INTRODUCTION

I. Suárez: the Man, his Career and Work:
Born at Granada on January 5, 1548, 56 years after the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, Francisco Suárez enrolled in 1561 at the University of Salamanca, where he began his study of Law, an interest he would have for the rest of his life. In June of 1564 he entered the Society of Jesus, i.e. the Jesuits. In October 1566, after two intensive years of philosophical education, he went on to study theology, still at Salamanca. In this pursuit, the most important of his teachers was the Dominican, Juan Mancio (1497–1576), who was holding Salamanca’s principal chair (Catedra de Prima) of theology, fourth in the line of succession after the great Francisco de Vitoria, O.P (1492/3–1546).

In 1570 Suárez began to teach philosophy, first at Salamanca and then at Segovia. He was ordained a priest in March 1572 and he continued to lecture in philosophy until, in September 1574, at the Jesuit College, Valladolid, he began his life’s work as a theology teacher for the Society. In years after, he taught his

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subject at Avila (1575), Segovia (1575), Valladolid again (1576), Rome (1580), Alcalá (1585), and Salamanca (1593). In 1597, he accepted the principal chair of theology at the University of Coimbra, where in 1612 he published the results of his legal teaching in his monumental treatise, “On Laws,” (De legibus). He remained at Coimbra until his retirement in 1615. On 25 September 1617, he died in Lisbon.

In addition to his teaching, Suárez engaged in theological and political debates. The most famous of these was the controversy De auxiliis (“On the Helps [for Salvation]”). Raging between sixteenth-century Jesuits and Dominicans, this centered on God’s Foreknowledge and Causality, Grace, and human freedom. Suárez, with his fellow Jesuits, Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) and Luis Molina (1535–1600), allowed for Divine prerogatives but also championed human free will. Less metaphysical and more political was the dispute between the Republic of Venice and the papacy about the limits of papal jurisdiction. In the course of this dispute Suárez in 1607 composed (but did not actually publish) a pro-papal treatise entitled, “On the ecclesiastical immunity violated by the Venetians.” Praising his effort, Pope Paul V [Camillo Borghese (1552–1621), pope (1605–1621)], in the year of its composition, stated that the work showed its author to be “an outstanding and pious doctor” (Doctor eximius ac pius) Hence the honorific title Suárez has enjoyed in the history of Scholasticism – “Doctor eximius.”

Tied to his teaching, Suárez’s writings, which have been estimated to comprise approximately 21 million words and which fill 26 volumes in the most accessible nineteenth-century edition, were mainly theological and usually corresponded to some area of the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). Outside this Thomistic framework were two controversial writings: the just mentioned treatise on ecclesiastical immunity and a long Latin work whose title translates as: “A Defense of the Catholic Faith against the Errors of the Anglican Sect, with a Reply to the ‘Apology’ for the ‘Oath of Fidelity’ and the ‘Warning Preface’ of James, the Most Serene King of England.” Appearing at Coimbra in 1613, this work detailed Suárez’s political philosophy. However,

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2 It is worth mentioning that Suárez was in Rome at the time in which the great Jesuit mathematician, Christopher Clavius (1538–1612), was working there on the 1582 reform of the calendar under the auspices of Pope Gregory XIII.

3 The work was finally published by Mgr. J.-B. Malou, bishop of Bruges, as the 4th Treatise in a volume entitled: R.P. Francisci Suarezii, Opuscula sex inedita (Paris/Bruxelles: P. Gueau, 1859).

4 For this, cf. J. Fichter, Man of Spain ..., p. 327.

5 Opera Omnia (Paris: L. Vivès, 1856–1866); plus two volumes (27 and 28) of indices, 1878.
in the very year of its appearance it was by order of James I publicly burned in London, because in it Suárez had opposed the absolute right of kings and had defended the indirect power of the papacy over temporal rulers. This last was coupled with a legitimation of citizens’ resistance against a tyrannical monarch – even to the point of tyrannicide in the case of a monarch deposed for heresy by the pope.

II. The Disputationes Metaphysicae:
Again outside the Thomistic framework are the two volumes of the *Disputationes metaphysicae* (“Metaphysical Disputations”), which were published at Salamanca in 1597. Without doubt Suárez’s most important and influential enterprise, the volumes contain résumés of his own and previous Scholastic thought on countless questions, arranged in the form of fifty-four “Disputations” that deal in systematic fashion with topics in metaphysics. Even a casual reader will be struck by the work’s tremendous display of its author’s erudition. Again in the most accessible edition, it comprises almost 2000 quarto pages, which, from a computer word count of a representative page, I estimate to contain more than 1.4 million words. After stating each problem, Suárez has searched the history of philosophy and theology for solutions that have been offered to it. With as many as twenty-two opinions listed in connection with a single question, almost every available Greek, Arabic, Patristic, and especially Scholastic writer has been cited, often many times. As a rule, these citations are from original sources and exact references are given. One historian has counted 7709 citations, referring to 245 different authors.6 Hardly surprising in a work on metaphysics, Aristotle (384–322 BC) was most mentioned, a total of 1735 times, while St. Thomas Aquinas was next, cited 1008 times.7 But the *Doctor eximius* does not just assemble opinions. Much more does he show himself ever an independent thinker with a passion for fairness, faithfully reporting as many positions as he can and giving equitable treatment both to those he endorsed and to those he opposed.

In a preface addressed to the reader of the *Disputationes*, Suárez remarks that he is taking time out from theological preoccupations to author a systematic metaphysics. This metaphysics, which will be Christian and at the service of theology, will be divided into two parts, to which he says the two volumes of the printed work will correspond. In the twenty-seven Disputations, which make up the first volume, Suárez is concerned with being in general while, symmetrically, in the twenty-seven Disputations of the second volume he descends to

particular beings – in effect dividing metaphysics itself into a general and a special part.\textsuperscript{8}

In the very first Disputation (\textit{Opera omnia}, Paris: Vivès [1856]: vol. 25, pp. 1–64), he tells us that the object of metaphysics is “being insofar as it is real being.” Explaining this, in Disputation 2 (pp. 64–102) he uses two distinctions already familiar to Scholastic authors. The first is between the \textit{formal concept} as an act of the mind and the \textit{objective concept} as what is immediately the object of that act. This latter may be an individual thing or some common feature (\textit{ratio}) of things. It may, further, be something mind-independent, whether actual or possible, or it may be something merely objective or mind-dependent. The second distinction is between \textit{being as a participle}, which refers to actual existents and \textit{being as a noun}, which refers to whatever is not a simple fiction but is true in itself and apt really to exist. The object of metaphysics is then identified with the “common objective concept of being as a noun.” This precise object, which reflects Avicenna’s (980–1037) understanding of Aristotelian metaphysics, abstracts from existence and, as common, transcends all categories, genera, species and differences to embrace everything real. This last runs a range from extrinsic denominations (such as “being right,” “being left,” “being known,” or “being willed”), \textsuperscript{9} through mere possibles (which reduce to non-contradiction), to actual created substances and accidents, to the subsistent, purely actual, necessary, uncreated, and infinite reality of God. Over this range, the common concept of being as a noun is analogous with what Suárez will call “an analogy of intrinsic attribution.” In this analogy, a unified concept of being is shared, in an order that is intrinsic to it, by different beings (God and creatures, substance and accidents) in such way that the being of what is posterior depends upon and indeed “demands” (\textit{postulat}) the being of what is prior.\textsuperscript{10}

Disputation 3 (pp. 102–115) offers a general treatment of the transcendental properties, namely unity, truth, and goodness, which belong to every being insofar as it is a being. The property of unity is as such treated in Disputation 4


(pp. 115–45), following which questions are raised in Disputation 5 (pp. 145–201) about individuation, in Disputation 6 (pp. 201–50) about formal and universal unity, and in Disputation 7 (pp. 250–74) about different kinds of distinction. In the course of his discussion of unity, Suárez rejects the Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine that traces individuation to “quantified matter.” He also rejects Scotistic “thisness” (haecceitas) while coming close to nominalism with a view that every thing is individual by its very entity. On universals, again he inclines to nominalism with a denial of any real common nature independent of individuals. At the same time, he teaches that the universalizing activity of the mind has a foundation in the likenesses of things. Distinctions he divides as real, rational, and modal. Along the way, he opposes the “real formal distinction” (distinctio formalis a parte rei) that Duns Scotus had taught to be present between “formalities” (formalitates) prior to any operation of the intellect.

In succeeding Disputations: the discussion of truth, which Suárez understands as conformity between formal and objective concepts, in Disputation 8 (pp. 274–312) is balanced by discussion of falsity in Disputation 9 (pp. 312–28). Likewise, discussion of goodness in Disputation 10 (pp. 328–55) is balanced by that of evil in Disputation 11 (pp. 355–72). Disputation 12 (pp. 372–95) treats causes in general, while Disputations 13–25 (pp. 395–916) treat material, formal, efficient, and final causes in detail. Completing the first part as well as the first volume of the Disputationes, Disputation 26 (pp. 916–49) considers causes in relation to their effects, while Disputation 27 (pp. 949–61) deals with causes in relation one to another.

The second part and second volume of the Disputationes begins in Disputation 28 (Vivès: vol. 26, pp. 1–21) with the principal division and principal analogy of being between infinite and finite. In Disputation 29 (pp. 21–60), Suárez demonstrates the existence of God in an expressly “metaphysical” way, once more reflecting Avicenna. This way turns on the principle, “Everything which comes to be, comes to be by another” and scales the ladder of the common concept of being from lesser and lower being to a First Being. In the course of his reasoning, Suárez rejects any “physical” demonstration, such as that of Aristotle, adopted by Averroes (1126–1198) and also St. Thomas, which would turn on the principle, “Everything which is moved is moved by another,” to pass from motion to a First Mover. These two Disputations are translated in the present volume.

Following demonstration of God's existence, Disputation 30, which is the longest Disputation (pp. 60–224), investigates the Divine nature and attributes. Disputation 31 (pp. 224–312) inaugurates treatment of finite being with a denial of the Thomistic distinction of essence and existence in creatures, which distinction the Doctor eximius understands as falling between two “things” (res). For Suárez the only distinction that can obtain here is one of reason with some basis
in reality. In Disputation 32 (pp. 312–29), substance and accidents are considered in general, as well as the analogy of being between created substances and accidents. Over the next four Disputations (pp. 329–491) substance is treated in detail while the various categories of accident are treated in Disputations 37 to 53 (pp. 491–1014). The whole work concludes in Disputation 54 (pp. 1014–41) with an extremely important discussion of “beings of reason” (entia rationis) divided into negations (which include so-called impossible objects), privations, and mind-dependent relations – all of which are outside the real being that is the object of metaphysics.

III. A Summary of Disputation 28: \textsuperscript{11}

As mentioned, the two Disputations that are translated in the present work open the second part of the Disputationes metaphysicae and mark the turn from being in general to particular beings. Their concern is with, first in Disputation 28, a comprehensive division of being in general, and after in Disputation 29, the existence of the principal member of this division, namely, that being which is God.

Disputation 28 is divided into three Sections, which ask about the legitimacy and the sufficiency of the division, as well as whether the dividend, i.e. being, is univocal or analogous between God and creatures. In the first Section (Vivès: vol. 26, pp. 1–8), the question is whether being is rightly divided into infinite and finite being? Doubts arise from the fact that “infinite” and “finite” on their face do not appear to cover the whole range of being but rather look to be restricted to accidental being in the category of quantity (§ 1). In addition, the terms of the proposed division seem obscure, especially the term “infinite” (§ 2). Suárez’s answer is to analyze the terms (§ 3) and then to defend the division as one that is good and necessary (§ 4) as well as first and most evident (§ 5). It is equivalent to other divisions such as being by itself (ens a se) and being from another (ens ab alio) (§§ 6–7) or, with clarifications, necessary being and contingent being (§§ 8–12). It is also equivalent to: essential being and being by participation (§ 13), created being and uncreated being (§ 14), or being in act and being in potency (§§ 15–16). Suárez next compares the first division with the rest (§ 17), explains the terms of the first division by comparison with quantity (§ 17), and closes the first Section (§ 18) with a reply to objections raised at its beginning.

Section 2 (vol. 26, pp. 8–13) opens with reasons for doubting the sufficiency of the division. These include that fact that relations, because they are found both in creatures and in God, seem to be neither finite nor infinite and do not therefore fit the division (§ 1). Something akin to this occurs from the case of Christ who is both finite and infinite inasmuch as he is both God and man (§ 2).

\textsuperscript{11} What follows is meant to be little more than an outline. Readers are advised to look at what Suárez has to say for himself, albeit in the present poor English version, rather than rely upon any synopsis of that.
Again, there is question regarding the free acts of the Divine Will, which would apparently be at once both contingent and necessary (§ 3). Then there is an opinion of Duns Scotus to the effect that being should first be divided into quantified and non-quantified being, and that the division into finite and infinite is a subdivision of quantified being (§ 4). After addressing this last opinion (§§ 5–6), Suárez goes on to defend the sufficiency of the divisions proposed in Section 1, especially that in terms of being by itself and being from another (§ 7). He then gives extended expositions of and answers to the difficulties proposed about relations, Christ, and Divine free acts (§§ 8–16).

Section 3 of Disputation 28 (vol. 26, pp. 13–21) begins with a rejection of the view that the term being as used between God and creatures is simply equivocal (§ 1). A quite opposite view, which was held by Duns Scotus (1266–1308), is that being is said univocally of God and creatures (§ 2). After explaining the reasons for this view and for its opposition to analogy in this context (§§ 3–4), Suárez himself presents an opinion that the term being is indeed said analogously of God and creatures (§ 5), discusses arguments in support of this (§§ 6–8), and replies to objections that may be raised against these arguments (§ 9). Subsequently, he inquires about the kind of analogy that is present here (§ 10) and rejects Cajetan’s doctrine that there is “a proper analogy of proportionality” between God and creatures (§ 11). Also rejecting any “analogy of attribution to a third thing,” that is, any position that would affirm that God and creatures are called being only by reference to something else, he next affirms that there is here “an analogy of one to another,” which is to say that creatures are being in reference to God and the term being is said more principally of God than of creatures (§ 12). At this point, he brings in the “Platonic” opinion that God is not being but rather above being, which occasions a brief explanation of the name of God in Exodus 3, 14 (§ 13). Following this, he explains and affirms that the analogy of being here is intrinsic inasmuch as creatures are designated beings from their own intrinsic being and not just extrinsically from God (§§ 14–17). Finally, his reply to objections and arguments in support of univocity closes the third Section and the Disputation itself (§§ 18–22).

IV. A Summary of Disputation 29:

Though almost twice as long, Disputation 29 like the one before is again divided into three Sections. Section 1 (vol. 26, pp. 21–34) begins after two introductory paragraphs (§§ 1–2) in which Suárez gives reasons for the location of the subject matter of the Disputation in this place and remarks how he will leave aside as much as possible items which depend for their understanding on Revelation. The first Section then asks whether and/or by what means the existence of God can be demonstrated. Among the Scholastic Doctors, Peter d’Ailly (1350–1420) has denied the possibility of such a demonstration. To this Suárez makes the brief but revealing reply that already by the various divisions of being
that have been presented in the previous Disputation the existence of “some being which is uncreated or not produced” has been proven (§ 1). The obvious implication is that by now the existence of God has in effect been proven. But immediately the question arises: by what means, physical or metaphysical, is this properly done? On one side, the opinion of Averroes is that the means is physical, namely the motion of the heavens (§ 2). The contrary opinion, that of Avicenna and later of Duns Scotus among others, holds that the means must be metaphysical (§ 3) – that is, not motion but being itself. A third and a fourth opinion hold in different ways that the task must belong to both physics, that is natural philosophy, and metaphysics (§§ 4–5). In different ways the means would thus be both physical and metaphysical. In Suárez’s judgment the second opinion is certainly the true one but there can be some probability in the fourth position, if it is rightly explained (§ 6).

At this juncture, he examines at length the physical argument that proceeds by the medium of motion and for various reasons he finds it wanting (§§ 7–17). Then he considers another physical argument, from the operations and the essence of the rational soul (§ 18). This too comes up short, unless we first pose a question about the soul’s being, which is a metaphysical question (§ 19). Here Suárez gives the metaphysical argument that is based upon a broader and deeper principle than the physical one, “Whatever is moved is moved by another.” The metaphysical principle is “Whatever is made or produced is made by another” and the argument itself concludes to an unmade Maker (§§ 20–21). An objection of a possibly circular chain of causes is dismissed as every bit as inadmissible as a thing’s causing itself (§ 22). Other objections involve an infinite number of causes that would preclude any arriving at a first uncaused or unmade cause. There are different ways to conceive such an infinity of causes. Suárez explains such ways in detail and shows their insufficiencies (§§ 23–40). The first Section ends (§§ 41–42) with a brief rehearsal of and summary judgment upon the opinions listed at the beginning.

Section 2 (pp. 34–47) gets more exact and asks: whether one can show in an a posteriori way that there is only one uncreated being which will in fact be God? The thought here is that although the basic demonstration has been displayed in the previous Section or even in the previous Disputation, it needs precision. For it might be the case that while by now an unmade or uncreated being has been proven to exist, perhaps there is more than one such, which would mean that we have not reached the true God, who is unique (§§ 1–2).

In a totally opposite direction is a position, which has been associated with St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), to the effect that the existence of God is self-evident and therefore need not and in fact cannot be demonstrated (§ 3). Suárez’s own view is that the existence of God can be demonstrated but it is necessary first to be clear about what we mean by God, that is to say what it is we
are attempting to demonstrate (§ 4). This he tells us is “a certain most noble being which both surpasses all the rest and from which as from a first author all the rest depend, which, accordingly, should be worshipped and venerated as the supreme deity” (§ 5). There are, he says, two ways to prove the existence of such a God: “one is completely _a posteriori_ and from effects; the other is immediately _a priori_, although remotely it also is _a posteriori_” (§ 7). In the first way, “the beauty of the whole universe and the wonderful connection and order of all things in it sufficiently declare that there is one first being, by whom all things are governed and from whom they draw their origin” (ibid). Four objections are that (1) this may prove that there is one governor of the world but not necessarily that there is one creator, (2) this proof does not rule out a number of rulers who might govern the world by consensus, (3) it says nothing about spiritual beings themselves or their connection with the present material world, and (4) this proof does not foreclose on there being another world besides this one (§ 8). Suárez goes on in paragraphs following to answer these objections in detail. In reply to the first, he draws from the ancient Christian writer, Lactantius (ca. 240–320), the lesson that “the universe can be governed only by him by whose counsel and power it has been created” (§ 9). He then devotes eleven paragraphs (§§ 10–20) to further explain this in the cases of the elements, mixed bodies (more or less perfect), and especially the heavens. In this last regard, he pays special attention to the causality between the heavens and sublunar natural things. The second objection is met through nine paragraphs (§§ 21–29) in which Suárez argues that a number of world rulers would require that such be at once intelligent but also imperfect and liable to disagreement among themselves. The third objection is presented in more detail (§ 30) and answered over six paragraphs (§§ 31–36) in which Suárez treats the Aristotelian separate substances. From the motion of the heavens their existence is at best only probable, and even if they do exist they must be creatures of God. Finally, in reply to the fourth objection, Suárez shows the reasonable character of the Christian doctrine that God is not limited to making only one world and could indeed be the creator of any number of worlds besides this one, with the result that the objection has no force (§ 37).

Nevertheless, at this point Suárez tells us: “from this and the preceding objection I am convinced that the reasoning made to prove that there is only one unproduced being and that all the rest of beings have been made by that being does not conclude absolutely about all beings, but only about those which can fall under human cognition by way of natural reasoning or philosophy. Therefore, in order that the argument conclude universally, there necessarily must be employed a demonstration _a priori_, which ... we will pursue in the following Section” (ibid.)

Section 3 (pp. 47–60) first affirms the impossibility of demonstrating the existence of God in _a priori_ manner from cause to effect, since obviously God
has no cause (§ 1). Nevertheless, once He has been, in an *a posteriori* way, demonstrated to exist, it is possible secondarily to use *a priori* demonstrations to arrive at some of his properties or attributes (§ 2). However, this is not easy to do, as Suárez shows by rejecting an argument which has been offered to prove God’s unicity on the basis that being can belong first and through itself only to a single unproduced being (§§ 3–7). He then proposes two more arguments that purport to prove that there cannot be several beings that exist of themselves. However, objections can be made to both of these arguments (§§ 8–10). A fourth argument, which Suárez finds “very probative,” is to the effect that singularity must belong by nature to an unproduced being; therefore such a being cannot be multiplied (§ 11). While objection may be made to this reasoning, Suárez thinks it can be defended (§ 12) and indeed, if it is rightly understood, it may strengthen the first argument offered (§ 13). He further infers that being can belong to other things only by way of efficient causality or effective emanation from the first unproduced being (§ 14). Suárez then considers at length a fifth argument, which he thinks is “enough by itself and also confirms the preceding argument” (§ 15) to the effect that two or more unproduced beings could be neither the same nor diverse in species (§§ 15–22). This leads to an explanation of a text from Aristotle that seems at variance with this (§ 23). At this point, a sixth argument is introduced to show that a first unproduced being which is supreme and infinite in its perfection and most powerful in its acting produces “all things that are” (§ 24). An objection is raised to the effect that if it were to produce all things it would produce itself (§ 25), which, of course, is absurd. Suárez answers that it belongs to the perfection of that being and subsequently to its power “that it is not itself producible by itself” while all else is produced by it (§ 26). Yet another argument can be taken, says the Doctor eximius, “from the causality of the ultimate end” (§ 27) and objections to this are raised and answered (§§ 28–31). Now Suárez states his conclusion – “From all of this, it has been sufficiently demonstrated that God exists” – and reaffirms its metaphysical character (§ 32). “Lastly,” he says, “from all that has been said it can be clear by, so to speak, a certain most evident experience how far from truth is the opinion ... which asserted that the existence of God is so self-evident that, for that reason, it could not be demonstrated” (§ 33). This occasions a final discussion of self-evident propositions (§ § 34–37).

V. Some Influence of Suárez:

Most scholars would agree with Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) that Suárez was the main source through which Greek ontology passed from the Middle Ages to usher in the metaphysics and the transcendental philosophy of modern times.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^\text{12}\) *Sein und Zeit* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1941), p. 22, tr. J. McQuarrie and E. Robinson,
First of all, the authority of the Doctor eximius for post-Renaissance Catholic Scholasticism was profound. While just a glance will show his importance even for Catholic writers who disagree with him, not surprisingly, he was most influential for succeeding Jesuits. Largely through the growth and activity of the Society of Jesus, his metaphysics spread from the Catholic schools of Spain, Portugal, and Italy to northern European countries. Beyond Catholicism, it crossed religious lines to the Lutheran universities of Germany where the Disputationes metaphysicae (of which seventeen editions appeared between 1597 and 1636) was studied, by those especially who embraced what had been Melanchthon’s (1497–1560) attitude toward philosophy. In a similar way,
Suárez had major influence in the Calvinist tradition of German and Dutch schools, for both metaphysics and law. In all probability, it was Suarezian metaphysics that René Descartes (1596–1650) first imbibed from his Jesuit teachers at La Flèche. While he is short on explicit citations, he has on at least one occasion referred to the *Disputationes*, of which he is believed to have owned a copy. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1649–1716) boasted that when he was young he had read...
Suárez “like a novel.”

23 Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), in his principal work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, shows great familiarity with the *Disputationes* and values it as “an authentic compendium of the whole Scholastic tradition.”

24 Again, Franz Brentano (1838–1917), in his 1862 work on the various meanings of being according to Aristotle, has recommended the *Disputationes metaphysicae* to anyone who wants to understand diverse medieval views on Aristotle.

25 But, to my mind most important for later philosophy, Christian Wolff (1679–1754), whose *Ontologia* was for Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) almost identical with pre-critical metaphysics, is on record telling us about “Francisco Suárez, of the Society of Jesus, who among Scholastics pondered metaphysical questions with particular penetration.”

26 And beyond all doubt Wolff was in his own metaphysics very much in debt to Suárez.

For more details of Suárez’s influence on the philosophy of the seventeenth century and after, I recommend to the reader the secondary sources that have been cited in the notes of the last three paragraphs. For my purposes now, I am


satisfied to have said enough about his life, his work, and his influence, to lay a
general foundation for the present translation.

Translator’s Remarks
Although Francisco Suárez was a fine philosopher and normally a quite clear
writer, his Scholastic Latin style was often wordy and repetitious while at other
times too brief and cryptic. Yet my aim was to translate his work as literally as
possible. This may account for an excess of run-on labyrinthine sentences in my
English as well as awkward word order within those sentences. It definitely does
account for the proliferation of words like “therefore” – although at times I
relented and used “hence” or “accordingly” even where there was no change in
Suárez’s “ergo.” While sometimes I changed his passive voice verbs to active
voice or modified his impersonal constructions, generally I resisted “improving”
on Suárez’s expression for the sake of more readable English. For example, I
fought the temptation in a number of places to substitute “consequent” for
Suárez’s “consequence.” But on occasion I did resort to synonyms for a single
word used by Suárez a number of times in close succession. Again, for clarity’s
sake, I supplied words that were not in the text. Usually I indicated this with the
device of square brackets. Frequently, when I had to choose among different
meanings of a Latin word, I gave the original word in parentheses. Something I
did do generally was break Suárez’s long paragraphs into smaller ones. My hope
was to better convey his meaning. The reader should be aware that Suárez’s own
paragraphs equate with the numbers within the Sections.

I was undecided about capitalization of items like “First Maker” or “First
Cause” as well as “He” or “His” in contexts that did, but not in an explicit way,
refer to God. I tried to use small letters where Suárez was speaking more gener-
ally of divisions of being and capital letters, especially in Disputation 29, from
Section 2 on, where the discussion was expressly about God and where the ref-
ereence was unmistakable. However, I cannot claim that I was always consistent
in this. Something similar occurred when Suárez, obviously speaking of
Aristotelian “separate substances,” wrote “intelligentiae,” which I translated with
a capital letter as “Intelligences.”

While as a rule Suárez’s references are accurate, on occasion, where he was
perhaps citing from a faulty memory, they are not. Where I found lapses, I have
indicated them with “[sic]” and have attempted to give the correct references in
footnotes. In deference to Suárez, it needs noting that apparent lapses may have
occurred because editions of the works he cited were divided differently from
editions that are available today. An example of this would be Fonseca’s
Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics, which Suárez used and which divides
Aristotle’s text sometimes at variance with present-day divisions. Nevertheless, I
was very impressed by how good overall the Doctor eximius’ citations were. In this regard, his attention to the Greek texts he was citing from Aristotle was particularly striking. He possessed at least three translations of the Metaphysics, those of Fonseca, Bessarion, and Argyropolous, and on the basis of his own reading of Aristotle’s Greek he was not hesitant to choose among them.

I did have a problem with his often vague cross-references to his own text, both between the two Disputations translated as well as to places in other Disputations. While it now and then required imagination, as much as possible I identified the passages to which he was referring. For this and for verifying references to other writers, I have given footnotes that fix Suárez’s citations more in detail. In doing so, I was fortunate to have access to the Vatican Film Library, and to the rare books in The St. Louis Room, here at St. Louis University. For references to early Christian writers, I used when I could the volumes of J.-P. Migne’s Greek and Latin Patrologies. Even where other more critical texts may have replaced them, the Migne volumes continue to be accessible.

In addition, I have employed footnotes to give brief explanations of points Suárez is making in the text. Obviously, some things needed clarification while others on their face seemed plain enough. The problem was deciding which points to explain. More often than not, I was content to let Suárez explain himself without any help from me. That however did not obviate the fact that there were extended portions of his text in which he presupposes background which he does not identify and which if I had pursued would have taken me too far from the main task of presenting Suárez himself. The best example of such background that comes to mind is the geocentric astronomy, neither purely Aristotelian nor Ptolemaic, which the Doctor eximius accepts but never spells out. My best guess is that it is a hybrid system that reflects the medieval doctrine of Sacrobosco [i.e. John Holywood (fl. ca. 1230)],29 which itself combined Aristotelian and Ptolemaic elements and which continued to be a standard text in Jesuit schools into the seventeenth century.30 But then I cannot be certain in all places.

As the Latin source for the translation, I used C. Berton’s edition of the Disputationes Metaphysicae from Suárez’s Opera Omnia (Paris: Vivès, 1581, during Suárez’s Roman teaching.


30 On this see especially the Commentary of Clavius: Christophori Clavii Bambergensis ex Societate Jesu, In Speram Ioannis de Sacro Bosco commentarius, nunc quinto ab ipso auctore hoc anno 1606, recognitus, et plerisque in locis locupletatus. Accessit Geometrica, atque uberrima de crepusculis tractatio (Romae: Sumptibus Io. Pauli Gellii, 1607). The first edition of this work of Clavius appeared in 1581, during Suárez’s Roman teaching.
1856–1866). In places, I checked Berton’s reading against a Mainz edition of 1605. This is mentioned in my bibliography along with the modern bilingual, Latin and Spanish, work of Sergio Rábade Romeo et al. For some passages, the Spanish version was helpful, but in overwhelming part the final English text is my own directly from the Latin.