Suárez, Francisco

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Designated as the *doctor eximius et pius* (the "Pious and Eminent Doctor") by Pope Paul V after Suárez wrote on behalf of the papacy in a dispute with Venice, Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) is the most prominent representative of a remarkable flowering of scholastic theology and philosophy (see MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY, CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION) during Spain's Golden Age. He found international prominence already during his lifetime. Some of the attention was negative. An accusation of novelty led to the young Jesuit being investigated by the Society of Jesus's superior general, though he seems to have been exonerated. In his book *Defensio fidei*, Suárez defended a theory of political power perceived to undermine monarchs' absolute right to rule. In addition to permitting tyrannicide, he argued that even monarchs who ascended to the throne legitimately could become tyrants and thereby lose their legitimacy. Such views led to the book being ordered burned in London and Paris. In general, however, Suárez's masterful exposition and probing analysis of a broad range of earlier theological and philosophical positions was recognized and well received.

Suárez was clearly a scholastic in style and temperament, despite coming after humanism's rise and living on the cusp of what is usually identified as the era of modern philosophy. His writings are sometimes said to contain the whole of scholastic philosophy because in addressing a question he surveys the full range of scholastic positions – Thomist (see AQUINAS, SAINT THOMAS), Scotist (see SCOTUS, DUNS), nominalist, and others – before affirming one of those positions or presenting his own variant. His predilection is for the *via media* position, sometimes trying to carve out a middle road even where there seems to be none available.

Suárez's greatness comes precisely from his magisterial weighing of all the competing positions across an extraordinarily broad range of theological and philosophical issues. The combination of broad systematicity, detailed elaboration, and thorough argumentation for his preferred view and against contrary views finds few rivals.

Life and works

Francisco Suárez was born on 5 January 1548, in Granada to Gaspar Suárez de Toledo and Antonia Vázquez de Utiel, half a century after Ferdinand and Isabella wrested the city from eight centuries of Muslim control. Although some members of the family several generations earlier ran into trouble with the inquisition, by this time the family was prosperous and included a number of members of note, including an uncle, Francisco Toledo de Herrera, who was a prominent professor of philosophy and the first Jesuit cardinal.

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Religion. Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro (Editors-in-Chief).

DOI: 10.1002/9781119009924.eopr0376

Suárez's childhood and early schooling seem to have been unremarkable. While at Salamanca studying canon law, he became one of the people who felt a call to join the Jesuit order after hearing the legendary sermons of the Jesuit Juan Ramirez. Remarkably for someone destined to become one of the fathers of Jesuit philosophy, Suárez was initially rejected from the order on grounds of insufficient intellectual aptitude. After several appeals, he was eventually accepted provisionally.

The subsequent flowering of Suárez's academic abilities has led some biographers to attribute this flowering to miraculous intervention by the Blessed Virgin Mary. His newfound abilities were noticed and he was sent to study theology at the University of Salamanca, launching him on a prominent career in scholastic theology. He taught theology and philosophy at schools in Segovia, Valladolid, Rome, Alcalá, Salamanca, and Coimbra, the last at the behest of Philip II. Suárez retired from Coimbra in 1613, hoping to revise an earlier set of lecture notes into a commentary on ARISTOTLE's *De anima*, among other projects. The revision, however, was still unfinished at Suárez's death on 25 September 1617.

Suárez's body of writings is enormous and most of his works are largely neglected by philosophers today. The works that have received the most attention recently are *Disputationes metaphysicae*, *De legibus seu de Deo legislatore*, and, to a lesser degree, the aforementioned commentary on *De anima*. These works include much philosophy of religion, but philosophers of religion would do well to go further and examine Suárez's many theological writings (often written loosely as commentaries on sections of Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*). Of special interest are his account of God and his attributes in *De Deo uno et trino*, his detailed and systematic examination of the incarnation in *De Incarnatione*, and his massive *De gratia,* along with some of his shorter works written in connection with the *De auxiliis* controversy raging during his lifetime. Unfortunately, despite their obvious value, none of these works has been translated.

Most traditional questions in the philosophy of religion receive at least some attention in Suárez's vast body of work. The following sections touch on only a small fraction of the most significant.

Congruism

Without doubt one of Suárez's most important contributions concerns the main theological controversy of his day, whose central issue concerned how to reconcile human FREE WILL with divine grace, PROVIDENCE, PREDESTINATION, and foreknowledge (see DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE) in such a way that one did not fall into one heresy or another. The issue was not new, of course, but it reached a fevered pitch in the late sixteenth century, not least because it was also at stake in the battles between Protestants and Catholics. Within Catholicism, the key players were Dominicans and Jesuits, with the Dominicans accusing the Jesuits of falling into Pelagianism and the Jesuits accusing the Dominicans of falling into Calvinism (see REFORMED TRADITION, THE; CALVIN, JOHN). The dispute culminated in the *Congregatio de Auxiliis* convened by Pope Clement VIII to settle the matter once and for all. After an

extraordinarily intense and sustained debate carried out over 85 meetings between 1598 and 1607, Pope Paul V suspended the tribunal without reaching a conclusion but ordering each side to refrain from condemning the other side as heretics.

Suárez addresses these matters in many of his works, and is, along with Robert Bellarmine, principally responsible for formulating a doctrine that came to be known as Congruism. Congruism is a species of Molinism (see MOLINA AND MOLINISM), so it will be helpful to say something about Molinism first. One way of reconciling human free will with the various theological desiderata is to provide a compatibilist account of free will, that is, to think of free will in a way compatible with determinism. Jesuits such as Luis de Molina and Suárez, however, reject such free will as unworthy of the name and insist that libertarian free will is required to underwrite moral responsibility. As Suárez (1994, 314) puts it, "a free cause is one which, given that all the things required for acting have been posited, is able to act and able not to act." Along with this emphasis on libertarian free will, Molina and Suárez also argue that the divine grace whereby sinful human beings can attain salvation (see SALVATION/SOTERIOLOGY IN CHRISTIANITY) is rendered efficacious by one's free consent to it. There are, of course, immediate questions about how these positions are compatible with traditional theological conceptions about God's foreknowledge and providential control of everything. Molina's best-known contribution is to propose something he calls "middle knowledge" to show their compatibility. Middle knowledge is God's pre-volitional knowledge of what any possible free creature would do in any scenario. Such knowledge would obviously entail that God's knowledge includes knowledge of the future actions of free creatures. Furthermore, Molina argues, God can make use of middle knowledge to exercise providential control over the world.

Suárez, at least in his mature years, agrees with Molina on all this and so is a Molinist, broadly speaking. There are disagreements as well, however. Suárez disagrees, for example, about how it is that God can know what creatures would freely do (Bac 2010; Craig 1988). The congruist's main dispute with Molina, however, is about the reason for divine grace's efficaciousness and the role of predestination. Suppose God bestows grace on Peter and John, knowing that Peter will freely accept the grace (thereby rendering it efficacious) while John will not (thereby leaving it inefficacious). On Molina's view, the only extrinsic reason for the grace's efficaciousness in Peter's case is Peter's acceptance of that grace. Furthermore, God predestines Peter to salvation precisely because he knows that Peter will accept grace.

Here Suárez parts company and formulates a position broadly Molinist yet closer to that of the Jesuits' Dominican opponents. Suárez agrees that Peter's free acceptance of the grace is an extrinsic reason for the grace's efficaciousness, but he does not think it the only extrinsic reason. Furthermore, he thinks God elects some people to salvation but not others antecedently to any middle knowledge of their merits or of how they would respond to grace. Once God has elected Peter to salvation, God then knows what graces to bestow on Peter such that Peter will freely avail himself of them. Consequently, the grace is efficacious not only because of Peter's acceptance of it but also because of God's antecedent decision to give

whatever "congruous" grace is needed to ensure that Peter will freely accept it (*De concursu, motione et auxilio Dei* in Suárez 1856, Volume 11).

Concurrentism

Suárez's more general model of divine and creaturely agency has God directly involved in all happenings in the world, whether miraculous or perfectly mundane, such as a rock warming in the sun. In all cases, a creaturely cause has insufficient power to bring about the effect by itself. Hence, God must concur with the creaturely cause in order to bring about the effect.

Concurrentism goes beyond requiring God constantly to conserve creatures in being (see CREATION AND CONSERVATION), something scholastic theologians generally agreed to be necessary for creatures' continued existence. Suárez accepts the need for conservation but adds that God must also be an immediate agent of every action (2002). Suárez devotes considerable resources to showing how this can be without leaving God responsible for sinful actions (Freddoso 2001).

On the other side, Suárez insists that God is not the sole agent in the world. He marshals a battery of arguments against occasionalism (see MALEBRANCHE, NICOLAS) to show that creatures also exercise genuine causal powers, even if not sufficient to bring about effects by themselves (1994, 37–50).

Suárez thinks the concurrentist model best manifests God's perfection. There is more glory in creating things that themselves have genuine powers than in creating powerless things. On the other hand, creating beings with powers sufficient to act without God's help would begin to infringe on God's SOVEREIGNTY. Concurrentism charts a course between those pitfalls.

The cosmological argument for God's existence

Suárez's central point in the twenty-eighth of his *Metaphysical Disputations* is that the best primary division of being is into infinite and finite being. Suárez (2004) notes that the arguments of this disputation already go a long way towards showing the existence of God, especially since he thinks an infinite being would also be an uncreated being. Nevertheless, he devotes the entire subsequent disputation to proving by natural reason alone that God exists.

Suárez rejects both the ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT and the COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT from motion. Suárez thinks the status of the Aristotelian physical principle that whatever is moved is moved by another is belied by our own free actions. Hence, he concludes that the physical cosmological argument relies on a false premise. Instead, he proposes a "metaphysical" version of the cosmological argument that relies on the premise that every being either is made by something else or is not, argues that there cannot be an infinite regress of created beings, and so concludes that there must be an uncreated being.

Well before Hume's (see HUME, DAVID) famous criticisms, Suárez recognizes that the cosmological argument is insufficient to show that there is one uncreated being

and that that being has the attributes usually attributed to God (Cantens 2012). Suárez thinks further arguments can be enlisted, however. For example, he marshals TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS to show that the order and beauty of the world show that the world was created by one uncreated being rather than by several. He considers a range of rebuttals, but argues that most of them fail, though he concedes that the argument he is making fails to show that there are not other worlds with other creators.

For the final stage, he enlists what he calls an a priori argument. Once an a posteriori demonstration of one divine attribute is in place, then a priori arguments can demonstrate further attributes. In the present case, Suárez makes a complex set of arguments to show that there can be only one uncreated being from an uncreated being's necessary existence and aseity (see NECESSARY BEING).

Suárez is modest about the force of his arguments for God's existence, but thinks they will have at least some persuasive force for open-minded readers.

Incarnation

An area on which Suárez wrote extensively but has received virtually no attention from contemporary philosophers of religion is the INCARNATION. *De Incarnatione* consists of 25 disputations, each on a different topic, and so covers far too much ground to be summarized here. But two topics may be briefly surveyed.

Suárez does not think that it can be shown by natural reason alone that the incarnation happened. This is especially so since, on Suárez's view, Christ's taking on human form and redeeming humanity were entirely free works. The incarnation is, he thinks, fitting (*conveniens*) both to God and to human nature before and after the Fall. He even says that the incarnation is *convenientissimum* to all the rest of creation. Such claims along with the assumption that God always does what is best might lead one to conclude that the incarnation was necessary and that it could reasonably be inferred without appeal to divine revelation. Suárez, however, explicitly rejects that God necessarily, or even in fact, always does what is best for creation. God could, for example, simply have left humanity unredeemed and facing eternal punishment (see HELL), since God's happiness in no way depends on or is affected by humanity's redemption. To say that God must do what is best is to fall into Wycliffean error (see WYCLIF, JOHN). So, although the incarnation is a most fitting manifestation of God's goodness, God could have refrained from willing it. Unsurprisingly, Suárez also does not think the incarnation's impossibility can be demonstrated. One might slide from there to thinking that the incarnation is possible. Suárez, however, argues that its possibility also cannot be demonstrated by natural reason. Rather, it is a mystery "*excelsum et admirabile*" (1856–1878, 17:38–55).

One of the places where Suárez parts company with Aquinas concerns God's motivation for the incarnation. Suárez denies that the incarnation depends on humanity's fall, since he thinks that God's primary motivation for the incarnation is its appropriateness for communicating and manifesting divine goodness. Attributing prior and posterior volitions to God is a delicate matter – Suárez expends considerable

effort in a previous section discussing how doing so might make sense – but Suárez argues that God willed and predestined the incarnation prior to permitting sin. The secondary motivation of redeeming human beings from sin depends on having permitted sin. Thus, willing that the incarnated Christ redeem humanity is posterior to permitting sin and foreseeing it through middle knowledge. An interesting wrinkle in this is that Suárez thinks that God did not will Christ to be mortal and capable of suffering in the prior volition, since mortality and passibility are not essential for the primary motivation of communicating goodness (1856–1878, 17:216–233).

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, Suárez's greatness comes from his judicious and comprehensive presentation of the arguments for and against the full range of positions on any given question, a quality impossible to convey in an encyclopedia entry. That quality does help explain why Suárez's writing served as one of the key conduits through which medieval philosophy influenced canonical early modern philosophy. Descartes (see DESCARTES, RENÉ), Leibniz (see LEIBNIZ, GOTTFRIED WILHELM), and Wolff, for example, learned scholasticism at least in part by reading Suárez's work. Whether borrowing from or reacting against, the scholasticism in view often comes via Suárez. Suárez's most extensive influence, however, is found among subsequent generations of scholastics, both Catholic and Protestant, where his influence is pervasive and difficult to overestimate.

***See also*:** COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT; INCARNATION; MALEBRANCHE, NICOLAS; MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY, CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION

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