

Francisco Suárez

Doctor Eximius

# Two Tasks Today

- Background to the study of Suárez
- The object and character of metaphysics
  - What does it study?
  - How does it study what it studies?
    - Reflections on Suárez's conception of causation.

# Suárez

- Born at Granada, 5 January, 1548; died at Lisbon, 25 September, 1617.
  - Thus his life overlaps with that of Descartes (1596-1650) and Grotius (1583-1645), and predates Locke (1632-1704) by only a few decades.
  - Often regarded as the last of the scholastics, as the dominant figure of the so-called Second Scholastic, Suárez regularly finds himself introduced as he is by the editor of the most recent version of Suarez's *Metaphysical Disputations*, Prof. Salvador Castellote, as 'constituting the inflection point between the Middle Ages and Modernity' (*constituye el punto de inflexión entre la Edad Media y la Modernidad*)
    - Others eschew the term 'Second Scholastic' in favour of 'Baroque Philosophy' or 'Early Modern Philosophy'
    - We will not dally with questions of periodization, noting only that one cannot understand, for instance, Descartes's *Meditations* unless we first understand the sort of terminology deployed by Suárez *inter alia* in this period — not *at all*.

# An Inflection Point I

- Looking backwards:
  - Suárez is sort of living compendium of medieval philosophy who:
    - writes in a fully scholarly manner, regularly referencing his predecessors, including:
      - most centrally Aquinas, with whom he maintains a broad and animating sympathy.
  - Bossuet remarks that his works ‘contains the whole of medieval philosophy’; or later Schopenhauer remarks that he regards Suárez as ‘an authentic compendium of the whole scholastic tradition’.
    - This seems a fair assessment. By one count (not mine, but owing to an index made by Iturrioz), Suárez best known work, the *Metaphysical Disutations* (1596), contains 7,709 references, citing 245 different authors, many of whose works and views are otherwise lost.
      - Of these, Aristotle has the lion’s share (a total of 1,735 citations), followed by Aquinas (1,008).

# An Inflection Point II

- Looking forward,
  - Suárez he exerts discernible influence on, Leibniz, Grotius, and thence also Pufendorf.
    - Grotius expresses his admiration plainly: ‘The Jesuit doctor was a philosopher and theologian of such depth, breadth and penetration ‘that he hardly had an equal’ (*Epistola CLIV*).
    - Leibniz refers to the *MD* a dozen times, as well as a host of other works: *De divina gratia opus tripartitum* (1609), *Commentariorum ac disputationum in tertiam partem D. Thomae* (1599–1606), *Operis de religione tomus secundus, complectens tractatus. ... V. De juramento et adjuratione* (1630), and *De vera intelligentia auxilii efficacis ejusque concordio cum libero arbitrio* (OO, 1594–1655).
    - Later, Heidegger is reported in a course of lectures on Suárez at Freiburg, to have said, ‘*Der ist der Mann.*’
    - His works became foundational touchstones for work in natural law, metaphysics, and also served as the text book for courses in Theology and Philosophy in Europe and beyond.

# His *Ouvre*

- During his working life, Suárez was both remarkably prolific and industrious:
  - His *Opera Omnia* (Vivès) comprises fourteen books, distributed across 26 volumes, equalling some 21 million words—more than twice the output of Thomas Aquinas.
  - As he grew in eminence, so too did his popularity rise: almost as soon as Suárez published a book, unauthorized copies were printed in places such as Paris, Vienna, Cologne, Geneva, Lyons, and Mainz.
- Our main focus will be his *Metaphysical Disputations* (*DM*)

# *Metaphysical Disputations:* Early Legacy

- Appearing in 1597, this work contains 54 individual disputations, running itself to some 1.4 million words.
- It went through some 17 editions in the several decades after its publication.
  - It travelled widely, from Portugal and Spain, throughout Europe, where it served as the basis of education in both Catholic and Lutheran liberal arts universities;
  - extensively in the Iberian Americas (Lima, Quito, and Mexico);
  - and as far from the Iberian peninsula as Japan, China, the Philippines, India and Ethiopia.
  - This dissemination came mainly at the hands of Jesuits: the Jesuit missionary Martino Martini, based at Hangzhou, even attempted translation into Chinese by the mid-seventeenth century.

# *Metaphysical Disputations:* Basic Divisions

- There are different ways of carving up the work, but perhaps the simplest:
  1. The nature of metaphysics (i)
  2. The transcendentals (ii-xi)
  3. The causes of being (xii-xxvii)
  4. Finite and Infinite Being (xxviii-xxxi)
  5. Substance and accident, pertaining to finite beings (xxxii-xxxviii)
  6. The nine categories of accidents (xxxix-liii)
  7. Real and conceptual being (liv)
- This reflects first a division into: (i) an orientating reflection on the character of metaphysics; (ii) a treatment of being as such and its causes (2-3); finite and infinite being (4-6), with divides categorically (4-7); and (iii) an unavoidable treatment *entia rationis*, though, properly speaking, these fall outside of the purview of the metaphysician (7)

# *Metaphysical Disputations:* Subject Matter

- Suárez prefaces this work, after pointing out that it would be most useful to write not another commentary on Aristotle, but rather a systematic treatise on being as the object of the study of the science of wisdom:
- ‘The first disputation in the present work explains just what that object is; and in this disputation we explain at the same time the sublimity, usefulness, and other attributes that authors normally explain in their introductions to the sciences. After that, in the first volume we carefully discuss the broadest and most universal concept of this object—namely, that by which it is called being—along with its properties and causes. I have gone on at more length than is normal in studying the causes [of being], because I believe that this study is both very difficult and also extremely useful for all of philosophy and theology. In the second volume we have taken up the less universal concepts of this same object, beginning with the division of being into created being and uncreated being, since this division has priority and is closer to the quiddity of being, as well as being more suited to the unfolding of the present doctrine, which then proceeds through the partitions that fall under these concepts to all the genera and grades.’ (*DM*, Proem)

# The Object of Metaphysics

- Why is there a problem here?
  - Some divisions among the sciences:
  - Theoretical sciences seek knowledge; practical sciences concern conduct and goodness in action; and productive sciences aim at beautiful or useful objects.
    - Among the theoretical sciences are first philosophy, mathematics, and physics, or natural philosophy (*Top.* 145a15–16; *Phys.* 192b8–12; *DC* 298a27–32, *DA* 403a27-b2; *Met.* 1025b25, 1026a18–19, 1064a16–19, b1–3; *EN* 1139a26–28, 1141b29–32).
  - The theoretic sciences as individuated in the normal way, by their domains:
  - ‘That natural science, then, is theoretical, is plain from these considerations. Mathematics also is theoretical; but whether its objects are movable and separable from matter, is not at present clear; it is clear, however, that it considers some mathematical objects *qua* immovable and *qua* separable from matter. But if there is something which is eternal and immovable and separable, clearly the knowledge of it belongs to a theoretical science — not, however, to natural science (for natural science deals with certain movable things) nor to mathematics, but to a science prior to both. For natural science deals with things which are inseparable from matter but not immovable, and some parts of mathematics deal with things which are immovable, but presumably not separable, but embodied in matter; while the first science deals with things which are both separable and immovable.’ (*Met* E 1, 1026a7-17)

# The Domain?

- ‘There is a science (*epistêmê*),’ says Aristotle, ‘which studies being qua being (*to on hê(i) on*), and the attributes belonging to it in its own right’ (*Met.* 1003a21-22).
  - This claim, which opens *Metaphysics* iv 1, is surprising.
    - After all, Aristotle claims that each science (*epistêmê*) studies a unified genus (*APo.* 87a39-b1), but he denies that there is a single genus for all beings (*APo.* 92b14; *Top.* 121a16, b7-9; cf. *Met.* 998b22).
      - Evidently, his two claims conspire against the science he announces: if there is no genus of being and every science requires its own genus, then there is no science of being.
        - This seems, moreover, to be precisely the conclusion drawn by Aristotle in his *Eudemian Ethics*, where he maintains that we should no more look for a general science of being than we should look for a general science of goodness: ‘Just as being is not something single for the things mentioned [viz. items across the categories], neither is the good; nor is there a single science of being or of the good’ (*EE* 1217b33-35).

# Special or General

- One of the most difficult problems of interpretation set by the *Metaphysics* lies in the fact that in book IV the 'sought-for science' is characterised very precisely as the science of 'being *qua* being'. . . Unlike the particular sciences, it does not deal with a particular area of being, but rather investigates everything that is, in its most general structural elements and principles. This description fulfils the expectations the reader has derived from books I and III, which repeatedly aim at insights of the highest generality. But, on the other hand, and startlingly, we also discover that in *Metaphysics* VI 1. . . Aristotle seems first to accept this opinion and then, immediately afterwards, to embrace its exact opposite. For in VI 1 we again find an analysis of the sciences designed to establish the proper place of 'first philosophy'. Here, however, Aristotle does not, as he did in book IV, distinguish the 'sought-for science' from all other sciences by its greater generality. First he divides philosophy into three parts: theoretical, practical, and productive; and then he splits theoretical philosophy into three disciplines. To each of these disciplines he entrusts well-defined areas as objects of research. The 'sought-for science', referred to in IV as the 'science of being *qua* being', he now calls 'first philosophy', and defines it as the science of what is 'changeless and self-subsistent (*akinêton kai chôriston*)'. He explicitly gives it the title of 'theology'. Physics and mathematics stand beside it as the two neighbouring disciplines in the field of theoretical philosophy. (Patzig, 'Theology and Ontology in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,' 1960).

# Yes, Special and General

- Aristotle seems to cut off part of being when identifying the subject matter of first philosophy:
  - One might indeed raise the question whether first philosophy is universal, or deals with one genus, i.e. some one kind of being; for not even the mathematical sciences are all alike in this respect—geometry and astronomy deal with a certain particular kind of thing, while universal mathematics applies alike to all.
- His response:
  - We answer that if there is no substance other than those which are formed by nature, natural science will be the first science; but if there is an immovable substance, the science of this must be prior and must be first philosophy, and universal in this way, because it is first. And it will belong to this to consider being *qua* being—both what it is and the attributes which belong to it *qua* being. (*Met.*1026a 23-32)

# Taking that All Together

- Metaphysics, or first philosophy, takes as its object *ens* — or *ens qua ens*.
  - Yet this does not tell us whether the metaphysician studies (i) some or all of the beings there are, just in so far as they are beings (= *ens* as count noun), or (ii) being, that quality or activity that all beings have in common, just in so far as they are beings (= *ens* as a participle)
    - Nor does it tell us whether, if (i), it studies (a) just one being, God or (b) all beings; or (c) both (a) and (b), perhaps managing (b) by focusing on (a).
    - Nor again does it tell us, if (ii), what that common quality or activity might be — such that it is univocal and determines a genus or something sufficiently genus-like to ground a single *scientia*.

# So, *Ens*?

- This does not immediately help.
  - We have the problem of *ens* vs. *ens*: Suárez wants to insist that *ens* can be taken either as a participle or as a noun (*DM* II. 2. 4-5):
    - As a participle, *ens* signifies the ‘act of being’ that is, the activity of making something actual; in this sense, being is restricted to actual being, and is, if you will, a being as doing
    - Taken the other way, *ens* signifies more in the manner of a count-noun: something with a real essence (*quod sit habens essentiam realem, id est non fictam nec chymaericam, sed veram et aptam ad realiter existendum*).
- One way of taking this is just to say that *a* being is here differentiated from some manner activity—an activity shared by all beings.
- Another way is to suppose that it is rather the actual v. non-actual distinction.
  - In this second way: there is something common to all actual beings, studied by the metaphysician, who has no interest in *ficta*, except insofar as the help set out the categories of real being.

# Or *Ens* inasmuch as it is Real *Ens*?

- It must be said, therefore, that being inasmuch as it is real being is the appropriate object for this science.
- *Dicendum est ergo ens in quantum ens reale esse obiectum adaequatum huius scientiae. (DM I.1.26)*

# Also in Suarez's Sights

- Although this science studies the three things mentioned earlier [scil., first causes, maximally universal principles, and separate substances], it does not study any of them as its subject, but only being in general. For the subject of a science is the thing whose causes and attributes it seeks, not the very causes of the genus under investigation. For cognition of cause of some genus is the end which investigation in a science attains (Aquinas, *Comm. in Meta, prol.*)

# *Metaphysical Disputations:* Subject Matter

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# Cause-Driven Metaphysics

- When he maintains that metaphysics trades in causes, Suarez has in view a highly stylized conception of causation, far more nuanced and iterated than the (broadly) event-based conception which is the common currency of many contemporary conceptions.

# Four Pertinent Observations

- A cause is a principle (or *principium*); and a principle is something on which something depends for its being (*DM XII 1.25*).
- A cause, properly, is a principle which communicates *esse* distinct from its own *esse* to that of which it is a cause (*DM XII 4.7*)
- A cause causes by means of ‘that influence by which a cause, within its own genus, actually gives being’
- These core notions of cause apply to all four Aristotelian causes.

# A Cause is a *Principium*

- A cause is a principle (or *principium*); and a principle is something on which something depends for its being (*esse*) (*DM XII 1.25*).
- Suarez in fact allows for a broader notion of principle than this suggests: a *principium* is also the first element in any ordering
- He then notes that the strict and metaphysical sense is this:
  - A principium (and hence a cause) is ‘that which truly and directly communicates (*influens*) some sort of being (*esse*) to that of which it is the principle.’

# Communicating *Esse* I

- A cause, properly, is a principle which communicates being distinct from its own (*esse*) to that of which it is a cause (*DM XII 4.7*)
- This naturally raises a question: how do we determine when the being of one thing is distinct from the being of another?

# Communicating *Esse* II

- We can see, then, that the core notion of a cause involves not one event's somehow pushing another.
- It is rather this: causation accrues when an agent exercises a power.
  - At its most general level, a cause is what: 'communicates *esse* by means of an action'.
    - N.b., however, that Suárez denies that there can be a univocal account of causation across all four species of cause (*quod illi modi causarum communes sunt causis accidentium et substantiarum, quae non possunt esse univoce causae, quia non dant univoce esse, unde nec ratio effectus univoca esse potest in accidente et substantia*) (DM XII 3.22).
- Be that as it may, paradigmatically, the agent may be intentional: If Smedley has the power to comb his own hair, then his doing so is an instance of causation.
- Or it may be non-intentional: if a running course of water has the power to etch a canyon through the desert, then its doing so is an instance of causation.

# Communicating *Esse* III

- One might wish to translate this talk of communicating *esse* into an idiom of event relation if one is so inclined.
- Nothing will be lost in the enterprise, provided that one of the events is an agent's exercising of a *power*: the ontology of causation presupposed calls upon powers as ineliminable features of the world.

# Within its Own Genus

- A cause causes by means of ‘that influence by which a cause, within its own genus, actually gives being.’
  - Thus, appeals to causes are ineliminably category based and accordingly restricted.
  - Cause is typically a kind of change, and nothing, properly speaking, changes from being blue to weighing eight ounces.
    - Rather something changes *within* the category of quality, from being blue to being red, or within the category of quantity, from weighing six ounces to weighing eight.
      - In the case of qualities, a change from one color to another presupposes a gain and loss along a determinate color spectrum.
- To take a case initially favorable to Suárez’s point of view: Socrates changes when he becomes tanned, where his change is upon analysis shown to be the loss of one contrary, pallor, in favour of another, darkness, within the category of quality (hence, ‘qualitative change’).

# All Four Causes

- So far, we have been restricting ourself to the efficient or moving cause.
- Suárez takes himself to be speaking generally, however, across the four causes: material, formal, efficient and final.
  - Suárez treats material and formal causes as *intrinsic* causes (*DM XII 3.19*).
    - They constitute part of that to which they communicate *esse*.
      - Still they are distinct from it, since that is a composite, and neither of them is.
  - By contrast, efficient and final causes are *extrinsic* (*DM XII 3.19*).
    - They communicate *esse* without constituting that to which to which they contribute.

# Taking Formal Cause as a Cause

- With respect to the first matter, it should be said that the principle of causing is nothing other than the nature of the form itself, which causes through itself and through its own entity, by making itself completely present (as I might say) to the matter or the composite.
- *Quoad primum dicendum est principium causandi non esse aliud quam entitatem et naturam ipsius formae, quae per seipsam et entitatem suam causat, exhibendo (ut ita dicam) sese totam materiae seu composito (MD XV 6.2)*
- In one way, this is simple: a substantial cause causes by uniting with some matter; it so doing it gives the compound its *esse*. End of story.
  - So, what makes this stuff a  $\phi$  thing? The presence to it of an  $\phi$  form.
- Is this a non-explanation?
  - This depends. What makes this brass a key? The presence of this shape to the bronze. What makes this brass a key to *this* lock? It is a key to this lock in virtue of the presence of this form, the one suited to this lock.
  - What makes this matter a pair of eyes? The presence to this matter of the structural features suited to light and color detection.
    - N.b. that we are here at fairly high level of functional specification, one already admitting multiple realizability.

# Two Observations

- A first observation: we found it convenient to illustrate by means of efficient causes; when we move to the realm of formal and final causation, matters become increasingly challenging and in some ways opaque.
- A second observation: in the case of formal causation, the cause, the form, is—in a sense to be examined—effectively its own causality.
  - We have a collapsing, it seems, of cause and causality in this domain.

# The Role of Causation in Suárez's *Metaphysics*

- To understand being, we must understand what brings being about, in the broadest possible sense — what is responsible for being (*ens*).
- Thereafter, we must come to terms with what causes individual beings (*entia*) to come into and remain in existence, and the also with what causes beings to change while they remain in existence.
  - This requires reflection on all the causes of being, however many and of whatever sorts they may be.
    - It further involves reflection on the narrower question of how the causes of being exercise their causality — how precisely, that is, such causes come to be responsible for being.
    - This, then, licenses, or indeed requires, Suárez to engage in a thorough examination of causation itself.