem certitudine omnia objecta sua complectitur....»

is most especially concerned with first principles and treats the same things as mathematics but from a more common or transcendental perspective such that even thus the principles of mathematics are included within metaphysics itself upon which they depend<sup>72</sup>. Be that as it may, Suárez does admit that metaphysics also has an aspect to it in which the nature of particular beings is explored, for example, immaterial substances<sup>73</sup>. Even with metaphysics so considered, Suárez marks a distinction between this part of metaphysics taken just as it is «in itself» (*secundum se*) and as it is «to us» (*quoad nos*)<sup>74</sup>. In the first sense, metaphysics is still more certain than mathematics because the certitude is correlated to its object, namely, the first principles of things<sup>75</sup>. A doubt arises, however, when considered from the conditions that a human science imposes, whether «to us» metaphysics is in fact more certain. The reason for this is that human science arises from sense knowledge—which is obscure and less capable of attaining the nature of things—and must be abstracted from all sensible matter<sup>76</sup>.

Suárez's response to the claim that metaphysics is less certain than mathematics with respect «to us» (*quoad nos*) is rather instructive with respect to how he regards the relationship between faith and reason and ultimately the relationship between theology and philosophy. He explains that it might be the case that metaphysics, which is a human science and thus laden with the same limitations as human thought itself, can be more perfect and more certain than mathematics. Though one attains metaphysics only through the natural means proportionate to human nature (i.e., beginning with sense experience), there could occur the case in which the human intellect is aided or elevated (*juvetur*) in its discourse by some higher cause through which the natural principles of things are known with a clarity and evidentness that exceeds the certainty of mathematics. Suárez admits that this speculation pertains more to theology than philosophy, but his point is clear: supernatural theology can illuminate

<sup>72</sup> *DM* 1.5.23 (vol. 25, 43): «... hanc doctrinam [i.e. metaphysics] esse certissimam.... quia ea scientia est cetissima, quae circa prima principia maxime versatur, et quae ex paucioribus rem conflicit; ... sic enim res illae, de quibus mathematicae tractant, includunt communia et transcendentia praedicata, de quibus metaphysica disserit; principia etiam mathematica includunt metaphysica, et ab illis pendent».

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* (vol. 25, 43): «Alter [pars metaphysicae] est, quae tractat de aliquibus peculiari-bus rationibus entium, praesertim de immaterialibus». This would seem to militate against Marco Forlivesi's claim that Suárez's metaphysics has as its proper subject matter immaterial being. See his «Impure Ontology: The Nature of Metaphysics and Its Object in Francisco Suárez's Texts», in *Quaestio* (5, 2005): 559-586.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.5.24 (vol. 25, 43): «De altera vero parte hujus scientiae, quae in determinatis rationibus entis versatur, distinguendum est; potest enim esse scientia certior, aut secundum se, aut quoad nos».

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* (vol. 25, 43): «Nam certitudo scientiae hoc modo pensanda est ex objecto; hu-jusmodi autem res et substantiae immateriales, sunt ex se aptae ad gegendam certissimam sui cognitionem, tum quia sicut sunt perfectiora entia, magisque necessaria, simpliciaque et abstracta, ita in eis major est vertias, majorque certitudo principiorum».

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* (vol. 25, 43-44): «... quod cum nostra cognitio a sensu oriatur, obscurius et ex natura rei minus certo attingimus ea, quae ab omni materia sensibili abstrahunt».

and clarify metaphysical truths and give to the latter a greater clarity and certitude than what one could attain simply through the exercise of one's own natural faculties that begin with sensation<sup>77</sup>. One could hardly imagine such a concession from a Descartes and certainly not from an Immanuel Kant! Suárez goes on to supply other reasons why, though «to us» (*quoad nos*) metaphysics has less certainty than mathematics, nevertheless essentially and simply speaking metaphysics is still more noble (*nobilior*) owing to the «dignity of its object»<sup>78</sup>.

#### 4. UNIVOCAL ONTOLOGY

Finally, we should consider the conception of being itself which emerges from the specific character of the Suárezian metaphysics. As noted above, there is the perennial claim that the *Doctor eximius* develops a «univocal ontology» that diminishes the irreducibility of God and establishes itself as a secular metaphysics. Two things must be said here. First, this interpretation is simply unfounded and, second, the sort of metaphysical practice that Suárez actually inaugurates is profoundly theological insofar as its structure is fundamentally Christological. I shall return to this latter claim momentarily.

With respect to my first claim, yes, it is true that Suárez gives pride of place to the unity of the concept of being in his metaphysics<sup>79</sup>. He himself tells us:

The formal concept of being corresponds to one adequate and immediate objective concept of being, which does not expressly indicate substance, or accident, or God, or creature, but all of these through the mode of unity, namely, inasmuch as they have some mode of similarity among each other and agree in being<sup>80</sup>.

His concern, here, as was the case of Scotus before him was that the scientific character not only of metaphysics but also theology should be preserved<sup>81</sup>. If

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 1.5.26 (vol. 25, 44): «... fortasse in aliquo statu posse metaphysicam humanam esse perfectiorem et certioram quam sint mathematicae; nam, licet acquirendo hanc scientiam solis naturalibus viribus et ordinario modo humano, non possit tam perfecte obtineri, si tamen noster intellectus juvetur ab aliqua superiori causa in ipsomet discursu naturali, vel si ipsa scientia modo supernaturali fiat, licet res ipsa sit naturalis, potest forte esse tam clara et evidens, ut mathematicas supersēt». Cf. SÖCHTING, «Perfecto en Humanidad», 35-38.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. (ibid): «... nam dignitas objecti maxime spectat ad dignitatem scientiae, et illa est quae per se redundat in scientiam....»

<sup>79</sup> Cf., e.g., *DM* 2.1.9 (vol. 25, 68): «Hinc etiam conceptus entis, non solum unus, sed etiam simplicissimus dici solet, ita ut ad eum fiat ultima resolutio caeterorum...»

<sup>80</sup> *DM* 2.2.8 (vol. 25, 72): «... conceptui formali entis respondere unum conceptum obiectivum adaequatum, et immediatum, qui expresse non dicit substantiam, neque accidens, neque Deum, nec creaturam, sed haec omnia per modum unius, scilicet quatenus sunt inter se aliquo modo similia, et conveniunt in essendo».

<sup>81</sup> Cf., e.g., *DM* 28.3.15 (vol. 26, 18): «Denique jam supra ostensum est, ens uno conceptu dici de omnibus sub illo contentis, ideoque posse esse medium demonstrationis, et rationem entis in creaturis inventam posse esse initium inveniendi simile rationem altiori modo in creatore existentem».

science proceeds syllogistically, then the demands of sound and valid syllogistic argumentation must be met among which is a distributed middle term. Scotus met that demand through adverting to a univocal concept of being, which is able to preserve science and allow *homo viator* to reach God<sup>82</sup>. Suárez, as we shall soon see, does not think univocity itself is necessary to preserve the unity of the concept of being, nevertheless, many interpreters frenetically point to a passage in which Suárez seems reject analogy for the sake of the unity of the concept of being<sup>83</sup>.

But if one of the two [i.e., analogy or the unity of the concept of being] must be denied, then it is more preferable that analogy, which is uncertain, be denied than the unity of the concept, which is certain and seen to be demonstrated by certain reasoning<sup>84</sup>.

This would certainly seem to be a damning text with which to accuse the *Doctor eximius* of a univocal ontology. Nevertheless, as José Pereira points out, it is important to read texts in their context and, perhaps more importantly, read them all the way through<sup>85</sup>. For immediately after his comment about the preference for the unity of the concept, Suárez immediately adds that in «true reality» neither the unity of the concept nor analogy needs to be denied! As he explains, «for univocity is it not sufficient that the concept in itself is one in some mode, but it is necessary that it have an equal relation and order with respect to many, which the concept of being does not have»<sup>86</sup>. That is, as Suárez argues in the second division of his *Disputationes metaphysicae*, the concept of being, though absolutely simple in itself, descends to its *inferiora* with an ordered priority: first to God, who is *ens per essentiam*, and secondarily or derivatively to creatures which are *ens per participationem*. Because there is an ordered relation of priority and posteriority, the concept of being cannot be considered

<sup>82</sup> SCOTUS, D., *Ordinatio* I, d. 3, pars 1, q. 1-2, n. 26 (ed. Vatican, vol. 3, p. 18): «Et ne fiat contentio de nomine univocationis, univocum conceptum dico, quia ita est unus quod eius unitas sufficit ad contradictionem, affirmando et negando ipsum de eodem; sufficit etiam pro medio syllogistico, ut extrema unita in medio sic uno sine fallacia aequivocationis concludantur inter se uniri».

<sup>83</sup> SEE, e.g., ROSEMANN, *Understanding Scholastic Thought with Foucault*, 176. HOERES, W., «Francis Suarez and the Teaching of John Duns Scotus on *Univocatio Entis*», in *John Duns Scotus, 1265-1965*, eds. J.K. Ryan and B.M. Bonasea, Studies in the History of Philosophy, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1965, 263-290. Even John P. Doyle thinks Suárez's account of analogy ultimately has some tensions insofar as the Jesuit seems to embrace unity to the point of overcoming analogy. See Doyle, «Suarez on the Analogy of Being, Part 1», in *The Modern Schoolman* (46, 1969): 219-249; «Suarez on the Analogy of Being, Part 2», in *The Modern Schoolman* (46, 1969): 323-341.

<sup>84</sup> *DM* 2.2.36 (vol. 25, 81): «... sed si alterum negandum esset, potius analogia, quae incerta est, quam unitas conceptus, quae certis rationibus videtur demonstrari, esset neganda».

<sup>85</sup> Cf. PEREIRA, *Suárez*, 134-135.

<sup>86</sup> *DM* 2.2.36 (vol. 25, 81): «Re tamen vera neutram negari necesse est, quia ad univocationem non sufficit quod conceptus in se sit aliquo modo unus, sed necesse est ut aequali habitudine et ordine respiciat multa, quod non habet conceptus entis...».

univocal since univocal concepts do not imply such an ordered relation<sup>87</sup>. The point is clear: Suárez himself does not reduce his metaphysical conception of being to one of pure univocity, for he recognizes inequality within the concept of being itself. Thus the doctrine of the *analogia entis* remains very much alive in the Suárezian metaphysics even if it does not present itself according to Thomistic principles, which the Jesuit thinks compromise the possibility of a scientific metaphysics<sup>88</sup>. In the final analysis, then, for the Suárezian analogy of being there is integration of real diversity—for being is, as the Jesuit says «intimately transcendent»—within absolute unity<sup>89</sup>. This leads me to my claim about the Christological character of Suárez's metaphysical project.

Regarding the ontological neutrality accorded to Suárez account of being, I think it is important that the concept of real being, with which metaphysics is concerned, is taken in its greatest latitude so as to embrace both infinite and finite being, which is to say, in its own way, Suárez's metaphysical project is co-terminus with his Christology<sup>90</sup>. Admittedly, Suárez's *Disputationes metaphysicae* does not immediately strike one as Christological in character. Certainly it does not begin with an overt discussion of Christ. Nevertheless, as Julio Söchting points out, «The Christological relevance, although still remote, is determinate: for the Incarnation, there exists an individual who realizes actually and effectively this agreement [of God and creature in being]»<sup>91</sup>. This is precisely the challenge that confronts Suárez's metaphysical project: namely, how can the diversity of being, the greatest of which obtains between finitude and infinitude (or what is the same creature and God), be accommodated by the concept of being which remains absolutely unified in itself? Placed in a Christological key, this same metaphysical question can be reframed as the by-now familiar question: how can the reality of two distinct natures that have a maximal opposition between each other (i.e., infinite vs. finite) subsist through and achieve an absolute unity in the person of Christ? For Suárez, the problem here is not unlike that faced by Kant. The question for the transcendental idealist is not whether mathematics and physics are possible but, rather, how are they possible? Similarly, for the Jesuit, the question is not whether metaphysics is possible for, given the very reality of Christ as the unity of the infinite and the finite, he knows that it is possible. The task for the *Doctor eximius*, then,

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 28.3.17.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 28.3.9. For an account of Suárez's doctrine of the analogy of being that distinguishes it from both that of Thomas Aquinas as well as Scotistic univocity see my «Between Thomism and Scotism: Francisco Suárez on the Analogy of Being», in *A Companion to Francisco Suárez*, eds. Victor M. Salas and Robert L. Fastiggi, Brill, Leiden, 2015, 336-362.

<sup>89</sup> *DM* 2.4.14.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 1.1.26 (vol. 25, 11): «Ostensum est enim, objectum adaequatum hujus scientiae debere comprehendere Deum, et alias substantias immateriales, non tamen solas illas. Item debere comprehendere non tantum substantias, sed etiam accidentia realia...».

<sup>91</sup> SÖCHTING, «Perfecto en Humanidad», 76: «La relevancia cristológica, aunque todavía remota, es determinante: por la Encarnación, existe un individuo que realiza actual y efectivamente esta conveniencia».

is to undertake the transcendental deduction, as it were, of metaphysics' possibility by determining just how the concept of being can accommodate the exigencies that arise from a consideration of the Incarnation. The theological stakes, as Suárez explains in his *prooemium*, are clear and the coherence of his metaphysics is of crucial importance not only for the success of that theological project in general but for his Christology specifically. With an eye to that end, Suárez's metaphysical discussions, as Söchting observes, almost always involve some reference to the Christological implications contained therein and even find their validation through the Incarnation.

For Suárez, the point of departure for his metaphysics is the determination that metaphysics is concerned with being insofar as it is real being (*ens in quantum ens reale*)<sup>92</sup>. Included within the scope of real being is not only the divine being and immaterial substances, but all substances and accidents, excluding only beings of reason (*entia rationis*)<sup>93</sup>. Given the radical diversity in real being, the task then becomes one of determining just how that diversity can be overcome and captured by a unified concept of being, which is just what Suárez's teaching on analogy is supposed to achieve<sup>94</sup>. In raising the issue of the 'concept of being,' it is important to mark a crucial distinction that is operative throughout Suárez's metaphysics, namely, the distinction between formal and objective concepts, a distinction that was already common coin in sixteenth-century scholasticism<sup>95</sup>. The formal concept, Suárez explains, is «said to be that act itself, or (what is the same) the word by which the intellect conceives some thing or common character [*ratio*]»<sup>96</sup>. An objective concept, however, is said to be «that thing itself, or *ratio*, which properly and immediately is known or represented through the formal concept»<sup>97</sup>. Suárez goes on to explain that the objective concept is only referred to as a 'concept' through extrinsic denomination in its reference to the formal concept as that which terminates the intellect's intending<sup>98</sup>. Furthermore, unlike the formal concept, which—because it is an act or quality of the mind—is always a real, positive, and singular

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *DM* 1.1.26 (vol. 25, 11): «Dicendum est ergo, ens in quantum ens reale esse obiectum adaequatum hujus scientia».

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *DM* 1.1.6; *ibid.*, 1.1.26; *ibid.*, 54. Prooem.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. *DM* 2.1.9; *ibid.*, 2.2.8.

<sup>95</sup> Cf., e.g., Suárez's older order-brother, Pedro da Fonseca, *Commentaria in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, lib. 4, c. 2, q. 2 (ed. Cologne, 1615): «Qualis sit conceptus entis? Quaestio II/ De conceptu formali et objectivus» (fol. 709ff). Jan Aertsen points out that this distinction between formal and objective concepts reaches back at least to the early fifteenth century and can be found in modified form in Capreolus's *Defensiones theologiae divi Thomae Aquinatis*. See Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (Ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez*, Brill, Leiden, 2012, 595.

<sup>96</sup> *DM* 2.1.1 (vol. 25, 64): «... conceptus formalis dicitur actus ipse, seu (quod idem est) verbum quo intellectus rem aliquam seu commune rationem concipit...».

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* (vol. 25, 65): «Conceptus objectivus dicitur res illa, vel ratio, quae proprie et immediate per conceptum formalem cognoscitur seu repraesentatur...».

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* (vol. 25, 65): «... conceptus quidem per denominationem extrinsecam a conceptu formali, ... et ad quam mentis acies directe tendit...».

thing, the objective concept need not always be real but can be a fiction (i.e., *ens rationis*) or a universal (i.e., common *ratio*)<sup>99</sup>. After marking this distinction between the two kinds of concept, Suárez specifies that in this «disputation we especially intend to treat the objective concept of being as such, according to its total abstraction, and according to which we have said it to be the object of metaphysics»<sup>100</sup>. The question remains, though: how can the objective concept of being, which contains the vast diversity of being, be brought into an absolute unity such that it can satisfy the requirements of a unified Aristotelian science?

For Suárez, this is as much a metaphysical question as it is a Christological one. In his *De Incarnatione* the Jesuit is clear that a proper understanding of the hypostatic union of Christ to human nature cannot be achieved unless three metaphysical questions receive an adequate solution: namely, what kind of distinction obtains between essence and existence; what does suppositum add over created nature; and, finally, how created subsistence is distinguished from the existence itself of a created substantial nature?<sup>101</sup> I shall not go into the specific answers Suárez gives to these questions, my point, rather, is to indicate that, for the *Doctor eximius*, there is a profound interconnection between metaphysics and theology, such that, as he himself tells us, when one suffers so too necessarily does the other. It is impossible to claim, then, that Suárez's metaphysical account ultimately advances an ontological neutrality that prescind from theological considerations; such a procedure would compromise his entire project.

## CONCLUSION

If the argument I have made throughout this essay is correct, then it should be clear that one cannot fail to misunderstand Suárez's philosophy in general and his metaphysical project in particular if one abstracts it from its theologically rich environment—thereby starving it of its vitality and orientation—and places it in a philosophical vacuum of ontological neutrality or autonomy. Such was the project of modernity's true father, René Descartes. While it is true that no thought emerges in a vacuum, Descartes' included (despite his reluctance to name his sources), and that it was chiefly Jesuit scholasticism that helped fashion what would become Cartesian thought, it cannot be said that Suárez's metaphysics was what birthed that Enlightenment project.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. (vol. 25, 65): «Unde colligitur differentia inter conceptum formalem et objectivum, quod formalis semper est vera ac positive res et in creaturis qualitas menti inhaerens, objectivus vero non semper est vera res positiva; concipimus enim interdum privationes, et alia, quae vocantur entia rationis, quia solum habent esse objective in intellectu».

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. (vol. 25, 65): «In hac ergo disputatione, praecipue intendimus explicare conceptum objectivum entis ut sic, secundum totam astractionem suam, secundum quam diximus esse metaphysicae objectum...».

<sup>101</sup> *De Incarnatione*, 8.4.3.

Rather, as José Pereira suggests, much of modern philosophy, as practiced among the canonical figures (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Wolff, etc.) and within the Baroque *Schulmetaphysik* (Hurtado, Arriaga, Bernaldo de Quirós, etc.), represents the anamorphosis of Suárezian thought<sup>102</sup>. As Gilson himself said, «God save us from our disciples»<sup>103</sup>, both those who are faithful and those who intend to overcome their master.

In the latter category was Suárez's Jesuit successor Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza (1578-1641) who described the *Doctor eximius* as not only the «light of the Society [of Jesus] and of Spain, but also of the whole Church»<sup>104</sup>. Hurtado, it seems, could perceive more clearly in his time, what certain thinkers —Jesuits included— today cannot or will not. While one cannot doubt that his *Disputationes metaphysicae* assured for Suárez a distinct place in the history of metaphysics, his place in that history is more nuanced than many have appreciated. Though he was a first-class metaphysician, Suárez was, nevertheless, by his own reckoning first and foremost a theologian for whom metaphysics was ancillary. To say that the Suárezian metaphysics operates with a secularized notion of being or that the philosophy employed therein operates in neglect of the divine is simply to tilt at windmills.

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<sup>102</sup> PEREIRA, *Suárez*, 28, 34.

<sup>103</sup> GILSON, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 106.

<sup>104</sup> HURTADO, *Universa philosophia*, Meta., disp. 1, sec. 2, §48 (ed. Lyon 1624): «Qua in re complures sunt authorum sententiae, quas graviter & erudite proponit partimque refellit P. Francisc. Suarez clarissimum non solum Societatis, & Hispaniae lumen, sed etiam Ecclesiae totius...».