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Francisco Suárez's Concept of Being.

Mark D'Amato

A Thesis

In

The Department

of

Philosophy

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
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## ABSTRACT

### Francisco Suárez's Concept of Being

Mark D'Amato

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the fundamental aspects of Suárez's doctrine of being. Specifically, these aspects include: his concept of being and the manner in which he develops his definition of being as 'essence and existence'. This thesis attempts to illustrate the Suárezian position on, and elucidate the distinction he draws between, essence and existence. Further, this thesis demonstrates that his position was the unavoidable result of Suárez's first premise on the nature of being in general. This result is significant with regard to the modification of Aquinas' view and the regnant Thomistic position.

FOR LUANN  
AND TO THE MEMORY OF ANNA

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CHAPTER 1.

### Introduction to Francisco Suárez and the *Disputationes Metaphysicae*.

*Doctor Eximius*, an honorific title meaning 'Eminent Doctor', was the title bestowed by Pope Benedict XIV on Francisco Suárez, a Jesuit who became one of the greatest philosophical minds of the sixteenth century. Suárez was born at Granada in Spain on January 5, 1548,<sup>1</sup> and studied law at Salamanca from 1561 to 1564. In 1564, in an ironic twist of fate, Suárez was refused entry to the Society of Jesus because he was judged deficient in health and in talent.<sup>2</sup> Later that year, after insistent pleading, he was accepted by the Society only as a *novitate* or 'indifferent', a title given to those admitted on a 'trial basis' - without a decision whether they would ultimately be ordained as priests, or kept on as lay-brothers.<sup>3</sup>

Following his admission to the Society, Suárez's initial efforts at philosophy met with little success. But by the end of his first year, he had become one of the better students. His progress was recognized, and Gregory of Valencia, a famous scholar, was made his tutor in 1565.<sup>4</sup> Upon completion of his studies in 1570, Suárez went on to teach theology and philosophy for a period of sixteen years, first at the prestigious schools of Salamanca, Segovia,

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<sup>1</sup> Raoul De Scorraille, S.J., *François Suárez de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Paris, 1911, I,p.3. and Joseph Fichter, *Man of Spain, Francis Suárez*, New York, 1940, p.6. De Scorraille remains the principal source for a biography of Suárez. In English, Fichter provides a solid account. For more recent and brief overviews, see: Jorge J.E. Gracia, "Francisco Suárez: The Man in History," *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, LXV (1991), pp. 259-266; and Carlos Noreña, "Suárez and the Jesuits," *ibid.*, pp. 267-286.

<sup>2</sup> De Scorraille, I,43-46; Fichter, 38, 48-50.

<sup>3</sup> De Scorraille, I,48; Fichter, 51.

<sup>4</sup> Fichter, 62.

Valladolid and Avila, and later at the *Gregorianum* in Rome. Subsequently he returned to Spain where, except for a brief return to Rome from 1603 to 1606, he remained for an additional twenty-two years, lecturing at the schools of Alcalá, Salamanca, and Coimbra.<sup>5</sup> Suárez became a 'jubilarian professor' (professor emeritus) in 1615,<sup>6</sup> and died in his seventieth year, on September 25, 1617, at Lisbon.<sup>7</sup>

Suárez did not publish any of his works until the age of forty-two. In 1590, he published *De Incarnatione Verbi*, the first in his exceptional series of works. To claim that Suárez was a prolific writer is an understatement. His total body of work, has been estimated to exceed some twenty-one million words, the equivalent of more than two hundred and eighty volumes of seventy-five thousand words apiece.<sup>8</sup> His works (and publication dates) include: *De Incarnatione Verbi*, 1590; *De Mysteriis Vitae Christi*, 1592; *De Sacramentis*, I, 1595; *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, 1597; *Varia Opuscula Theologica*, 1599; *De Sacramentis*, II, 1602; *De censuris*, 1603; *De Deo Uno et Trino*, 1606; *De Virtute et Statu Religionis*, I, 1608; *De Virtute et Statu Religionis*, II, 1609; *De Legibus*, 1612; *Defensio Fidei Catholicae*, 1613. Works published posthumously include: *De Gratia*, I, II, 1619; *De Angelis*, 1620; *De Opera Sex Dierum*, 1621; *De Anima*, 1621; *De Fide, Spe et Caritate*, 1621; *De Virtute et Statu Religionis*, III, 1624; *De Virtute et Statu Religionis*, IV, 1625; *De Ultimo Fine*, 1628; *De Gratia*, II,

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<sup>5</sup> De Scoraille, I, 335ff.; Fichter, 208.

<sup>6</sup> De Scoraille, II, 223; Fichter, 327-327.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Fichter, *op.cit.*, 327.

1651; *De Vera Intelligentia Auxilii Efficacis*, 1655; *Opuscula Sex Inedita*, 1859. In addition, there are some four volumes of manuscript material that have not as yet been published.

To understand Suárez and appreciate his locus within the context of a history of the development of Western thought, we must keep in mind that, although he wrote of Scholasticism, he did not live during the greater Scholastic period. St. Thomas Aquinas' contributions came at a time when metaphysics was at the forefront, and at the height of its intellectual activity, but since the fourteenth century, Scholasticism had been in decline. Suárez arrived as the Scholastic age was coming to an end. The late sixteenth century was a time of turmoil and radical readjustments which were drawing the medieval period to a close, and framing the portals through which the modern world would emerge. Suárez lived at a time when the intellectual community was immersing itself in the ideological and theological struggle between Catholicism and the Reformation. Suárez rallied in defense of the Catholic Church; his armor was the amassed density and sturdiness of Scholastic thought. However, Suárez was keenly aware that if there were to be a revival of Scholastic thought, it had to be presented in a form more attuned to the intellectual preoccupations and activities of his century.

Suárez was an exceptional philosopher in his own right; equally so, he was a talented student of the history of philosophy, as familiar with ancient Greek, Roman, Jewish and Islamic sources as he was with the Scholastics. The

synthesis of thought which he developed from this academic background, as set forth in The *Disputationes Metaphysicae* is truly remarkable. The *Disputationes* were published in the form of two large folio volumes in Salamanca in 1597. Suárez believed that metaphysics was indispensable to a mastery of theology. This function of metaphysics was his compelling motive for producing this systematic, comprehensive work which encompassed his many years of metaphysical studies and investigations. Suárez makes clear his intentions: In the *Ad lectorem* to the work, *Quemadmodum fieri nequit ut quis Theologicus perfectus evat, nisi firmus prius metaphysicae jecerit fundamenta*,<sup>9</sup> ; “It is impossible for anyone to become a competent theologian, unless he builds upon a solid foundation of metaphysics”.

The *Disputationes Metaphysicae* is comprised of fifty-four disputations, divided into two main parts, corresponding to the two volumes in which they were first published.

The first volume (Disputations I - XXVII) deals with the most general questions of metaphysics: being as such, and the properties and causes of being. Disputation I deals with the object of metaphysics (as first philosophy) and its definition (as the science which contemplates being as being). Disputation II begins with an exposition of the concept of being. Disputations III through XI discuss the transcendental properties of being. Disputations XII to XXVII are concerned with causes.

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<sup>9</sup> DM, *Ad lectorem*, line 1.

The second volume opens with Disputation XXVIII, on the division of being into infinite and finite being. The following two disputations treat infinite being and the attributes of God. The next twenty three disputations are devoted to the metaphysics of finite being, distributed according to the Aristotelian categories. The last disputation (LIV) deals with 'beings of reason', '*entia rationis*'.<sup>10</sup>

Suárez's *Disputationes Metaphysicae* represent a notable transition from the commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics, typical of the Scholastic period, to an independent treatise on metaphysics and to the method of *Cursus philosophicus* in general.<sup>11</sup> Suárez's method is based on a development of the dialectical method, which was popular in medieval Scholasticism. However, Suárez's method differs from the traditional in many aspects, due primarily to his dissatisfaction with the order or arrangement of Aristotle's Metaphysics,<sup>12</sup> as well as that of the subsequent treatises and commentaries by his predecessors. Suárez rearranged the vast subject matter of metaphysics into a complete, systematic treatise according to his own method. In this method, Suárez gives detailed information about all the inquiries made on the problem under discussion, identifies who has written on the subject, and faithfully presents their views and conclusions. After recapitulating the abundant information available,

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<sup>10</sup> Summaries of the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* can be found in the following works: Francis Suárez, 'On the Various kinds of Distinctions', *Disputationes Metaphysicae, Disputatio VII*, trans. and introduction by Cyril Vollert; Frederick Copelston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 3, p.354.; Francisco Suárez, 'On Beings of Reason, Metaphysical Disputation LIV', trans. and introduction by John P. Doyle.

<sup>11</sup> Frederick Copelston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 3, p.355.

<sup>12</sup> Introduction to *Liber tertius metaphysicae*, in the *Index locupletissimus*, Vivès ed., XXV, ix.

Suárez presents his own conclusion, which he substantiates with series after series of arguments. Suárez does not limit himself to mere repetition of the theories of others, nor does he accept any doctrine solely because it had been advocated by authoritative sources.

That Suárez's style is *prolix*, even a cursory perusal of his writings will attest. This is a result of his efforts to present all sides of a question before rendering his own conclusion. His encyclopedic knowledge of his philosophical and theological predecessors is undisputed. But whether he faithfully represented Aquinas may be debated. Although Suárez follows Aquinas in many essential questions, he reverently disagrees with Aquinas and the Thomists on a number of basic theses. Specifically, Suárez denies a real distinction between essence and existence in created beings; he thinks that prime matter may be capable of existence in its own right without the determining and actuating influence of substantial form; and he further departs from Aquinas in his teaching of the principle of individuation and in his theory of knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

Suárez can hardly be considered a Thomist in any proper sense, since he ultimately questions, modifies or rejects most of Aquinas' propositions. Intellectually, Suárez seems to be placed midstream between two opposing traditions, Thomistic and Scotist. At various points in his writings Suárez can be found with a foot in either camp (whichever best serves his immediate purpose); at other points he stands completely on his own. On the whole, Suárez

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<sup>13</sup> Francis Suárez, 'On the Various kinds of Distinctions', *Disputationes Metaphysicae, Disputatio VII*, trans. by Cyril Vollert, p.11.

demonstrates more of the critical spirit of Scotus than the metaphysical acumen of Aquinas. One of the aims of this thesis is to demonstrate how Suárez differs from Aquinas on the problem of being and the distinction of essence from existence. In only one respect does Suárez prove himself a true disciple of Aquinas: Like Aquinas, he does not follow the authority of any author, but always seeks the truth, regardless of where it may be found.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Object of Metaphysics.

Suárez claims that “the adequate object of metaphysics is being insofar as it is real being”.<sup>14</sup> *Dicendum est ergo, ens in quantum ens reale esse objectum adaequatum hujus scientiae.* He continues by stating that this is the opinion of Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Scotus, Albert, and most other scholastic writers.<sup>15</sup> *Haec est sententia Aristotelis, 4 Metaph, fere in principio, quam ibi D. Thomas, Alensis, Scotus, Albert., Alex. Aprod., et fere alii sequuntur, et Comment. ibi, et lib. 3, comm. 14, et lib. 12, comm. 1; Avicen., lib. 1 suae Metaph., c. 1; Sonc., 4 Metaph., q. 10; Aegid., lib. 1, q. 5, et reliqui fere scriptores.* Having fortified his position with authoritative views, Suárez presses home his point: “to show indeed that the adequate object of this science ought to include God and the other immaterial substances, but not only them. It ought likewise to include not only substances, but also real accidents, but not logical and entirely *per accidens* constructs; an object of this sort can be nothing other than being as such; therefore that is the adequate object.”<sup>16</sup> *...Ostensum est enim, objectum adaequatum hujus scientiae debere comprehendere Deum, et alias substantias immateriales, non tamen solas illas. Item debere comprehendere non tantum substantias, sed etiam accidentia realia, non tamen*

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<sup>14</sup> DM.I, 1, 26.

<sup>15</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> *Loc. cit.*



*entia rationis*,<sup>17</sup> et omnino per accidens; sed hujusmodi objectum nullum aliud esse potest praeter ens ut sic; ergo illud est objectum adaequatum.

To restate, Suárez is claiming that the adequate object of metaphysics includes all real being, material or immaterial, God and creatures, substances as well as real accidents; in principle all real being as such. As its object, metaphysics does not look strictly to the particular modes of being, neither in its inquiry does it consider being *per accidens*. Metaphysics is the most universal science, since it treats of all reality. To this claim, Suárez devotes a lengthy exposition of its proof, drawing upon the authority of Aristotle.<sup>18</sup>

The universality of this science does not prohibit the inclusion within its scope of the inferiors of being, essentially, the several and discrete fashions in which being is concretely found. Some beings are so acutely bound up with matter that they cannot be without matter. Then metaphysics must necessarily consider the number of kinds of being which cannot be without matter. Following Aristotle, Suárez divides finite being into ten categories: substance and nine varieties of accidents. Substance is in turn either material or immaterial.

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<sup>17</sup> *Entia rationis*; although Suárez says in the first disputation that *entia rationis* are not included in the special subject matter of metaphysics, in the last disputation (LIV) he considers the general principles concerning them. Suárez is of the opinion that *entia rationis* are not true beings, but only “shadows of beings” (*umbrae entium*), they are not intelligible *per se*, but only through analogy and in relation to true beings: ...*Nam imprimis, cum entia rationis non sint vera entia, sed quasi umbrae entium, non sunt per se intelligibilia, sed per aliquem analogiam et conjunctionem ad vera entia...* (D.M., LIV, 1, 6). An *ens rationis* signifies that which has being objectively only in the mind, although it has no being in itself, *Et ideo recte definiri solet, ens rationis, esse illud, quod habet esse objective tantum in intellectu, seu esse id, quod a ratione cogitatur ut ens, cum tamen in se entitatem non habeat*. Italics in original text. (D.M. LIV, 1, 6), e.g., privations and negations, purely mental relations, or a chimera. Thus, blindness when known is an *ens rationis*, that is, a logical construct.

<sup>18</sup> *Fundari potest amplius haec sententia, primo, in auctoritate Aristotelis, 1 Metaphysic., cap. 2, dicente, metaphysicam esse universalem scientiam, quia de omnibus rebus disputat.* (D.M.I, 2, 3.)

Although the metaphysician is primarily concerned with immaterial being, it cannot be given proper consideration unless the knowledge and quiddity of material substance is first examined.<sup>19</sup> “Indeed, since we do not know the immaterial things except by way of privation, it is proper first to know what material substance or matter is, that by its lack we may know immaterial substance.”. *...imo, cum nos immaterialia non nisi ad modum privationem cognoscamus, prius oportet scire quid materialis substantia seu materia sit, ut per carentiam ejus immaterialem substantiam apprehendamus.*

Furthermore, when metaphysics is said to deal with being as being, it should not be thought that being is taken entirely and formally prescinded from all its inferiors according to their own intelligibility, because this science does not rest in the consideration only of that formal and actual character, but that character (of being) includes in some fashion its inferiors.<sup>20</sup>

In the preface to the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* Suárez, claims that his purpose in writing the work was to provide a firm foundation in metaphysics as a prerequisite for the study of theology. The purpose of metaphysics as such, however, is quite independent of any utility beyond itself. He asserts quite plainly in the first disputation that “the end of this science is the contemplation of

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<sup>19</sup> paraphrased from D.M.I, 2, 5.

<sup>20</sup> The above is a free translation of the concluding sentence of D.M.I, 2, 12., taking the context into consideration. The Latin text is as follows: *Sic ergo, cum metaphysica dicitur versari circa ens in quantum ens, non est existimandum sumi ens omnino ac formaliter praecisum, ita ut excludantur omnia inferiora, secundum proprias rationes, quia haec scientia non sistit in sola consideratione illius rationis formalis actualis; sumenda ergo est illa ratio, prout includit aliquo modo inferiora.* (D.M.I, 2, 12.)

truth for its own sake."<sup>21</sup> *Dico ergo primo, finem hujus scientiae esse veritatis contemplationem propter seipsam.*

To Suárez, it seemed useful and perhaps necessary to provide the lengthy introductory material, giving particular attention to his own views on the object, scope and matter of metaphysics. In this manner, his doctrine on some specific problems of being can be viewed as part of a structure within the context of a history of Western philosophy. Suárez's position on the issues is midway between the scholasticism of Aquinas and of the Modern world. If Suárez is indeed the portal through which Medieval Scholasticism passed, then it is a worthwhile endeavor to study his doctrines, particularly to inquire how the Thomistic view was continued and modified. Professor Gilson accurately appraises the value of studying Suárez's presentation of the Thomistic view by the following statement: "Rather than judge, Suárez arbitrates, with the consequence that he never wanders very far from the truth and frequently hits upon it, but, out of pure moderation of mind, sometimes contents himself with a "near miss" ."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> D.M.I, 4, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, p. 99.

### CHAPTER 3, SECTION 3.1.

#### Suárez's Concept of Being: The Unity of Formal and Objective Concepts.

Suárez states, "...we must explain the question, what is *ens in quantum ens*; for that being is, is so well known *per se*, that it needs no clarification. But after the question whether a thing exists, the question what is a thing, is the first of all..."<sup>23</sup> "...*explicanda nobis est quaestio, quid sit ens in quantum ens; nam, quod ens sit, ita per se notum est, ut nulla declaratione indigeat. Post quaestionem autem, an est, quaestio quid res sit, est prima omnium...*"

In order to explain a thing which so obviously exists, namely being, Suárez first examines the concept of being (*ens*). In order to grasp the metaphysics of Suárez, some consideration of his epistemology is required. Essentially this consists of a brief examination of the formal and objective concepts of being, as explained by Suárez.

The two concepts, formal and objective, are distinct concepts; "*Supponenda est imprimis vulgaris distinctio conceptus formalis et objectivi...*"<sup>24</sup> According to Suárez, the formal concept is the act itself or the word by which the intellect conceives some thing or common *ratio*. It is called a concept because it is a 'mental offspring' (*prolis mentis*). It is called formal because it is the ultimate form of the mind, the form by which the mind is informed, or because it formally represents the thing known to the mind, or because it is the intrinsic and formal term of mental conception.<sup>25</sup> "...*conceptus formalis dicitur actus ipse, seu (quod*

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<sup>23</sup> D.M.II, *Proemium*

<sup>24</sup> D.M.II, 1, 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Loc. cit.*

*idem est) verbum quo intellectus rem aliquam seu communem rationem concipit; qui dicitur conceptus, quia est veluti proles mentis; formalis autem appellatur, vel quia est ultima forma mentis; vel quia revera est intrinsecus et formalis terminus conceptionis mentalis ...*". The formal concept is a true and positive thing, a quality inhering in the mind of creatures.<sup>26</sup> "...*formalis semper est vera ac positiva res et in creaturis qualitas menti inhaerens ...*".

Alternately, the objective concept is not, strictly speaking, a concept at all. It is called a concept only by reason of its relation to the formal concept. The objective concept is the thing known itself, or some intelligible aspect of the thing which is properly and immediately known or represented by means of the formal concept.<sup>27</sup> "*Conceptus objectivus dicitur res illa, vel ratio, quae proprie et immediate per conceptum formalem cognoscitur seu repraesentatur...*". Suárez states, "...for example, when we conceive man, that act which we effect in the mind to conceive man is called the formal concept; but man as known and represented by that act is called the objective concept..."<sup>28</sup> "...*ut, verbi gratia, cum hominem concipimus, ille actus, quem in mente efficimus ad concipiendum hominem, vocatur conceptus formalis; homo autem cognitus et repraesentatus illo actu dicitur conceptus objectivus...*".

The objective concept, in the case of man, is not caused by the mind of the knower, but it is a real being and it is what the mind apprehends by virtue of the formal concept which represents it. The objective concept is the thing known

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<sup>26</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *Loc. cit.*

or some intelligible aspect of that thing, to which the focus of the mind is directed. It is the object, the objective matter (*materia circa quam*),<sup>29</sup> known by the formal concept.

The formal concept is something in and of the mind, it enjoys a genuine intramental being. The formal concept has two aspects: entitative and representative; it is a thing in the mind, an intramental being and it is an 'image' of some thing or some aspect of a thing or things. The objective concept is not of itself in the mind, however, as known it is in the mind by an 'image' or representation of the thing. The explanation stresses the objectivity of knowledge when what is known is real but not actual in an extramental sense. In Suárez's view there is always the mind on one side, reality on the other. Suárez distinguishes and opposes the act of knowing and the object known.

It is impossible, within the scope and intent of this thesis, to give a complete treatment of Suárez's theory of knowledge. But, at this point, it is necessary to provide a brief overview, since for Suárez the objective concept of being is indeed bound up with the nature of the formal concept itself. The importance of this prefatory matter on the main subject of this section will become clear as the topic is developed.

Although for Suárez the objective and formal concepts are distinct, in some way they are related. Suárez intends to explain the objective concept of being in the second disputation, but the objective concept is the more difficult of

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<sup>29</sup> "...*objectum et materia circa quam versatur formalis conceptio, et ad quam mentis acies directe tendit...*". *Loc. cit.*

the two to explain. This is why Suárez begins with the formal concept, since it seems to him that it is and can be better known.<sup>30</sup> If there were no relation between the formal and objective concepts, his attempt to study the objective concept by means of an analysis of the formal concept would be futile.

If an examination of the formal concept will elucidate the nature of the objective concept, nevertheless the metaphysician cannot ignore the objective concept entirely. Although the formal concept is produced by and in us, and seems better known to us through experience, yet the knowledge of its unity depends on the unity of its object, since it is from the unity of its object that an act derives its unity.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the objective concept of being is real being. This is the problem of the second disputation. It is by an analysis of the formal concept of being that Suárez will arrive at a knowledge of real being.

The most prominent characteristic of the formal concept of being is its unity. Suárez states, "... it must be said that the proper and adequate formal concept of being as such is one, in reality and in character prescinded from the other formal concepts of other things and their objects..."<sup>32</sup> *"...dicendum est, conceptum formalem proprium et adaequatum entis ut sic, esse unum, re et ratione praecisum ab aliis conceptibus formalibus aliarum rerum et obsectorum..."*. The subject is made clear in the section of the second disputation

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<sup>30</sup> *"...In hac ergo disputatione, praecipue intendimus explicare conceptum objectivum entis ut sic, secundum totam abstractionem suam, secundum quam diximus esse metaphysicae objectum; quia vero est valde difficilis, multumque pendens ex conceptione nostra, initium sumimus a conceptu formali, qui, ut nobis videtur, notior esse potest".* (D.M.II, 1, 1.)

<sup>31</sup> *"...licet formalis, quatenus a nobis et in nobis fit, videatur esse posse experientia notior, tamen exacta cognitio unitatis ejus multum pendet ex unitate objecti, a quo solent actus suam unitatem et distinctionem sumere".* (D.M.II, 1, 9.)

<sup>32</sup> D.M.I, 1, 9.

which follows the above passage. *“Ex quo intelligitur primo, quo sensu quave ratione hic conceptus formalis dicatur secundum rem ipsam praecisus ab aliis conceptibus, scilicet, quia a parte rei est realiter distinctus a conceptu substantiae ut sic, accidentis, qualitatis, et caeteris similibus; loquimur enim in intellectu humano, qui ea dum etiam, quae in re distincta non sunt, mente dividit, in seipso conceptibus partitur, conceptus realiter distinctos formando ejusdem rei secundum diversam praecisionem vel abstractionem rei conceptae, quomodo conceptus formalis justitiae et misericordiae divinae in nobis sunt realiter praecisi, seu distincti, quamvis misericordia et justitia in se non distinguantur. Sic igitur conceptus entis ut sic, cum in repraesentando praescindat a propria ratione substantiae ut sic, accidentis, et omnium aliarum, necesse est ut in se sit realiter praecisus, et distinctus a conceptibus propriis talium rationum vel naturarum ut tales sunt, et hoc etiam facile omnes fatentur”.*<sup>33</sup> In this section, Suárez states that the formal concept of being is said to be really (*secundum rem*) distinct from other concepts because it is really distinct from the formal concepts of substance as such, the concepts of accident, quality, and the like.

“For we speak of the human intellect”, which divides things not really distinct, as it forms concepts within itself really distinct from each other according to diverse degrees of abstraction. For example, the formal concept of divine justice and the formal concept of mercy are really distinct in us, although, in God justice and mercy are not distinct. So too the formal concept of being as such,

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<sup>33</sup> D.M.II, 1, 10.



since in representing being it prescinds from the proper *ratio* of substance as such, from the proper *ratio* of accident, and from all the others, must be in itself really distinct from the proper formal concepts of such natures. In other words, Suárez is saying the formal concept of being as it exists in the intellect is really distinct from the formal concepts of other things as such. This will have greater bearing on the discussion of distinction between essence and existence in creatures, in the following chapter, (chapter 3, section 3.2).

The function of the formal concept, at the same time that it distinguishes what things are not distinct, is to fuse those that are distinct. The formal concept unites in a single representative image things which in extramental reality may be distinct. The formal concept unites these things insofar as they are similar, and come together under the aspect of being.<sup>34</sup> To summarize what has been established to this point regarding formal and objective concepts: first, they are distinct; second, in some way they are related; finally, the formal concept of being as such is distinct from all other formal concepts in the mind.

Returning to the discussion of the unity of the formal concept of being: Suárez states, "... it must be said that the proper and adequate formal concept of being as such is one in reality and in character prescinded from other formal

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<sup>34</sup> "...Secundo, quia, sicut mens nostra, praescindendo ea quae in re non distinguantur, in seipso realiter distinguit conceptus formales suos, ita e converso, confundendo et coniungendo ea quae in re distinguantur, quatenus in se similia sunt, unit conceptum suum, formando illum re et ratione formali unum; hoc autem modo concipiuntur entia hoc formali conceptu entis; sumit enim mens illa omnia solum ut inter se similia in ratione essendi, et ut sic, format unam imaginem repraesentatione formali repraesentantem id quod est, quae imago est ipse conceptus formalis; est ergo ille conceptus simpliciter unus re et ratione formali, et secundum eam praecisus ab his conceptibus, qui distinctius repraesentant particularia entia, seu rationes eorum". (D.M.II, 1, 11.)

concepts of other things and objects... .”<sup>35</sup> Having said this, Suárez continues that this is the common opinion, and cites an impressive list of authorities as proof.<sup>36</sup> But the real proof of the unity of the formal concept of being is to be found not in the weight of the authorities, but rather in the examination of the formal concept itself.

Suárez says that “from experience we know that our mind, having heard the name of being, is not distracted or divided into several concepts, but rather collects them into one, as when it conceives man, animal, and the like.”<sup>37</sup> “...*Et probatur primo experientia; audito enim nomine entis, experimur mentem nostram non distrahi nec dividi in plures conceptus, sed colligi potius ad unum, sicut cum concipit hominem, animal, et similia...*”. Suárez means by this that the concept of being, for example, is one in the mind and it is not multiplied according to the number of its inferiors.

Secondly, proof is offered from the material unity of the word ‘being’. “As Aristotle said, through the words we express our formal concepts. But this word, being, is not only materially one but it also has one signification from its earliest use, from the rigor of which it does not signify immediately some nature under a determined and proper *ratio*, under which it is distinguished from others. As such, it does not signify many as many, because it does not signify many according as they differ among themselves, but rather as they agree, or are

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *supra*, note 12.

<sup>36</sup> In this section Suárez cites the following: Peter Fonseca, “Scotus and all his disciples”, John Capreolus, Cajetan (who cites St. Thomas), Paul Soncinas, Chrysostom Javelli, Flandria, Hervaeus Natalis, Soto, “*et plane colligitur ex D. Thoma*”. (D.M.II, 1, 9.)

<sup>37</sup> *Loc. cit.*

alike. Therefore, one formal concept in the mind corresponds to this word, by which formal concept it immediately and adequately conceives what is signified by this word.”<sup>38</sup> “...Secundo, quia, ut Aristoteles dixit, 1 de Interpret., per voces exprimimus nostros formales conceptus; sed vox, *ens*, non solum materialiter est una, sed etiam unam habet significationem ex primaeva impositione sua, ex vi cujus non significat immediate naturam aliquam sub determinata et propria ratione, sub qua ab aliis distinguitur. Unde nec significat plura ut plura sunt, quia non significat illa secundum quod inter se differunt, sed potius ut inter se conveniunt, vel similia sunt; ergo signum est huic voci respondere etiam in mente unum conceptum formalem, quo immediate et adequate concipitur quod per hanc vocem significatur...”.

Later in Disputation XXXI, when Suárez treats of the identity of essence and existence,<sup>39</sup> he uses the unity of the formal concept of existence to illustrate the unity of the formal concept of being. Suárez says that it seems *per se* evident that there is one formal concept of existence as such. However, Suárez does not elaborate on the following statement: “...for being is either the same as existing, or if it is taken as existing in aptitude, its concept has the same characteristic of unity.”<sup>40</sup> “Tertio, argumentari possumus ex conceptu existentiae; videtur enim per se evidens, dari unum conceptum formalem existentiae ut sic, quia, quoties hoc modo de existentia loquimur et disputamus tanquam de uno actu, revera non formamum plures conceptus, sed unum; ergo etiam conceptus

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<sup>38</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

<sup>39</sup> D.M.XXXI, 5, 1.

<sup>40</sup> D.M.II, 1, 9.

*formalis existentiae ut sic unus est, quia, sicut concipitur abstractum per modum unius, ita et concretum ut sic praecise constitutum; ergo similiter enti ut sic unus conceptus formalis respondet; nam ens vel est idem quod existens, vel si sumatur ut aptitudine existens, conceptus ejus habet eandem rationem unitatis...".* This presupposes my claim that will be made at a later point in this thesis; that because Suárez identifies essence with existence, he makes being (existence) and essence identical. According to Suárez, *ens*, as 'being' or 'existing aptitudinally', is to be taken as a noun. Simultaneously, *ens*, as 'being' or 'the same as existing', is also taken as a participle. This issue will be treated at some length in chapter 4, section 4.2.

"Not only is this formal concept of being one, but it is also the most simple, so that to it the others can be ultimately resolved".<sup>41</sup> *"...Hinc etiam conceptus entis, non solum unus, sed etiam simplicissimus dici solet, ita ut ad eum fiat ultima resolutio caeterorum; ...".* "For through other concepts we conceive one or another being; but in this formal concept of being, we prescind from all composition and determination. Such that, this formal concept of being is customarily said to be of itself the first one which is formed by man."<sup>42</sup> *"...per alios enim conceptus concipimus tale vel tale ens; per hunc autem praescindimus omnem compositionem et determinationem, unde hic conceptus dici etiam solet ex se esse primus qui ab homine formatur, quia, caeteris paribus, facilius de quacunque re concipi potest..."*

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<sup>41</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> *Loc. cit.*

“Just as this formal concept of being in itself is one as it exists in the mind, so also, by reason of its formal character it prescinds from the formal concepts of particulars.”<sup>43</sup> *“...hunc formalem conceptum entis, sicut in se est unus secundum rem, ita etiam secundum rationem formalem suam, et secundum eam etiam ratione praecisum a conceptibus formalibus particularium rationum...”*.

All this emphasis on the unity of the formal concept of being poses problems that draw Suárez into a position which he will have difficulty overcoming. For when he denies that the formal concept of being is a generic universal, and especially when he rejects the proposition that the formal concept of being is a univocal concept, he appears to deny the unity of the formal concept of being above all.

Suárez states, “It is clear that this concept in itself is the most simple, objectively as well as formally, ...therefore in itself it has one simple, adequate, formal character...”<sup>44</sup> *“...hic conceptus in se est simplicissimus, sicut objective, ita etiam formaliter; ergo in se habet unam simplicem rationem adaequatam...”*.

“The formal concept of being as such is not multiplied according to the multitude of particular objects.”<sup>45</sup> *“Formalis conceptus entis ut sic, non multiplicatur secundum multitudinem objectorum particularium.”* There are three ways in which formal concepts can be multiple: first, according to the number of diverse knowing subjects; second, in the same subject according to diverse

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<sup>43</sup> D.M.II, 1,11.

<sup>44</sup> D.M.II, 1,11.

<sup>45</sup> D.M.II, 1,12.

times, that is, the knower conceives something in a higher way; third, with a greater clarity and a more distinct apprehension of the same formal character of being as such.<sup>46</sup> *“Possunt quidem hi conceptus formales multiplicari, vel secundum numerum in diversis subjectis, vel in eodem diversis temporibus, forte etiam secundum speciem ex parte concipientis altiori modo, vel cum majori claritate et distinctiori apprehensione ipsius rationis formalis entis ut sic...”*. But the concept of being as such cannot be multiplied by a greater or lesser determination of its object, for this does not pertain to the common conception of being as such, but belongs instead to the conception of this or that being — beings as such. Although formal concepts can certainly be multiple, in no way can the formal concept of being as such be other than one. When someone conceives being with that greater clarity and distinctness just mentioned, he does not really have another formal concept of being than he did at first, but rather a better, more accurate formal concept of being. When formal concepts are more than one, they are not of being as such, but rather of being plus substance or accident, etc..<sup>47</sup> *“...at vero ex majori vel minori determinatione objecti non potest conceptus entis, ut sic, multiplicari; quia, ut ostensum est, hoc ipso quod non sistitur in communi conceptione entis ut sic, sed descenditur ad hoc et illud ens, ut talia sunt, licet multiplicentur conceptus formales, non tamen conceptus entis ut sic, sed adjugendo conceptum substantiae, vel accidentis, etc..”*

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<sup>46</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> *Loc. cit.*

“This formal concept is not only a nominal consideration, but also has to do with the reality of the thing”.<sup>48</sup> *“Hic conceptus non est tantum nominis, sed etiam rei”*. Suárez implies in this statement, that the formal concept of being is prior to the term ‘being’; the formal concept of being is that which is signified by that term. For, although on our part, formal concepts are often formed by means of words, yet in itself simply, the formal concept comes first. The formal concept gives rise to the term and its application; “Therefore” Suárez says, “such a concept is simply and absolutely the concept of the thing in itself, and not only in the order of the signification of the word.”<sup>49</sup> *“...falso vocari hunc conceptum tantum nominis, et non rei significatae nomine entis, et secundum eam rationem qua per illud significatur. ...hic conceptus prior est voce, et impositione ejus ad res tali modo significandas. Nam, licet quoad nos conceptus saepe formentur mediis vocibus, tantum secundum se, et simpliciter, prior est conceptus, qui ex se partit vocem qua exprimitur, et est origo impositionis ejus; ergo talis conceptus est simpliciter et absolute conceptus rei secundum se, et non tantum in ordine ad significationem vocis...”*. Furthermore, this formal concept is a certain simple image naturally representing that which is conventionally signified by this word.<sup>50</sup> *“...hic conceptus est per modum cujusdam simplicis imaginis naturaliter repraesentantis id, quod per vocem ad placitum significatur...”*.

In the preceding pages, it has been shown that the outstanding attribute of the formal concept of being is its unity; that the formal concept is an image

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<sup>48</sup> D.M.II,1,13.; Italics in original text.

<sup>49</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> *Loc. cit.*

naturally representing that which is signified by the term 'being'; and that this image represents the intelligible aspect of extramental reality prior to the term.

There is "one objective *ratio* of being".<sup>51</sup> . "Datur una ratio entis objectiva".

Suárez emphasizes the unity of the objective concept of being, this time in regard to that which is known. To one formal concept of being there corresponds one objective concept of being. "Therefore, I say in the first place, that there corresponds to the formal concept of being one adequate and immediate objective concept, which is not expressly called substance, nor accident, neither God nor creature, but all these as one, that is, as they are in some way like each other, and come together under the aspect of being."<sup>52</sup> *"Dico ergo primo, conceptui formali entis respondere unum conceptum objectivum adaequatum, et immediatum, qui expresse non dicit substantiam, neque accidens, neque Deum, nec creaturam, sed haec omnia per modum unius, scilicet quatenus sunt inter se aliquo modo similia, et conveniunt in essendo"*.

Suárez does not intend for the unity of the objective concept of being to be taken numerically or entitatively; not everything which falls under the heading of being is one being. He intends, rather, that there is something common to all beings, by which they are entitled to the name of being. The formal concept of being must have some adequate object. But the formal concept of being is one, and it must be one because of some likeness of beings to each other. Clearly, the objective concept of being is common to many things. If the formal concept of

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<sup>51</sup> D.M.II, 2, 8. Italics in original text.

<sup>52</sup> *Loc. cit.* I have taken some minor liberties in the translation given in order to render the passage quoted into English.



being derives its unity from its object, then obviously its object, the objective concept of being, must be one.<sup>53</sup> *“Necesse est conceptum formalem entis habere aliquod adaequatum objectum; sed illud non est aggregatum ex variis naturis entium secundum aliquas determinatas rationes earum, quantumvis simplices; ergo oportet ut ille conceptus sit unus secundum aliquam convenientiam et similitudinem entium inter se. Consequentia est evidens a sufficiente enumeratione, quia supponimus (quod est per se notum) illum conceptum objectivum non esse unum unitate reali, id est, numerali seu entitativa; nam constat hunc conceptum esse communem multis rebus. Major item assumpta evidens est, quia ille conceptus formalis est actus intellectus; omnis autem actus intellectus, sicut et omnis actus, quatenus unus est, habere debet aliquod objectum adaequatum, a quo habet unitatem”*. Again, Suárez insists upon the unity of the objective concept of being: “All real beings truly have some likeness and community under the aspect of the act of being; therefore they can be conceived and represented under that precise aspect in which they come together; therefore they can constitute under that aspect one objective concept; therefore, that is the objective concept of being.”<sup>54</sup> *“...omnia entia realia vere habent aliquam similitudinem et convenientiam in ratione essendi; ergo possunt concipi et repraesentari sub ea praecisa ratione unum conceptum objectivum constituere; ergo ille est conceptus objectivus entis”*.

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<sup>53</sup> *Loc.cit.*

<sup>54</sup> D.M.II, 2, 14.

Suárez reiterates that this unity of the objective concept is not a real or numerical unity, but it consists “in a formal or fundamental unity which is nothing other than the likeness and community mentioned above”.<sup>55</sup> “...sed in unitate formali seu fundamentali, quae nihil aliud est quam praedicta convenientia et similitudo”.

Suárez agrees with Cajetan that “although being is predicated analogically of God and creatures, it is predicated of them intrinsically”, not by some extrinsic denomination. No real being can be by way of extrinsic denomination; to be such is proper to logical beings. “What is real must be such really and formally, by its own intrinsic entity which is identical with it and inseparable from it, even if everything else be understood to be separated of prescinded from it...”.<sup>56</sup> “...et expresse idem Cajet., 1 p., q. 13, art. 5, docet ens, licet analogice dicatur de Deo et creaturis, intrinsice de illis dici; et per se quidem notum videtur non posse aliquid esse reale ens per denominationem extrinsecam; nam haec est propria ratio vel fundamentum entium rationis, ut postea dicetur; necesse est ergo ut quod est ens reale, sit tale realiter ac formaliter per suam intrinsecam entitatem, quae est idem cum ipso, et inseparabilis ab ipso, etiam si omnia ab eo praescindi vel separari intelligantur;...”. Particularly significant to this view is the assertion that every being which is real being is being identified with itself, and inseparable from itself. This is not exactly the same as the principle of self-identity, although it is

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<sup>55</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>56</sup> D.M.II, 2, 18.

commonly understood as such. This will be demonstrated by the later discussion of Suárez' definition of 'real being'. (In my thesis I will maintain the view that Suárez identifies essence with existence.)

The word 'being' does not signify immediately either substance or accident, but only the intramental objective concept of being as such. Mediatly, however, it may signify its inferiors, just as the word 'man' signifies immediately man, and mediatly Peter in whom the *ratio* of man is found in extramental reality (*a parte rei*).<sup>57</sup> *"...hanc vocem, ens, non significare immediate substantiam vel accidens, ut alia genera seu entitates simplices secundum proprias rationes earum, sed conceptum objectivum entis ut sic, ...exemplo hominis, (et idem est de similibus); significat enim immediate hominem, et mediate Petrum, in quo a parte rei ratio hominis reperitur; ergo similiter ens, etc. ..."*

Because of the immediate signification of the objective concept or common *ratio* of being, this term 'being' can be most properly distributed. We can say "every being is good, and divided into substance and accident", for example. In this instance, not only is the word divided, but also what the word signifies, namely, being. We also compare beings; one being is more perfect than another. We use the word 'being' as the extreme or middle term of a syllogism. The unity of a word would not serve for reasoning unless it immediately and proximately signified one concept.<sup>58</sup> *"...propter hanc immediatum significationem conceptus seu rationis communis entis potest*

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<sup>57</sup> D.M.II, 2, 22.; italics in original text.

<sup>58</sup> D.M.II, 2, 25.

*propriissime ens distribui, dicendo: Omne ens est bonum, et dividi, verbi gratia, in substantiam et accidens; non enim sola vox ibi dividitur, sed quod voce significatur. Propterea etiam optime comparatio, dicendo hoc esse perfectius ens quam illud... . Ac denique optime utimur hac voce tanquam extremo vel medio syllogismi, nam vocis unitas non deserviret ad rationcinandum, nisi ratione unius significati proximi et immediati.”.*

As experience bears witness, having heard the name being, we conceive something, and it is neither substance nor accident. One who knows the signification of the word ‘being’ forms a different concept from the person who does not know its signification. The latter conceives the word, and there he remains, or he wonders what is signified by that word. The former, in addition to the word, conceives the thing signified without any doubt as to its signification, and yet he conceives neither substance nor accident.<sup>59</sup> *“Ultimo accedit experientia saepe tacta, quia audito nomine entis aliquid concipimus, et non substantiam, neque accidens. Dici enim non potest (ut aliqui significant) tunc nos sistere in conceptu vocis, quia id est contra experientiam; alium conceptum format, qui scit vocis ens significationem, quam qui ignorat; hic enim concipit vocem, et ibi sistit, vel dubitat quid ea voce significetur; ille vero praeter vocem concipit rem significatam, et de significatione nullo modo dubitat, et tamen non concipit substantiam neque accidens; ...”.*

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<sup>59</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

Clearly, Suárez begins his explanation of the structure of reality with the formal and objective concept of being as it appears to the mind. Suárez insists that since being is known by us by our concepts, then being must contain a *ratio* corresponding to this formal concept of being (which is the formal concept of being as such), and that if this formal concept appears to us as one, with a simple and single content, it must follow that somehow there must be a real *ratio* which is one in that same way.

Suárez admits that there is a difficulty with his position on the unity of the objective concept: "Immediately the difficulty arises that according to this explanation the concept of being seems to lack nothing proper to a universal, for it will be one in many and of many. But this difficulty depends on two reasons for doubting. One is about the univocity of being, for if being is not univocal, that reason suffices that it not be properly a universal.<sup>60</sup> "*Sed statim urget difficultas, quia juxta haec nihil videtur deesse conceptui entis ad rationem proprii universalis, nam erit unum in multis, et de multis. Sed haec difficultas pendet ex duabus rationibus dubitandi in principio sectionis positae. Una est de univocatione entis, quia si ens non est univocum illa ratio sufficit ut non sit proprie universale;...*". But Suárez maintains that being is not a univocal concept.<sup>61</sup> "*...quomodo autem ex dictis non sequatur esse univocum, et quid illi ad univocationem desit, infra in proprio loco est tractandum, agendo de divisionibus entis;...*". Suárez continues: "For the present I make only this assertion, namely,

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<sup>60</sup> D.M.II, 2, 36.

<sup>61</sup> *Loc. cit.*

that all that has been said about the unity of the concept of being appears to be much clearer and more certain than the fact that being is analogous; and that consequently it would not be right to deny the unity of this concept for the sake of defending its analogy. But if one or the other would have to be denied, this would have to be the analogy of the concept, which is uncertain, rather than its unity, which seems to be demonstrated by indisputable arguments.”<sup>62</sup> “...nunc solum assero, omnia, quae diximus de unitate conceptus entis, longe clariora et certiora videri, quam quod ens sit analogum, et ideo non recte propter defendendam analogiam negari unitatem conceptus, sed si alterum negandum esset, potius analogia, quae incerta est, quam unitas conceptus, quae certis rationibus videtur demonstrari, esset neganda”.

In fact, neither the unity nor the analogy of the concept of being need be denied. Suárez demands more than some kind of unity for a concept to be univocal. The univocal concept must apply to its inferiors in exactly the same way. The other difficulty implied by Suárez in this section is “the manner in which being descends, or is contracted to its inferiors” according to its function as a formal and objective concept.<sup>63</sup> “Re tamen vera neutram negari necesse est, quia ad univocationem non sufficit quod conceptus in se sit aliquo modo unus, sed necesse est ut aequali habitudine et ordine respiciat multa, quod non habet conceptus entis, ut latius citato loco exponemus. Alia difficultas erat de modo quo ens descendit, vel trahitur ad inferiora secundum rationem...”.

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<sup>62</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>63</sup> Loc. cit.

### CHAPTER 3, SECTION 3.2.

#### Suárez's Concept of Being: The Distinction Between Essence and Existence.

After examining the formal concept of being and the objective concept of being, Suárez seeks to address the question 'what is being?' The primary source for his explication is the fourth section of the second disputation, entitled: "In what the *ratio* of being consists, and how it applies to its inferiors".<sup>64</sup>

Suárez begins by distinguishing between *ens* used as a participle and *ens* used as a noun. "*Ens* therefore ... is sometimes taken as the participle of the verb *sum* and as such signifies the act of being as exercised, and is the same as existing in act; but sometimes it is taken as a noun signifying formally the essence of its reality, which has or can have *esse* not as exercised in act, but in potency or aptitude..."<sup>65</sup> "*Ens ergo, ut dictum est, interdum sumitur ut participium verbi sum, et ut sic significat actum essendi, ut exercitum, estque idem quod existens actu; interdum vero sumitur ut nomen significans de formali essentiam ejus rei, quae habet vel potest habere esse, et potest dici significare ipsum esse, non ut exercitum actu, sed in potentia vel aptitudine...*". For example, the word 'living' as a participle\* signifies the actual exercise of life. As a noun, it signifies only that which has a nature which can be the principle of vital operation.<sup>66</sup> "*...sicut vivens, ut est principium\*, significat actualem usum vitae, ut vero est*

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<sup>64</sup> "*In quo consistat ratio entis in quantum ens, et quo-modo inferioribus entibus conveniat*". D.M.II, 4.

<sup>65</sup> D.M.II, 4, 3. Italics in original text.

<sup>66</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text. \*(The Vives edition has '*principium*' here, but '*participium*' seems to be a correct reading according to the context.)

*nomen, significat solum id quod habet naturam, quae potest esse vitalis operationis principium”.*

Suárez states that the basis for this distinction can be found in the rigorous use of the word *sum*, which in absolute terms signifies actual esse or existence... the verb *est* is never divorced from time.<sup>67</sup> “...*nam prior significatio fundata est in proprietate et rigore verbi sum, quod absolute dictum actuale esse seu existentiam significat ... verbum est nunquam absolvi a tempore”.*

This is clear from common usage, for when someone says, “Adam is,” he means that Adam exists, and that the participle *ens* is included in the meaning of the verb.<sup>68</sup> “*Et patet ex communi usu, nam si quis dicat, Adam est, significat ipsum existere. Habet autem hoc verbum in rigore suum participium in ipso inclusum, in quod potest resolvi praedicta propositio*”. Furthermore, *ens*, taken to mean a real being, not only applies to existing things, but also to real natures considered in themselves whether they exist or not. But in this sense *ens* does not retain the rigor of a participle, because a participle always has the connotation of time and existence. In this latter usage, *ens* is a noun meaning something which either can exist or does exist, or in other words, that which involves no contradiction.<sup>69</sup> “*Rursus constat ex communi usu, ens, etiam sumptum pro ente reali (ut nunc loquimur), non solum tribui rebus existentibus, sed etiam naturis realibus secundum se consideratis, sive existant, sive non; ... . Sed ens in hac significatione non retinet vim participii, quia participium*

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<sup>67</sup> Loc. cit. Italics in original text.

<sup>68</sup> Loc. cit. Italics in original text.

<sup>69</sup> Loc. cit. Italics in original text.



*consignificat tempus, et ita significat actuale exercitum essendi seu existendi, et ideo hac vox, existens nunquam dici potest de re quae actu non existat, quia semper retinet vim participii verbi existo; ergo necesse est ens in hac posteriori significatione sumi in vi nominis”.*

This distinction between participle and noun is central to Suárez’s doctrine of being. To better illuminate Suárez’s use of the terms, it is helpful to consider each usage of these distinctions individually.

*Ens* as a participle means something existing in act, or having a real act of being, or having actual reality, which is distinguished from potentiality. Potentiality is nothing in act.<sup>70</sup> *“Ens participium quid importet ... sumpto ente in actu, prout est significatum illius vocis in vi participii sumptae, rationem ejus consistere in hoc, quod sit aliquid actu existens, seu habens realem actum essendi, seu habens realitatem actualem, quae a potentiali distinguitur, quod est actu nihil”.* Suárez could not emphasize this point more strongly. This is precisely what ‘being’ taken participially is for him: a real essence having actuality. However, this actuality is not something added to essence, (since essence is the same as *esse* for Suárez). This concept of ‘being’ or ‘real essence having actuality’ cannot be proven in any manner, except by recourse to the common way by which it is conceived, and from the signification of the word as it is explained by Suárez. Therefore, Suárez states: the concepts of *ens* both as a noun and as a participle can be both formal and objective, common to

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<sup>70</sup> D.M.II, 4, 4. Italics in original text.

all beings existing in act, or able to do so (since they are alike, and come together in actual esse and entity as well as in the aptitude to do so), and it is clear that the concept can be signified by this word.<sup>71</sup> *“Ac denique, ... ens sub hac ratione posse habere unum conceptum formalem et objectivum, communem omnibus entibus actu existentibus, cum inter se similia sint, et conveniunt in actuali esse et entitate, constat etiam posse conceptum illum hac voce significari; ergo entis sic sumpti et conceptus ejus ratio non potest in alio consistere, nec potest aliter explicari”*. It cannot be otherwise, nor can it be explained in any other way, according to Suárez.

This seems to be the bond between Suárez's formal and objective concepts of being, namely, that *ens* taken as a participle is common to all beings existing in act, and that as a participle it signifies a real essence here in actuality.

*Ens* taken as a noun is that which has 'real essence' that is not a fiction or a chimera, but true and thus capable of really existing.<sup>72</sup> *“... si ens sumatur prout est significatum hujus vocis in vi nominis sumptae, ejus ratio consistit in hoc, quod sit habens essentiam realem, id est non fictam, nec chymericam, sed veram et aptam ad realiter existendum”*.

What is a real essence? In order to answer this question, Suárez examines each of the terms: first, 'what is an essence?' and second, 'what is real?'. "The essence is that in terms of which a thing is called and denominated

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<sup>71</sup> D.M.II, 4, 4.

<sup>72</sup> D.M.II, 4, 5.

as being.”<sup>73</sup> “... *essentia sit secundum quam res dicitur seu denominatur ens ...*”.

According to Suárez, there are three ways of looking at the character of essence: first, as the nature of the thing; that is, as the intrinsic root principle of all the actions and properties of the thing. In this sense, essence is considered dynamically. The second way of regarding essence is in the order of human knowledge. In this regard, the essence is what is most knowable about a thing and is called the ‘quiddity’ or ‘whatness’ of a thing. This is because the essence answers the question of what a thing is. The third way of looking at essence is in the order of being; the essence is what is first understood about the act of being. Following Suárez, the character of essence can be explained either in terms of the effects or modes of a thing, or in terms of our way of conceiving and speaking.<sup>74</sup> “*In quo duo peti possunt, quae illis duobus vocibus indicantur; primum, in quo consistat ratio essentiae; secundum, in quo consistat quod realis sit. Primum non potest a nobis exponi, nisi vel in ordine ad effectus vel passiones rei, vel in ordine ad nostrum modum concipiendi et loquendi*”.

In the first manner, (in terms of the effects or modes), the essence of a thing is, that which is primary and radical, and the intrinsic principle of all actions and properties of the thing.<sup>75</sup> “*Primo modo dicimus, essentiam rei esse id, quod est primum et radicale, ac intimum principium omnium actionum ac proprietatum, quae rei conveniunt, et sub hac ratione dicitur natura uniuscujusque rei...*”.

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<sup>73</sup> D.M.II, 4, 6.

<sup>74</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>75</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

In the second manner, (according to our way of conceiving and speaking), the essence of a thing is that which is explained by the definition; what is first conceived about the thing. 'First conceived' refers not to the order of origin (for this would imply our conception of a thing originates in its essence rather than with what is extrinsic to it), but rather to the order of nobility and primacy of object. For that which we conceive to belong to a thing primarily, and to be intrinsically constituted in the being of the thing (*in esse rei*), is the essence of that thing. Essence so understood is also called 'quiddity', because it is that which answers the question '*quid sit res*' (what it is). Finally, it is called essence because it is that which is primarily understood to be in each thing in virtue of the act of being (*actum essendi*).<sup>76</sup> *"Secundo autem modo dicimus essentiam rei esse, quae per definitionem explicatur, ... et sic etiam dici solet, illud esse essentiam rei, quod primo concipitur de re; primo (inquam) non ordine originis (sic enim potius solemus conceptionem rei inchoare ab his quae sunt extra essentiam rei), sed ordine nobilitatis potius et primitatis objecti, nam id est de essentia rei, quod concipimus primo illi convenire, et primo constitui intrinsece in esse rei, vel talis rei, et hoc modo etiam vocatur essentia quidditas in ordine ad locutiones nostras, quia est id, per quod respondemus ad quaestionem, quid sit res. Ac denique appellatur essentia, quia est id, quod per actum essendi primo esse intelligitur in unaquaque re".*

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<sup>76</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

The essential quality of a 'real essence' is that in itself it involves no contradiction and is not merely an 'offspring' of the mind. This is the negative aspect of a real essence. Regarding it positively, essence is the principle or root of real operations or effects, whether in virtue of an efficient, formal, or material cause.

According to Suárez, nothing is a real essence which cannot have some effect or real property.<sup>77</sup> *"Quid autem sit essentiam esse realem, possumus aut per negationem, aut per affirmationem exponere. Priori modo dicimus essentiam realem esse, quae in sese nullam involvit repugnantiam, neque est mere conficta per intellectum. Posteriori autem modo explicari potest, vel a posteriori, per hoc quod sit principium vel radix realium operationum, vel effectuum, sive sit in genere causae efficientis, sive formalis, sive materialis; sic enim nulla est essentia realis quae non possit habere aliquem effectum vel proprietatem realem"*.

A real essence (in the order of creation) is one which can be produced by God, and which can be constituted in the reality of actual being (*in esse entis actualis*). God is the extrinsic efficient cause of created essence.<sup>78</sup> *"A priori vero potest explicari per causam extrinsecam (quamvis hoc non simpliciter de essentia, sed de essentia creata verum habeat), et sic dicimus essentiam esse realem, quae a Deo realiter produci potest, et constitui in esse entis actualis"*.

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<sup>77</sup> D.M.II, 4, 7.

<sup>78</sup> *Loc. cit.*

Suárez claims that this understanding (*ratio*) of essence as dependent on an extrinsic efficient cause cannot properly be explained by an intrinsic cause, because essence is the simplest first cause or intrinsic *ratio* of being, as it is conceived by the most common concept of essence.<sup>79</sup> *“Per intrinsecam autem causam non potest proprie haec ratio essentiae explicari, quia ipsa est prima causa vel ratio intrinseca entis, et simplicissima, ut hoc communissimo conceptu essentiae concipitur; ...”*. “Then we can say only that a real essence is that which of itself is apt to be, or really to exist”.<sup>80</sup> *“... unde solum dicere possumus, essentiam realem, eam esse quae ex se apta est esse, seu realiter existere”*.

This immediately suggests a difficulty with the distinction between potential being and actual being. Do they meet on any common ground? Is the twofold signification of being (‘being’ used as a noun, and ‘being’ used as a participle) merely equivocal, or is it so analogical that no concept common to each answers to it? Is there a common concept?<sup>81</sup> *“Una vero dubitatio circa duas conclusiones positas hic praetermitti non potest, quamvis attingat divisionem in ens in actu et ens in potentia; scilicet, an illa duplex significatio entis nominaliter et participialiter sumpti, sit mere aequivoca, vel ita analogica, ut nullus conceptus, communis utrique membro, ei respondeat, an vero aliquem conceptum communem; ...”*.

Suárez asserts that there is, indeed, a common concept. If someone were to say that this concept were equivocal, Suárez would answer that then there

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<sup>79</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>80</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>81</sup> D.M.II, 4, 8.

would be no concept of being which applies to all beings; there would be no concept of being common to God and creatures — not only creatures existing in act, but also possible creatures. This equivocal concept of being would allow only for beings existing in act and not for possibles (Suárez does include ‘possibles’ within the scope of being). Suárez claims that this is clearly false, contrary to the common way of conceiving, and contrary to everything he has said about the most common concept of being.<sup>82</sup> *“Si vero dicatur primum, sequitur non posse dari conceptum entis communem Deo et creaturis, ut possibilibus, sed tantum ut actu existentibus, quod videtur plane falsum, et contra communem modum concipiendi, et contra omnia supra dicta de communissimo conceptu entis”.*

That there is such a concept can be demonstrated by the use of the word ‘man’. ‘Man’ without qualification can mean existing man or man as possible. The concept which corresponds to this word ‘man’ likewise represents indifferently existing man or possible man. It is not, therefore, an equivocal term or an equivocal concept.<sup>83</sup> *“...nam homo ex vi ejusdem impositionis significat hominem, sive actu existentem, sive possibilem; imo et simplex conceptus hominis, qui illi voci respondet, aequae repraesentat hominem existentem, vel possibilem; non est ergo ibi significatio aequivoca; idem ergo est proportionaliter de ente sub illa duplici ratione seu significatione sumpto, et de conceptu qui illi respondet”.*

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<sup>82</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>83</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

Is the concept of being so analogical that it admits of no concept common to both potential being and actual being? Regarding this question, Suárez answers in the negative. This concept of being abstracts from potentiality and actuality, and includes only what is common to being as being.<sup>84</sup> “... *an illa duplex significatio entis nominaliter et participialiter sumpti, sit mere aequivoca, vel ita analogica, ut nullus conceptus, communis utrique membro, ei respondeat, an vero aliquem conceptum communem; nam si hoc posterius dicatur, nondum est a nobis communissima ratio entis satis explicata; declaravimus enim singulorum membrorum rationes, non autem rationem entis, ut communis et abstrahentis ab utroque membro*”.

A discussion of the kind of analogy which is proper to being, and is consistent with Suárez’s view, is not within the scope of this thesis. However, Suárez rejects the proposition that the concept of being is equivocal; although it is not truly univocally predicated either, since it applies to its inferiors in diverse ways.

*Ens*, according to this twofold signification (as a noun and as a participle) does not have a twofold *ratio* which divides some common *ratio*, but it signifies the concept of being more or less precisely.<sup>85</sup> “... *ens. secundum illam duplicem acceptionem non significare duplicem rationem entis, dividentem aliquam communem rationem, seu conceptum communem, sed significare conceptum entis, magis vel minus praecisum: ...*”.

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<sup>84</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>85</sup> D.M.II, 4, 9. Italics in original text.



Suárez intends by this that *ens*, used rigorously as a noun, signifies that which has a real essence, prescinding from actual existence, but not excluding or denying actual existence.<sup>86</sup> “... *ens enim in vi nominis sumptum significat id, quod habet essentiam realem, praescindendo ab actuali existentia, non quidem excludendo illam, seu negando, sed praecisive tantum abstrahendo; ...*”. This is *ens* — the noun — taken with precision. But *ens* — the noun — does not exclude potential being.

*Ens*, used as a participle, signifies a real being, one which has a ‘real essence with actual existence’, and thus it signifies what is more contracted in its signification.<sup>87</sup> “... *ens vero ut participium est, significat ipsum ens reale, seu habens essentiam realem cum existentia actuali, et ita significat illud magis contractum*”. As a participle, *ens* signifies one of the specific cases of ‘being-in-general’; a particular actualization of a real essence.

The term ‘being’ does not signify some concept common to both *ens* the noun and *ens* the participle, but there is one common concept of being which immediately has a twofold signification: it signifies being either prescinding from actual existence or existing in act.<sup>88</sup> “*Ita ergo ens non significat conceptum aliquem communem enti nominaliter et participialiter sumpto, sed immediate habet duplicem significationem, qua significat, vel ens praescindendo ab actuali existentia, vel ens actu existens*”.

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<sup>86</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

<sup>87</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

<sup>88</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

Suárez emphasizes that it must be understood that 'being' (*ens* as a noun) is not the same as potential being, privatively or negatively opposed to being in act. Being taken as a noun means only that which has real essence, prescinding from actual existence (but not denying actual existence).<sup>89</sup> "... *ens sumptum in vi nominis non significare ens in potentia, quatenus privative vel negative opponitur enti in actu, sed significare solum ens ut praecise dicit essentiam realem...*". The reason that Suárez gives is that being as a noun is common to God and creatures, whereby being as a noun can truly be applied to God since He has a 'real non-contradictory essence'. Yet in no manner can 'being in potency' be predicated of God, and existing in creatures, since they are not in potency but in act. '*Ens*' can be predicated of existing creatures as both participle and noun, because even though they have actual existence, it can truly be said of them that they have a real essence, by prescinding from but not denying actual existence.<sup>90</sup> "... *ens in vi nominis sumptum commune est Deo, et creaturis, et de Deo affirmari vere potest; ens autem in potentia nullo modo potest praedicari de Deo; imo nec de creaturis existentibus ut sic, proprie dicitur, quia jam non sunt in potentia, sed in actu; cum tamen de illis dici possit ens, tam ut participium quam ut nomen, quia licet habeant actualem existentiam, vere etiam de illis dicitur quod habent essentiam realem, praescindendo, et non negando actualem existentiam*".

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<sup>89</sup> D.M.II, 4, 11.

<sup>90</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

*Ens*, used rigorously as a noun, can properly be divided into *ens* in act and *ens* in potency. *Ens* in act is the same as *ens* taken as a participle.<sup>91</sup> “*Unde tamen intelligitur, ens praecise sumptum, ut in vi nominis significatur, proprie dividi posse in ens in actu, et ens in potentia, et ens in actu idem esse quod ens significatum per hanc vocem in vi participii sumptam...*”. However, this does not contradict the claim that *ens* taken as a noun is not the same as ‘being in potency’. The difference between *ens* as a noun and *ens* as a participle is in the degree of precision. These two signify the same concept (*ratio*) of being: either precisely (noun), or determined to actual existence (participle), whether this determination to actual existence is essential as it is in God, or outside of the essence (*extra essentiam*) as it is agreed to be in creatures.<sup>92</sup> “... *atque ita illa dua significare rationem entis, vel praecisam, vel determinatam ad actualem existentiam, sive haec determinatio essentialis sit, ut est in Deo, sive sit extra essentiam, ut censetur esse in creaturis...*”.

However, *ens* in potency is also called ‘real being’ by Suárez, insofar as it has a real essence, contracted and determined not by something positive, but by privation of actual existence. ‘Being’ thus contracted or conceived is not signified by the word *ens* alone, but only by a complex term such as *ens possibile*, or *ens in potentia*, and the like.<sup>93</sup> “... *ens autem in potentia dicit etiam reale ens, quantum ad realem essentiam, contractum et determinatum non per aliquid positivum, sed per privationem actualis existentiae. Ens autem sic contractum,*

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<sup>91</sup> D.M.II, 4, 12. Italics in original text.

<sup>92</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>93</sup> D.M.II, 4, 12. Italics in original text.

*seu prout in tali statu conceptum, non significatur per hanc vocem ens, nec per aliquam aliam incomplexam quae mihi nota sit, sed solum per hos terminos complexos, ens possibile, ens in potentia, et similes...*".

Is *ens* an essential predicate? On this question Suárez once more distinguishes between being as a noun and being as a participle. Suárez asserts that as a noun (prescinding from actual existence), being is an essential predicate, and is predicated 'quidditatively' of creatures; but as a participle, signifying actual existence, being is predicated essentially only of God.<sup>94</sup> "Ens an sit praedicatum essentiale. Atque hinc obiter colligitur rationem entis communissimam, quae significatur per eam vocem in vi nominis sumptam, esse essentialem, et praedicari quidditative de suis inferioribus, quamvis ens, ut actualement dicit existentiam, et significatur per participium essendi, absolute non sit praedicatum essentiale, nisi in solo Deo".

This implies some sort of distinction between essence and existence in creatures, but Suárez has little more to say about this. He adds only that, whether they are distinct or not, to exist is not of the essence of a creature, because existence can be given to it or taken away from it, and thus it does not have the necessary connection with the essence of a creature precisely conceived.<sup>95</sup> "*Quantum vero spectat ad creaturis, pendet ex dicendis infra de distinctione existentiae ab essentia in creatura; nunc supponamus, sive distinguantur, sive non, absolute esse dicendum, existere non esse de essentia*

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<sup>94</sup> D.M.II, 4, 13. Italics in original text.

<sup>95</sup> *Loc. cit.*

*creaturae, quia potest illi dari et ab illa auferri, et ita non habet necessarium connexionem cum essentia creaturae praecise concepta...".*

To have a 'real essence' belongs essentially to every creature, and for this reason Suárez claims that *ens* is an essential predicate.<sup>96</sup> "... *quia habere essentiam realem convenit omni enti reali, estque illi maxime essentiale; ergo ens sub praedicta ratione est praedicatum essentiale*". Suárez adds: to be a being in this way belongs to a creature even if it does not exist.<sup>97</sup> . "*Praeterea, esse ens hoc modo convenit creaturae, etiamsi non existat...*". It would seem that statement is puzzling; for how can a thing be a creature and not exist, by the very fact that it has been created? Perhaps Suárez intends that every possible creature has some sort of being in the divine fore-knowledge, but he does not say so here. The example Suárez gives provides some explanation; he states that the proposition 'man is a being' is said to be eternally true. But to be a being does not belong to man '*per se secundo*', as a property, because being does not suppose something prior from which it flows as a mode. It is, rather, the first concept of any real being; therefore being belongs to man as an essential predicate, and is of the 'quiddity' of the thing.<sup>98</sup> "... *quomodo haec propositio: Home est ens, dicitur esse aeternae veritatis; sed non convenit illi per se secundo, ut proprietas aliqua, quia non supponit aliquid prius a quo dimanet tanquam passio; nam potius ille est primus conceptus cujusvis entis realis; ergo convenit ut praedicatum essentiale, et de quidditate rei*".

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<sup>96</sup> D.M.II, 4, 14.

<sup>97</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>98</sup> *Loc. cit.* Italics in original text.

Suárez goes on to suggest that since *ens* as noun and *res* differ only etymologically, and *res* can be predicated essentially of every being, *res* should be used to express what is signified by *ens* taken as a noun. *Res* should signify or imply actual existence, and vice versa; this is essentially predictable of every being.<sup>99</sup> “Unde obiter colligo ens in vi nominis sumptum, et rem, idem omnino esse seu significare, solumque differre in etymologia nominum; nam res dicitur a quidditate, quatenus est aliquid firmum et ratum, id est, non fictum, qua ratione dicitur quidditas realis; ens vero in praedicta significatione dicit id, quod habet essentiam realem: eamdem ergo omnino rem seu rationem realem important”.

According to Suárez, being (*ens*) as a noun is a single concept (formal / objective) having an immediate twofold signification, which is more or less precise. Alternatively, *res* has the same signification as *ens* taken as a noun. Thus *res* has only one signification for Suárez: that of a ‘real essence’, whether or not that essence happens to exist.

It seems abundantly clear from this discussion that for Suárez, being as noun is the same as essence and that actual existence is nothing more than the actualization of a ‘real essence’. Suárez’s view implies that actual existence is merely the essence in act; it is not what Aquinas meant by his *actus essendi*. Suárez seems to move easily from *actus essendi* to *existens in actu*. The latter is the curious move; wherein *actus essendi* is reduced by Suárez to *existens / ens / essentia in actu*.

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<sup>99</sup> D.M.II, 4, 15. Italics in original text. Cf. also D.M.III, 2, 4., where Suárez treats of *res* and *ens* at some length.

## CHAPTER 4, SECTION 4.1. Real and Mental Distinctions.

Prior to discussing the distinction between essence and existence, a discussion of the various kinds of distinctions that Suárez uses will help make clear the relationship that he intends among his formal and objective concepts of created being.

In the seventh disputation of the *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, Suárez treats of three main distinctions: real, mental, and modal. This discussion will concentrate on 'real' and 'mental' distinctions and will offer only a brief summary of 'modal' distinction.

First, According to Suárez, it is self-evident that there exists a 'real distinction' among things. "For greater clarity this is usually called a distinction between thing and thing. It consists in the fact that one thing is not another, and vice-versa".<sup>100</sup> That things are distinct even when they are not united to each other is obvious, for example, in the case of two *suppositia*, or accidents inhering in *suppositia*. "However, it sometimes happens that really distinct things are united to one another, as is clear in the case of matter and form, or quantity and substance".<sup>101</sup>

In addition to 'real distinctions' there are 'mental distinctions'. "This sort of distinction does not formally and actually intervene between things designated

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<sup>100</sup> D.M. VII,1,1. Vollert, p.16. (Note: The English translations used throughout this section are from Francis Suárez, "On The Various Kinds of Distinctions", *Disputationes Metaphysicae, Disputatio VII*, trans. and intro. by Cyril Vollert.)

<sup>101</sup> *Loc. cit.*, Vollert, p.17.

as distinct, as they exist in themselves, but only as they exist in our ideas, from which they receive some denomination".<sup>102</sup> In this way, the human intellect distinguishes one attribute from another, (such as divine mercy and justice),<sup>103</sup> or the relation of identity from its term.<sup>104</sup>

Suárez considers mental distinctions to be of two kinds. The first, called the 'distinction of the reasoning reason', (*distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*), is a purely mental distinction which has no foundation in reality, because it is the product of reflection and activity of the intellect. The second, which he called the 'distinction of the reasoned reason' (*distinctio rationis ratiocinatae*), is founded in reality.<sup>105</sup>

Suárez admits of the impropriety of his term 'distinction of the reasoning reason' and that it can be understood as equivocal in regard to 'distinction of the reasoned reason'. Suárez states: "For this (latter) type of mental distinction can be understood as pre-existing in reality, prior to the discriminating operation of the mind, so as to be thought of as imposing itself, as it were, on the intellect, and to require the intellect only to recognize it, but not constitute it."<sup>106</sup> The term is explained only according to its etymology; the former is not the true 'mental distinction' that Suárez intends when he speaks of a 'mental distinction' with a

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<sup>102</sup> D.M. VII,1,4. Vollert p.18.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *supra*, note 33, "... qui ea dum etiam, quae in re distincta non sunt, mente dividit, in seipso conceptibus partitur, conceptus realiter distinctos formando ejusdem rei secundum diversam praecisionem vel abstractionem rei conceptae, quomodo conceptus formalis justitiae et misericordiae divinae in nobis sunt realiter praecisi, seu distincti, quamvis misericordia et justitia in se non distinguantur.", D.M.II, 1, 10.

<sup>104</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>105</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>106</sup> *Loc. cit.*



foundation in reality. Accepting this use of the term 'mental distinction', the distinction would be called 'mental' rather than 'real' and would differ from a 'real distinction' only in degree and not in kind.<sup>107</sup>

There can be, however, a distinction of the reasoned reason (the latter type) with a foundation in reality, (mental distinction); because "actually and formally it is not found in reality, but has its origin in the mind; a distinction of the reasoned reason, because it arises not entirely from the former sheer operation of the intellect, but from the occasion offered by the thing itself on which the mind is reflecting. Hence, the foundation that is held to exist in nature for this distinction is not a true and actual distinction between the things regarded as distinct; for then not the foundation of the distinction but the distinction itself would precede mental operation".<sup>108</sup> The foundation for this distinction must either be the eminence of the object which the mind distinguishes (a virtual distinction, for example, when the human mind distinguishes the attributes of God, such as divine mercy and justice); or the foundation must at least be some reference or comparison to other things which are truly distinct in the real order, and with respect to which such a distinction is derived.<sup>109</sup>

"The distinction of the reasoning reason is ordered to one and the same adequate or simple concept of an object solely through a mental repetition or comparison of the object."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>108</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>109</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>110</sup> D.M. VII,1,5. Vollert p.19.

The second kind of mental distinction, (the distinction of reasoned reasoning with a foundation in reality), arises from multiple, inadequate concepts of one single thing. Although the same thing is apprehended in each concept, the whole reality of the thing is not adequately represented, nor is its entire essence and objective idea exhausted by any of those concepts. This often happens when we conceive a thing in terms of its relationship to different things, or when we represent one thing in the ways we conceive those different things.<sup>111</sup> “Hence such a distinction always has a foundation in fact, even though formally it will be said to spring from inadequate concepts of the same thing”.<sup>112</sup>

We should keep in mind that, according to Suárez, the formal concept is the act itself or the word by which the intellect conceives some thing or common *ratio*. It is called a concept because it is a ‘mental offspring’. It is called formal because it is the ultimate form of the mind, the form by which the mind is informed, or because it formally represents the thing known to the mind, or because it is the intrinsic and formal term of mental conception.<sup>113</sup> Alternately, the objective concept, in the case of man, is not caused by the mind of the knower, but it exists in reality and it is what the mind apprehends by virtue of the formal concept which represents it. The objective concept is not, strictly speaking, a concept at all. It is called a concept only by reason of its relation to the formal concept. The objective concept is the thing known itself, or some

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<sup>111</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>112</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>113</sup> *Cf. supra*, Ch.3/S.3.1/p.12.

intelligible aspect of the thing which is properly and immediately known or represented by means of the formal concept.<sup>114</sup>

According to what has been said about real distinctions; mental distinction with a foundation in reality does not exist strictly by itself. If it did, it would be a real and not a mental distinction. Mental distinctions with a foundation in reality exist “only dependently on the mind that conceives things in an imperfect, abstract, and confused manner, or inadequately”.<sup>115</sup> “However, since the object which is the basis of the distinction is absolutely one, the distinction between the concepts has its origin solely in the imperfection of the concepts themselves”.<sup>116</sup>

In order to further differentiate real distinctions from mental distinctions, Suárez draws upon another example: the real essence. “Whatever exists in reality has its own real essence. Therefore, things that are really distinct have in reality really distinct essences either numerically, if they are only numerically distinct, or specifically, or generically, if they are assumed to be essentially distinct. Consequently, they have in reality distinct entities, which is what is meant by a real distinction.”<sup>117</sup> Suárez gives two reasons for his conclusion: “First, the entity of a thing is nothing but its real essence as it exists outside its causes; but if the essences are distinct, they exist really outside their causes; therefore they will be distinct entities. Secondly, if we have here two real essences, each of them is the essence of some real being, for being and

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. *supra*, Ch.3/S.3.1/p.13.

<sup>115</sup> D.M. VII,1,8. Vollert p.21.

<sup>116</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>117</sup> D.M. VII,1,12. Vollert p.23.

essence are adequately compared as abstract and concrete concepts; but one and the same being can have no more than one essence; therefore, if there are two real essences, there are two real beings.”<sup>118</sup>

The third kind of distinction, modal distinction, is like the real distinction in that it precedes any activity of the mind. However, modal distinctions do not intervene between two really distinct entities, and are not as great a distinction as real distinctions. A modal distinction may also be called ‘distinction from the nature of the case’, (*distinctio ex natura rei*), it invariably is found to intervene between a thing and its mode.<sup>119</sup>

According to Suárez this implies that in created things, besides their entities, there are certain real modes that are something positive, and of themselves “modify the very entities by conferring on them something that is over and above the complete essence as individual and existing in nature”.<sup>120</sup>

To illustrate the modal distinction, Suárez draws on the example of quantity and the inherence of quantity in a substance. He states, “two aspects may be considered: one is the entity of quantity itself, the other is the union or the actual inherence of this quantity in the substance”.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, the inherence of this quantity is modally distinct from the entity of the quantity itself; the inherence of quantity is called the mode of quantity because it affects

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<sup>118</sup> D.M. VII,1,12. Vollert p.23, 24.

<sup>119</sup> D.M. VII,1,16. Vollert p.27.

<sup>120</sup> D.M. VII,1,17. Vollert p.28.

<sup>121</sup> *Loc. cit.*

quantity and its manner of existing, “without adding to it a proper new entity, but merely modifying a pre-existing entity”.<sup>122</sup>

“Besides modal, real, and mental distinctions, no further distinction is possible”.<sup>123</sup> All other distinctions may be reduced to one of these three. “If the extremes of a distinction are not actually distinct in the real order, we invariably have a mental distinction”, although there may be various kinds of mental distinctions.<sup>124</sup> “But if the extremes of a distinction are actually distinct in the real order, either each is a true thing having its own simple or composite entity, or one extreme is a thing and the other is a mode of that thing.”<sup>125</sup> If each element of a distinction is a true thing having its own entity, then there is a real distinction between them. According to Suárez, to be a true thing (*res seu ens ut nomen*) is to have a real essence. Alternately, if only one element of the distinction is a true thing and the other is a mode, then there is only a modal distinction.

For Suárez, although many signs are usually proposed to assist us in recognizing a real distinction, only two of them are important. Both signs are based on real separation. One is based on separation alone, with regard to a real union; a distinction is real if “both extremes can simultaneously and actually be preserved apart from a real union between them”. The other sign is based on “mutual separation with respect to existence”; a distinction is real if one element

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<sup>122</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>123</sup> D.M. VII,1,21. Vollert p.32.

<sup>124</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>125</sup> D.M. VII,1,21. Vollert p.33.

can be preserved immediately and by itself without the other, and vice versa, “to the exclusion of any ordination to or necessary connection with a third thing”.<sup>126</sup>

These two rules stand against both mental and modal distinctions. These rules cannot apply to mental distinctions (as they do to real distinctions) because each extreme must be capable of existing without the other by itself and immediately, — yet the essence of a mode demands that it cannot exist unless actually united to the thing it modifies.<sup>127</sup>

Suárez rejects the opinion that a sign of a real distinction is that “things that are really distinct have distinct existences: but things that are only modally distinct have only one existence. For a mode is a mode precisely because it has no other existence than the existence of the thing it modifies.”<sup>128</sup> Suárez claims that this sign is worthless, variously claiming that it is more obscure than the object of his investigation, or that it begs the question, or that it involves some error.<sup>129</sup> Suárez states that, “if it is true that existence is the actual entity of a thing, to say that those things are really distinct which have distinct existences, is the same as saying that those things are really distinct which have distinct entities. But if existence is imagined to be a thing distinct from actual essence, then either the supposition is that things having distinct existences also have distinct essences — and this is indeed true, but it is no less difficult to know distinct existences than to know distinct essences, unless perhaps through

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<sup>126</sup> D.M. VII,2,9. Vollert p.46.

<sup>127</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>128</sup> D.M. VII,2,13. Vollert p.49.

<sup>129</sup> D.M. VII,2,14. Vollert p.49.

separation; or else it is asserted that two essences can have a single existence, and so are only modally distinct, whereas a real distinction occurs when a distinction of existences is joined to a distinction of essences — and this I judge to be so obscure that it cannot be naturally ascertained of any objects whatsoever, but further to be false, because there is no greater reason for distinguishing essences than existences in extremes that are modally distinct. For the same kind of distinction which occurs between essences can occur between existences. Accordingly, supposing for the present what we shall demonstrate later,<sup>130</sup> that essence is nothing else than the very entity of actual essence, ...".<sup>131</sup> This statement of Suárez's stands in opposition to what he understands as the Thomistic position, which holds that there is a real distinction between essence and existence of creatures: "... in the view that existence is a thing distinct from essence,<sup>132</sup> things that are really distinct can exist with one and the same indivisible existence; thus matter and form, and all the parts of the same composite."<sup>133</sup>

According to Suárez, the concept of being (*ens ut nomen*) is a single objective concept having an immediate twofold signification, which is more or less precise. Alternately, *res* has only one signification for Suárez: that of 'real existence', whether or not that *res* happens to exist. For Suárez, being (*ens ut nomen*) is the same as essence and actual existence is nothing more than the

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<sup>130</sup> Cf. D.M.XXXI,4,7.

<sup>131</sup> D.M. VII,2,14. Vollert p.49-50.

<sup>132</sup> Vollert claims in a footnote on the passage quoted, "Suárez seems never to have rightly grasped the Thomistic teaching on essence and existence."

<sup>133</sup> D.M. VII,2,14. Vollert p.50.

actualization of a 'real essence'.<sup>134</sup> The following chapter will discuss in greater detail Suárez's position on the distinction between essence and existence in creatures.

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<sup>134</sup> Cf. *supra*, Ch.3/S.3.2/p.46.



## CHAPTER 4, SECTION 4.2. Essence and Existence.

Disputation thirty-one of the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* is entitled: “On the Essence of Finite Being As Such, On the Existence of That Essence and Their Distinction”.<sup>135</sup> The purpose of this chapter is a general exposition of the essential portions of Disputation XXXI, as they relate to Thomists, Scotus’ and Suárez’s views. This chapter will illustrate, in an abbreviated fashion, Suárez’s doctrine of finite being, and attempt to explain why he held the position he did on the distinction between essence and existence in creatures. The English translations used throughout this section are from Francisco Suárez, On the Essence of Finite Being As Such, On the Existence of That Essence and Their Distinction, translated with an introduction by Professor Norman J. Wells.

Suárez begins the discussion with his definition of *esse*: “To avoid an equivocation in terms and to make it unnecessary later to make distinctions about an essential being, an existential being or a subsistential being or a being of truth in a proposition, I suppose by *esse* we understand the actual existence of things.”<sup>136</sup> Suárez then proceeds with a lengthy exposition of the opinions of those who hold that essence and existence are really distinct: “Hence, there are different opinions about this existence of a creature. The first is that existence is a ‘thing’ altogether really distinct from the essential entity of a creature. This is considered to be the opinion of St. Thomas which, in this sense, almost all the

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<sup>135</sup> D.M.,XXXI, *De Essentia Entis Finiti Ut Tale Est, Et De Illus Esse, Eorumque Distinctione*

<sup>136</sup> D.M.,XXXI,1,2. Wells, p.45.

old Thomists have followed.”<sup>137</sup> However, although the opinion cited was believed to be that of St. Thomas, it was, more particularly, the words of Giles of Rome “whose personal terminology had done much to obscure the genuine meaning of the doctrine.”<sup>138</sup>

Suárez believed that the ‘Thomists’ held “that existence is a ‘thing’ altogether really distinct from the essential entity of a creature.”<sup>139</sup> Suárez rejects what he regards as the ‘Thomistic’ view (that existence is a real thing which is joined in some fashion to a real essence in order to create an actual entity.)

According to Suárez’s citation of the position of the Thomists, “... the being of a creature is a thing distinct from its essence, because it is not possible for one and the same thing to be and not to be by an efficient cause.”<sup>140</sup> ; thus, in Suárez’s account of Thomist position, a thing is that which has a real essence, prescinding from actual existence.

The second opinion posited a modal distinction of essence and existence. Suárez states: “The second opinion is that created being is indeed distinguished in reality or (as others say) formally, from the essence which has the being and it is not a proper entity altogether really distinct from its essential entity, but its mode. This position is attributed to Scotus, in 3, dist. 6, quest. 1; ...”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> D.M.,XXXI,1,3. Wells, p.45.

<sup>138</sup> Etienne Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, pp. 99 - 100.

<sup>139</sup> D.M.,XXXI,1,3. Wells, p.45.

<sup>140</sup> D.M.,XXXI,1,4. Wells, p.46.

<sup>141</sup> D.M.,XXXI,1,11. Wells, p.50.

“The third opinion asserts that the essence and existence of a creature, proportionately compared, are not distinguished really or in reality as two extremes, but are distinguished in reason only.”<sup>142</sup> This, the third opinion, is the one accepted by Suárez as the true view. He explains this view as follows: “This third opinion must be set forth in such a way that the comparison takes place between actual existence, which they call actually exercised being, and the existent actual essence. Thus this opinion asserts that existence and essence are not distinguished in the thing itself, even though the essence, conceived of abstractly and with precision, as it is in potency, be distinguished from actual existence, as non-being (*ens*) from a being (*ens*). Moreover, I think that this opinion as set forth is absolutely true.”<sup>143</sup>

Upon establishing an acceptable distinction between essence and existence, Suárez continues to ask the question: “How and in what manner being (*ens*) in potency and in act, or essence in potency and act, differ in creatures.”<sup>144</sup> Suárez argues; “for if essence and existence are different things, just as an essence is in potency and act, so a created existence is in potency and act. And just as an essence cannot be actual unless joined to an existence, so neither can an existence be actual unless joined to an essence. Yet formally and intrinsically, actual existence does not differ from itself as potential by essence but by its own actual entity which it did not have in act while it was in potency. Accordingly, the same pertains to essence if it be compared to itself in

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<sup>142</sup> D.M.,XXXI,1,12. Wells, p.51.

<sup>143</sup> D.M.,XXXI,1,13. Wells, p.52.

<sup>144</sup> D.M.,XXXI,3. (title). Wells, p.67.

potency in terms of the precise actuality of the essence. Similarly, not only can we conceive of essence precisely, but also of the whole composite of being and essence, as in potency, and as in act, which is self-evident. However, this being (*ens*) in act is not adequately distinguished from itself in potency because it adds existence to essence. For, in both states, it includes existence proportionately. But it differs by its entire adequate entity, because, to be sure, while it is in act, it has an essential and existential actuality; but while it is in potency, it has neither.”<sup>145</sup>

Suárez continues to assert; “Hence, it is universally true, according to the principle set down above, namely, that a being (*ens*)<sup>146</sup> in act and a being (*ens*) in potency are distinguished formally and directly as a being (*ens*) and a non-being (*ens*), and not as adding one being (*ens*) to another being (*ens*). Consequently, it is also true that an essence as an actual being (*ens*) is distinguished from a potential essence by its own actual entity whether or not it requires another entity or another mode to have that. For the argument is the same in the case of an essence in act as in the case of any being (*ens*) in act. Hence, to speak formally and to abstract from every opinion, one must not say that an actual essence is distinguished from a potential essence, because it has existence. For, although that too can be verified, either formally and proximately, or fundamentally and remotely, according to the different opinions, still, most

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<sup>145</sup> D.M., XXXI,3,7. Wells, p.71.

<sup>146</sup> Suárez’s precise use of *ens* as a noun and *ens* as a participle is discussed at length in Ch.3./S.3.2.

formally and directly in every opinion an actual essence is separated from a potential one by its own actual entity which it has in the order of real essence."<sup>147</sup>

The question remains: What is this 'existence' which constitutes such a vast difference between being and non-being? Suárez answers that "it is certain for all concerned that existence is that by which a thing formally and intrinsically is existing in act. For, although existence is not properly and strictly a formal cause just as subsistence or personality are not, still it is the intrinsic and formal constitutive of its own constitute, just as personality is the intrinsic and formal constitutive of a person, be this with or without a composition."<sup>148</sup>

The views expressed in the preceding section make the Suárezian position abundantly clear. In the words of the commentator, Etienne Gilson: "Obviously Suárez is not existence-blind. He knows that real things do exist; what he does not know is where existence can fit in such a philosophical interpretation of reality as his own is."<sup>149</sup>

Disputation XXXI, VI, discusses what distinction can occur or be conceived between an essence and created existence. Suárez gives (at considerable length), his reasons for rejecting what he views as the real distinction between an actual essence and existence.<sup>150</sup> It will be possible to present here only the most pertinent sections of this lengthy exposition.

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<sup>147</sup> D.M., XXXI,3,8. Wells, p.71.

<sup>148</sup> D.M., XXXI,5,1. Wells, p.78.

<sup>149</sup> Etienne Gilson, *op. cit.*, pp.101-102.

<sup>150</sup> D.M.,XXXI,6. Wells, p.87.

Suárez begins by stating, "first, we must say that a created essence constituted in act outside its causes is not really distinguished from existence, so that there are two distinct things or entities."<sup>151</sup> He says that, "it is especially demonstrated by reason because such an entity added to an actual essence, can neither formally endow it with the first (so to speak) actuality or the first feature of a being (*ens*) in act by which it is separated and distinguished by being (*ens*) in potency. Also, it cannot be necessary under any aspect of cause, properly or deductively, for an essence to have its own actual essential entity. Hence, by no reason can such a distinct entity be imagined."<sup>152</sup>

"Every form, really distinct from the potency which it actuates, forms one composite with it. Hence, such an act can be called a formal cause either in relation to the composite, or in relation to the potency or the other quasi-component part, if it cannot be without such an act or form. Thus, in relation to the composite, it is best and most truly said that such an act formally and intrinsically constitutes it, yet it cannot be altogether mutually distinguished from it but must be included in it and be distinguished as a part of the whole, because such an act cannot be the total entity of a composite which must include another companion-part or another component. But, indeed, if an act be compared to another thing or potency whose act it is, it cannot intrinsically and formally constitute its proper entity because that entity is not composite but simple. Otherwise, it would not be a second component part but the whole composite,

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<sup>151</sup> D.M.,XXXI,6,1. Wells, p.87.

<sup>152</sup> D.M.,XXXI,6,2. Wells, p.87.

which is certainly repugnant in a real composition of distinct things. ... So then, if they were distinct, one would have to philosophize about an essential entity and an existential entity; for they would compose a unit, for instance, this existent, in relation to which existence would have the status of an intrinsic and formal act. Still, in relation to the essential entity it could in no way intrinsically constitute or compose it, because one would be mutually distinguished from the other as a simple entity from a simple entity. Nor can it be said that an essential entity so conceived and distinct is not actual, for, otherwise it would not make a real composition since an entity in objective potency does not make a real composition with act. So, then, it is clearly established that an existential entity, distinct from an essential entity, cannot be required for it to constitute intrinsically the very essential entity in its proper actuality.”<sup>153</sup>

“However, the second member of the division, namely, that such a distinct entity is not required in any other genus of cause so that the essential entity could be *in rerum natura*, is proved sufficiently (as I judge) in the above sections when we showed that, besides an actual essential being and mode of subsistence or inherence, there is no need for another existence.”<sup>154</sup> Therefore, if an essence already has the being of an ‘actual essence’, insofar as it is actual it lacks nothing to exist.

To those of an opposing viewpoint, (who say that the entity of existence is a “necessary condition without which an essential entity cannot remain *in rerum*

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<sup>153</sup> D.M., XXXI,6,3. Wells, pp.88-89.

<sup>154</sup> D.M., XXXI,6,4. Wells, p.89.

*natura*"); Suárez answers simply that it is neither useful nor necessary to multiply this entity, by stating (perhaps somewhat gratuitously) that it is a necessary condition.<sup>155</sup>

"Although the essence of a creature, before it comes to be, could be said to be in pure objective potency on its own part, still that essence as it is now an actual entity by the effecting of its cause, is not in itself and on its own part purely a potency in reference to being. But, intrinsically and in an absolute identity, it has some real and actual being; and this being is true existence since it formally and intrinsically constitutes an entity outside its cause."<sup>156</sup>

Suárez intends to make clear that once an essence is made actual, by being placed outside its cause, its existence lacks nothing. For all the reasons cited, (and others), Suárez cannot accept the proposition that in a created essence, its actual essence is really distinct from its existence. Fundamentally, his rejection of this proposition is based on two facts which Suárez does not cite himself. The first is his notion of a real distinction, as outlined in Chapter 4 Section 4.2. The second fact is that his own concept of being (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, Section 3.2) will not allow him to accept any doctrine other than the one which he defends. It follows that the only way in which Suárez can have a concept of a real distinction; is between two entirely independent realities or beings which can be preserved apart from one another.

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<sup>155</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>156</sup> D.M.,XXXI,6,7. Wells, pp.90-91.



Etienne Gilson clearly identifies the problem that Suárez is facing:

"...Suárez realizes that what makes an actual essence to be different from a merely possible one is existence. Like all *Christian* philosophers, Suárez moreover admits, and indeed expressly teaches, that no finite essence exists out of itself but owes its existence to the divine act of creation."<sup>157</sup>

Gilson also presents Suárez's alternate view: "...that existence seems to add so much to essence, and yet is itself nothing. Here is a possible essence, then God creates it; what has God created? Obviously, God has created that essence. And, as we already know, for that essence to be actualized by God and to exist are one and the same thing. What Suárez fails to see, unless, perhaps, his adversary is himself suffering from double vision, is that, when God creates an essence, He does not give it actuality of essence, which any possible essence enjoys in its own right; what God gives it is another actuality, which is that of existence. Taken in itself, the essence of man is fully actual *qua* essence."<sup>158</sup> Gilson further makes the point that, in addition, Suárez fails to see that when God creates He does not actualize essence as essence, but He actualizes it in another order, in the order of existence.<sup>159</sup>

Suárez, however, is not sympathetic to the modal distinction between essence and existence. He rejects it for reasons similar to those he gave for excluding the real distinction: "...it must be said that existence is not

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<sup>157</sup> Etienne Gilson, *op.cit.*, p.101. Italics in original text.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102. Italics in original text.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

distinguished from the actual essential entity as a mode distinct from it.”<sup>160</sup>

Suárez continues, “For, although in common parlance, this distinction, which is minor, could happen where the first, which is major cannot occur, still in the present case, the arguments which prove that existence is not an entity distinct from actual essence plainly prove that such an existence is nothing at all. Or (and this is the same thing) that, besides an actual essential entity, nothing further can be formally required for existing as such, but only for subsisting or inhering in something similar.”<sup>161</sup> Therefore, for Suárez, there can be no modal distinction between essence and existence.

Following his discussions, Suárez defends the only possible position which is consistent with his view, namely, “that in creatures existence and essence are distinguished as either a being (*ens*) in act and a being (*ens*) in potency, or, if both are taken in act, they are distinguished only by reason with some basis in reality.”<sup>162</sup> “This distinction will suffice for us to say absolutely that it is not of the essence of a creature to exist in act. To understand this distinction and the ways of speaking based on it, it is necessary to realize (what is most certain) that no being (*ens*) except God has its own entity from itself insofar as it is a true entity. I add this to remove the equivocation in regard to an entity in potency which is truly not an entity but nothing; and it bespeaks only non-repugnance or logical potency on the part of the creatable thing.”<sup>163</sup> In other

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<sup>160</sup> D.M.,XXXI,6,9. Wells, p.92.

<sup>161</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>162</sup> D.M.,XXXI,6,13. Wells, p.95.

<sup>163</sup> *Loc. cit.*

words, 'being' has a 'real essence', one which could be created by God, because it involves no contradiction. This 'being' is equivocal with 'being, used as a noun' (*ens*).<sup>164</sup>

When Suárez denies that in an actually existing creature essence and existence are really or modally distinct, he clearly wishes to establish that he is not at the same time asserting that a creature exists of himself. "...It is most truly said that to exist in act is of the essence of God, and not of the essence of a creature. For, truly, God alone by virtue of His nature, has existence in act without the efficient causation of another; but a creature by virtue of its nature does not have existence in act without the efficient causation of another."<sup>165</sup> For Suárez, the contingency of a creature depends on the fact that it can at some time be in potency, therefore its essence, which is nothing, must be actualized in order that it may exist. However, Gilson points out a difficulty with this view: "I cannot help wondering how he himself (Suárez) has not seen what followed from its obvious truth for his own doctrine. If, out of itself, an essence is a mere possible, and if a mere possible is nothing, what will be the result of its actualization? Nothing. This existential nothingness of the possible essence is precisely what compels us to look outside the order of essence for an intrinsic cause of its actual reality."<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Cf. *supra*, Chapter 3, section 3.2, pp.35-44.

<sup>165</sup> D.M.,XXXI,6,14. Wells, p.95.

<sup>166</sup> Etienne Gilson, *op.cit.*, p.104.

In the above passage, Gilson apparently fails to realize that Suárez's nothing (*nihil*) is nothing actual. But as 'nothing actual' it is 'something real'. For Suárez, what is real is not what is actual. But, it can be actual.

However this difficulty may present itself, Suárez steadfastly asserts his view: "From this it further happens that our intellect, which can make precisions in what are not separated from reality, can also conceive of creatures by abstracting them from actual existence. For, since they do not exist necessarily, it is not repugnant to conceive of their natures by prescinding from efficient causation and consequently from actual existence. But, at the same time they are so abstracted, they are also prescinded from an actual essential entity both because they neither have this without efficient causation nor of themselves nor of necessity, and also because an actual entity cannot be prescinded from existence as was proved above."<sup>167</sup>

The importance of what Suárez meant by *ens* cannot be overlooked<sup>168</sup> in providing insight into his definition of 'being'. Suárez's definition of 'being' is as follows: "I state first: a real essence, which in itself is something in act, distinct from its cause, is constituted intrinsically by some real and actual being (*esse existentiae*)."<sup>169</sup> "I state secondly: This constitution does not come about by a composition of such being with such an entity, but by an identity real in every way. ... For an actual essence at once differs from its potential self immediately by its own entity. Accordingly, by that very entity it has that actual being by which

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<sup>167</sup> D.M.,XXXI,6,15. Wells, p.96.

<sup>168</sup> This has been discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.2.

<sup>169</sup> D.M.,XXXI,4,2. Wells, p.73.

it is constituted, etc.”<sup>170</sup> “I say thirdly: that being by which the essence of a creature is formally constituted in essential actuality is the true existential being.”<sup>171</sup>

Therefore, when Suárez says that in an actually existing creature there is only a mental distinction with a foundation in reality between essence and existence, he means that essence and existence are really the same thing, but conceived under the aspect of essence.

Suárez gives the explanation of ‘being’ and ‘the character of being’ as follows: “Therefore, it must be said that essence and existence are the same thing but that it is conceived of under the aspect of essence, insofar as by its character the thing is constituted under a particular genus and species. For essence, as we have explained above, disp.2, sect. 4, (6-7), is that by which something is primarily constituted within the realm of real being (*ens*), (but not necessarily an actual being), as it is distinguished from fictitious being (*ens*). In each and every particular being (*ens*) its essence is called that by whose character it is constituted in such a grade or order of beings. ... Under this aspect the essence is usually signified by the name of quiddity. For that is what is expressed by a definition or by some description by which we manifest what a thing is or of what nature it is. But, indeed, this same thing is conceived of under the aspect of existence insofar as it is the aspect of being (*essendi*) *in rerum natura* and outside its causes. For, since the essence of a creature does not

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<sup>170</sup> D.M.,XXXI,4,3. Wells, p.73.

<sup>171</sup> D.M.,XXXI,4,4. Wells, p.74.

necessarily have this from its own power that it be an actual entity, then when it receives its own entity, we conceive of something to be in it, which would be for it the formal character of being (*essendi*) outside its causes. That, under such an aspect, we call existence which, although in reality it is not other than the very essential entity, is still conceived of by us under a diverse aspect and description; this suffices for a distinction of reason. But the basis for this distinction is that created things do not have being of themselves and can sometimes not be. For from this it happens that we conceive of the essence of the creature as indifferent to being or non-being in act. This indifference is not in the manner of a negative abstraction but of a precise one. So, although the character of an essence be absolutely conceived of by us even in a being (*ens*) in potency, still much more do we understand it to be found in a being (*ens*) in act, although in that we prescind that whole which necessarily and essentially belongs to it from the very actuality of being (*essendi*). In this way do we conceive of essence under the aspect of essence as potency, but we conceive of existence as its act. Hence, for this reason we say that this distinction of reason has some basis in reality, which is not some actual distinction which occurs in reality. But it is the imperfection of a creature which, from the very fact that it does not have being of itself and can receive that from another, affords the occasion for this conception of ours."<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> D.M.,XXXI,6.23. Wells, p.102.

In other words, according to Suárez's view, the reason for making a mental distinction with a foundation in reality is not because of some actual distinction intervening in extramental reality, (*in rerum natura*), but rather, because of the imperfection of creatures which do not have an actual being of themselves but must receive it from another.

## CHAPTER 5. Conclusion.

Beginning with a brief historical account of Francisco Suárez, this thesis has attempted to examine Suárez's position on, and elucidate the distinction he draws between, essence and existence, and further, to demonstrate that this distinction was an inevitable conclusion, given Suárez's first premise on the nature of being in general.

Suárez held that the object of metaphysics is being insofar as it is 'real being' (*ens reale*). This leads to an examination of what he means by being, especially 'real being'. In order to clearly understand Suárez's concept of being, a brief understanding of his epistemology was undertaken. This study of his theory of knowledge makes clear Suárez's reasons for beginning his discussions with the topic of being as it is known by the mind (the formal concept), and then proceeding from an examination of the formal concept to a theory of the extramental reality (the objective concept). To Suárez the formal concept is an 'image' which represents, or reveals, the objective concept. In principle, Suárez assumes that as being is in the mind, so it must be in reality. This proposition may be asserted, but the difficulty — to which Suárez freely admits — lies in his use of a defective instrument, the human intellect, as he attempts to explain reality in the way the mind commonly conceives of it. Some of the difficulties inherent in Suárez's metaphysical doctrine have been illustrated with reference to the views of Etienne Gilson.



Suárez finds that the prime characteristic of the objective concept of being is its unity; but this does not imply that it is a univocal predicate, since it applies to its inferiors in diverse ways. The unity of the formal concept reveals a certain unity in the objective concept; for Suárez this is made evident by the fact that all beings have something in common in the very act of being.

When Suárez considers 'what is being' (*ens*), he immediately distinguishes *ens* as a participle from *ens* as a noun. *Ens* as a participle is intended to mean something existing in act; while *ens* as a noun is intended to mean that which has 'real essence'. According to Suárez a 'real essence' is one which can be produced by God; that is, one which is not a fiction or a chimera, but true and thus capable of existing. *Ens* used as a noun is not the same as potential being, but is rather actual being, from which its act is prescinded only in order to consider being or essence.

Following the views of Suárez, three kinds of distinctions were examined: real, modal, and mental. A real distinction always intervenes between two things: thing (*res*) and thing (*ens*). (*res*; that which has a real essence, and *ens*; that which exists). *Res* can be distinguished and still remain in the realm of actual being without being joined to something else.

A modal distinction is found between a thing and its mode of existing. This distinction is like the real distinction, in that it precedes the activity of the intellect, but it is not as great as the real distinction.

There are two grades of mental distinction. One is the purely mental distinction, for which there is no objective foundation; it is merely a certain mental repetition or comparison of one concept of a single thing. The other kind of mental distinction has a foundation in reality. This comes about through the inadequacy of our concepts of a single thing, although there is some objective occasion for the various concepts of that thing. The same reality may be perceived by two or more different concepts, primarily due to the imperfections of the concepts themselves.

In considering the Suárezian distinction between essence and existence in creatures, it was useful to consider his rejection of what he thought was the position of St. Thomas Aquinas. Suárez's rejection of the 'real distinction' (according to his understanding of that term), seemed to be wholly reasonable, considering his own development of his doctrine of being.

According to Suárez, once an essence has actuality outside its causes, it exists as a being. There is no requirement for any kind of an 'existence-being' to be joined to an 'essence-being'. Existence is merely the act of being — a real essence in act apart from its causes. This does not mean that creatures exist necessarily in or of themselves, since their being is received from another. This is the objective basis for a mental distinction between essence and existence in creatures — precisely because their being is received, they can be thought of as not existing.

With this seminal work on these issues ... the definition and etymology of 'being', with its attendant distinctions, and their final synthesis into his doctrine of essence and existence, Francisco Suárez illuminated and expanded upon the foundation of Medieval Scholasticism, and provided a bridge that would prove influential in the transition to modern thought. If it were not for Suárez, the essentialistic philosophies of Descartes and Leibniz, among others, may not have been developed as we know them today.

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APPENDIX 1.  
Texts Selected from the Disputationes Metaphysicae.

*Disputationes Metaphysicae I, Definitur Quod Sit Metaphysicae Adequatum Objectum.*

DM.I,1,26 / DM.I,2,3 / DM.I,2,4 / DM.I,2,5 / DM.I,2,12 / DM.I,4,2

*Disputatione Metaphysicae II, Conceptus Formalis et Objectivus Quid Sint et In Quo Differant.*

DM.II,*Prooemium*;near end / DM.II,1,1 / DM.II,1,9 / DM.II,1,10 / DM.II,1,11 /  
DM.II,1,12 / DM.II,1,13 / DM.II,2,8 / DM.II,2,14 / DM.II,2,15 / DM.II,2,16 /  
DM.II,2,17 / DM.II,2,18 / DM.II,2,19 / DM.II,2,21 / DM.II,2,22 / DM.II,2,23 /  
DM.II,2,24 / DM.II,2,25 / DM.II,4,3 / DM.II,4,4 / DM.II,4,5 / DM.II,4,6 / DM.II,4,7 /  
DM.II,4,8 DM.II,4,9 / DM.II,4,11 / DM.II,4,12 / DM.II,4,13 / DM.II,4,14 / DM.II,4,15

Vollert translation; Disputation VII, On the Various Kinds of Distinctions:

DM.VII,1,1 / DM.VII,1,4 / DM.VII,1,5 / DM.VII,1,8 / DM.VII,1,12 / DM.VII,1,16 /  
DM.VII,1,17 / DM.VII,1,21 / DM.VII,2,9 / DM.VII,2,13 / DM.VII,2,14 / DM.VII,2,21 /  
DM.VII,2,28

Wells translation; Disputation XXXI, On the Essence of Finite Being, On the Existence of that Essence and Their Distinction:

DM.XXXI,*Prooemium* / DM.XXXI,1,2 / DM.XXXI,1,3 / DM.XXXI,1,4 /  
DM.XXXI,1,11 / DM.XXXI,1,12 / DM.XXXI,1,13 / DM.XXXI,3,7 / DM.XXXI,3,8 /  
DM.XXXI,4,2 / DM.XXXI,4,3 / DM.XXXI,4,4 / DM.XXXI,5,1 / DM.XXXI,6,1 /  
DM.XXXI,6,2 / DM.XXXI,6,3 / DM.XXXI,6,4 / DM.XXXI,6,7 / DM.XXXI,6,9 /  
DM.XXXI,6,13 / DM.XXXI,6,14 / DM.XXXI,6,15 / DM.XXXI,6,23