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A  
HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME III  
OCKHAM TO SUÁREZ

BY  
FREDERICK COPLESTON, S.J.

*Professor of the History of Philosophy  
at Heythrop College*

*The Newman Press*  
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1963

certain customs or laws which are in accord with the natural law, even though they are not strictly deducible from it. And these customs or laws form the *ius gentium*.

It has been said, not unreasonably, that Vitoria's idea of all nations as forming in some sense a world-community and of the *ius gentium* as law established by the authority of the whole world looked forward to the possible creation of a world-government, whereas Suárez' idea of the *ius gentium* looked forward rather to establishment of an international tribunal which would interpret international law and give concrete decisions without being itself a world-government, which Suárez did not regard as practicable.<sup>1</sup> However this may be, it is clear that in much of their political and legal philosophy the Renaissance Scholastics showed a grasp of concrete problems and a readiness to handle them in a 'modern' way. Men like Vitoria, Bellarmine and Suárez all maintained that political sovereignty is in some sense derived from the people; and they maintained the right of resistance to a ruler who acts tyrannically. Although they naturally thought in terms of contemporary forms of government, they did not consider that the actual form of government is a matter of prime importance. At the same time the fact that their conception of political society and of law was founded on a clear acceptance of the natural moral law constituted its great strength. They systematized and developed mediaeval legal and political philosophy and transmitted it to the seventeenth century. Grotius, for example, was certainly indebted to the Scholastics. Some people would maintain, I suppose, that the legal and political theory of the Renaissance Scholastics constituted a stage in the development from a predominantly theological outlook to a positivist outlook; and as a historical judgment this may be true. But it does not follow that the later secularization of the idea of natural law and its subsequent abandonment to all intents and purposes constituted a philosophical advance in any but a chronological sense.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Catholic Conception of International Law* by J. B. Scott, Ch. XIII.

## CHAPTER XXII

## FRANCIS SUÁREZ (I)

*Life and works—The structure and divisions of the Disputationes metaphysicae—Metaphysics as the science of being—The concept of being—The attributes of being—Individuation—Analogy—God's existence—The divine Nature—Essence and existence—Substance and accident—Modes—Quantity—Relations—Entia rationis—General remarks—Étienne Gilson on Suárez.*

I. FRANCIS SUÁREZ (1548–1617), known as *Doctor eximius*, was born at Granada and studied canon law at Salamanca. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1564 and in due course began his professional career by teaching philosophy at Segovia. Afterwards he taught theology at Avila, Segovia, Valladolid, Rome, Alcalá, Salamanca and Coimbra. Suárez, who was an exemplary and holy priest and religious, was also very much the student, scholar and professor; and his whole adult life was devoted to lecturing, study and writing. He was an indefatigable writer, and his works fill twenty-three volumes in the earlier editions and twenty-eight volumes in the Paris edition of 1856–78. A large number of these works were, of course, concerned with theological questions; and for present purposes his most important writings are the two volumes of *Disputationes metaphysicae* (1597) and his great work *De legibus* (1612). One may also mention his *De Deo uno et trino* (1606) and the *De opere sex dierum* (published posthumously in 1621).

Suárez was convinced that a theologian ought to possess a firm grasp and profound understanding of the metaphysical principles and foundations of speculation. He says explicitly that no one can become a perfect theologian unless he has first laid the firm foundations of metaphysics. Accordingly, in his *Disputationes metaphysicae* he set out to give a complete and systematic treatment of Scholastic metaphysics; and, indeed, the work was the first of its kind. It was incomplete in the sense that metaphysical psychology was omitted; but this was supplied in the *Tractatus de anima* (published posthumously in 1621). Suárez abandoned the order adopted by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*<sup>1</sup> and divided the

<sup>1</sup> The importance of this change is not diminished, of course, by the fact that we know that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was not 'a book' but a collection of treatises.

matter systematically into fifty-four disputations, subdivided into sections; though at the beginning he provided a table showing where the themes treated of in the successive chapters of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* were dealt with in his own work. In this work the author's astounding erudition is clearly expressed in his discussions of, or references and allusions to, Greek, Patristic, Jewish, Islamic and Scholastic authors and to Renaissance thinkers like Marsilius Ficinus and Pico della Mirandola. Needless to say, however, Suárez does not confine himself to the historical recital of opinions; his object is always the attainment of a positive and objective answer to the problems raised. He may be prolix, but he is certainly systematic. As an example of a competent non-Scholastic judgment of the work one may quote the following sentence. 'All the important Scholastic controversies are in this work lucidly brought together and critically examined and their results combined in the unity of a system.'<sup>1</sup>

In the present chapter I shall be concerned mainly with the *Disputationes metaphysicae*. In the next chapter I shall treat of the contents of the *Tractatus de legibus ac Deo legislatore in X libros distributus*. This last work summarized and systematized Scholastic legal theories, and in it the author presented his own development of Thomist legal and political theory. In this connection one must mention also Suárez' *Defensio fidei catholicae et apostolicae adversus Anglicanae sectae errores, cum responsione ad apologiam pro iure fidelitatis et praefationem monitoriam Serenissimi Jacobi Angliae Regis* (1613). In this book Suárez maintained Bellarmine's theory of the indirect power of the pope in temporal affairs and argued against the notion, dear to James I of England, that temporal monarchs receive their sovereignty immediately from God. As I remarked in the last chapter, James I had the book burned.

2. Before going on to outline some of Suárez' philosophical ideas I want to say something about the structure and arrangement of the *Disputationes metaphysicae*.

In the first disputation (or discussion) Suárez considers the nature of first philosophy or metaphysics, and he decides that it can be defined as the science which contemplates being as being. The second disputation deals with the concept of being, while disputations 3 to 11 inclusive treat of the *passiones entis* or

<sup>1</sup> M. Frischeisen-Köhler and W. Moog: *Die Philosophie der Neuzeit bis zum Ende des XVIII Jahrhunderts*, p. 211; vol. III of F. Ueberweg's *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 12th edition.

transcendental attributes of being. Unity in general is the theme of the fourth disputation, while individual unity and the principle of individuation are dealt with in the fifth. The sixth disputation treats of universals, the seventh of distinctions. After considering unity Suárez passes to truth (disputation 8) and falsity (9), while in disputations 10 and 11 he treats of good and evil. Disputations 12 to 27 are concerned with causes; disputation 12 with causes in general, disputations 13 and 14 with the material cause, disputations 15 and 16 with the formal cause, disputations 17 to 22 with efficient causality, and disputations 23 and 24 with final causality, while exemplary causality is the subject of disputation 25. Finally, disputation 26 deals with the relations of causes to effects and disputation 27 with the mutual relations of the causes to one another.

The second volume begins with the division of being into infinite and finite being (disputation 28). Infinite or divine being is treated in the next two disputations, God's existence in disputation 29 and His essence and attributes in disputation 30. In disputation 31 Suárez goes on to consider finite created being in general, and in the following disputation he considers the distinction of substance and accidents in general. Disputations 33 to 36 contain Suárez' metaphysics of substance, and disputations 37 to 53 deal with the various categories of accidents. The last disputation of the work, 54, deals with *entia rationis*.

As has already been indicated, Suárez' *Disputationes metaphysicae* mark the transition from commentaries on Aristotle to independent treatises on metaphysics and to *Cursus philosophici* in general. It is true that one can discern among Suárez' predecessors, as for example with Fonseca, a growing tendency to shake off the bonds imposed by the commentary method; but it was Suárez who really originated the new form of treatment. After his time the *Cursus philosophici* and independent philosophical treatises became common, both inside and outside the Jesuit Order. Moreover, Suárez' decision not to include rational psychology in metaphysics but to treat it on its own and consider it as the highest part of 'natural philosophy'<sup>1</sup> had its influence on succeeding writers like Arriaga and Oviedo, who assigned the theory of the soul to physics rather than to metaphysics.<sup>2</sup>

One feature of Suárez' *Disputationes metaphysicae* which should

<sup>1</sup> *Disp. metaph.*, I, 2, nn. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> This classification of psychology was in accordance with Aristotle's remarks in his *De Anima*.

be noticed is that no separation is made in this work between general and special metaphysics. The later distinction between ontology or general metaphysics on the one hand and special metaphysical disciplines like psychology, cosmology and natural theology on the other hand has commonly been ascribed to the influence of Christian Wolff (1679-1754), the disciple of Leibniz, who wrote separate treatises on ontology, cosmology, psychology natural theology, etc. But further investigation into the history of Scholasticism in the second half of the seventeenth century has shown that the distinction between general and special metaphysics and the use of the word 'ontology' to describe the former antedate the writings of Wolff. Jean-Baptiste Duhamel (1624-1706) used the word 'ontology' to describe general metaphysics in his *Philosophia vetus et nova* or *Philosophia universalis* or *Philosophia Burgundica* (1678). This is not to say, however, that Wolff's division of the philosophical disciplines was not of great influence or that the continued use of the word 'ontology' for general metaphysics is not to be ascribed primarily to him.

3. Metaphysics, says Suárez,<sup>1</sup> has as its *obiectum adequatum* being in so far as it is real being. But to say that the metaphysician is concerned with being as being is not the same thing as saying that he is concerned with being as being in complete abstraction from the ways in which being is concretely realized, that is to say, in complete abstraction from the most general kinds of being or *inferiora entis*. After all, the metaphysician is concerned with real being, with being as including in some way the *inferiora entis secundum proprias rationes*.<sup>2</sup> He is concerned, therefore, not only with the concept of being as such but also with the transcendental attributes of being, with uncreated and created, infinite and finite being, with substance and accidents, and with the types of causes. But he is not concerned with material being as such: he is concerned with material things only in so far as knowledge of them is necessary in order to know the general divisions and categories of being.<sup>3</sup> The fact is that the concept of being is analogous, and so it cannot be properly known unless the different kinds of being are clearly distinguished.<sup>4</sup> For instance, the metaphysician is primarily concerned with immaterial, not with material substance; but he has to consider material substance in so far as knowledge of it is necessary in order to distinguish it from immaterial substance and

<sup>1</sup> *Disp.*, I, I, 24.<sup>2</sup> I, 2, II.<sup>3</sup> I, 2, 24.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

in order to know the metaphysical predicates which belong to it precisely as material substance.<sup>1</sup>

With Suárez, then, as Suarezians at any rate would maintain, the fundamental metaphysical attitude of Thomism persists unchanged. The Aristotelian idea of 'first philosophy' as the study or science of being as being is maintained. But Suárez emphasizes the fact that by being he means real being; the metaphysician is not concerned simply with concepts. Again, though he is concerned primarily with immaterial reality, he is not so exclusively concerned with it that he has nothing to say of material reality. But he considers material reality only from the metaphysical point of view, not from the point of view of a physicist or of a mathematician; Suárez accepted the Aristotelian doctrine of the degrees of abstraction. Again, we may note that Suárez emphasized the analogical character of the concept of being; he would not allow that it is univocal. Lastly, as to the purpose of metaphysics, Suárez is convinced that it is the contemplation of truth for its own sake;<sup>2</sup> he remains in the serene atmosphere of the Aristotelian *Metaphysics* and of St. Thomas and is unaffected by the new attitude towards knowledge which manifested itself in a Francis Bacon.

4. In the second disputation Suárez treats of the concept of being; and he declares that 'the proper and adequate formal concept of being as such is one' and that 'it is different from the formal concepts of other things'.<sup>3</sup> As he goes on to say that this is the common opinion and reckons among its defenders 'Scotus and all his disciples', it might seem that he is making the concept of being univocal and not analogical. It is necessary, then, to say something about Suárez' view on this matter.

In the first place the formal concept of being is one, in the sense that it does not signify immediately any particular nature or kind of thing: it does not signify a plurality of beings according as they differ from one another, but 'rather in so far as they agree with one another or are like to one another'.<sup>4</sup> The concept of being is really distinct from the concept of substance or the concept of accident: it abstracts from what is proper to each.<sup>5</sup> It will not do to say that there is a unity of word alone, for the concept precedes the word and its use.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, 'to the formal concept of being there corresponds an adequate and immediate objective concept, which does not expressly signify either substance or accident, either God

<sup>1</sup> *Disp.*, I, 2, 5.<sup>4</sup> 2, I, 9.<sup>2</sup> I, 4, 2.<sup>6</sup> 2, I, 10.<sup>3</sup> 2, I, 9.<sup>5</sup> 2, I, 13.

or creature: it signifies them all in so far as they are in some way like to one another and agree in being.<sup>1</sup> Does this mean that in a created substance, for instance, there is a form of being which is actually distinct from the form or forms which make it a created substance in particular? No, abstraction does not necessarily require a distinction of things or forms which actually precedes the abstraction: it is sufficient if the mind considers objects, not as each exists in itself, but according to its likeness to other things.<sup>2</sup> In the concept of being as such the mind considers only the likeness of things, not their differences from one another. It is true that a real being is such by its own being which is inseparable from it, that is to say, it is true that a thing's being is intrinsic to it; but this simply means that the concept of being as such does not include its 'inferiors'.

Suárez admits, then, that a concept of being can be formed which is strictly one; and on this matter he ranges himself with Scotus against Cajetan. But he emphasizes the fact that this concept is the work of the mind and that 'as it exists in the thing itself, it is not something actually distinct from the inferiors in which it exists. This is the common opinion of the whole School of St. Thomas.'<sup>3</sup> Why, then, does he insist that the concept of being represents reality? If it represents reality, in what does being as such consist and how does it belong to its inferiors? Does it not seem that if the concept of being as such represents reality, it must represent something in the inferiors, that is, in existent beings, which is distinct from that intrinsic entity or beingness which is peculiar to each? And, if this is not so, does it not follow that the concept of being as such does not represent reality?

Suárez distinguishes 'being' understood as a participle, that is to say, as signifying the act of existing, from 'being' understood as a noun, that is to say, as signifying what has a real essence, whether it actually exists or not. A 'real essence' is one which does not involve any contradiction and which is not a mere construction of the mind. Now, 'being' understood as a participle gives rise to one concept 'common to all actually existent beings, since they are like to one another and agree in actual existence' and this holds good both for the formal and for the objective concepts.<sup>4</sup> We can also have one concept of being understood as a noun, provided that the concept simply abstracts from, and does not exclude, actual existence.

<sup>1</sup> *Disp.*, 2, 2, 8.<sup>2</sup> 2, 2, 15.<sup>3</sup> 2, 3, 7.<sup>4</sup> 2, 4, 4.

It does not appear to me that the repetition of this statement of our ability to form one concept of being provides a very adequate answer to the difficulties which can be raised; but I wish now to indicate why Suárez does not call this concept a univocal concept.

In order that a concept should be univocal, it is not sufficient that it should be applicable in the same sense to a plurality of different inferiors which have an equal relationship to one another.<sup>1</sup> Suárez, therefore, demanded more for a univocal concept than that it should be one concept; he demanded that it should apply to its inferiors in the same way. We can, indeed, form a formal concept of being which is one and which says nothing about the differences of the inferiors; but no inferior is, so to speak, outside being. When the concept of being is narrowed down (*contrahitur*) to concepts of different kinds of being, what is done is that a thing is conceived more expressly,<sup>2</sup> according to its own mode of existence, than it is by means of the concept of being.<sup>3</sup> This does not mean, however, that something is added to the concept of being as though from outside. On the contrary, the concept of being is made more express or determinate. In order that the inferiors should be properly conceived as beings of a certain kind, the concept of being must indeed be contracted: but this means making more determinate what was already contained in the concept. The latter cannot, therefore, be univocal.

5. In the third disputation Suárez proceeds to discuss the *passiones entis in communi*, the attributes of being as such. There are only three such attributes, namely unity, truth and goodness.<sup>4</sup> These attributes do not, however, add anything positive to being. Unity signifies being as undivided; and this undividedness adds to being simply a denial of division, not anything positive.<sup>5</sup> Truth of knowledge (*veritas cognitionis*) does not add anything real to the act itself, but it connotes the object existing in the way that it is represented by the judgment as existing.<sup>6</sup> But truth of knowledge is found in the judgment or mental act and is not the same as *veritas transcendentalis*, which signifies the being of a thing with connotation of the knowledge or concept of the intellect, which represents, or can represent, the thing as it is.<sup>7</sup> This conformity of the thing to the mind must be understood primarily of a relation to the divine mind, and only secondarily of conformity to the

<sup>1</sup> 2, 2, 36; 39, 3, 17.<sup>2</sup> 2, 6, 7.<sup>4</sup> 3, 2, 3.<sup>3</sup> *expressius, per maiorem determinationem.*<sup>5</sup> *Disp.*, 4, 1-2.<sup>6</sup> 8, 2, 9.<sup>7</sup> 8, 7, 25.

human mind.<sup>1</sup> As to goodness, this means the perfection of a thing, though it also connotes in another thing an inclination to or capacity for the aforesaid perfection. This connotation, however, does not add to the thing which is called good anything absolute; nor is it, properly speaking, a relation.<sup>2</sup> None of the three transcendental attributes of being, then, adds anything positive to being.

6. In the fifth disputation Suárez considers the problem of individuation. All actually existing things—all things which can exist 'immediately'—are singular and individual.<sup>3</sup> The word 'immediately' is inserted in order to exclude the common attributes of being, which cannot exist immediately, that is to say, which can exist only in singular, individual beings. Suárez agrees with Scotus that individuality adds something real to the common nature; but he rejects Scotus' doctrine of the *haecceitas* 'formally' distinct from the specific nature.<sup>4</sup> What, then, does individuality add to the common nature? 'Individuality adds to the common nature something which is mentally distinct from that nature, which belongs to the same category, and which (together with the nature) constitutes the individual metaphysically, as an individual *differentia* contracting the species and constituting the individual.'<sup>5</sup> Suárez remarks that to say that what is added is mentally distinct from the specific nature is not the same thing as saying that it is an *ens rationis*; he has already agreed with Scotus that it is *aliquid reale*. In answer, then, to the question whether a substance is individuated by itself Suárez replies that if the words 'by itself' refer to the specific nature as such, the answer is in the negative, but that, if the words 'by itself' mean 'by its own entity or being', the answer is in the affirmative. But it must be added that the thing's entity or being includes not only the *ratio specifica* but also the *differentia individualis*, the two being distinguished from one another by a mental distinction. Suárez emphasizes the fact that he is speaking of created things, not of the divine substance; but among created things he applies the same doctrine to both immaterial and material substances. From this it follows that he rejects the Thomist view of *materia signata* as the only principle of individuation.<sup>6</sup> In the case of a composite substance, composed, that is to say, of matter and form, 'the adequate principle of individuation is this matter and this form in union, the form being the chief principle and sufficient by itself for the composite, as an individual

<sup>1</sup> 8, 7, 28-9.    <sup>2</sup> 10, 1, 12.    <sup>3</sup> 5, 1, 4.    <sup>4</sup> 5, 2, 8-9.    <sup>5</sup> 5, 2, 16.    <sup>6</sup> 5, 3.

thing of a certain species, to be considered numerically one. This conclusion . . . agrees with the opinion of Durandus and Toletus; and Scotus, Henry of Ghent and the Nominalists do not hold anything substantially different' (*in re non dissentiunt*).<sup>1</sup> It is perfectly true that because our knowledge is founded on experience of sensible things, we often distinguish individuals according to their several 'matters' or according to the accidents, like quantity, which follow on the possession of matter; but if we are considering a material substance in itself, and not in relation simply to our mode of cognition, its individuality must be primarily ascribed to its principal constitutive element, namely the form.<sup>2</sup>

7. Having dealt at length with the doctrine of causes Suárez comes in disputation 28 to the division of being into infinite being and finite being. This division is fundamental; but it can be made 'under different names and concepts'.<sup>3</sup> For example, being can be divided into *ens a se* and *ens ab alio*, into necessary being and contingent being, or into being by essence and being by participation. But these and similar divisions are equivalent, in the sense that they are all divisions of being into God and creatures and exhaust being, as it were.

The question then arises whether being is predicated equivocally, univocally or analogically of God and creatures. Suárez notes<sup>4</sup> that a doctrine of equivocation is wrongly attributed to Petrus Aureoli. The Scotist doctrine, that 'being signifies immediately one concept which is common to God and creatures and which is therefore predicated of them univocally, and not analogically',<sup>5</sup> Suárez rejects. But if being is predicated analogically of God and creatures, is the analogy in question the analogy of proportionality alone, as Cajetan taught, or the analogy of proportionality together with the analogy of attribution, as Fonseca, for example, considered? According to Suárez, the analogy in question cannot be the analogy of proportionality, for 'every true analogy of proportionality includes an element of metaphor', whereas 'in this analogy of being there is no metaphor'.<sup>6</sup> It must be, therefore, analogy of attribution, and, indeed, intrinsic attribution. 'Every creature is being in virtue of a relation to God, inasmuch as it participates in or in some way imitates the being (*esse*) of God, and, as having being, it depends essentially on God, much more than an accident depends on a substance.'<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 5, 6, 15.  
<sup>2</sup> 28, 3, 2.

<sup>3</sup> 5, 6, 17.  
<sup>4</sup> 28, 3, 11.

<sup>5</sup> 28, 1, 6.  
<sup>6</sup> 28, 3, 16.

<sup>7</sup> 28, 3, 1.

8. In the following disputation (29) Suárez considers the question whether God's existence can be known by reason, apart from revelation. First of all he examines the 'physical argument', which is to all intents and purposes the argument from motion as found in Aristotle. Suárez' conclusion is that this argument is unable to demonstrate the existence of God. The principle on which the argument is founded, namely 'every thing which is moved is moved by another' (*omne quod movetur ab alio movetur*), he declares to be uncertain. Some things appear to move themselves, and it might be true of the motion of the heaven that the latter moves itself in virtue of its own form or of some innate power. 'How, then, can a true demonstration, proving God's existence, be obtained by the aid of uncertain principles?'<sup>1</sup> If the principle is rightly understood, it is more probable (*probabilius*) than its opposite, but all the same, 'by what necessary or evident argument can it be proved from this principle that there is an immaterial substance?'<sup>2</sup> Even if it can be shown that a mover is required, it does not follow that there is not a plurality of movers, still less that the mover is immaterial pure act. Suárez' point is that one cannot prove the existence of God as immaterial uncreated substance and pure act by arguments drawn from 'physics'. In order to show that God exists it is necessary to have recourse to metaphysical arguments.

First of all it is necessary to substitute for the principle *omne quod movetur ab alio movetur* the metaphysical principle *omne quod fit, ab alio fit*.<sup>3</sup> The truth of the principle follows from the evident truth that nothing can produce itself. On the basis of this metaphysical principle one can argue as follows.<sup>4</sup> 'Every being is either made or not made (uncreated). But not all beings in the universe can be made. Therefore there is necessarily some being which is not made, but which is uncreated.' The truth of the major premiss can be made evident in this way. A made or produced being is produced by 'something else'. This 'something else' is itself either made or not made. If the latter, then we already have an uncreated being. If the former, then that on which the 'something else' depends for existence is itself either made or not made. In order to avoid an infinite regress or a 'circle' (which would obtain if one said that *A* was made by *B*, *B* by *C*, and *C* by *A*), it is necessary to postulate an uncreated being. In his discussion of the impossibility of an infinite regress<sup>5</sup> Suárez distinguishes *causae per*

<sup>1</sup> 29, 1, 7.    <sup>2</sup> 29, 1, 8.    <sup>3</sup> 29, 1, 20.    <sup>4</sup> 29, 1, 21.    <sup>5</sup> 29, 1, 25-40.

*se subordinatae* and *causae per accidens subordinatae*; but he makes it clear that he considers an infinite regress impossible even in the case of the latter. He adopts, then, a different opinion from that of St. Thomas. But he remarks that even if one accepts the possibility of an infinite regress in the series of *causae per accidens subordinatae*, this does not affect the main line of the argument, for the infinite series would be eternally dependent on a higher extrinsic cause. If it were not, there would be no causality or production at all.

This argument, however, does not immediately show that God exists: it has still to be shown that there is only one uncreated being. Suárez argues first of all that 'although individual effects, taken and considered separately, do not show that the maker of all things is one and the same, the beauty of the whole universe and of all things which are in it, their marvellous connection and order sufficiently show that there is one first being by which all things are governed and from which they derive their origin'.<sup>1</sup> Against the objection that there might be several governors of the universe Suárez argues that it can be shown that the whole sensible world proceeds from one efficient cause. The cause or causes of the universe must be intelligent; but several intelligent causes could not combine to produce and govern the one systematically united effect unless they were subordinated to a higher cause using them as organs or instruments.<sup>2</sup> There is, however, another possible objection. Might there not be another universe, made by another uncreated cause? Suárez allows that the creation of another universe would not be impossible, but he observes that there is no reason to suppose that there is another universe. Still, given the possibility, the argument from the universe to the unicity of God holds good, strictly speaking, only for those things which are capable of being known by human experience and reasoning. He concludes, therefore, that an *a priori* proof of the unicity of uncreated being must be given.

The *a priori* proof is not, Suárez notes, *a priori* in the strict sense: it is impossible to deduce God's existence from its cause, for it has no cause. 'Nor, even if it had, is God known by us so exactly and perfectly that we can apprehend Him by means of His own principles, so to speak.'<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, if something about God has been already proved *a posteriori*, we may be in a position to argue *a priori* from one attribute to another.<sup>4</sup> 'When it has been proved

<sup>1</sup> 29, 2, 7.    <sup>2</sup> 29, 2, 21.    <sup>3</sup> 29, 3, 1.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

*a posteriori* that God is necessary self-existent being (*ens a se*), it can be proved *a priori* from this attribute that there cannot be any other necessary self-existent being, and consequently it can be proved that God exists.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Suárez' argument is that it can be proved that there must be a necessary being and that it can then be shown conclusively that there cannot be more than one necessary being. How does he show that there can be only one necessary being? He argues that, in order that there may be a plurality of beings having a common nature, it is necessary that the individuality of each should be in some way (*aliquo modo*) outside the essence of the nature. For, if individuality was essential to the nature, the latter would not be multipliable. But in the case of uncreated being it is impossible for its individuality to be in any way distinct from its nature, for its nature is existence itself, and existence is always individual. The foregoing argument is the fourth which Suárez considers.<sup>2</sup> Later on<sup>3</sup> he remarks that 'although some of these arguments which have been considered do not perhaps, when taken separately, so convince the intellect that a froward or ill-disposed man cannot find ways of evading them, none the less all the arguments are most efficacious, and, especially if they are taken together, they abundantly prove the aforesaid truth'.

9. Suárez proceeds to consider the nature of God. He points out at the beginning of disputation 30 that the question of God's existence and the question of God's nature cannot be entirely isolated from one another. He also repeats his observation that, although our knowledge of God is *a posteriori*, we can in some cases argue *a priori* from one attribute to another. After these preliminary remarks he proceeds to argue that God is perfect being, possessing in Himself, as creator, all the perfections which He is capable of communicating. But He does not possess them all in the same way. Those perfections which do not of themselves contain any limitation or imperfection, God possesses 'formally' (*formaliter*). A perfection like wisdom, for example, though it exists in human beings in a finite or imperfect manner, does not include in its formal concept any limitation or imperfection, and it can be predicated formally of God, *salva analogia, quae inter Deum et creaturam semper intercedit*.<sup>4</sup> Perfections of this sort exist 'eminently' (*eminenter*) in God, for creaturely wisdom as such cannot be predicated of God; but there is, none the less, a formal

<sup>1</sup> 29, 3, 2.<sup>2</sup> 29, 3, 11.<sup>3</sup> 29, 3, 31.<sup>4</sup> 30, 1, 12.

analogous concept of wisdom which can be predicated formally, though analogously, of God. In the case, however, of perfections which involve inclusion of the being possessing them in a certain category these can be said to be present in God only *modo eminenti*, and not formally.

In succeeding sections Suárez argues that God is infinite,<sup>1</sup> pure act and without any composition,<sup>2</sup> omnipresent,<sup>3</sup> immutable and eternal, yet free,<sup>4</sup> one,<sup>5</sup> invisible,<sup>6</sup> incomprehensible,<sup>7</sup> ineffable,<sup>8</sup> living, intelligent and self-sufficient substance.<sup>9</sup> He then considers the divine knowledge<sup>10</sup> and the divine will<sup>11</sup> and the divine power.<sup>12</sup> In the section on the divine knowledge Suárez shows that God knows possible creatures and existent things and then remarks that the question of God's knowledge of conditional future contingent events cannot be properly treated without reference to theological sources, even though it is a metaphysical question, 'and so I entirely omit it'.<sup>13</sup> But he allows himself the remark that if statements like, 'if Peter had been here, he would have sinned' have a determinate truth, this truth cannot be unknown to God. That they have determinate truth is 'much more probable' (*multo probabilius*) than that they have not, in the sense that Peter in the example given would either have sinned or not have sinned and that, though we cannot know which would have happened, God can know it. However, as Suárez omits any further treatment of this matter in his metaphysical disputations, I too omit it.

10. Coming to the subject of finite being, Suárez treats first of the essence of finite being as such, of its existence, and of the distinction between essence and existence in finite being. He first outlines the arguments of those who hold the opinion that existence (*esse*) and essence are really distinct in creatures. 'This is thought to be St. Thomas's opinion, which, understood in this sense, has been followed by almost all the early Thomists.'<sup>14</sup> The second opinion mentioned by Suárez is that the creature's existence is 'formally' distinguished from its nature, as a mode of that nature. 'This opinion is attributed to Scotus.'<sup>15</sup> The third opinion is that essence and existence in the creature are distinguished only mentally (*tantum ratione*). This opinion, says Suárez,<sup>16</sup> was held by Alexander of Hales and others, including the nominalists. It is

<sup>1</sup> 30, 2.<sup>2</sup> 30, 3-5.<sup>3</sup> 30, 7.<sup>4</sup> 30, 8-9<sup>5</sup> 30, 10.<sup>6</sup> 30, 11.<sup>7</sup> 30, 12.<sup>8</sup> 30, 13.<sup>9</sup> 30, 14.<sup>10</sup> 30, 15.<sup>11</sup> 30, 16.<sup>12</sup> 30, 17.<sup>13</sup> 30, 15, 33.<sup>14</sup> 31, 1, 3.<sup>15</sup> 31, 1, 11.<sup>16</sup> 31, 1, 12.

the opinion he himself defends, provided that 'existence' is understood to mean actual existence and 'essence' actually existing essence. 'And this opinion, if so explained, I think to be quite true.'<sup>1</sup> It is impossible, Suárez states, for anything to be intrinsically and formally constituted as a real and actual being by something distinct from it. From this it follows that existence cannot be distinguished from essence as a mode which is distinct from the essence or nature *ex natura rei*.<sup>2</sup> The right view is this.<sup>3</sup> If the terms 'existence' and 'essence' are understood to refer respectively to actual being (*ens in actu*) and potential or possible being (*ens in potentia*), then there is, of course, a real distinction; but this distinction is simply that between being and not-being, since a possible is not a being and its potentiality for existence is simply logical potentiality, that is, the idea of it does not involve a contradiction. But if 'essence' and 'existence' are understood to mean, as they should be understood to mean in the present controversy, actual essence and actual existence, the distinction between them is a mental distinction with an objective foundation (*distinctio rationis cum fundamento in re*). We can think of the natures or essences of things in abstraction from their existence, and the objective foundation for our being able to do so is the fact that no creature exists necessarily. But the fact that no creature exists necessarily does not mean that when it exists its existence and essence are really distinct. Take away the existence, so to speak, and you cancel the thing altogether. On the other hand, a denial of the real distinction between essence and existence does not, Suárez argues, lead to the conclusion that the creature exists necessarily.

Existence and essence together form an *ens per se unum*; but this composition is a 'composition' in an analogical sense. For it is only really distinct elements that can together form a real composition. The union of essence and existence to form an *ens per se unum* is called a 'composition' only in a sense analogous to the sense in which the union of matter and form, two really distinct elements, is called a composition.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the union of essence and existence differs from that of matter and form in this point also, that the former is found in all creatures, whereas the latter is confined to bodies. Composition out of matter and form is a physical composition and forms the basis of physical change, whereas composition out of essence and existence is a metaphysical

<sup>1</sup> 31, 1, 13.<sup>2</sup> 31, 6, 9.<sup>3</sup> 31, 6, 13-24.<sup>4</sup> 31, 13, 7.

composition. It belongs to the being of a creature, whether spiritual or material. The statement that it is a *compositio rationis* does not contradict the statement that it belongs to the being of a creature, for the reason why it belongs to the being of a creature is not the mental character of the distinction between essence and existence but rather the objective foundation of this mental distinction, namely the fact that the creature does not exist necessarily or of itself (*a se*).

Suárez considers the objection that it follows or seems to follow from his view that the existence of the creature is not received in a potential and limiting element and that consequently it is perfect and infinite existence. If, it is said, existence is not an act which is received in a potential element, it is unreceived, and consequently it is subsistent existence. But, says Suárez,<sup>1</sup> the existence of a creature is limited by itself, by its entity, and it does not need anything distinct from itself to limit it. Intrinsically it is limited by itself; extrinsically or *effective* it is limited by God. One can distinguish two kinds of limitation or contraction, namely metaphysical and physical. 'Metaphysical limitation (*contractio*) does not require an actual real distinction between the limited and limiting factors, but a distinction of concepts with some objective foundation is sufficient; and so we can admit (if we wish to use the language of many people) that essence is made finite and is limited with a view to existence and, conversely, that existence is rendered finite and limited by being the act of a particular essence.'<sup>2</sup> As to physical limitations, an angel does not need any intrinsic principle of limitation other than its simple substance, while a composite substance is limited by its intrinsic component factors or principles. This is equivalent to saying that a composite substance also is limited by itself, since it is not something distinct from those intrinsic component factors taken together in their actuality.

Suárez' view is, then, this. 'Because existence is nothing else than essence constituted in act, it follows that, just as actual essence is formally limited by itself, or by its own intrinsic principles, so also created existence has its limitation from the essence, not because essence is a potentiality in which existence is received, but because existence is in reality nothing else but the actual essence itself.'<sup>3</sup> A great deal has been written in Scholastic circles about the dispute between Suárez and his Thomist

<sup>1</sup> 31, 13, 18.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

opponents on the subject of the distinction between essence and existence; but, whichever side is right, it should at least be clear that Suárez had no intention whatsoever of impairing, so to speak, the contingent character of the creature. The creature is created and contingent, but what is created is an actual essence, that is to say, an existent essence, and the distinction between the essence and its existence is only mental, though this mental distinction is grounded on and made possible by the creature's contingent character. Both Thomists and Suarezians agree, of course, about the creature's contingent character. Where they differ is in the analysis of what it means to be contingent. When the Thomists say that there is a real distinction between essence and existence in the creature, they do not mean that the two factors are separable in the sense that either or both of them could preserve actuality in isolation; and when the Suarezians say that the distinction is a *distinctio rationis cum fundamento in re*, they do not mean that the creature exists necessarily, in the sense that it cannot not exist. However, I do not propose to take sides in the controversy; nor shall I introduce reflections which, in the context of contemporary philosophy in Great Britain, might suggest themselves.

II. Passing to the subject of substance and accident, Suárez remarks<sup>1</sup> that the opinion that the division between substance and accident is a sufficient proximate division of created being is 'so common, that it has been received by all as if it were self-evident. Therefore it needs an explanation rather than a proof. That among creatures some things are substances and others accidents is clear from the constant change and alteration of things.' But being is not predicated univocally of substance and accidents: it is predicated analogically. Now, many people, like Cajetan, think that the analogy in question is the analogy of proportionality alone; 'but I think that the same must be said in this connection as has been said concerning being as common to God and to creatures, namely that there is here no analogy of proportionality, properly speaking, but only analogy of attribution'.<sup>2</sup>

In creatures primary substance (that is, existent substance, as distinguished from the universal or *substantia secunda*) is the same thing as a *suppositum*;<sup>3</sup> and a *suppositum* of rational nature is a person.<sup>4</sup> But Suárez discusses the question whether 'subsistence' (*subsistentia*), which makes a nature or essence a created *suppositum*,

<sup>1</sup> 32, 1, 4.<sup>2</sup> 32, 2, 12.<sup>3</sup> 34, 1, 9.<sup>4</sup> 34, 1, 13.

is something positive, distinct from the nature. According to one opinion existence and subsistence are the same; and that which being a *suppositum* adds to a nature is consequently existence. 'This opinion is now frequently met with among modern theologians.'<sup>1</sup> But Suárez cannot agree with this theory, as he does not believe that existence is really distinct from the actual nature or essence. 'Actual essence and its existence are not really distinct. Therefore, in so far as subsistence is distinct from actual essence, it must be distinct from the existence of that essence.'<sup>2</sup> Therefore being a *suppositum* or having subsistence, which makes a thing independent of any 'support' (that is, which makes a thing a substance) cannot, in so far as it is something added to an actual essence or nature, be the same thing as existence. What, if anything, does subsistence add to an actual essence or nature? Existence as such simply means having actual being: that a being exists does not, of itself, determine whether it exists as a substance or as an accident. 'But subsistence denotes a determinate mode of existing',<sup>3</sup> namely existing as a substance, not inhering in a substance as an accident inheres in a substance. Therefore subsistence does add something. But what it adds is a mode of existing, a way of existing, not existence itself; it determines the mode of existence and gives to the substance its completion *in ratione existendi*, on the level of existence. Having subsistence or being a *suppositum* adds, therefore, to an actual essence or nature a mode (*modus*), and *subsistentia* differs modally (*modaliter*) from the nature of which it is the subsistence as a thing's mode differs from the thing itself.<sup>4</sup> The composition between them is, then, the composition of a mode with the thing modified.<sup>5</sup> Created subsistence is thus 'a substantial mode, finally terminating the substantial nature and constituting a thing as *per se* subsistent and incommunicable'.<sup>6</sup>

12. Here we meet Suárez' idea of 'modes', of which he makes extensive use. For example, he says that probably 'the rational soul, even while joined to the body, has a positive mode of subsistence, and, when it is separated (from the body), it does not acquire a new positive mode of existence, but it is simply deprived of the positive mode of union with the body'.<sup>7</sup> In man, then, not only is there a 'mode' whereby soul and body are conjoined but the soul, even while in the body, also has its own mode of partial

<sup>1</sup> 34, 4, 8.  
<sup>2</sup> 34, 4, 39.<sup>3</sup> 34, 4, 16.  
<sup>4</sup> 34, 5, 1.<sup>5</sup> 34, 4, 24.  
<sup>6</sup> 34, 5, 33.<sup>7</sup> 34, 4, 33.

subsistence; and what happens at death is that the mode of union disappears, though the soul retains its own mode of subsistence. In purely material substances both form and matter have their own modes, in addition to the mode of union; but it is the 'partial mode' (*modus partialis*) of the matter alone which is conserved after separation of form and matter. The form of a purely material substance does not, like the human soul, which is the form of the body, preserve any mode of subsistence after the corruption of the substance.<sup>1</sup> A material form has not got its own mode of existence or partial subsistence,<sup>2</sup> but matter has. It follows that God could conserve matter without any form.<sup>3</sup>

13. In his detailed treatment of the different kinds of accidents Suárez gives a good deal of attention to the subject of quantity. First of all, the opinion that quantity is really distinct from material substance must be accepted. 'For although it may not be possible to demonstrate its truth sufficiently by natural reason, it is nevertheless shown to be true by the principles of theology, especially on account of the mystery of the Eucharist. Indeed, the natural reason, enlightened by this mystery, understands that this truth is more in agreement and conformity with the natures themselves of things (than the opposite opinion). Therefore the first reason for this opinion is that in the mystery of the Eucharist God separated quantity from the substances of bread and wine. . .'<sup>4</sup> This distinction must be a real distinction, for, if the distinction were only modal, quantity could not exist in separation from that of which it is a mode.

Considerations taken from the theology of the Eucharist appear also in Suárez' treatment of the formal effect of quantity (*effectus formalis quantitatis*), which he finds in the quantitative extension of parts as apt to occupy place. 'In the body of Christ in the Eucharist besides the substantial distinction of parts of matter there is also a quantitative extension of parts. For, although the parts of that body are not actually extended in place, they are none the less so extended and ordered in relation to one another that, if they were not supernaturally prevented, they would have to possess actual extension in place. This (first) extension they receive from quantity, and it is impossible for them to be without it if they are not without quantity.'<sup>5</sup>

14. As to relations, Suárez maintains that there are in creatures real relations which constitute a special category.<sup>6</sup> But a real

<sup>1</sup> 34, 5, 35.    <sup>2</sup> 34, 5, 42.    <sup>3</sup> 34, 5, 36.    <sup>4</sup> 40, 2, 8.    <sup>5</sup> 40, 4, 14.    <sup>6</sup> 47, 1.

relation, although it signifies a real form, is not something actually distinct from every absolute form: it is in reality identified with an absolute form which is related to something else.<sup>1</sup> To take an example. In the case of two white things the one thing has to the other a real relation of similarity. But that real relation is not something really distinct from the thing's whiteness: it is the whiteness itself (considered as an 'absolute form') as similar to the whiteness of another thing. This denial of a real distinction between the relation and its subject<sup>2</sup> does not, says Suárez, contradict the assertion that real relations belong to a category of their own, for 'the distinction between categories is sometimes only a *distinctio rationis cum aliquo fundamento in re*, as we shall say later in regard to action, passion and other categories'.<sup>3</sup>

It is only real relations which can belong to the category of relation; for mental relations (*relationes rationis*) are not real beings and cannot, therefore, belong to the category *ad aliquid*.<sup>4</sup> But it does not follow that all real relations belong to the category of relation. If there are two white things, the one is really like the other; but if one of them is destroyed or ceases to be white, the real relation of similarity also ceases. There are, however, says Suárez, some real relations which are inseparable from the essences of their subjects. For example, it belongs to the essence of an existent creature that it depends on the Creator: 'it does not seem that it can be conceived or exist without a transcendental relation to that on which it depends. It is in this relation that the potentiality and imperfection of a created being as such seem especially to consist.'<sup>5</sup> Again, 'matter and form have a true and real mutual relationship essentially included in their own being; and so the one is defined by its relation to the other'.<sup>6</sup> These relations, called by Suárez *relationes transcendentales*, are not mental relations; they are real; but they cannot disappear while the subject remains, as predicamental relations (that is, relations belonging to the category of relation) can disappear. A predicamental relation is an accident acquired by a thing which is already constituted in its essential being; but a transcendental relation is, as it were (*quasi*), a *differentia* constituting and completing the essence of that thing of which it is affirmed to be a relation.<sup>7</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> 47, 2, 22.

<sup>2</sup> The opinion that there is always a real distinction between a real relation and its foundation is 'the opinion of the old Thomists', like Capreolus and Cajetan (47, 2, 2).

<sup>3</sup> 47, 2, 22.

<sup>4</sup> 47, 3, 3.

<sup>5</sup> 47, 3, 12.

<sup>6</sup> 47, 3, 11.

<sup>7</sup> 47, 4, 2.

definition of a predicamental relation is 'an accident, the whole being of which is *ad aliud esse, seu ad aliud se habere, seu aliud respicere*'.<sup>1</sup> This definition might seem to cover also transcendental relations; but 'I think that transcendental relations are excluded by the phrase, *cuius totum esse est esse ad aliud*, if it is understood in the strict sense explained at the end of the preceding section. For those beings which include a transcendental relation are not so related to another thing that their whole being consists simply in a relation to that other thing.'<sup>2</sup> Suárez goes on to argue that a predicamental relation requires a subject, a foundation (for example, the whiteness of a white thing) and a term of the relation.<sup>3</sup> But a transcendental relation does not require these three conditions. For example, 'the transcendental relation of matter to form has no foundation, but it is intimately included in matter itself'.<sup>4</sup>

The two examples of transcendental relation given above, namely the relation of creature to Creator and of matter and form to one another, should not lead one to suppose that, for Suárez, there is a 'mutual' relation between the creature and the Creator. There is a real relation to the Creator on the part of the creature, but the Creator's relation to the creature is a *relatio rationis*.<sup>5</sup> The nominalists hold that<sup>6</sup> God acquires real relations in time, not in the sense that God acquires new perfections but in the sense, for example, that God is really Creator and, as creation took place in time, God becomes related to creatures in time. But Suárez rejects the opinion.<sup>7</sup> If the relation were real, God would acquire an accident in time which is an absurd idea; and it is useless to say that the relation would *assistere Deo*, and not *inesse Deo* (a distinction attributed to Gilbert de la Porrée), for the relation must be in a subject and, if it is not in the creature, it must be in God.

15. Suárez' final disputation (54) is devoted to the subject of *entia rationis*. He tells us that, although he has said in the first disputation that *entia rationis* are not included in the special subject-matter of metaphysics, he thinks that the general principles concerning this topic should be considered. The topic cannot be properly treated except by the metaphysician, even if it belongs to his subject-matter *quasi ex obliquo et concomitanter*.<sup>8</sup>

After distinguishing various possible meanings of the phrase *ens rationis*, Suárez says that, properly speaking, it signifies 'that

<sup>1</sup> 47, 5, 2.  
<sup>2</sup> 47, 15, 6.

<sup>3</sup> 47, 6, 5.  
<sup>4</sup> 47, 15, 16.

<sup>5</sup> 47, 6-9.  
<sup>7</sup> 47, 15, 17-28.

<sup>6</sup> 47, 4, 2.  
<sup>8</sup> 54, *introd.*

which has being objectively only in the mind' or 'that which is thought of as being by the mind, although it has no being in itself'.<sup>1</sup> Blindness, for example, has no positive being of its own, though it is 'thought of' as if it were a being. When we say that a man is blind, we do not mean that there is anything positive in the man to which the word 'blindness' is given; we mean that he is deprived of vision. But we think of this deprivation as if it were a being, says Suárez. A purely mental relation is another example of an *ens rationis*. So is a chimera or purely imaginative construction, which cannot have being apart from the mind. Its being consists in being thought or imagined.

Three reasons can be assigned why we form these *entia rationis*. First of all, the human intellect tries to know negations and privations. These are nothing in themselves; but the mind, which has being as its object, cannot conceive that which is in itself nothing except *ad modum entis*, that is, as if it were being. Secondly, our intellect, being imperfect, has sometimes, in its endeavour to know something which it cannot know as it exists in itself, to introduce relations which are not real relations by comparing it to something else. The third reason is the mind's power to construct composite ideas which cannot have an objective counterpart outside the mind, though the ideas of the parts correspond to something extramental. For example, we can construct the idea of a horse's body with a man's head.

There can be no concept of being common to real beings and to *entia rationis*, for existence (*esse*) cannot be intrinsically participated in by the latter. To 'exist' only in the mind is not to exist (*esse*), but to be thought or mentally constructed. Therefore *entia rationis* cannot be said to possess essence. This distinguishes them from accidents. Nevertheless, an *ens rationis* is called *ens* in virtue of 'some analogy' to being, since it is founded in some way on being.<sup>2</sup>

*Entia rationis* are caused by the intellect conceiving that which has no real act of being as if it were a being.<sup>3</sup> The senses, appetite and will are not causes of *entia rationis*, though the imagination can be; and in this respect 'the human imagination shares in some way the power of the reason', and perhaps it never forms them save with the co-operation of reason.<sup>4</sup>

The three types of *entia rationis* are negations, privations and (purely mental) relations. A negation differs primarily from a

<sup>1</sup> 54, 1, 6.

<sup>2</sup> 54, 1, 9.

<sup>3</sup> 54, 2, 15.

<sup>4</sup> 54, 2, 18.

privation in that, while a privation signifies the lack of a form in a subject naturally apt to possess that form, a negation signifies the lack of a form without there being any natural aptitude to possess that form.<sup>1</sup> For example, blindness is a privation; but a man's lack of wings is a negation. According to Suárez<sup>2</sup> imaginary space and imaginary time, conceived without any 'subject', are negations. The logical relations of, for example, genus and species, subject and predicate, antecedent and consequent, which are 'second intentions', are purely mental and so *entia rationis*, though they are not gratuitously formed but have some objective foundation.<sup>3</sup>

16. In the multitudinous pages of the *Disputationes metaphysicae* Suárez pursues the problems considered into their various ramifications, and he is careful to distinguish the different meanings of the terms employed. He shows himself to be an analytic thinker, in the sense that he is not content with broad generalizations, hasty impressions or universal conclusions based on an insufficient study of the different aspects of the problem at issue. He is thorough, painstaking, exhaustive. One cannot, of course, expect to find in his work an analysis which will satisfy all the demands made by modern analysts: the terms and ideas in which he thought were for the most part traditional in the Schools and were taken for granted. One might, indeed, take various points out of Suárez' writings and express them in the more fashionable terms of today. For example, his observations that to 'exist' only in the mind is not really to exist at all but to be thought or mentally constructed could be translated into a distinction between different types of sentences analysed in reference to their logical meaning as distinct from their grammatical form. One has, however, to take a past thinker in his historical setting, and if Suárez is seen in the light of the philosophical tradition to which he belonged, there can be no doubt that he possessed the gift of analysis in an eminent degree.

That Suárez possessed an analytic mind would hardly, I think, be denied. But it has been maintained that he lacked the power of synthesis. He became immersed in a succession of problems, it is sometimes said, and he gave such a careful consideration to the manifold ways in which these problems had been treated and solved in history that he was unable to see the wood for the trees. Moreover, his great erudition inclined him to eclecticism. He

<sup>1</sup> 54, 5, 7.

<sup>2</sup> 54, 5, 23.

<sup>3</sup> 54, 6, 8-9.

borrowed a view here and an opinion there, and the result was a patchwork rather than a system. His critics would not, I think, suggest that he was a superficial eclectic, since it needs no very close acquaintance with his writings to see that he was very far from being superficial; but they do suggest that he was an eclectic in a sense which is incompatible with possessing the gift of synthesis.

The accusation that a given philosopher was not a system-builder is not an accusation which is likely to carry much weight in contemporary philosophical circles. Provided that the accusation does not rest on the fact that the philosopher in question expounded a number of mutually incompatible theses, many modern philosophers would comment, 'so much the better'. However, leaving this aspect of the matter out of account one can ask whether the accusation is in fact true. And in the first place one can ask in what sense Suárez was an eclectic.

That Suárez was an eclectic in some sense seems to me undeniable. He had an extremely extensive knowledge of former philosophies, even if, as is only to be expected, he was sometimes mistaken in his assertions or interpretations. And he could hardly possess this knowledge without being influenced by the opinions of the philosophers he studied. But this does not mean that he accepted other people's opinions in an uncritical manner. If, for example, he accepted the opinion of Scotus and Ockham that there is a confused intellectual intuition of the individual thing, which logically precedes abstraction, he did so because he thought that it was true. And if he questioned the universal applicability of the principle *quidquid movetur ab alio movetur* he did not do so because he was a Scotist or an Ockhamist (he was neither) but because he considered that the principle, considered as a universal principle, is in fact questionable. Moreover, if Suárez was an eclectic, so was Aquinas. The latter did not simply accept Aristotelianism in its entirety; if he had done so, he would have occupied a far less important position in the development of mediaeval philosophy and would have shown himself to be devoid of any spirit of philosophical criticism. Aquinas borrowed from Augustine and other thinkers, as well as from Aristotle. And there is no cogent reason why Suárez should not have followed his example by utilizing what he considered valuable in philosophers who lived at a later date than Aquinas. Of course, if the accusation of eclecticism means simply that Suárez departed from the teaching

of St. Thomas on a number of points, he was certainly an eclectic. But the relevant philosophical question would be not so much whether Suárez departed from Aquinas's teaching as whether he was objectively justified in doing so.

That Aquinas was also in some sense an eclectic would presumably be admitted by all. What philosopher is not in some sense an eclectic? But some would still maintain that there is this big difference between the philosophy of St. Thomas and that of Suárez. The former rethought all the positions which he adopted from others and developed them, welding these developments, together with his own original contributions, into a powerful synthesis with the aid of certain fundamental metaphysical principles. Suárez on the other hand juxtaposed various positions and did not create a synthesis.

The truth of this accusation is, however, extremely doubtful. In his preface (*Ad lectorem*) to the *Disputationes metaphysicae* Suárez says that he intends to play the part of philosopher in such a way as to have always before his eyes the truth that 'our philosophy ought to be Christian and the servant of divine theology' (*divinae Theologiae ministrum*). And if one regards his philosophical ideas in this light, one can see a synthesis clearly emerging from the mass of his pages. For Aristotle, in the *Metaphysics* at least, God was simply the first unmoved mover: His existence was asserted in order to explain motion. The Christian philosophers, like St. Augustine, introduced the idea of creation, and St. Thomas attempted to weld together Aristotelianism and creationism. Beneath, as it were, the Aristotelian distinction of matter and form St. Thomas discerned the more fundamental distinction of essence and existence, which runs through all finite being. Act is limited by potentiality, and existence, which stands to essence as act to potentiality, is limited by essence. This explains the finitude of creatures. Suárez, however, was convinced that the utter dependence which logically precedes any distinction of essence and existence is itself the ultimate reason of finitude. There is absolute being, God, and there is participated being. Participation in this sense means total dependence on the Creator. This total dependence or contingency is the reason why the creature is limited or finite.<sup>1</sup> Suárez did not explain finitude and contingency in terms of the distinction between existence and essence: he explained this distinction, in the sense, that is, in which he

<sup>1</sup> 31, 13, 18.

accepted it, in terms of a finitude which is necessarily bound up with contingency.

It is sometimes said that Suarezianism is an 'essential' philosophy or a philosophy of essence rather than a philosophy of existence, like Thomism. But it would seem difficult to find a more 'existential' situation than the situation of utter dependence which Suárez finds to be the ultimate characteristic of every being other than God. Moreover, by refusing to admit a 'real' distinction between essence and existence in the creature Suárez avoided the danger of turning existence into a kind of essence. Cancel the creature's existence, and its essence is cancelled too. The Thomist would say the same, of course; but this fact suggests perhaps that there is not so great a difference between the Thomist 'real' distinction and the Suarezian conceptual distinction with an objective foundation as might be supposed. The difference lies perhaps rather in the fact that the Thomist appeals to the metaphysical principle of the limitation of act by potentiality, which suggests a view of existence that seems strange to many minds, whereas Suárez founds his distinction simply on creation. The view is at any rate arguable that he carried the 'purification' of Greek philosophy a stage further by bringing the concept of creation and of utter dependence which creation spells more into the centre of the picture. Again, whereas St. Thomas laid stress on the Aristotelian argument from motion in proving God's existence, Suárez, like Scotus, preferred a more metaphysical and less 'physical' line of thought, precisely because the existence of creatures is more fundamental than their movement and because God's creation of finite being is more fundamental than His concurrence in their activity.

There are, moreover, many other ideas in the philosophy of Suárez which follow in some way from, or are connected with, his fundamental idea of dependence or 'participation'. Dependent being is necessarily finite, and as finite it is capable of acquiring further perfection. If it is a spiritual being it can do this freely. But as dependent it needs the divine concurrence even in the exercise of its freedom. And as utterly dependent on God it is subject to the divine moral law and is necessarily ordered to God. Again, as finite perfectible being the free creature is capable not only of acquiring perfection by its own activity, with the divine concurrence, but of receiving a perfection which lifts it above its natural life; as dependent spiritual being it is, as it were, malleable

by God and possesses a *potentia obedientialis* for the reception of grace. Further, finite being is multipliable in diverse species and in a plurality of individuals in one species. And in order to explain the multipliability of individuals in a species it is not necessary to introduce the idea of matter as principle of individuation, with all the remnants of 'unpurified' Platonism attaching to that Aristotelian idea.

It has not been my intention in this last section of the present chapter to give my own views on the matters raised, and I do not wish to be understood in this sense. My intention has been rather that of showing that there is a Suarezian synthesis, that the key to it is the idea of 'participation' or dependence in being, and that it was this idea above all which must, Suárez was convinced, be the distinguishing mark of a Christian philosophy. To say this is not, of course, to suggest in any way that the idea is absent from Thomism. Suárez regarded himself as a follower of St. Thomas; and Suarezians do not set Suárez against St. Thomas. What they believe is that Suárez carried on and developed the work of St. Thomas in building up a metaphysical system in profound harmony with the Christian religion.

That the *Disputationes metaphysicae* exercised a wide influence in post-Renaissance Scholasticism scarcely needs saying. But they penetrated also into the Protestant universities of Germany, where they were studied by those who preferred Melanchthon's attitude towards philosophy to that of Luther. Indeed, the *Disputationes metaphysicae* served as a text-book of philosophy in a large number of German universities in the seventeenth century and part of the eighteenth. As for the leading post-Renaissance philosophers, Descartes mentions the work in his reply to the fourth set of objections, though apparently he did not know it at all well. But Leibniz tells us himself that he read the work as if it were a novel while he was still a youth. And Vico studied Suárez for a whole year. Again Suárez' idea of analogy is mentioned by Berkeley in his *Alciphron*.<sup>1</sup> At the present time the *Disputationes metaphysicae* are a living force primarily in Spain, where Suárez is considered one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of the national philosophers. To the modern world at large he is known rather for his *De legibus*, to which I shall turn in the next chapter.

17. Reference has been made in the preceding section to the contention that the metaphysics of Suárez is an essentialist, as

<sup>1</sup> 4, 20.

contrasted with an existentialist, metaphysics. In *Being and Some Philosophers* Professor Étienne Gilson argues that Suárez, following Avicenna and Scotus but proceeding further in the same direction, lost sight of Aquinas's vision of being as the concrete act of existing and tended to reduce being to essence. And Suárez begot Christian Wolff who refers with approval to the Spanish Jesuit in his *Ontologia*. Finally Suárez' influence has corrupted large tracts of neo-Scholasticism. Modern existentialism has protested in the name of existence against the essentialist philosophy. Kierkegaard reacted strongly against the system of Hegel, who is to be numbered, so one gathers, among the spiritual descendants of Suárez. But modern existentialism has no true realization of existence. The consoling conclusion emerges, therefore, that St. Thomas Aquinas is the one true metaphysician.

That the position and character of the analysis of the concept of being which is found in many neo-Scholastic text-books of metaphysics are very largely due to the influence of Suárez can hardly be denied. Nor can it well be denied, I think, that Suárez influenced Wolff and that a number of neo-Scholastic writers were influenced, indirectly at least, by Wolff. But the issues raised by Professor Gilson in his discussion of 'essentialist' metaphysics as contrasted with 'existentialist' metaphysics are so wide and far-reaching that they cannot, in my opinion, be properly treated in the form of a note to Suárez' philosophy. At the close of my *History of Philosophy* I hope to return to the subject in the course of considering the development of western philosophy as a whole. Meanwhile, it must suffice to have drawn the reader's attention to Gilson's estimate of Suárez' philosophy, which can be found in *L'être et l'essence* and *Being and Some Philosophers*, both of which books are listed in the Bibliography.