

Research Statement

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My research explores a philosophical tradition that is prolific, sophisticated, and influential and yet largely unknown: late medieval to early modern scholasticism. Standard historical narratives used in the discipline of philosophy do well when they include a medieval period between ancient and early modern philosophy. Yet discussions of medieval philosophy seldom look at figures later than Buridan in the fourteenth century, while examinations of early modern philosophy often as not start with Descartes in the early seventeenth century. That leaves a good two centuries neglected. Also neglected are the later forms of the early modern scholastic tradition that begins here but continues to thrive into at least the eighteenth century, especially in places such as Spain, Bohemia, and Poland. A complicated set of causes—including self-serving historiographies, interdisciplinary conflicts, religious prejudices, and provincialism—has largely buried one of the most prolific traditions in history. In my research, I dig out some of the philosophical treasure. Acquaintance with this tradition gives us a better understanding of the transition from medieval to modern philosophy. It also gives us additional philosophical tools: questions to consider, distinctions to employ, arguments to ponder, and so forth.

There is a practically endless amount of material to dig into here, so my research has to focus on a few spots. As far as figures are concerned, my main focus is on Francisco Suárez (1548–1617), a Spanish Jesuit theologian and philosopher who, along with his rival Gabriel Vásquez (1549–1604), inspired tens of thousands of pages of subsequent philosophy, both within scholasticism and without. Outside of scholasticism, Descartes, Hobbes, Malebranche, and Leibniz all knew Suárez's work. Thanks to my website on Suárez (<http://www.sydneypenner.ca/suarez.shtml>), I have become identified as a Suárez person. That said, my interests extend farther to include other figures in this tradition, such as Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza (1578–1641) and Rodrigo de Arriaga (1591–1667), as well as earlier figures such as Aquinas and Scotus and the canonical early modern figures. With respect to the latter, I have special interests in Malebranche.

Topically, I have interests both in ethics/moral psychology and in metaphysics. With respect to the former, I am especially interested in how the eudaimonism of Aristotle and Aquinas is developed and modified by the later scholastics. I am convinced that the standard Sidgwickian story that makes modern moral philosophy with its dualism of practical reason seem discontinuous with an ancient and medieval eudaimonist tradition needs serious qualification at the very least. With respect to metaphysics (and, depending on the classification, natural philosophy), I am particularly interested in the metaphysics of relations and in causation. To date, I have investigated final causation in particular, but I hope shortly to pursue projects on efficient and formal causation as well. This, of course, is an area where there are obvious connections to be drawn to the canon-

ical early modern figures such as Descartes and Malebranche.

Translation: Since very little of Francisco Suárez's work—and even less of the other early modern scholastics' work—has been translated, a significant part of my work consists of the archaeological project of translation. Many of my translations are still in a fairly rough state; some are more polished. Numerous examples can be seen at <http://www.sydneypenner.ca/translations.shtml>. Suárez's *Metaphysical Disputation XXIII.1* (on final causation) is an example of a relatively polished translation. I plan to continue translating Suárez and other scholastic authors and eventually to see some translations through to publication.