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A Study of Being as the Proper Object of Suarez' Metaphysics

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A STUDY OF BEING AS THE PROPER OBJECT
OF SUAREZ' METAPHYSICS

by

Reverend Francis J. Litton

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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LIFE

Father Francis J. Litton was born in Glenagery, Co. Dublin, Ireland, August 7, 1918.

He received his secondary education at the Catholic University School, Dublin and was graduated in June, 1935.

In September, 1935 he joined the Society of Saint Columban and studied Philosophy and the Sacred Sciences at Saint Columban's College, Galway. He was ordained to the priesthood at Saint Columban's College, Navan, December 21, 1941 and there continued his studies until June, 1942.

Unable to leave Ireland for the foreign missions during the war years he received a temporary appointment as an assistant in the diocese of Meath. Later he worked as an assistant for a number of years in the diocese of Galway.

He came to the United States in February, 1950 and began his graduate studies at Loyola University in July of the same year.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The fundamental problem of Philosophy may be stated, Father Renard says, in the antimony of "the one and the many."¹ In seeking the fundamental explanation of all things through their ultimate causes the human mind instinctively looks for unity or for a unifying principle in the great variety and multiplicity of things which make up the sum total of reality. It is the nature of the mind to universalize, to look for unity amidst the changes and differences in the things which are immediately obvious and present to the senses. The early Greek thinkers sought this unity on what may be called the Cosmological level. They looked for the unifying principle of all material things. As Father Copleston says, "Ionian philosophy or cosmology is therefore mainly an attempt to decide what this primitive element or Urstoff of all things is, . . ."² Thus Thales found it in water; Anaximenes and Diogenes thought it was air, while Hippasus of Metapontium and Heraclitus of Ephesus said that it was fire.³ Though these explanations may now seem crude, their value lies in the fact that they focused the attention

1 Henri Renard, S.J., The Philosophy of Being, Milwaukee, 1946, 17.

2 Frederick Copleston, S.J., A History of Philosophy, Westminster, 1946, Vol. 1, 20.

3 Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 1, 984a, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed., Richard McKeon, New York, 1941, 694.

of later philosophers upon the question of the "one and the many." Father Renard says that among these early Greek philosophers Parmenides seems to have been the first to realize that all things are intelligible and can be conceived of in so far as they are beings and that consequently all things are one in being. All things are one in at least this respect: they are.⁴ A quotation from Parmenides may not be out of place here. Parmenides argued:

It is necessary both to say and to think that being is; for it is possible that being is and it is impossible that not-being is. . . . There are many proofs that being is without beginning and in-destructable; it is universal, existing alone, immovable and without end; nor ever was it nor will it be since it now is all together, one and continuous. For what generating of it wilt thou seek out? From what did it grow and how? I will not permit thee to say or to think that it came from not-being; for it is impossible to think or say that not-being is. . . . being either is absolutely or is not, nor will the force of the argument permit that anything spring from being except being itself.⁵

This line of reasoning amounts to this: all things are one in being and outside being there is only non-being. But non-being cannot differentiate things for it is nothing. Thus Parmenides concluded that all being is one and that change and multiplicity are not real but only figments of the imagination. Though this theory of being is now regarded as fantastic, the great contribution to Philosophy made by Parmenides was that he resolved the problem of the "one and the many" into the question, "what is being?"

If Philosophy is that science "which undertakes to give the fundamental explanation of all things"⁶ the philosopher must sooner or later

⁴ Renard, The Philosophy of Being, 18 footnote.

⁵ Parmenides, in Philosophers speak for Themselves, T. V. Smith, Chicago, 1934, 15-16.

⁶ Louis De Rasynaker, Introduction to Philosophy, translated by Harry McNeill, New York City, 1948, 27.

face the question, "What is being?" This is the problem of first Philosophy or Metaphysics and since being is that which is most fundamental in all things and beyond which there is nothing, the answer which the philosopher gives to this question will be the basis of his whole understanding and explanation of "all things." The differences between Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Scotus, Suarez, Hegel, Bergson may all be traced back to the answers given by these philosophers to the question, "What is being?"

The Metaphysician, then, must study all things, that is to say, all reality, both the Creator and His creatures, all changing and becoming, all beings and all the modes of being: in short, everything that in any way is. This is the material object of his science. All these realities are studied by the Metaphysician from the point of view of what they have in common, that is, being. Thus he treats of being, not as this or that kind of being, but as it is being. This is the formal object of the science of Metaphysics of which Aristotle says

There is a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature. Now this is not the same as any of the so-called special sciences; for none of these others treats universally of being as being.⁷

Now if being is that which is most fundamental in things and which makes them intelligible and if it is the first thing known by the intellect, it may be objected, "Surely it is most obvious and self-evident what being is and hence there is no reason to study it by a special science." It is not proposed to deal directly with this objection here. The fact is, as the

7 Aristotle, Metaphysics, IV, 1003a.

history of Philosophy shows, that philosophers not only have disagreed about the problem of being but have held widely divergent views about it. The reason for this is that the first apprehension by the mind of being does not explain what being is. The nature of being is not immediately evident. Were it so, as Maritain says, the child, upon the dawn of reason, would be a metaphysician.⁸ The nature of being can be known only after a deep study of beings and different kinds of beings in so far as they are beings.

In showing how great is the difference between the first apprehension of being and the metaphysician's notion of it, Maritain distinguishes a number of varying notions of being.⁹ First there is the notion of being as it is the first thing known to the mind. Maritain calls it the "common sense" notion of being.¹⁰ This concept of being gives "infra-scientific and pre-scientific knowledge" of being, taking scientific knowledge to mean knowledge through causes. Because things are intelligible only in so far as they are beings this notion is the first in the awakening intellect. Thus known being is not conceived of formally as such but it is known implicitly in the material objects present to the senses. That is to say, the mind does not know being as such in such a way as to know what being is. Rather it knows this or that to be "a thing," "a something," "a being." Knowing being in this way, "we have not yet disengaged the properties

8 Jacques Maritain, A Preface to Metaphysics, New York, 1948.

9 Ibid., 29 and following.

10 Maritain, Preface, 29.

of being as the primordial source and focus of intelligible mystery, . . ."¹¹
 This notion is the most simple of notions for it cannot be resolved into more simple ideas: beyond being there is only non-being and non-being is not intelligible. It is "the poorest in intention as it is the widest in extension."¹² It is derived, as Maritain says, by an abstractio totalis, which he renders in English as an "extensive abstraction."¹³ This abstraction cannot give a notion of being as such. "By itself common sense cannot disengage this notion of being and envisage it in its distinctive mystery."¹⁴ By this kind of abstraction the mind merely sees this and that and everything that is as "things," "somethings," "beings." Van Steenberghen aptly describes this notion of being thus:

Being is the most primitive datum. It is par excellence the primum notum. It is impossible to analyze it or reduce it to anything more elementary. . . . Nothing is clearer or simpler or more evident than being, as apprehended in our first experience or act of consciousness.¹⁵

If the mind reflects upon this notion of being so as to make it clear and explicit, then,

Being is simply the most general and the most convenient of the classifications which we constantly employ and in which all the objects of our thought are arranged, the most comprehensive of them. It is merely a class.¹⁶

Being is thus known by "common sense" but in the vaguest possible way.

Another notion of being which Maritain considers is the logician's

11 Ibid., 31.

12 Peter Goffey, Ontology, New York, 1929, 33.

13 Maritain, Preface, 30.

14 Ibid., 30.

15 Fernand Van Steenberghen, Epistemology, translated by Martin J. Flynn, New York, 1949, 83.

16 Maritain, Preface, 32.

concept of being.¹⁷ The objects with which Logic is concerned are entia rationis, beings of reason which can only be in the mind. Such beings of reason are genus as such and species as such. It is as a being of reason that the logician considers being. The science of Logic is not concerned with the nature of being as such but with the concept of being as it is related to other concepts. It deals with being and with its analogical and transcendental character precisely as it is the predicate of a judgment. Hence being is here looked upon as a secunda intentio of the mind and in this way it cannot exist outside the mind. It is this, says Maritain, that gives Logic its specific character. Because Logic deals with beings of reason, Maritain calls the being of Logic "being divested of reality."¹⁸ Logic is not interested in being as it is in reality but in being in its "conceptual functions" and because of this the metaphysician, if he mistakes the being of Logic for the object of his science, will develop a "science of the void, of vacuity itself."¹⁹

The next notion of being which Maritain takes up is what he calls "Pseudo-Being."²⁰ What he deals with here is the false notions of being which have been developed by certain philosophers. One such idea springs from the mistake that being is a genus. If being is a genus then everything which distinguishes and determines particular beings will have to be eliminated

17 Ibid., 33.

18 Maritain, Preface, 33.

19 Ibid., 36.

20 Ibid., 36.

until eventually nothing is left. There remains a being which is indistinguishable from non-being. This, says Maritain, was the procedure of Hegel.²¹ Of Hegel's concept of being Gilson says:

This being which is completely void of all determinations, is thereby absolute emptiness. Whatever else could be ascribed to it, we should have to deny it. In other words, since it is neither this nor that nor any other thing it is nothing.²²

Another form of "Pseudo-Being" is found in the error of those who make thought the product of a priori mental forms. For all such philosophers, being is completely separated from reality and is but a form of thought. The real nature of being can never be known. This was the error of Kant and of Hamilton.²³ Yet a third kind of "Pseudo-Being" is evolved by those philosophers who confuse being with essence and exclude existence from the notion of being. The result of such a procedure is Platonism or Scotism.²⁴

There remains the true metaphysical concept of being. This is not the concept of being as known by "common sense"²⁵ nor is it the logician's concept nor the notion of any kind of "Pseudo-Being."²⁶ It is founded upon the bed rock of real things, real beings. This concept is grasped, according to Maritain, by a special intuition.²⁷

21 Ibid., 37.

22 Etienne Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, Toronto, 1949, 137.

23 Maritain, Preface, 37.

24 Ibid., 38.

25 Ibid., 27.

26 Ibid., 44.

27 Ibid., 45.

It is not necessary to examine here the psychological process of the knowing of being, whether it be grasped by an intuition or by some other means. Nor is it within the scope of this thesis to deal with what Maritain, as a Thomist, considers to be the nature of being. What is important, however, is to understand the function, as it were, of the metaphysician's notion of being. Its function is to give scientific knowledge of real being as such. The metaphysician, while in the highest realm of abstraction, must not withdraw his science from reality if it is to be of any value. He abstracts from matter and from individuation but not from reality. Matter is in itself unintelligible and Metaphysics deals with being which in itself is wholly intelligible. As has been said, this science treats of being as being and does not consider any kind of particular being as it is particular whether it be material or immaterial. As St. Thomas says:

. . . other sciences which are concerned with particular beings do indeed consider being since all the subjects of the sciences are beings, yet they do not consider being as it is being but as it is being of this kind . . .²⁸

This does not mean that Metaphysics does not explain the being of material things, but it considers them from the point of view of their being and not their materiality.

Now the metaphysical concept of being must be scientific, that is, it must give knowledge through causes. This concept must therefore be universal because science is not of the causes of particulars but of

28 St. Thomas Aquinas, In Metaphysicam Aristotelis Commentaria, ed., Fr. M. R. Cathala, Turin, 1926, IV, lect. I. (530).

universal causes. That the concept may be of universal causes it must be abstracted. But the concept of being cannot be abstracted in the same way as is a universal essence. In abstracting, say, "man" from Peter, that which individuates Peter is not considered. Being cannot be abstracted in this way because the differences of beings are themselves beings. All the differences between beings must be included in the abstraction of being. This cannot be done by abstraction strictly so called but can only be accomplished by an abstraction which includes all beings and their differences and apprehends them in a confused way. This is the opinion of all Scholastic Philosophers except those of the Scotistic School. They disagree, however, as to whether such an abstraction includes its inferiors actually or potentially. Thomists claim that it includes its inferiors actually.²⁹ Suarezians on the other hand contend that the notion of being abstracted in this way will include its inferiors only potentially, as will be seen later.

It should be clear that there are very great differences among the notions of being above described, and that the metaphysician who substitutes one for the other is doomed to failure. As Maritain says:

We must . . . distinguish carefully being which is the object of Metaphysics from being as it is grasped by common sense and studied by the natural sciences and from being as it is studied by logic. Failure to observe these distinctions has led many modern thinkers into very grave confusions.³⁰

29 Renard, Philosophy of Being, 89.

30 Maritain, A Preface, 27.

Neither the "common sense" notion of being nor the being of Logic nor "Pseudo-Being" can tell just what being is. Professor Gilson points out that the fact that being is the "principle of knowledge" does not mean that all scientific knowledge can be deduced from the notion of being as it is first known by the intellect. He says:

To describe being as "the principle of knowledge," does not mean that all subsequent knowledge can be analytically deduced from it, but rather that being is the first knowledge, through which all subsequent knowledge can be progressively acquired. . . . from the intuition that something is, the knowledge of what it is, beyond the fact that it is something, cannot possibly be deduced . . .³¹

The first notion of being is used in reasoning to the proper metaphysical concept of being but it is not that concept. To quote Gilson again:

. . . all the failures of metaphysics should be traced to the fact, that the first principle of human knowledge has been either overlooked or misused by the metaphysicians.³²

Similarly, the being of logic, if analyzed cannot reveal the nature of being. All that such an examination can show is the nature of being in the conceptual order, the nature of an ens rationis. The true metaphysical concept of being cannot be got by examining thoughts but only by investigating real things.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the metaphysical notion of being of Francis Suarez, S.J. and the way in which he derives it, by a careful and more extensive investigation of the writings of Suarez than is usually made in the ordinary text books or even in such important works as those of Father Descogs, S.J. In other words, the work is concerned with the meaning which Suarez attaches to "being as such" as it is the proper object of

31 Gilson, The Unity of Philosophical Experience, New York, 1947, 313.

32 Ibid., 316.

the science of Metaphysics. Because of the special position of Suarez as a professed Commentator of St. Thomas Aquinas, it will be both useful and necessary to examine closely the texts from St. Thomas which Suarez quotes in support of his arguments. In view of what has been said about the concept of being which Suarez develops is the key to his whole philosophy.

The importance of Suarez in both philosophy and theology can scarcely be underestimated. According to some, his influence has reached out even beyond Catholic circles. Thus Father Hugon, O.P. writes:

The incontestable merits of his (Suarez) thoroughness and erudition explain his influence on Scholastic philosophers and theologians, especially in the Society of Jesus and even on Descartes, Leibnitz and Berkeley.³³

Whether this be true or not is a question for the historian of philosophy to decide. There can be no doubt, however, about the significance of Suarez in Catholic thought. Were proof of this sought it would surely be found in the many and vigorous debates between Suarezian and Thomistic philosophers and theologians.

As often heard criticism of Suarez is that he is an eclectic.³⁴ To the casual reader it might seem that he selects from the teachings of other authors, so many does he quote at such great length. Yet it is certain that the Disputationes Metaphysicas of Suarez are by no means the product of a pick-and-choose method of formulating a system of philosophy. Were it true to

³³ Fr. Edouard Hugon, O.P., Book review, Revue Thomiste, Saint Maximin, 1922, Vol. XXVII, 84.

³⁴ For example, see: Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Reality, St. Louis, 1950, 45.

say that the philosophy of Suarez is a collection of elements drawn from other systems of thought, it would be hard to understand how it has become the foundation of one of the major schools of scholasticism. As De Raeymaker says "Suarez constructs an original and strongly built synthesis."³⁵ This is precisely what the Disputationes Metaphysicae are, for they form a body of ordered and reasoned treatises, the one following of logical necessity from the other.

It will be necessary in this thesis to examine the texts from St. Thomas which Suarez quotes because of the special relation of Suarez to Aquinas. Suarez in the foreword to his Disputationes claims that the work is a commentary upon St. Thomas.³⁶ He believed that he was expounding a true and co-ordinated explanation of the teaching of St. Thomas on metaphysical questions. Moreover history has accorded him the title of "Faithful Commentator of the Angelic Doctor."³⁷ Today there is scarcely anyone who would maintain that Suarez is a commentator of St. Thomas in the ordinary accepted meaning of the word. Of the Disputationes, De Wulf writes,

It is no commentary but an original treatise on Being, its categories and causes, a work in which all who would understand Scholastic Metaphysics will find a masterly presentation of the problems to be solved and of the author's solutions.³⁸

35 De Raeymaker, Introduction to Philosophy, 122.

36 Francis Suarez, S.J., Disputationes Metaphysicae, ed., Carolus Berton, Paris, 1861, Vol. XXV, "Ad Lectores."

37 Maurice De Wulf, History of Medieval Philosophy, translated by Dr. Peter Coffey, New York, 1909, 494.

38 Ibid., 494.

The wide divergence between the basic principles of Thomism and Suarezian philosophy has been demonstrated by Father Fahy, C.S.Sp., writing in the Irish Ecclesiastical Record where he compares "the Twenty Four Theses of Thomism" with twenty four similar theses taken from the writings of Suarez.³⁹ Father Fahy contends that Suarez disagrees with St. Thomas in twenty three of these fundamental propositions. In seeking to explain this divergence, Fr. Fahy attributes to Suarez the fault of "the philosophers of old" who were "not able to rise above their imagination."⁴⁰ He says:

. . . in his (Suarez) case the Imagination encroached upon the Intelligence in the grasping of Being. Though Suarez accepted, as did St. Thomas, the principle that "the object of the intelligence is Being" yet because he tries to represent, in too material a fashion, Being and Immaterial reality, he concluded that the metaphysical solutions of St. Thomas could not be conceived.⁴¹

This explanation is rather naive and, absolutely speaking, can neither be proved nor disproved. It appears to the present writer that the differences between Suarez and St. Thomas are rooted in the different points of departure of these philosophers in their study of being as such. Hence the need to inquire into whence Suarez derives his metaphysical concept of being.

³⁹ Denis Fahy, C.S.Sp., "The Metaphysics of Suarez," The Irish Ecclesiastical Record, Dublin, 1924, Vol. XXIII, 389-415. The "Twenty Four Theses" were approved by the S. Cong. of Studies as containing the principles and major doctrines of St. Thomas. This decision of the Congregation was confirmed by Pope Benedict XV and published March 7th, 1916.

⁴⁰ St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, Ia, Q. 75, art. 1.

⁴¹ Fahy, "The Metaphysics of Suarez," Irish Ecol. Record, 1924, 394.

CHAPTER II

THE POINT OF DEPARTURE OF SUAREZIAN METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics or Wisdom as it is sometimes called, says Suarez, deals with the first causes of all things and with all beings.⁴² In the first Disputatio Metaphysica he sets out to determine precisely in what way this science deals with all things or in other words what is the "adequate object" of Metaphysics. The science of all things, he says cannot confine itself to any particular being or kind of beings but must explain all beings, God and His creatures, all substances both material and immaterial and also that kind of being which is called accident. He asserts that:

. . . the adequate object of this science ought to extend to (comprehenders) God and other immaterial substances, but not only to these. It should also extend not only to substances but also to real accidents . . . but an object of this kind can be none other than being as such. Therefore this is the adequate object (of Metaphysics)⁴³.

Metaphysics does not deal with the particular aspects of all these things as such but it abstracts from them.⁴⁴ It considers things in the highest degree of abstraction.

42 Suarez, Disput. Metaph. Disput. I, section 1, parag. 1.

43 Ibid., I, 1, 26.

44 Ibid., I, 1, 13.

Metaphysics is said to abstract from sensible and intelligible matter, and not only according to reason but also according to being because the aspects of being which it considers are found in reality without matter; and so in its proper and objective concept it does not include matter.⁴⁵

What Suarez means here is that Metaphysics does not consider matter, either sensible or intelligible, as such. Some beings are without matter and Metaphysics is concerned with being as it is common to material and immaterial things. This abstraction gives Metaphysics its unity for considered only in this way can all things be one. It also defines the limits of Metaphysics which deals with all that is abstracted thus and with nothing else.⁴⁶ Thus in treating of its adequate object, Metaphysics must extend to such aspects of it as substance as such, accident as such, cause as such.⁴⁷

Having established that the proper object of Metaphysics is being as such, "it is first necessary," says Suarez, "to expound the proper and precise nature" of this object.⁴⁸ This exposition is the subject of the second Disputation. Suarez notes in the introduction to this Disputation that what being is, is so evident that it needs no explanation and that the

⁴⁵ Suarez, Disput. Metaph. I, 11, 13, which in the Latin reads as follows: *Metaphysica vero dicitur abstrahere a materia sensibili et intelligibili, et non solum secundum rationem, sed etiam secundum esse, quia rationes entis, quas considerat, in re ipsa inveniuntur sine materia; et ideo in proprio et objective conceptu suo per se non includit materiam.*

⁴⁶ Ibid., I, 11, 13.

⁴⁷ Ibid., I, 11, 14, 17.

⁴⁸ Ibid., II, Introduction.

question here is what is being as such.⁴⁹ Thus Suarez seems to distinguish between a "common sense" notion of being and a metaphysical notion of it. His method of answering the question which he proposes is to take the notion of being which comes to mind when the word "being" is heard, the notion of being which is first known to the intellect and subject it to a careful analysis. This introspective scrutiny will reveal the nature of being as such.⁵⁰ This process is described by Fr. Descocs, S.J., who is probably the most outstanding modern Suarezian, as a "reflection by the intellect."⁵¹ The first concept of being is, he says, "common" (vulgaris) and confused and by it being is not known as transcendental or as analogous. The reflection by the intellect being instituted, being is apprehended as analogous and transcendental. The reflection involves analysis and comparison and by this means the true nature or metaphysical notion of being is brought to light.⁵² This seems to be the point of departure in Suarezian Metaphysics.

In making his investigation Suarez first distinguishes between the formal concept and the objective concept. In this he was, according to

⁴⁹ Suarez, Disput. Metaph. II, Introduction. "In presente ergo disputatione explicanda nobis est questio, quid sit ens in quantum ens; nam, quod ens sit, ita per se notum est, ut nulla declaratione indigeat.

⁵⁰ Ibid., II, 1, 1.

⁵¹ Pedro Descocs, S.J., Institutiones Metaphysicas Generalis, Paris, 1925, Vol. 1, 133.

⁵² Ibid., Vol. 1, 133.

Fr. Mahieu, following the usage of contemporary Scholastics,⁵³ The distinction is of great importance in understanding the object of Suarezian Metaphysics. The formal concept is the subjective idea in the mind. It is that mental representation by which and through which the object is known. Suarez describes it as:

the very act or, what is the same thing, the word by which the intellect conceives some thing or common nature. It is called a concept because it is as it were the offspring of the mind. It is named formal because it is the ultimate form of the mind or because it formally represents the known thing to the mind or because it is the true intrinsic and formal terminus of mental conception. . . .⁵⁴

The objective concept is that reality which immediately corresponds to the formal concept in the thing known. Suarez points out that it is not a concept really but is called a concept by "extrinsic denomination."⁵⁵

The objective concept is that thing or nature (ratio) which is properly and immediately known or represented by the formal concept It is called objective because it is the object of the matter with which the formal concept is concerned It is called by some the intencio intellecta and by others the ratio objectiva.⁵⁶

To give an example, when the mind apprehends Peter as a man, that reality in Peter which corresponds to the idea "man" is the objective concept. It does not include that reality in Peter which makes him "this man" or "this kind of

⁵³ L'Abbe Leon Mahieu, Francisco Suarez, Sa Philosophie et les Rapports qu' elle a avec sa Theologie, Paris, 1921, 79.

^{54, 55, 56} Suarez, Disput. Metaph, II, 1, 1. Descocq uses different terminology. For him the formal or subjective concept as explained above is the "objective concept." What Suarez calls the objective concept, Descocq names the "formal object" of. Descocq, Institutiones, Vol. 1, 117.

man." Harper, who claims to be a Suarezian, defines the objective concept as "that reality in the object which is covered by our present thought."⁵⁷ While the objective concept immediately corresponds to the formal concept, formally considered these two may differ in several ways:

The formal concept is always a true and positive thing and in creatures is a quality inhering in the mind but the objective concept is not always true and positive. We can conceive sometimes privations and other things which are called beings of reason because they have being objectively only in the intellect. Again the formal concept is always a singular and individual thing because it is a thing produced by the intellect and inhering in it. The objective concept can sometimes be a singular and individual thing as it is the object of knowledge (quatenus menti obijci potest) and is conceived by a formal act, but often it is a universal or confused and common thing, for example, "man" "substance," and such like.⁵⁸

The point of the last difference between the formal and objective concepts is found in Suarez' theory of knowledge. According to him, the intellect abstracts the singular immediately. The singular form is known as universal only after a reflection by the mind which sees that the singular form may be applied to many.⁵⁹ It is as such a "universal or confused and common thing" that Suarez studies being. Metaphysics deals with the objective concept of being as such:

but because (the explanation of being as such) is very difficult and depends much upon our mode of conceiving (multumque pendens ex conceptione nostra) we shall being with the formal concept which, it seems to us, can be better known.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Thomas Harper, S.J., The Metaphysics of the School, New York, 1940, Vol. 1, 579.

⁵⁸ Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, 1, 1.

⁵⁹ Renard, Philosophy of Being, 86.

⁶⁰ Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, 1, 1.

Suarez proceeds to examine the formal concept of being because it corresponds exactly to the object of cognition and represents reality as it is. In this way, whatever is found in the formal concept will be verified in the objective concept. The formal concept is a true and adequate representation of the objective concept because the form which informs the mind is the form of the object known.

Now experience shows, contends Suarez, that the formal concept is in itself and according to its content separate and distinct from all other formal concepts of all other things.

It must be stated that the proper and adequate formal concept of being as such is one, prescinded in reality and by reason from other formal concepts of other things and objects.⁶¹

Hence the concept of being does not immediately or actually contain its inferiors but only potentially, being abstracted from them.

The concept of being has in itself an absolute unity and not merely a unity in a qualified sense. Descoqs describes this unity as "simple but imperfect."⁶² He rejects the unity which he says Cajetan ascribes to the concept of being. According to Cajetan, says Descoqs:

The concept of being is not simply one but is one only in a qualified sense (secundum quid); because this concept . . . does not prescind properly and perfectly from its inferiors so that of itself it always signifies at least implicitly its relations to its inferiors of which it is predicated and so it does not prescind from the multiple diversity of the inferiors

61 Ibid., II, 1, 9.

62 Descoqs, Institutiones, Vol. 1, 143.

but actually and immediately contains the differences according to a proportion . . . not explicitly but implicitly and in a confused way.⁶³

The unity of the concept is according to Descoqs imperfect because, although it is in se one, it is verified in its inferiors in different ways.⁶⁴

Suarez, himself, in explaining how the formal concept is one says:

This formal concept in itself is said to be prescinded from other concepts . . . because in reality it is really distinct from the concept of substance as such, of accident, of quality and such like things. . . . As the concept of being as such prescinds in representing from the proper nature of substance as such, of accident and of all other things, it is necessary that in itself it be really abstracted and distinct from the proper concepts of such entities and natures as they are such . . .⁶⁵

Likewise the ratio formalis of the concept of being formally considered is also one.

This is clear, in the first place because as this concept is in itself most simple objectively so also is it formally. Therefore in itself it has one, simple, formal and adequate note (ratio) according to which it is prescinded from all other formal concepts. Secondly, just as our mind by abstracting those things which are in reality not distinct, in itself really distinguishes its formal concepts, so conversely by confusing and joining together those things which are in reality distinct, in so far as they are alike, it unifies its concept making it one really and according to its ratio formalis. In this way beings are conceived of in this formal concept of being . . . The mind takes all things only in this respect that they are alike in being (in ratione essendi) and as (they are) such it forms one image by a single formal representation representing that which is. This image is the formal concept.⁶⁶

63 Descoqs, Institutiones, Vol. 1, 155.

64 Ibid., Vol. 1, 160.

65 Suarez, Disput. Metaph. II, 1, 10.

66 Suarez, Disput. Metaph. II, 1, 11.

As has been said, Suarez demonstrates or proves the unity and simplicity of the concept of being by an analysis of the concept.

When the word "being" is heard it is our experience that our mind is not distracted nor divided by several concepts but rather is centered on one, just as when it conceives man, animal and the like.⁶⁷

A second proof is drawn from the word "being" itself:

because we express our formal concepts by words, but the word "being" is not only one materially, it also has one signification . . . in virtue of which it does not immediately signify any nature according to its determined and proper entity (ratio) by which it is distinguished from others. Hence it neither signifies them as they are many nor as they differ among themselves but rather as they agree among themselves and are alike. This therefore is a sign that even in the mind there is corresponding to this word one formal concept by which is immediately and adequately conceived that which is signified by this word ("being").⁶⁸

Thirdly, Suarez argues to the unity of the concept of being from the concept of existence,

for it seems per se evident that there is one formal concept of existence as such because as often as we speak of existence in this way and talk of it as one act we do not really form several concepts but one. Therefore the formal concept of existence as such is one because as the thing abstracted is conceived of as one so the concrete thing as such is conceived to be precisely constituted (sicut concipitur abstractum per modum unius, ita et concretum ut sic precise constitutum). Similarly there corresponds to being as such one formal concept for being is either that which exists or that which has an aptitude for existence and in either case its concept has the same note of unity.⁶⁹

Suarez does not here mean that the objective concept has a numerical or real unity which corresponds to the unity of the formal concept. As will be shown

67, 68 Ibid., II, 1, 9.

69 Suarez, Disput. Metaphy., II, 1, 9.

later the unity of the objective concept is a formal and fundamental unity. Besides this note of unity which Suarez finds in the formal concept of being there is also the note of absolute simplicity which also has its counterpart in the objective concept.

Hence also the concept of being is wont to be called not only one but also most simple so that other things are resolved into it. By other concepts we conceive of such and such a being but by this concept we prescind from all composition and determination. Hence also this concept is wont to be said to be of itself the first formed by man because, other things being equal, it can be conceived more easily of anything whatever. All this is shown by St. Thomas in De Veritate, Q. 1, art. 1. and Q. 21, art. 1.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ibid., II, 1, 9. The Passage from De Veritate, Q. 1, art. 1. to which Suarez refers is as follows: In matters which are open to proof the demonstration must lead back to some principles which are known to the intellect by themselves. So too, when we investigate what anything is. Otherwise in both cases we should go on ad infinitum and thus all science and knowledge would perish.

Now that which the intellect first conceives, as what is best known, and to which it reduces all conceptions, is being, as Avicenna says in the beginning of his Metaphysics. Whence it is necessary that all other conceptions of the intellect be obtained by adding to being. But nothing can be added to being which is, as it were, of an extraneous nature, after the manner in which a difference is added to a genus or an accident to a subject because any nature whatsoever is essentially a being. Whence also the Philosopher proves in III Metaphysics that being cannot be a genus, but certain things are said to be additions to being in the sense that they express a manner of being which is not expressed by the name of being itself. . . . The negation which attaches to all beings, absolutely, is indivision, and this is expressed by the term "one"; for "one" means nothing else but undivided being. . . .

In Q. 21, art. 1. St. Thomas speaks of being as: that which first is thought of by the mind (id quod primo cadit in conceptione mentis) and as "that which is the first thought of the intellect" (quod est prima conceptio intellectus). Also in his reply to the first objection St. Thomas says: The essence of a thing itself, absolutely considered, is sufficient for this that through it something may be called a being, but it is not sufficient for this that through it something may be called good.

As has been said the formal concept has a counterpart in reality which is the objective concept and the notes found in the formal concept will be verified in the object concept. Thus as the idea of being is one, so also is being as such, and as the concept is most simple because it cannot be divided or broken down to any more fundamental ideas, so the reality which is being as such is most simple and cannot be composed of things more simple than itself.

CHAPTER III

THE OBJECTIVE CONCEPT OF BEING

As has been said, Suarez examines the formal concept of being in order that he may have a clear understanding of the objective concept. The formal concept has been shown to be really and formally one. This unity must be founded in reality in the objective concept. Suarez proceeds to investigate the unity of the objective concept. He insists that this unity is an absolute unity and that the concept of being is not merely one in a qualified sense. He says:

I assert that all that we have said about the unity of the concept of being is by far more clear and certain than that being is analogous and that therefore the unity of the concept is not to be denied in defining analogy . . .⁷¹

His reason for this statement is that:

to the one formal concept one objective concept necessarily corresponds; but it has been shown that there is one formal concept of being; therefore there must of necessity be one objective concept.⁷²

In explaining the unity of the objective concept, Suarez, as Marc says, takes a middle course between the Thomists and the Scotists.⁷³ According to Suarez,

71 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, 11, 36.

72 Ibid., II, 11, 3.

73 Andre Marc, S.J., "L'idee de l'Être chez St. Thomas et dans la Scholastique Posterieure", Archives de Philosophie, Paris, Vol. X, 1923, 17.

the Thomists, amongst whom are Cajetan and Ferrara, deny the unity of being.⁷⁴ Scotus on the other hand holds that the concept of being is perfectly one and is arrived at by a perfect abstraction from its inferiors.⁷⁵ The theory which Suarez develops is as it were a via media between the Thomists and Scotus.⁷⁶ It is an attempt to save the multiplicity and the unity of being without holding that being is universal (Scotus) and at the same time avoiding the emphasis upon the diversity of being which is found in the Thomist position. Briefly the Suarezian position amounts to this: the objective concept considered as distinct from others is one and is without diversity; but considered as it is in reality it is multiple and without unity. Suarez explains the unity of the objective concept thus:

. . . to the formal concept of being there corresponds one, adequate and immediate objective concept which does not expressly signify either substance or accident, God or creature, but all these as one, namely, as they are in some way alike among themselves and agree in being (essendo) . . . St. Thomas very much favors this opinion in the places above quoted from De Veritate, Q. 1, art. 1, and Q. 21, art. 1. in that he says the concept of being is most simple and the first of all and is determined to substance, quantity, etc., by a certain determination and expression of such and such a mode of being. This is necessarily a question of the objective concept, for the formal concept is neither determined nor contracted. Hence St. Thomas clearly says in Ia. Q. 5, art. 3, ad 1. "Substance, quantity and quality contract being by applying being to some quiddity or nature." But contraction cannot be understood without some unity, and agreement in the objective concept.⁷⁷

74 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, 11, 4.

75 Ibid., II, 11, 5.

76 Marc, Archives de Philosophie, Vol. X, 17.

77 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, 11, 8.

Being as such, then, does not include substance as such or accident as such not any of its inferiors as they are such beings but it includes them only from the point of view of their all agreeing in that they are beings. In this way it does not contain its inferiors actually as they are such but only potentially. Being is not abstracted from the different modes of being nor from different natures in such a way as to leave out the differences. These latter are beings but they are here considered precisely as agreeing with one another in that they are.

Suarez goes on to describe the abstraction by which the objective concept is derived. The mind, in abstracting, does not require a real distinction in things as a basis for its abstraction. It is not necessary there be a real distinction, say, between a being and its mode or between a specific nature and its mode of being. This is why, says Suarez, we can abstract God's Will from His Intellect or His Nature from His Substance.

Thus therefore the intellect abstracts and prescindis some thing from something as a common thing from a particular, not on account of a distinction or precision which existed beforehand in the thing but because of its imperfect, confused or inadequate mode of conceiving. In the object which it considers it does not comprehend all that is in it as the object exists in reality but (it comprehends it) only according to some likeness or similarity which many things have among themselves, which things are considered under one aspect.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, 11, 16. It may be noted here that Suarez does not distinguish between the term "abstractio" and the term "praescisio" but uses them indiscriminately. He speaks, however, of "abstractio praescisiva" (abstraction in Thomist terminology) and of "abstractio primitiva vel negativa" (precision in Thomist terminology) vide, II, IV, 11. Cf. Descogs, Institutiones, Vol. 1, 118, and Marc, Archives de Philosophie, Vol. X, 20, footnotes.

Thus it can be seen that the concept of being is abstracted in the same way as any other objective concept. Take, for example, the objective concept "man." This is abstracted by reason from individuals but in reality it is not something separate from that totality which is Peter or Paul. The objective concept is that which corresponds to the formal concept which does not represent "man" according to every mode by which man exists in reality, i.e. as "man" is in individuals, but "according" to the similarity which many men have who are conceived of as one in that respect."⁷⁹ Nor may it be objected that the case of being is different because being is in all things while the various modes of being or the different specific natures are not in all things. The nature of substance, for example, as a universal, is found to be "intimately" in all individual substances. It is the same in the case of being which is abstracted from all individuals but is found to be in all of them and in all their modes. As has been said, abstraction need not always be founded upon a real distinction in things but may rest solely upon such a manner of conceiving a thing under a particular aspect.⁸⁰

In view of the nature of the abstraction by which the objective concept is arrived at, it should be easily understood why the concept does not immediately contain its inferiors.

79 Ibid., II, 11, 16.

80 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, 11, 19.

. . . By the formal concept of being, God, Substance, Accident are not represented according to the way in which they are in reality nor as they differ among themselves but only as they are in some way similar and alike. Therefore that which immediately and adequately corresponds to this formal concept is according to reason abstracted from the proper concept of substance and accident. . . . This precision of reason consists solely in a distinction of reason in relation to the formal concepts (in ordine ad conceptus formales).⁸¹

It also follows that the objective concept need not be in reality as formally distinct from its modes and in such a way that they are not beings. That being was formally distinct from its modes and that they did not contain the ratio entis was the opinion of Scotus.⁸² But, "the objective concept as it exists in reality is not something really distinct and prescinded from the inferiors in which it exists."⁸³ That this is so is proved from the following considerations. In the first place, Substance as a contractive mode of being is either intrinsically included in being or it is not. If it is not included it is then nothing and cannot determine being, it cannot add anything to being nor can it effect a distinction between being and substance. If, on the other hand it is included in being it is either distinct from being or it is not. If it is distinct there must be yet another mode by which it is distinguished and this mode must be either a being or not a being and so on ad infinitum.⁸⁴ Secondly, the concept of being is abstracted not only from creatures but also from God. But in God

81 Ibid., II, 11, 17.

82 Ibid., II, 111, 6.

83 Ibid., II, 111, 7.

84 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, 111, 9.

the objective concept of being as it is in Him cannot be really distinct from His mode of being for He is absolutely simple. Therefore the concept of being is not really distinct in creatures.⁸⁵ Finally the fact that we can mentally distinguish different aspects of things and as it were distinguish parts in them mentally is no proof that these things are in reality composed of distinct parts.⁸⁶

Lastly, it may be concluded from the nature of this abstraction in what way the objective concept of being is one.

The unity of the objective concept does not consist in a real and numerical unity but in a formal and fundamental unity which is nothing other than the aforesaid agreement and similarity.⁸⁷

The objective concept has formal unity which is given to it by the mind. As it exists in things it is diverse but in these things there is a basis or fundamentum for the unity which the mind perceives. The basis is the similarity or agreement which diverse beings have in being. "That agreement is founded in the act of being (in actu essendi)."⁸⁸

The objective concept of being as such is the proper object of Metaphysics for Suarez. It is seen, therefore, that what Suarez studies in this science is an abstraction which does not and cannot exist in reality as it is in itself and which is not immediately nor actually verified in its inferiors. Metaphysics deals with being as it is one but in reality being

85 Ibid., II, III, 10.

86 Ibid., II, III, 11.

87 Ibid., II, II, 11.

88 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, II, 11.

is diverse. Suarez has unity in the logical order and diversity in the ontological order. This he well realizes. In answer to the question, how can one and the same entity both agree with and differ from others through one and the same most simple ratio, he says that if the distinction and the similarity are in different orders there is no repugnance in their being founded upon one and the same thing.⁸⁹ He continues,

. . . The distinction is real, but the agreement is according to reason only and so it is not repugnant that two simple things which in fact are really distinct may have in reason a unity founded upon a real similarity or agreement which they have among themselves.⁹⁰

The unity of being is, therefore, in the conceptual order. It is founded upon the likeness or similarity of the "actus essendi" of different things. In this explanation of Suarez it is difficult to see how one does not logically conclude with the univocity of being.

89, 90 Ibid., II, 111, 16.

CHAPTER IV

BEING AS SUCH

Having established that there is one objective concept of being as such, Suarez states:

It must be declared briefly in what consists its formal and essential nature (ratio), at least by a description or explanation of terms, because since its nature is most abstract and most simple it cannot properly be defined.⁹¹

To elucidate the nature of being as such Suarez introduces a distinction between "being" used as a noun and "being" used as a participle of the verb "to be."

Being therefore . . . is sometimes taken as the participle of the verb "I am" and as such it signifies the act of being (actum essendi) and is the same as an actually existing thing (idem quod existens actu). Sometimes it is taken as a noun formally signifying the essence of that which has or can have existence (esse) and it can be said to signify being itself (ipsum esse) not as actually exercised but in potency or aptitude just as living as a participle signifies actual use of life but as a noun it signifies only that which has a nature which can be the principle of vital operation.⁹²

As a verb, then being signifies the act of existing and as a noun it signifies not only that which has existence but also that which can have it. As

⁹¹ Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, IV, 1.

⁹² Ibid., II, IV, 3.

Suarez says: .

it is clear from common usage that being when taken as meaning real being . . . is not only attributed to existing things but also to real natures considered in themselves whether they exist or not.⁹³

It is being looked upon in this way which is the object of Metaphysics.⁹⁴

The distinction between being as a noun and being as a participle is insinuated by St. Thomas in Quodlib., II, art. 3. In this passage St. Thomas says, "this noun (nomen) being (ens) as it means a thing to which belongs existence (esse) of this kind, signifies the essence of the thing and is divided by the ten genera."⁹⁵

It should be noted that Suarez does not take being as a participle to mean the act of existence as abstracted from that which has the act of existing. He does not consider the act of existing, the act of being, as a reality distinct from that which has it. He says:

Considering being in act as it is that which is signified by this word taken as a participle, it must first be stated that its ratio consists in this that it is something actually existing or having a real act of being or having actual reality . . .⁹⁶

As a noun the word expresses not only that which has actual existence but also that which can have it. The "that which" in this case signifies what Suarez calls a "real essence".

93 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, IV, 3.

94 Ibid., II, IV, 3.

95 Ibid., II, IV, 3.

96 Ibid., II, IV, 4.

It is necessary, says Suarez, to understand what is meant by "real essence" in order to explain in what real being consists. Now essence may be looked at in three ways. Firstly:

the essence of a thing is that which is first and radical and the innermost principle of all actions and properties which belong to the thing and from this point of view it is called nature . . .⁹⁷

The second way in which essence may be considered is as that

which is explained by the definition . . . and in this way it is also said that that is the essence of a thing which is first conceived of the thing . . . not in the order of origin . . . but rather in the order of nobility and primacy . . . for that is of the essence of a thing which we conceive to belong to it primarily and to be primarily constituted intrinsically in the being of the thing. . . . In this way essence is also called quiddity . . . because it is that which we speak of in reply to the question, what is the thing.⁹⁸

In the third way of considering essence we note that it is called essence precisely "because it is that which, through the act of being, is understood primarily to be in any thing."⁹⁹ Now it must be seen what Suarez means by a real essence. This term has a special meaning for Suarez. It does not signify an actually existing essence but rather one which has an aptitude for existing whether this aptitude be realized or not.¹⁰⁰ It is one which does not involve any contradiction in terms. Thus for Suarez, the essence of Peter and the essence of a Dodo are equally real essences. Similarly a real being (being as a noun) is one which, so to speak, can be a being (being as a participle).

97, 98, 99 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, IV, 6.

100 Ibid., II, IV, 5.

But now one is faced with a difficulty.¹⁰¹ "How are these two concepts of being, that is, being taken as a noun and being taken as a participle, to be reconciled with the unity of the objective concept of being?" It would appear that this twofold aspect or signification of being is equivocal and that there cannot be a concept common to both because there seems to be no way of abstracting it. In any case, were there such a concept, there would be the difficulty of determining whether it be taken as a noun or as a participle. The solution which Suarez proposes is as follows:

Being according to that twofold aspect does not signify a twofold ratio of being dividing some common ratio or common concept but it signifies the concept of being as more or less abstracted. Being taken as a noun signifies that which has real essence, prescinding from actual existence, not indeed excluding it or denying it but merely abstracting from it (vide supra, 29, footnote). Being taken as a participle signifies real being itself or that having real essence with actual existence and thus it signifies it (being) as more contracted.¹⁰²

In this way being does not signify some concept which is, as it were, abstracted from both being taken as a noun and being taken as a participle and which is thus common to both. Rather, it signifies both immediately even though one is more contracted than the other. When being is considered as a noun actual existence is left out of consideration entirely, being neither affirmed nor denied. In this way it is abstracted but it is important to understand the exact nature of this abstraction so that being taken as a

101 Ibid., II, IV, 8.

102 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, IV, 9.

noun may not be confused with being in potency.

Being taken as a noun does not signify being in potency as privatively and negatively opposed to being in act but it signifies being precisely as it is convertible with real essence (ut precise dicit realem essentiam) which is a very different matter, for prescissive abstraction is different from negative abstraction. Thus being taken as a noun, although it means precisely being having real essence, does not add the negation of the having of actual existence, which negation is implied by "being in potency." This is very clear from the fact that being taken as a noun is common to God and to creatures and is truly affirmed of God. Being in potency can in no way be predicated of God, nor even of existing creatures as such, properly speaking, because they are now not in potency but in act.¹⁰³

This distinction between being as a noun and possible being is very important in understanding the proper object of Suarezian Metaphysics. It would seem that Professor Gilson does not sufficiently stress the relation between these two notions in his study of Suarez in Being and Some Philosophers. In stating Suarez' position he says:

There is no reason to worry about this twofold meaning of the word "being." The fact that it signifies at one and the same time actual being and possible being does not make it an equivocal term. . . . What Suarez means . . . is that actually existing being represents a restricted area of being in general which, as has just been said, includes both actual and possible being.¹⁰⁴

It is true that for Suarez being includes both actual and possible being but that does not mean that being "signifies at one and the same time actual being and possible being." Possible being, as has been seen, implies a

103 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, IV, 11.

104 Etienne Gilson, Being and Some Philosophers, Toronto, 1949, 98.

negation of actual existence whereas actual being positively implies or affirms actual existence. Were one of these terms to be a more precise determination of the other the consequence would be that to exist was a more precise determination of not to exist which is manifestly absurd.

It is true that for Suarez possible being is not absolutely nothing but it is not signified immediately by the word being. How actual being and possible being are related to being as such is clear from the following words of Suarez.

Hence it is finally understood that being taken precisely as it is signified by the noun can be properly divided into being in act and being in potency. Being in act is the same as being as signified by the participle and these two (i.e. the noun and the participle) signify the ratio of being either as abstracted or as determined to actual existence whether this determination be essential as it is in God or not essential as it is in creatures But being in potency signifies real being in so far as it is applied to real essence, contracted and determined not by anything positive but by a privation of actual existence. Being thus contracted, or as it is conceived of in such a state is not signified by this word being nor by any other simple term (aliam incomplexam) known to me but only by these complex terms, possible being, being in potency and the like.¹⁰⁵

Being as a noun, the being with which Metaphysics is concerned, includes being in act and being in potency but it does not signify them immediately. Being as a noun is determined to being in act (being used as a participle); it is also determined to being in potency. This is very different from saying that being in act is a more precise determination of being in potency. As Suarez shows, when one introduces the notion of potency or possibility one is no longer considering being as a noun as such. Being as a noun is a pure

¹⁰⁵ Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, IV, 12.

abstraction and cannot be such in the order of reality where everything is either actual or possible. Because being taken as a participle is a determination of being considered as a noun, it can be thought of as a more restricted area of being in general.

In developing his concept of being Suarez uses terms which are quite acceptable to a Thomist but care should be taken not to interpret them in a Thomistic sense. Suarez, as has been seen, is always most insistent upon the simplicity of being. Now if being is most simple it cannot be composed of two principles which are really distinct. This is why, for Suarez, an essence is not a principle of being but an aspect of being considered as the principle of operation. Similarly existence is not a principle of being but is an existing being considered precisely from the point of view of its existence. It is because of the simplicity of being that Suarez must take the word being sometimes as a noun and sometimes as a participle -- "interdum. . . . interdum."¹⁰⁶ That which has the act of existing and the act of existing are but logically distinct. For the Thomist being is both a noun and a participle and it is as both that he treats of it in Metaphysics. When the Thomist studies essence he is dealing not with being but with a principle of being. When Suarez studies a real essence he is dealing with a being abstracted both from actual existence and from the realm of possibility. Because it is most simple being cannot be

106 Suarez, Disput. Metaph., II, IV, 3.

defined, says Suarez, but can only be declared by synonymous terms.¹⁰⁷ Were one to attempt to describe it one might say that being is a certain "is-ness" which has no reference to existence. Suarez does not use the definitions of being, or what are often called definitions of being, given by St. Thomas, viz., "id cui competit esse"¹⁰⁸ and "id cuius actus est esse"¹⁰⁹ but were he to do so he would understand them in a very different sense from the Thomists. For him the word "id" would mean being and the phrase "cui competit esse" would signify "having aptitude for existence, abstracting from whether the being exists or not."¹¹⁰ In other words, the phrase would mean what Suarez understands by the designation "real" as applied to essences.

The simplicity of the being of Suarez does not mean that the being which he studies in Metaphysics is the Divine Being. Descoqs points out that the simplicity of the notion of being as such differs "toto caelo" from the simplicity of God.¹¹¹ If the simplicity in the notion is different, that which corresponds to the notion in reality will be different. Descoqs shows that the simplicity of being as such and the simplicity of God differ in three respects.¹¹² Being as such is most abstract and most indeterminate, whereas God is most actual and real. Being as such is "of the least comprehension and the greatest extension" but God is of "the greatest comprehension

107 Ibid., II, IV, 1.

108 St. Thomas Quodlib., II, Q. III.

109 St. Thomas, De Natura Generis, c. 1.

110 This is the meaning which Descoqs gives to this definition of St. Thomas. Institutiones, Vol. 1, 193.

111, 112 Descoqs, Institutiones, Vol. 1, 137.

and the least extension." Again, being as such does not exclude further determination but God cannot be further determined. From these differences it can be seen that the simplicity of being as such is not something positive and actual as it is in God but it is a negative simplicity which follows from its abstraction from every determination. Descocq goes on to note that this simplicity of being as such must not be confused with the indetermination which Hegel attributed to being, according to whom says Descocq, "being is so simple and indeterminate that 'really it is nothing, and neither more nor less than nothing'".¹¹³ Descocq continues:

Although being is most indetermined it is not absolutely indetermined, because it is indeed distinguished from nothing so that it may signify not-nothing or something.¹¹⁴

Descocq seems to take the simplicity of being as such to be synonymous with indetermination. Suarez, too, holds that being as such is most indeterminate but it would appear that he also ascribes to it a certain positive simplicity in that it is not composed of parts and cannot be divided into anything more fundamental than itself. The difference then between this positive simplicity of being as such and the simplicity of God is that the simplicity of God is pre-eminently existing whereas the simplicity of being as such does not exist as such.

113, 114 Descocq, Institutiones, Vol. 1, 137.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters reveal Suarez' conception of the nature of being as such as it is the proper object of Metaphysics. It has been seen that the object of this science is the objective concept of being as such which corresponds to the formal concept. This objective concept of being is characterized by its simplicity and its abstractness. In the first place it is negatively simple in that it is not determined to any particular nature. Yet it is not absolutely nothing. It also has a certain positive simplicity in that being as such is not a composition: it cannot be resolved into parts or into entities more fundamental than itself. Secondly being as such is an abstraction. It is abstracted from all particular natures and from all modes of being in such a way that it does not contain these actually or immediately. All these, the inferiors of being, are contained in the objective concept only potentially. It is further abstracted from actual existence in that existence is not actually contained in the concept. From this it is seen that what Suarez studies in Metaphysics is indeed "most simple and most abstract."¹¹⁵ Marc well describes this "being as such" thus,

It is a single objective concept, the product of a single act of the mind. It is then the single object of a single science, an object indetermined in the abstract, differentiated in the concrete. It signifies that which has a certain reality, that which is not nothing and which is abstracted from all actual and possible

existence, neither affirming nor denying it. . . .¹¹⁶

It is not intended here to fully develop the Thomistic notion of being as it is the proper object of Metaphysics but merely to show how widely it differs from the Suarezian conception. In the first place, being as such which Thomists study in Metaphysics is not a "most simple" entity. For them only the being of God is most simple; the being of creatures is composed of principles which are really distinct, albeit inseparable. A multitude of authors could be cited to show that this is the Thomist position. It is considered, however, that a quotation from one of the greatest Thomist commentators will suffice. Commenting upon the introduction to the De Ente et Essentia of St. Thomas, Cajetan says,

We proceed from being to essence. This he (St. Thomas) proves in two ways. First, we proceed from composites to simple things; but being is as a composite and essence is a simple thing. Therefore we proceed from being to essence. Secondly we proceed from posterior things to prior things; but being is posterior to essence. Therefore we proceed from being to essence. . . . Concerning the minor of the first argument, note that being . . . signifies id quod habet esse, but that which has esse includes in itself essence. But essence signifies that which the definition denotes . . . which does not imply esse or non-esse. . . . Being therefore is so related to essence that it embraces in itself both essence and existence. But essence is only one of these two and so being is called a composite with respect to essence. . . .¹¹⁷

Here it is clearly stated that the being of creatures is a composite of essence and esse. Further it is indicated that existence enters into the very nature of being and that without existence there is no being, there is

¹¹⁶ Marc, Archives de Philosophie, Vol. X., 30.

¹¹⁷ Thomas de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan, In De Ente et Essentia D. Thomas Commentaria, ed., Fr. M. H. Laurent, Turin, 1934, 30.

no Metaphysics. Now Metaphysics must not be divorced from reality and all Thomists consider that this realism of Metaphysics cannot be preserved by a concept which contains all the inferiors of being only potentially. Renard concisely and clearly describes the nature of the Thomistic notion of being in this respect. He says:

The mind merely perceives essence inasmuch as it is ordered to the "to be" . . . We abstract from any definite determination of the relation of essence to the "to be" It is at once clear that such a concept must contain all beings (in whatever manner they may be considered, whether as beings only, or as such beings, talia), and that it must contain them not merely potentially but actually.¹¹⁸

Metaphysics then deals with beings from the point of view of their being. Therefore, taking the phrase "ens in quantum ens" it can be said that the first ens signifies the material object of this science and the second ens characterizes being formally as the object of Metaphysics.¹¹⁹

These few references to the Thomistic conception of being as such show how greatly Thomists differ from Suarez in their interpretation of the Angelic Doctor. Yet, Suarez, as has been said, claims to be a commentator on the works of St. Thomas and to give a faithful summary of his teaching. It is proposed therefore to examine in this chapter the texts from St. Thomas which Suarez quotes in support of his arguments and his use of them.

Actually the texts from St. Thomas which Suarez quotes with reference to the being which is the proper object of Metaphysics are not

118 Renard, Philosophy of Being, 90.

119 Gerald B. Phelan, S.J., "A Note on the Formal Object of Metaphysics," The New Scholasticism, Vol. XVIII, Washington, D.C., 1944.

numerous. He relies mainly upon two texts from the De Veritate and one from the second Quodlibetum. From De Veritate, I, 1. Suarez proves the unity of the concept of being and from this unity he argues to the utter simplicity of being as such. He also cites De Veritate, 21, 1. in proving the unity and simplicity of being as such.¹²⁰ Quodlibetum, II. is quoted in showing that being is simply essence and Suarez says that in the article to which he refers the distinction between being as a noun and being as a participle is insinuated.¹²¹

Underlying the use of the texts from the De Veritate is the principle that knowledge truthfully represents reality. From this principle Suarez argues that if the concept of being is most simple it follows that being itself is most simple. In other words, what is found in the concept of being has its counterpart in reality. It is of course quite true that knowledge is faithfully representative of extra-mental reality. It does not follow, however, that things have their being, in the same way in which they are known. This should be manifest from the fact that material things are known in a spiritual way. Moreover, because of the manner of abstracting, the mind can form concepts which are truly representative of objects but which as such are not found in the ontological order. For example, it is true that "man is an animal" but actually there is no such thing existing in

¹²⁰ De Veritate, I, 1. This text is given supra, 24. As it is quoted by Suarez, vide supra 24, 27. De Veritate, 21, 1. is always quoted by Suarez in conjunction with De Veritate, I, 1.

¹²¹ Quodlibetum, II, art. 3. vide supra 34 n. 95.

the ontological order as "animal"; there are only brutes and men. In the same way there is no such thing as being as such; there are only this or that kind of beings. This does not mean, of course, that a genus or a species or suchlike is a kind of Kantian mental form because they have their foundation in reality, in real things, and it is the forms of real things which inform the mind in knowing. That man knows things in this way is a consequence of the abstraction by which things are known spiritually through material phantasms.

In De Veritate, I. St. Thomas is not concerned with being as it is known by the mind. As the title indicates the question deals with truth which is defined as Adequatio rei et intellectus and which is formally in the mind.¹²² Hence it is with the knowledge of being that St. Thomas is primarily concerned in this question. The Angelic Doctor explains that in "investigating what anything is" the mind can place that thing in ever widening genera and finally it can predicate of that thing "being," which is not a genus but transcends all genera. Now it is clear that between being and non-being there is no being. But it cannot be concluded absolutely from all this that the being of a thing is a most simple entity or reality in the ontological order. No Thomist would admit such a conclusion but he would maintain that there are constitutive metaphysical elements or principles

¹²² St. Thomas, De Veritate, Q. I, art. 1, corpus. See also De Veritate, Q. 21, art. 1: "Truth is in the mind as the Philosopher says in VI Metaphys. and anything whatever is called true in so far as it is conformed or conformable to the intellect; and so all who correctly define truth place the intellect in its definition.

of created beings which principles are not of themselves beings.

It may be concluded then that Suarez makes an illicit transition from the logical order to the ontological order when he uses this text. The simplicity of being of which St. Thomas speaks refers to the concept of being itself which cannot be resolved into any more simple concepts and not to that which is represented by the concept. It can therefore be said that Suarez is not supported here by St. Thomas for this passage can have an interpretation very different from that which Suarez gives it. Taking the text from De Veritate, I, 1., as he does, Suarez holds that being is one in the logical order and diversified in the ontological order. But it would seem that this leads logically to the univocity of being which is expounded by Scotus and which Suarez seeks to avoid. Says Suarez, beings are one in that they are alike and similar in this respect: they are. This similarity is perceived by the mind. Now the mind does not, as it were, imprint the likeness upon reality; it must therefore be founded upon something in the real order. The question is "Upon what is it founded?" Different things are alike in being but the differences are themselves beings. The ratio entis which is one and most simple is then in all things and in all their differences. It would seem to follow that, because of the simplicity of being, all beings are alike in every respect and this involves the univocity of being. Suarez gives unity in one order and diversity in another but he cannot give both in either order.

In the De Veritate, Q. 21, art. 1 St. Thomas asks the question, "Whether good adds anything to being?" His conclusion is that "good" like

"true" adds to being a relation of reason. The relation between "true" and being is secundum rationem speciei; the relation between "good" and being is secundum esse. As it is here a matter of a relation of reason, this is in a certain respect also a matter of the knowledge of being. Though the passage quoted above (supra 34) may seem to indicate that essence and being are synonymous it should be noted that St. Thomas does not say that essence is being but "that a thing may be said to be a being" That St. Thomas does not take essence alone to be the same as being is shown by the following parallel passage from the Summa Theologica.

It is clear that a thing is perfect so far as it is being; for being is the actuality of everything, . . . being properly signifies that something actually is and actuality properly correlates to potentiality.¹²³

Another important text from St. Thomas used by Suarez is taken from the second Quodlibetum.¹²⁴ Suarez claims that here St. Thomas holds that being is the same as essence abstracted from existence.¹²⁵ But Suarez' interpretation of this passage can at least be disputed when it is examined within its context. In this article St. Thomas discusses "Whether an angel is substantially composed of essence and existence (esse)."^{*} In the First objection he says it would seem that an angel is not composed of essence and existence because

123 St. Thomas, S.T. Ia, Q.5, art.1.

124 St. Thomas, Quod. II, Q.2, art.1.

125 Suarez, Disput. Metaph. II, IV, 3.

The essence of an angel is the angel himself for the quiddity of a simple thing is itself simple. If therefore an angel were composed of essence and existence, he would be composed of himself and another thing. But this is not fitting (inconueniens). Therefore he is not composed substantially of essence and existence.¹²⁶

In reply to this objection, St. Thomas answers that sometimes from those which are joined together there results a third thing as, for example, the union of body and soul. But sometimes a third does not result but rather a certain composite ratio. This objection and the answer given to it should make clear in what sense the corpus should be understood. In this passage St. Thomas says

But it is true that this noun (nomen) being as it means a thing to which belongs existence of this kind thus signifies the essence of a thing and is divided by the ten genera.¹²⁷

Now it must be understood that St. Thomas does not mean by the word "thing;" in this context a complete being for if he did he would thereby admit the validity of the first objection in the article. For the same reason he cannot mean that "essence" is synonymous with complete being. As he explains, essence and existence do not make up a third thing; they are merely principles of a thing. Each considered by itself is not a thing. It must therefore be concluded that being taken as a noun is "that to which belongs this kind of existence." Being is id cui competit esse and the cui competit esse is not merely descriptive of or qualifying the id; rather it expresses the relation between essence and existence which enters into the very constitution of a

126 St. Thomas, Quodlib. II, Q.2.art.1, ad 1.

127 Ibid, II, Q.2,arti, corpus.: Sed verum est quod nomen ens, secundum quod importat rem cui competit huiusmodi esse, sic significat essentiam rei, et dividitur per decem genera.

being. It is the essence which determines the thing to be this kind of being or that kind of thing and so it is from the aspect of their essences that beings are divided into the ten categories. It is not lawful to conclude therefore from this text that being and essence are one and the same reality.

It would appear that Suarez is forced to interpret the above texts as he does by his anxiety to maintain the unity and simplicity of being. If being is simple it cannot be a composite of essence and existence. If being is one, there cannot be composite being in creatures for there is certainly no composition in the being of God. It follows from the simplicity of being, as Suarez develops the idea, that existing being is but a determination of being in general. This notion of the unity and simplicity of being, which is so important in Suarez, he derives from his formal concept of being. In developing his Metaphysics he focuses his attention upon his concept of being and not upon real beings. He thus seems to be guilty of the same error as was Parmenides who started with his notion of being and did not proceed to deal with real beings as they are. Of Parmenides, St. Thomas says:

Parmenides argues thus: Whatever is outside being is non-being; and whatever is non-being is nothing. But being is one. Therefore whatever is beyond one is nothing. From this it is clear that he (Parmenides) was thinking of the concept of being (ipsam rationem essendi) which seems to be one for it cannot be understood that something be added to the concept of being by which it may be diversified for that which is added to being must be outside being. But anything of this kind is nothing. Hence it seems that being cannot be diversified.¹²⁸

128 St. Thomas, Comm. in Metaph. I, lect. 9, 138.

Suarez takes the concept of being which seems one and simple and concludes from this fact that being itself is one and most simple. Suarez differs from Parmenides in that he is a realist and a Christian. Because he is a realist he must admit the reality of change and the differences among beings. Because he is a Christian he must admit that the being of creatures is only analogous to the being of God. Thus in avoiding, as he thinks, the error of Parmenides and still maintaining the unity and simplicity of being, he evolves his notion of the objective concept of being which has been described in the foregoing chapters.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Reverend Francis J. Litton has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

July 10 1951
Date

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