

“THE BRIGHT INITIATOR OF SUCH A GREAT SYSTEM”
SUÁREZ AND FONSECA IN IBERIAN JESUIT JOURNALS
(1945–1975)

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Abstract: In this paper I focus on the historiographical fate of Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) and Pedro da Fonseca (1528–1599) in two Iberian journals ran by Jesuits and founded in 1945: the Spanish *Pensamiento*, and the Portuguese *Revista portuguesa de filosofia*. I endeavor to show that the discussions of Suárez’s and Fonseca’s ideas on these journal is a two-sided case of constructing the legacies of major figures in late scholasticism, and I emphasize how the demand to identify cultural national heroes intertwines with theoretical and ideological elements, especially the peculiar history of the Iberian Peninsula, and to the historical relationships between Spain and Portugal. With regard to Suárez, the *Pensamiento* group strives to carve out a specific place for Neo-Suarezianism within Neo-Thomism, also via a substantive reassessment of Suárez’s importance in the history of scholasticism and of philosophy in general. Hence, Suárez’s thought undergoes triumphant reevaluation, which even aims at ousting Aquinas as the ultimate reference of scholasticism, to make Suárez’s Thomism the principal authority of contemporary schools. By contrast, Fonseca remains a rather obscure and neglected figure, dug up by his fellow compatriots on the *Revista portuguesa de filosofia*, also against this attempt at establishing a Suarezian, Spanish hegemony.

Keywords: Pedro da Fonseca; Francisco Suárez; twentieth-century historiography; Jesuit journals; *Pensamiento*; *Revista portuguesa de filosofia*; José Hellin; Cassiano Abranches.

1. Introduction: *Vetera novis augere et perficere*

Although it may appear to be a transparent label, the category of ‘second scholasticism’ is ultimately grounded in a rather questionable historiographical narrative. It reenacts the plot of the Renaissance as a great cultural divide

* I am sincerely grateful to Mário Santiago de Carvalho for his remarks on an earlier version of this paper. All mistakes are my own.

between the medieval and the modern age, and implicitly accepts such periodizations, by claiming that the authors who carried on scholastic thought beyond the boundaries of fourteenth-century scholasticism are the modern *Doppelgänger* of the great medieval philosophical heroes. Late scholastics revive and at once imitate a tradition that allegedly fell into a deep crisis due to the religious ruptures arising between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries; a tradition which was able to flourish once again as soon as the Counter-Reformation brought spiritual steadiness back to the Church of Rome, and rediscovered the authority of Thomas Aquinas.

As noted by Marco Forlivesi,¹ this view has been promoted particularly by the Jesuit Carlo Giacon in his well-known works on late scholasticism² and is integral to the historiographical needs of twentieth-century Neo-Thomism. Indeed, how can one legitimize the rebirth of scholastic Thomism after the great break of the Enlightenment, Positivism, and Neo-Idealism, if not by telling a story in which scholasticism was resuscitated in the name of Aquinas, after the great break of the Renaissance? Nonetheless, Giacon himself was quite overt in setting out this peculiar historiographic view, which makes scholasticism a sempiternal philosophical category, historically articulated over three 'moments':

The period of the development of Christian scholastic thought runs basically from the ninth to the fifteenth century, that is to say, from the Carolingian Renaissance to the end of the Middle Ages, from the first Dialecticians to the end of Nominalism. This first period, which ends with the decadence of Scholasticism, is followed by another period, that of the reflowering of the same, at times called Spanish Scholasticism, before and after the Council of Trent, up to and throughout the whole of the eighteenth century, when a new decadence of it took place. Finally, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there is a second reflowering: Neo-Scholasticism and, above all, Neo-Thomism. For ease

1 FORLIVESI 2017.

2 GIACON 1941; GIACON 1942; GIACON 1943; GIACON 1944–1950.

of expression, in recollection of the three Platonic Academies, we have settled on calling the three periods of Christian Scholasticism First, Second and Third Scholasticism: medieval, Spanish, and Neo-scholastic.³

This idea that ‘second’ scholasticism might entirely overlap with Spanish scholasticism is, by and large, symptomatic of some specific premises on which we shall dwell below. For now, it is worth focusing on Giacom’s two-fold claim that fourteenth-century Nominalism⁴ was the endpoint of ‘first’ scholasticism, which early modern scholasticism then revived. The ascription of this specific role to Ockham and his followers is of course instrumental to a portrayal according to which Aquinas is the pivot of scholasticism *tout-court*. As we shall see, it would have been crucial in shaping the philosophical identity of late scholasticism, and even of a specific historiographical canon. It is not accidental that the latter lines up the most famous Italian and Spanish commentators of Aquinas, whose ultimate synthesis would be the thought of Francisco Suárez:

After the first decadence of Scholasticism, which occurred in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it flourished again in the sixteenth and seventeenth, thanks both to the intrinsic need to rediscover a highly rich speculation, in the face of the poverty of the new philosophical and theological researches, and to the need to polemicise with Protestantism. Particular merit in this first rebirth of Scholasticism is deserved by the great Dominican theologians who wrote commentaries on St. Thomas: Tommaso de Vio, Francesco Silvestri, Vitoria, Soto, Cano and Báñez. An equally important recognition is owed to the theologians of the new-born Society of Jesus: Toledo, Fonseca, Molina, Vázquez, Leys, Valencia, and St. Roberto Bellarmino. Francisco Suárez requires a particular place of his own. He did not wish to be merely a commentator on others’ doctrines but to master scholastic speculation in order to expound it in his own way, according to the needs of the new times.⁵

3 GIACON 1943, XIII-XIV; translation from FORLIVESI 2017, 338.

4 On the reception of Nominalism in nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography see COURTENAY 1991.

5 GIACON 1941, 679; translation from FORLIVESI 2017, 335.

For today's historians of philosophy, this list might appear quite telling about the Neo-Thomistic and Jesuit-centric historiographical approach. First, it places Pedro da Fonseca – a Portuguese man who lived in Rome and who was learned in the teachings of sixteenth-century Italian commentators of Aquinas – on a list of Jesuit Spaniards (save for the Flemish Leys and the Italian Bellarmino), while simultaneously excluding some other great Portuguese scholastics (for instance, the Coimbrans, Francisco Soares, Cristovão Gil, Baltazar Telles), some of whom were true giants of early modern Thomism (for instance João Poinset, who would, however, receive more attention from Spanish historians of philosophy). Secondly, and more importantly, it censors the names of two other great Spanish Jesuits, Hurtado de Mendoza and Rodrigo Arriaga, who were guilty of having been Nominalists. Third, it carefully picks up some authors who were distinguished as metaphysicians, commentators of Aristotle, and law theorists, while excluding many important and influential theologians (Bento Perera, Nicolas Ysambert) and natural philosophers.

Although such a picture is peculiar to Giacon's work, and cannot be projected onto Neo-Thomism in general, it quite clearly points out some overall tendencies. Likewise, the historiographical necessities of Neo-Thomism must be taken into account, especially when addressing the works of those scholars who, in the early and mid-twentieth century, delved into reconstructing certain moments of 'second scholasticism', by identifying, and in a way constructing, major figures.

This work deeply intertwines with the theoretical tendencies of Neo-Thomism, as it was shaped by important authors such as Désiré Mercier, Jacques Maréchal, Étienne Gilson, and Johannes B. Lotz, but also by early-

twentieth century Italian Thomists. As stressed by Vasoli,⁶ these Catholic thinkers especially identified their mission with a twofold task, i.e. to defend the core of the *philosophia perennis* – for them Aquinas’s philosophy – and to reaffirm, against new philosophies – especially idealism – the commitment of scholasticism towards realism and objectivity, while now presenting its foundations not as dogmas, but as rational truths. In sum, by taking literally Leo XIII’s motto, *vetera novis augere et perficere*, Italian Neo-Thomism merged historiographical defence with the aim of reinterpreting scholasticism in light of new debates. Let us read, for instance, what Agostino Gemelli wrote as early as 1919 in the *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica*:

our task must be to find in Scholastic thought what is crucial, i.e. the core of the *philosophia perennis*. Having stripped Scholasticism of those fallen elements which were the product of partial and temporary views, and above all having stripped it of those forms which were the product of the times in which it was thought and by means of which it was vulgarized then, it appears to us with this fundamental core in all its beauty: the vindication of the objectivity of knowledge, the existence of God, his nature, his governance; the world as created by God; man, his nature, his soul, his moral life. This pivotal nucleus will have to be defended in the face of the objections that modern philosophy has advanced. Which highlights the second point of our task [...]. It is no longer positivist monism that reigns, but idealism. It is no longer the problems of science that are of concern, but those of the spirit. It is no longer a matter of discussing of the origin of world, of man, about the nature of man, etc., but of claiming for the human mind the capacity to grasp reality, to search for and determine the organicity of the real in a whole and to show how the human mind knows it; it is a matter of claiming the capacity of the human mind to attain God, etc., in a word, it is a matter of defending our dualism against idealistic monism.⁷

However, these ideas seem to have been implemented quite differently depending on geographic regions. They interlaced with a number of political correlates of the defense of Christian philosophy, and were often connected

6 VASOLI 1991.

7 GEMELLI 1919, 2–3.

with nationalistic stances along with the need to write histories of philosophy befitting of specific political and national histories. In an age of national and cultural competition – as most of the twentieth century indisputably was –, even philosophers were called upon to play the role of national heroes, and representatives of their respective cultures. And just as this much is true of famous figures like Descartes, Galileo, or Hegel, it appears that no less true of scholastic authors involvement in this process.

In accordance with the expectations for this issue of *Noctua*, by focusing on the role that scholarly journals played in shaping historiographical debates, I will focus here on a remarkable, two-sided case of constructing the legacies of major figures in late scholasticism, which clearly shows how the demand to identify cultural national heroes overtly intertwined with theoretical and ideological elements. It is the twofold case of Pedro da Fonseca and Francisco Suárez; two important representatives of late scholasticism (and two great philosophers independently of these dynamics), whose historiographical fate – which was admittedly quite different – was not free from connections with national and philosophical ideologies. I will endeavor to show that Fonseca and Suárez were two sides of the same coin, and that the reconstruction of their thought and philosophical relevance signify two movements which were somehow coordinated by mutual need. This is due especially to the peculiar history of the Iberian Peninsula, and to the relationships between Spain and Portugal.

The debates that took place in journals were undoubtedly the driving force behind the mutual construction of national-philosophical identities. In this paper, I focus especially on literature on Fonseca and Suárez which was published in two famous journals founded and run by Jesuits, i.e. the Spanish *Pensamiento* (founded by Fernando Palmes, S.J. and José Hellín Las Heras, S.J.),

and the Portuguese *Revista portuguesa de filosofia* (founded by Domingos Maurício, S.J., Cassiano Abranches, S.J., Severiano Tavares, S.J. and Diamantino Martins, S.J.). Following the ideological lead mentioned above, I will then draw my attention to the years 1945–1975 (even though the bulk of the papers I address come from the period between the '40s to the '60s) as ideal chronological coordinates. Such a period covers the thirty years between the founding of both journals (1945) to the fall of the respective far-right dictatorships: Salazar's and Caetano's in Portugal (1974), and Franco's in Spain (1975).⁸ Notably, besides the fact that these were the years during which these journals concentrated more specifically on Fonseca and Suárez, I aim to follow the evolution of these exchanges and see how these authors and their philosophies were represented. In the case of Suárez, due to reasons of space and cohesion, I must concentrate on his metaphysical thought to better compare it with Fonseca's. Suárez's political thought remains, however, quite uncovered by the papers featured by these two journals, which do not seem to host a true debate on it. The few papers⁹ dedicated to Suárez's theories of law, war, and community are valuable pieces of research, but they do not nurture a real exchange and I gladly left their appraisal to others.

2. Constructing Suárez

Since its foundation in 1945, *Pensamiento* has contributed substantially to the construction of Neo-Suarezian thought, thereby carving out a more definitive

⁸ It is worth recalling that the Society of Jesus was expelled from Spain not only in 1834, but also in 1932, under the government (1931–1933) of Manuel Azaña. Francisco Franco's dictatorship withdrew this ban in 1938.

⁹ See in particular the papers featured in *Pensamiento's* 1948 special issue on Suárez: ALVAREZ DE LINERA 1948; FERREIRO LÓPEZ 1948; GÓMEZ ROBLEDO 1948; GUERRERO 1948; ROMMEN 1948. Besides these papers, Suárez's political and juridical thought has been covered quite rarely by *Pensamiento*.

role for Suárez in the history of Western philosophy. The more notable character in this endeavor was the journal's co-founder, José Hellín Las Heras, a true scholastic of our times and a great eclectic erudite, who founded the study circle "Academia de Suárez" ("Suárez Academy") as early as the 1920s.¹⁰ He was dedicated to the systematic reconstruction of Suarezian philosophy in dozens of papers published in *Pensamiento* and other Spanish journals (*Revista de filosofía, Espiritu*). Besides Hellín, more involved actors included prominent names of Spanish Neo-scholasticism and the scholarly history of metaphysics, such as José Gomez Caffarena, Eleuterio Elorduy, Juan Roig Gironella, and Jesús Iturrioz. Some of these played an important role in debating other important moments of Spanish Neo-scholastic philosophy (for instance Zubiri's thought)¹¹ on whom Suárez indirectly exerted his influence.¹²

In general, a number of these materials date back to 1948, the four-hundredth anniversary of Suárez's birth (1548), when both *Pensamiento* and the *Revista portuguesa de filosofia* offered sizeable special issues on the Uncommon Doctor¹³ – in the case of the *Revista*, Suárez shared the issue with another important Neo-scholastic author, Jaime Balmes, who died in 1848.¹⁴ Here, I will

10 For some bio-bibliographical information about Hellín see MARTÍN GÓMEZ 1959; VERD CONRADI 1976; O'NEILL, DOMÍNGUEZ 2001.

11 Hellín himself discussed Zubiri's *Natureza, Historia, Dios* (ZUBIRI 1942) in the second issue of *Pensamiento* (HELLÍN 1945b), praising its overall metaphysical stance, particularly his metaphysical theology, and eventually placing Zubiri within the body of the scholastic tradition and methodology. See also HELLÍN 1963. Another important figure is of course Caffarena. On these relationships see COROMINAS, VICENS 2007.

12 MONSERRAT 2018.

13 Important articles on Suárez have also appeared in two other Spanish journals: *Razon y Fé* (see IRIARTE 1947; ALDAMA 1948; CAFFARENA 1948; DUEÑAS 1948; ELORDUY 1948; GUERRERO 1948b; IRIARTE 1948; ITURRIOZ 1960) and *Espiritu* (HELLÍN 1958; HELLÍN 1961; GIRONELLA 1961c; HELLÍN 1980; HELLÍN 1981; GIRONELLA 1987).

14 However, already in 1917–1918 (i.e. on the occasion of the third hundredth anniversary of his death) two collective initiatives had focused on Suárez's thought: the collective volume *SIX* 1917 and the special issue of *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* GEMELLI 1918.

dwell especially on those papers featured in *Pensamiento*, and will save the discussion of some of the (few) articles published on the *Revista portuguesa de filosofia* for the next section.

2.1. Suárez the Spaniard

Hellín and the *Pensamiento* group likely saw Suárez as a philosophical genius whom Spanish intellectuals could brag about. Such was, indeed, the spirit of the time. For instance, in his popular work *La ciencia española* (*The Spanish Science*, 1887), the influential historian of ideas Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo referred to Suárez's *Disputationes* as "one of the most precious monuments of Iberian science."¹⁵ Likewise, in 1905, Pelayo admirer Eloy Bullón y Fernández, in his *Los precursores españoles de Bacon y Descartes* (*Spanish precursors of Bacon and Descartes*), mentioned Suárez as the nobler representative of "the movement of scholastic restoration," "promoted and supported almost exclusively by Spanish scholars," which was "the strongest bulwark against the errors of Protestantism, and in the philosophical order the most prudent, learned and disciplined school of the century."¹⁶ These appraisals were followed by those of Marcial Solana González-Camino, the author of a popular work in three volumes, the *Historia de filosofía española* (*History of Spanish Philosophy*, writtene in 1928–1933 but published in 1941), where Suárez's *Disputationes* were said to be "the most excellent of all the treatises on philosophy that came out of a Spanish pen" – "and these," Solana underlined to corroborate his own objectivity, "are not the passionate judgments of a Spaniard blinded by patriotic glories."¹⁷

15 MENÉNDEZ-PELAYO 1887, II, 34.

16 BULLÓN Y FERNÁNDEZ 1905, 34.

17 SOLANA 1941, III, 470. In 1955, Solana published a shorter essay with a quite telling title, *Fueron los españoles quienes elevaron la filosofía Escolástica a la perfección* (*The Spaniards were Those who Raised Scholastic Philosophy to Perfection*), in which he praises Suárez as a Span-

As for *Pensamiento*, these voices are echoed especially in a work authored by the Bishop of Calahorra y La Calzada-Logroño, Fidel García, which featured in the aforementioned 1948 special issue devoted to Suárez. Here, García encouraged the study of this great Spanish figure with rather ambiguous words:

[...] we must recognize and regret that justice has not yet been done to this great Spanish philosopher, nor has his intellectual work been taken advantage of, as it deserves. Is it misfortune of our national things and glories? If Suárez was Italian, or French, we suspect that his fate in the chairs and the philosophical literature would have been quite different. Let us hope that this centenary marks the time for a rectification, and that we can leave aside, if only for spiritual elegance and good taste, antiquated sectarianism and intellectual narrow-mindedness of factions or schools. Let us do to our great philosopher and great theologian the justice he deserves, even here in Spain. Not because science has to be something nationalistic or chauvinistic; but for the specific reason that no nationalist or partisan prejudice should be an obstacle to recognizing and proclaiming science, the universal patrimony of all free souls, wherever it is discovered.¹⁸

Thus, Suárez was seen as a national figure and as a source of pride for the Spaniards. It is important to stress that these views were explicitly put forward in *Pensamiento* mainly by external authors, where the core contributors (all Jesuits) mainly concentrated on theoretical reconstructions. Nonetheless, the latter commonly extolled Suárez as a true scholastic genius, sometimes so much as to border on the ridiculous – as in the case of Roig Gironella, who

ish national myth: “The Uncommon Doctor, followed in past and present times by many and very respectable philosophers, and who managed in getting Chairs at such illustrious Universities as those of Salamanca, Alcalá de Henares, and Valladolid to expound his doctrines: a wise man, of whom it can be said, in the philosophical-scholastic context, what Frenchman Bossuet said about him with respect to the theological order: that whoever hears him listens to the whole School; one portentous philosopher, the greatest that our country ever had, greater and more exalted than Seneca, Avicenna, Averroes, the Blessed Lull and Juan Luis Vives, and whom, due to reasons that are obvious and which I have been trying to explain, we all, and particularly we the Spaniards, must consider and acclaim as the true *Magister scholasticorum*,” SOLANA 1955, 123.

¹⁸ GARCÍA 1948, 12.

described the Spanish thinker as “a colossal stony obelisk, raised amid the desert by the hand of God, to point the way to the weary caravans of poor men in constant pilgrimage towards the final oasis of the possession of the Infinite Truth.”¹⁹

2.2. Suárez the Mastermind

Apart from the national problem, the *Pensamiento* Jesuits seemed to put Suárez’s thought to work for more subtle and theoretically refined aims. In order to understand it, it is important to note that before 1945, Suarezian philosophy was studied and appraised mainly for Suárez’s effort as a legal theorist and political philosopher, while paying less attention to his metaphysics. During roughly the same years, Suárez was even criticized for his Nominalistic sympathies and for his fragmentary treatment of metaphysical issues.²⁰ Crude critiques came then from Italian Neo-Thomistic purists, who were quite worried about the rise of Suarezianism as an alternative to Thomism. Cornelio Fabro, for instance, saw the Spanish Jesuit as an adversary of genuine Thomism (especially about the *esse-essentia* real distinction, which was famously rejected by Suárez in line with Scotus)²¹ and a great but unoriginal thinker.²²

Outside these debates within Neo-Thomism, especially important were Heidegger’s claims in *Sein und Zeit*, according to which Greek ontology made “essential transition via the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* of Suárez into the metaphysics and transcendental philosophy of the modern period.”²³ This

19 ROIG GIRONELLA 1948, 211. See also ROIG GIRONELLA 1953, wholly focused on the “Spanish aspects” of Suárez’s philosophy, here labelled as a “idealistic realism.”

20 HELLÍN 1948, 135.

21 FABRO 1941; FABRO 1947.

22 FABRO 1947.

23 HEIDEGGER 1996, 19. See also HEIDEGGER 1995, § 14, 51–55. As for this line of interpreta-

brief mention made Suárez the meeting point of ancient ontology and transcendental philosophy and, ultimately, the one who inaugurated the modern conceptualization and epistemologization of ontology, thereby paving the way for Kant. Nonetheless, the *Pensamiento* group seems to have been not all that attracted to Heidegger's view, and much more interested in another perspective. The latter is well represented by what Xavier Zubiri wrote on Suárez in a short note included in his 1942 *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios* (*Nature, History, God*, published a year before the foundation of *Pensamiento*), in which he summarizes some ideas that were circulating at the time:

The systematization to which he [Suárez] subjected these problems and his originality in rethinking them had as a consequence that ancient thought would continue in the breast of the nascent European philosophy of the seventeenth century; and many of the concepts upon which it based itself were given to it by him. Only ignorance of Suarez [*sic*] and Scholasticism could have led to the conviction on the part of historians that these concepts were totally original creations of modern idealism. [...] The influence of Suarez, in this sense, has been enormous. The better he is known, the clearer this becomes. For the rest, it is already quite well known that his *Disputations* served as the official text of philosophy in almost all German universities during the seventeenth and a large part of the eighteenth century. So by any measure Suarez is an indispensable factor in the understanding of modern philosophy. But perhaps still more interesting is the fact that Suarez's work represents the first attempt since Aristotle to construct a body of independent philosophical doctrine out of metaphysics. Up until Suarez, first philosophy either existed in the form of commentaries on Aristotle, or constituted the intellectual framework of Scholastic theology. With Suarez it is elevated to the rank of an autonomous and systematic discipline. The exclusiveness that attempted to center Scholasticism entirely in St. Thomas has been responsible in large measure for the relative obscurity of the philosopher from Granada, whose work is still far from being intellectually exhausted, and whose vigor and originality situate him, in many essential ways, very much above the 'classic' Scholastic thinkers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁴

As one can see, Zubiri offers a different way from Heidegger's of considering

tion, see especially ESPOSITO 2001, 2003, 2010.
24 ZUBIRI 1942; English translation ZUBIRI 1981.

Suárez's relationship with modernity; namely, he sees Suárez as the forerunner of early modern rationalism. The Spanish Jesuit would be the one who, consistently with the spirit of his time, took the whole of scholastic philosophy beyond the form of the commentary, to follow the 'order of reason' that would mark systematic philosophy. Following in the wake of this idea, the *Pensamiento* debate on Suárez's metaphysics intensified considerably, ushering in an endeavor not only to reconstruct his doctrines in detail, but also to interpret them. This effort aimed especially at reaffirming the clarity, the systematic nature, and the complexity of Suárez's work as a theoretical philosopher, stressing his ability to renew the tradition without ever changing it. Sometimes, as we will see, this approach results in exaggerated interpretations of Suárez's alleged rationalism, seen as a totally aprioristic and deductive metaphysical system.²⁵

Besides that, in contrast to Fabro's expulsion of Suárez from the family of Thomism, the Uncommon Doctor is presented here as a direct follower of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, considerably downplaying his well-known eclecticism and debts towards Duns Scotus. In fact, this tendency fits perfectly with a recurrent problem, namely, that of Suárez's (alleged) pure Thomism. This problem worried most of his Neo-Thomistic Spanish interpreters, who constantly aimed to reply to accusations of eclecticism against their national hero, by showing that Suárez's statements of Thomism were authentic and that, save for the new order he adopted, he does follow Aquinas in the whole of his doctrine. Implicitly, this also makes Suárez the perfect

²⁵ This aspect is dramatically present in a remarkable paper by Hellín dated from 1948 (HELLÍN 1948), a document on which I shall dwell later. Here, Hellín ambitiously endeavors to present Suárez's philosophy as a comprehensive system in which every metaphysical element stems *a priori*, and deductively, from a core-notion (the principle of the identity of essence and existence in God). Of course, this reading is far from being an objective presentation of Suárez's thought, which proceeds systematically but neither holistically nor deductively.

personality to oppose to Descartes, who (according to the interpretation circulating at the time) systematically reorganized his philosophy in order to oppose scholastic philosophy.

It should be noted that for Hellín and the *Pensamiento* Jesuits, Suárez was not only a true Aristotelian and Thomist; in general, he was a model of the scholastic way of philosophizing. They contend that effectively, all of his doctrines had already been formulated in the ancient and medieval philosophy of his masters, which he just contributed to systematizing and clarifying, by reorganizing Aristotle's arguments and introducing a new modern, rational order. This point is expressed quite efficaciously by Iturroz in a remarkable paper dating from 1948. Here, we are told that Suárez's system (as already noted by Grabmann)²⁶ is marked by an overall "novelty":

for the external form of presenting the *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, detached from the Aristotelian text and structured along a more systematic line. Even greater novelty, due to the internal form of his metaphysical thought, now organized in harmonious unity and which, by the ways of deduction, progressively embraces, so to speak, according to modern manners, and lively, all the fields of metaphysics, not infrequently treading unfamiliar ground, and cultivating it by not infrequently untrodden ground, fertilizing it [...] sowing new seeds for solving new needs.²⁷

Iturroz's paper consists of a thorough, qualitative and quantitative reconstruction of Suárez's sources. Quite significantly, it is articulated in four paragraphs, corresponding to as many influences on the Spanish Jesuit: Aristotle, Aquinas, and the tradition of Aquinas' commentators, notably Thomas De Vio Cajetan, and the School of Salamanca. Suárez's thought would stem, then, from the harmonization of these sources, according to a general plan of leading the Uncommon Doctor back to the Thomistic lineage, and pulling

26 GRABMANN 1917.

27 ITURROZ 1948a, 88.

him away from Scotus.

Within this picture, Suárez's most relevant contribution would lie solely in a masterful use of metaphysical reasoning, which made him able to account better than anyone for some core positions of medieval scholasticism, bringing them to a clearer and more understandable form for human reason. This is, on the other hand, how Neo-Thomistic scholastics conceived 'modernity': an epistemological innovation of traditional truths. This perspective is well portrayed by Salvador Cuesta, S.J. in a brief text that appeared again in 1948, where Suárez is described as a chess-player who triumphs in play without having invented the game:

His originality, like that of every scholastic and Christian philosopher, does not lie in *creating*, but in *inventing*, i.e. in finding the truth. It is the originality of the chess champion, who neither invents the game, nor draws the board, nor fabricates the pieces, but comes to the table when the "situation" is extremely difficult, and observes the position of the pieces, until he discovers the path to follow in order to clear and mate.²⁸

If the truth has already been revealed – rationally explained by the great medieval authorities and then lost in the drift of non-scholastic or anti-scholastic philosophies – the role of the early modern schoolman is essentially that of using reason to defend the acquired truths of the tradition, in the harsh clash of modern (and contemporary) philosophy. Hence, with his systematic reform of metaphysics, Suárez appears to be this kind of scholastic *par excellence*, one who saves the tradition from decline by reordering it, thereby placing it in dialogue with contemporary trends.

However, these interpretations do more than just squeeze Suárez into adamantine Thomistic positions. At once, they also highlight key aspects of

28 CUESTA 1948, 215.

his work along two specific dimensions. On the one hand, they portray Suárez primarily as a metaphysician, whose thought can be actively reenacted for the purposes of twentieth-century discussions. More specifically, they (notably Hellín and Roig Gironella) evoke the idea of Suárez being the eminent advocate of the gnosiological role of abstraction – one of the pillars of new Thomism which opposed other currents such as innatism, empiricism, apriorism, and sensism. As we shall see, this stance led these interpreters to concentrate on Suárez's founding of ontology upon noetics by analogy, while leaving aside other aspects of his metaphysics which are connected with natural philosophy (matter, time, space, place) or theology (angelology). On the other hand, by representing Suárez as a great reformulator and reorganizer of medieval thought, these readings tend to isolate him from any possible influence from his contemporaries. This problem was already posed, albeit in different terms, by Menéndez Pelayo himself, who in his *La ciencia española* asked why traditional historiography had talked of "Thomism," "Scotism," or "Ockhamism" without coining a specific category for "Suarezianism." In this way, twentieth-century Spanish historiography acted in a twofold sense. Indeed, while it implicitly pledged for Suárez's historiographic 'canonization', it also represented him as the frontman of the whole current of 'second scholasticism', and implicitly attributed to him all of the theses which circulated in late scholasticism.

Indeed, the reconstructions put forth by the *Pensamiento* group seem to have taken quite seriously Suárez's endless analyses of his medieval sources and neglect his dialogue with other great thinkers of the Society. It is telling, however, that Suárez's only competitor who was treated as an authority of Iberian Neo-Thomism is the Portuguese João Poinset, O.P. (John of St. Thomas), who embodies certain considerable influences from Suárez in the

form of a more orthodox Thomism. Among the neglected authors one finds yet another Portuguese thinker, i.e. Pedro da Fonseca, the greatest Jesuit metaphysician who preceded Suárez. Though he operated in the traditional form of commentary on Aristotle, Fonseca was an important reformulator of scholastic metaphysics twenty years before Suárez. Besides his work as a logician, it will suffice to remember that Fonseca was the first among the Jesuits to translate Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, who then commented on it accurately and very innovatively, thereby making a substantial synthesis of scholastic thought. In addition, the Portuguese Jesuit was a constant reference for Suárez, who in his *Disputationes* critically discusses his positions and often takes advantage of Fonseca's previous analyses. Iturrioz himself acknowledges that Suárez quotes Fonseca 114 times in the *Disputationes*, making him one of his most relevant references, exceeded only by major references like Aristotle (1.735), Aquinas (1.008), Scotus (363), Augustine (334), Cajetan (299), Averroes (179), Durandus (153), Silvestri (124), and Capreolus (115) - which was much more than figures like Averroes (84) or Ockham (67). Despite that, Fonseca's name is entirely removed from the reconstruction of Suárez's sources by Iturrioz, who preferred to mention Vitoria (3), Soto (75), Toledo (16), and the Coimbrans (13). Is such an oversight intentional? Certainly, a clearer acknowledgment of Fonseca's role in the *Disputationes* would have helped to tell a quite different story about Suárez's metaphysics, its genesis within the Society, and its sources.

2.3. *Ens ut sic: Ontology and the Analogy of Being*

As said above, the *Pensamiento* Jesuits tended to emphasize Suárez's role as a metaphysician. Besides the overall influence of the Neo-Thomistic climate -

including a constant dialogue with the Italian context²⁹ – it is important to recall that Hellín was the author of a book on Suárez's theory of analogy which was published in 1947,³⁰ a quite influential piece on *Pensamiento*. Starting from Hellín's works, it will hence be possible to dwell on some of the interpretations of Suárez's metaphysics put forward in the journal.

The overall approach of these papers is marked by two aspects. First, some of them specifically reconstruct the general architecture of Suárez's metaphysics, with impressively detailed contributions³¹, but that do not settle for simply reconstructing Suárez's philosophy. Also in this case, these attempts are aimed at interpreting and presenting Suárez's metaphysics as a highly systematic, cohesive whole marked by a strongly rationalistic intent. Let us read Iturroz again:

over physical reality, and over logical reality, Suárez placed in the first place – independent of both, although independent of them and assimilable by either of them – absolute reality, without adjectives or conditions of concrete states, whether physical or logical; a pure and real reality, the metaphysical reality, the truest of all; and in his investigation he reached a supreme highness that placed him on an authentically metaphysical level. There he posed and solved substantial problems. Those who misunderstood him, or understood him wrongly, accused and condemned him for being a nominalist, since they did not see him as rooted in the physical and real plane. Those who later abused of his elevation, lost any connection with the real world and lost themselves in the stratosphere of subjectivist idealism. However, nothing is more metaphysically real than Suárez's metaphysical reality. And nothing more philosophical than a philosophy situated on that supreme and absolute level, where essences are formed and eternalized. This is, we think, Suárez's highest merit: that of having elaborated a metaphysical metaphysics.³²

Generally speaking, the *Pensamiento* papers all seem to implicitly argue that

29 Especially via the *Rivista di filosofia Neo-scolastica*; see again the special issue of *Rivista di filosofia Neo-scolastica* GEMELLI 1918.

30 HELLÍN 1947; see also HELLÍN 1945; HELLÍN 1946.

31 See, for instance, HELLÍN 1948; ROIG GIRONELLA 1948a.

32 ITURRIOZ 1948a, 89.

Suárez's metaphysics proceeds, according to a 'modern' movement, ascensively and discursively,³³ first identifying a key-notion (the *ens*) and thereby deducing a series of metaphysical truths.

Second, these critical discussions focus on a small, albeit crucial, group of issues in Suárez's work, which traditionally would have been reputed as fundamental by mid- and late-twentieth century historiography. They are as follows: his doctrine of formal/objective concepts; accordingly, his theory of the analogy of being; and his substantial option for what Hellín and his colleagues dubbed 'existentialism', i.e. existence as the ultimate reality for essence and hence for all of created being.

Such a list concentrates on Suárez's 'noetization' of metaphysics, and neglects other topics. His metaphysics is presented as strongly conceptualistic thought which is inclined towards a realistic ontology, and which could serve as usable material in Neo-Thomistic debates. In particular, his work is seen as a strategic stronghold of scholasticism, from which the core of the Aristotelian tradition could be revived, in an age dominated by Kant and Husserl. Indeed, Suárez's noetics – and consequently his metaphysics, grounded on a peculiar, objective concept-oriented understanding of the analogy of being – are seen as one strategic way out of both the limits of criticism and the idealistic temptations of phenomenology.³⁴ Notably, Suárez's complex twist between gnosiology, language, and metaphysics prompts interest of his twentieth-century readers for retrieving an ultimate, realistic foundation of being, predication and knowledge, in contrast with the solipsistic approaches of modern philosophies.

This seems to be one of the reasons behind a peculiar presentation of

33 HELLÍN 1948, 126.

34 See especially ROIG GIRONELLA 1948.

Suárez's theory of analogy, put forward especially by Hellín.³⁵ Circumventing the many Scotistic (and thus univocist) elements at stake in Suárez's thought, his papers portray the Spanish Jesuit as a direct descendent of the Dominican tradition of analogy from Aquinas to Cajetan. Hence, and at once, Hellín reads what Suárez sets out in *Disputatio* 2 about the formal and the objective concept of being³⁶ in light of what he argues in *Disputatio* 28 about analogy of intrinsic attribution.³⁷

Famously, this remains the received view about Suárez's ontology today; one that Suárez effectively legitimized himself.³⁸ Thus, here I do not wish to question whether Hellín's reading is loyal or unfaithful to Suárez, but rather to point out three elements: 1) the popular reading for which Suárez's foundation of ontology is structurally a part of his theory of analogy of the being is formulated in the first systematic way in Hellín's works; 2) this reading, according to a Thomistic pattern, puts God's unintelligible essence at the core of Suárez's problematic ontology, and makes analogy the way through which to construct a metaphysical *system*, to bypass this obstacle; 3) like his contemporaries, Hellín reads Suárez as a rationalist; accordingly, he understands his attempt at epistemologically founding metaphysics as a science – by showing that metaphysics has one single and precise object, namely, being (*ens*) – as though Suárez would have sought to *construct* a metaphysical system in the order of reason by finding the notion of being as the ultimate notions which to start from. In this way, the analogy of being ends up becom-

35 Outside *Pensamiento*, and much later, see also ROIG GIRONELLA 1987.

36 SUÁREZ 1861, *Disputatio* 2, s. 1-2.

37 SUÁREZ 1861, *Disputatio* 28, s. 1-3.

38 SUÁREZ 1861, *Disputatio* 2, s. 1, § 14: "Fundamentum primae sententiae [...] tangit materiam de analogia entis infra tractandam [...]," s. 2, § 36: "Una est de univocatione entis, quia si ens non est univocum, illa ratio sufficit ut non sit proprie universale; quomodo autem ex dictis non sequatur esse univocum, et quid illi ad univocationem desit, infra in proprio loco est tractandum, agendo de divisionibus entis [...]." See also s. 2, §§ 24, 26.

ing, from a structural problem of metaphysics as ontology, the ultimate foundation of metaphysics, and the pillar of a metaphysical *system*.

As I stated above, this latter aspect of Hellín's interpretation is especially evident in his extensive paper from 1948 *Lineas fundamentales del sistema metafisico de Suárez* (*Fundamental Features of Suárez's Metaphysical System*) where he not only contends that Suárez's philosophy exhibits all the features of a true philosophical system, but even pledges to reconstruct this Suarezian system as a 'synthetic' one (not so far from Spinoza's) in which all the metaphysical truths descend *a priori* and deductively from the first and the higher, i.e. the identity of essence and existence in God and hence His necessary existence); an aspect connected in turn with Hellín's idea, which I shall hint at below, that existence (in the scholastic meaning) is the ultimate core of all of Suárez's philosophy. According to Hellín, however, God's essence constitutes the core of Suárez's metaphysics:

The predicate 'being by essence' is that which is firstly conceived in God: from it are derived *a priori* all its characteristic predicates, and particularly its infinity and its imitability, and by imitability he is also the rationale *a priori* for the possibility of beings by participation in infinite variety; in turn, the predicate 'being by participation' is the one that is firstly conceived in the creature, and from it are derived *a priori* all the characteristic predicates of it, such as its continuity, the necessity of divine conservation or cooperation, the obediential power, the finiteness, the potentiality, the mutability, the composition of potency and act, at least accidental, the multiplicability of beings in the species and of individuals under the same species, the univocal similarities, which bind created beings to one another, and the analogous similarity which binds them to one another and to the Creator. Therefore, the simplest unity of being by essence is the *a priori* reason of its attributes and in particular of its immutability, and the *a priori* reason of being by participation in its immense variety and composition.³⁹

39 HELLÍN 1948, 139. Likewise, albeit different, readings of Suárez's (alleged) systematic metaphysics also circulated among contributors who were not members of the *Pensamiento* group, and whose contributions appear in the 1948 special issue on Suárez. This is the case with two influential intellectuals like the aforementioned Marcial Solana, and the historian of Spanish philosophy Juan Yela Utrilla. Bringing Suárez outside the limits of scholastic metaphysics, both Solana's and Yela's interpretations advance the notion

It must be said that Hellín's reconstructions widely acknowledge what today's readers call the "theological orientation of Suárez's metaphysics."⁴⁰ This is unlike later interpreters, who (sometimes influenced by Heidegger) would see a 'secularized' notion of being in Suárez's ontology. As Hellín points out, Suárez's whole system (so to speak) of analogy is wholly constructed upon a prior acknowledgment of the weakness of the human mind. Suarezian analogy is hence a way to construct a systematic metaphysics through bypassing the structural limits of the created mind by intellectually grasping, and verbally uttering, the intrinsic unity of a layered reality; especially in seizing the unity of created and uncreated being:

No such thing as the analogy of being would exist if all beings were equal; if they were all unequal, so that they are neither similar nor connected among themselves, there would be no analogy either, because there would be neither a concept nor a common term grounded in reality. And finally, if the understanding were to know all beings by their own concepts and as they are in themselves, there would be no analogy of being either, because although in this case there would be very different and mutually related beings, and they would be known as diverse and related, nevertheless, there would be neither a common concept nor a common term for all of them; neither would the one be known by concepts taken from the others, nor would they be named by terms primarily imposed on the others. So, before directly and technically solving the problem of analogy, we should be aware about the reality of beings that, being diverse, have some resemblance or connection among themselves, and that we conceive of some of them by concepts taken from others, or name them by terms imposed primarily on others. Dealing here with the analogy of being and of the other predicates which are shared by God and creatures, we must investigate whether God exists and what we know of him, his infinite transcendence over

of an implicit similarity between Suárez and early modern rationalism. Solana (SOLANA 1948) magnifies Suárez's claim that the principle of contradiction is the first and the ultimate metaphysical principle, making it the foundation of an abstract and aprioristic philosophy, not so distinct from Clauberg's and especially Wolff's. Yela Utrilla (YELA 1948), instead, reconstructs Suárez's overall account of the being of reason, by stressing that this issue is intrinsically connected with problems posed by idealism, and that, in a scholastic context that went beyond exemplarism, Suárez remains a realist while also anticipating German idealism. These two readings partially coincide with later interpretative stances, and which arose in the wake of super-transcendentalistic interpretations of Suarezian thought.

40 SALAS 2018.

all created and creatable things, both in the order of being and in the order of cognition, and, finally, how the opposition that seems to exist between God's transcendence and the possibility of our knowledge of Him is reconciled by means of analogy.⁴¹

However, Hellín reconstructs Suárez's whole theory of God's transcendence and culminates in the general thesis that we are led to opt for analogy since we cannot know God's essence. Indeed, in Hellín's view, we find ourselves at a crossroads. In one direction, we have the view that the concepts which we positively and commonly predicate of created reality are cannot at all be used to describe God's essence;⁴² a position that easily falls into dogmatic agnosticism. In the other direction, we have the way of projecting those attributes onto God; a position that falls into pantheism. Hence, the whole difficulty consists of trying to conceive of God positively but by analogy, without negating its difference with creatures.⁴³ Indeed, this theological *impasse* can be solved only by resorting to an analogical understanding of being, based on the analogy of intrinsic attribution. Hence, analogy is at once both a metaphysical strategy and a theological necessity.

2.3 The Abstraction Issue

By situating Suárez's thought in such a theoretical framework, the contributors of *Pensamiento* were particularly interested in another issue, which could be dubbed the 'abstraction problem'. Once it had been established that

41 HELLÍN 1945, 148.

42 HELLÍN 1945, 172.

43 HELLÍN 1945, 173: "the whole difficulty consists of seeing whether at least the common predicates, which enter into the analogical concept of God, are representative of some perfection that is formally in God, even though we do not represent it according to the way it is in God."

Suárez's theory of analogy is integral to his construction of ontology, and once it had been noted that Suarezian analogy pivots on a 'noetic' understanding of the unity of being, it appeared crucial to also determine Suárez's theory of *ens* from a gnosiological point of view, spelling out the process by which we get to grasp such a wide and general objective concept of 'being' – such that we can even employ it to analogically predicate something common between God and creatures. Evidently, this problem concerns not only the gnosiological foundations of Suárez's metaphysics and simultaneously connects it with two other issues. On the one hand, it plays a strategic role pitting Suárez against criticism and phenomenology, by showing that the human intellect has a 'way out' to realism, and away from idealistic solipsism. On the other hand – and also for this latter aim –, it provides a crucial contrast with the 'allegations' of Nominalism made against Suárez by a number of important representatives of Neo-Thomism.⁴⁴

This is why *Pensamiento* featured several important papers devoted to Suárez's gnosiology and theory of concepts over the years 1945–1975. Alejandro authored two famous articles which touched on Suárez's theory of the cognition of singulars and universals. The first one, which was published in two parts in 1947, deals with the thorny fact that Suárez effectively subscribed to the thesis of the direct and immediate knowledge of the material singular before the universal; a position previously held by Scotus and Ockham, and strongly contrasted by Thomism, which conversely maintained that matter is unintelligible and that it is impossible to know the singular directly. Alejandro's strategy was to admit Suárez's anti-Thomistic view, which he de-

⁴⁴ Spanish Neo-scholastics saw this point as crucial, since they identified Nominalism as an ultimately agnostic and anti-metaphysical tradition. See ALEJANDRO 1947, 404, and ALEJANDRO 1948c. Those who accused Suárez of being a Nominalist are in particular Mahieu (MAHIEU 1921), Marèchal (MARÈCHAL 1923, 26 and 27), and Giaccon (GIACCON 1941). See also ROIG GIRONELLA 1961a.

scribed as “rational gnosiological optimism,”⁴⁵ and defend it. In turn, he accused Thomism of embracing “Plato’s poetic thesis”⁴⁶ of the unknowability of matter. Interestingly, Alejandro pivots on Suárez’s anti-platonism (and the alleged platonism of the Thomists) by connecting this issue with Suárez’s peculiar understanding of the principle of individuation (entity), which makes the individual into a pure individual, and not a particularization of a common nature.⁴⁷ For Alejandro, this shows that the doctrine of the direct knowledge of the singular takes part in a wider anti-platonic strategy implemented by Suárez, which allows him to more properly defend a Thomistic moderate realism.⁴⁸ Alejandro’s following paper, featured in 1948,⁴⁹ deals with the Uncommon Doctor’s theory of the universal concept. Herein, he attacks Kant’s notion of ‘intuition’ and pledges to show that Kant (and not Suárez) follows in the wake of Ockham’s doctrine, by arguing that the German philosopher was pushed to contend that ‘concepts’ (universal notions) cannot be acquired from the outside, but rather must indwell in the subject itself. On the contrary, through his theory of the intelligibility of the singular, Suárez manages to save a form of the moderate realism of universals and to clear out why and how we get to know universal things by means of the knowledge of singulars.⁵⁰

45 ALEJANDRO 1948a, 429.

46 ALEJANDRO 1947a, 423.

47 SUÁREZ 1861, *Disputatio* 5, s. 6. See GRACIA 1979; GRACIA 1982; GRACIA 1994.

48 ALEJANDRO 1947b, 151–152.

49 ALEJANDRO 1948a.

50 It is worth noticing that Alejandro carefully distinguishes Suárez’s from Scotus’s view, insisting on the fundamental difference between the two great masters about the universals and the principle of individuation (Scotus’s individual is not Suárez’s, nor Aquinas’ or Ockham’s). Yet, Suárez’s theory of the knowledge of the singular (like Fonseca’s and of most of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Jesuits) draws from Scotus’s doctrine (e.g. *Quaestiones de Anima*, q. 16), especially in claiming the priority of the singular in universal in cognition (see SOUTH 2002, who yet interprets Suárez’s doctrine as departing from both Aquinas and Scotus). On the other hand, Suárez (SUÁREZ 1861, *Disputatio* 5, s. 2, §§ 9–12) famously tries to reconcile his moderate realism with Scotus’s theory, by identifying the notion of the ‘entity’ (i.e. singular existence as a supposit) with

In later times, these topics would remain central in *Pensamiento*, with papers like those of Muñoz⁵¹ and Roig Gironella.⁵² Yet another, even more metaphysical, level of the ‘abstraction problem’ would inspire these authors, i.e. the issues, connected with Suárez’s aprioristic ‘foundation’ of metaphysics, of the distinction between the formal and the objective concept. In 1948 and 1962, two papers featured in *Pensamiento* dialogued about this topic at a distance. The first article was Eleuterio Elorduy S.J.’s work devoted to Suárez’s notion of ‘objective concept’. This lengthy article (90 pages) reconstructs in detail all the occurrences of Suárez’s objective concept. Apart from critically discussing the interpretation of Mahieu,⁵³ and championing Suárez’s position, Elorduy dwells on the historical placement of his doctrine with respect to other understandings of the same notion and, by comparison with the Spanish thinker’s manuscripts,⁵⁴ on the role of the Coimbra Jesuit Balthasar Álvarez (the editor of Suárez’s posthumous works) in interpolating its genuine doctrine in the *De anima*. Despite its great erudition, Elorduy’s paper overlaps different statements about the objective and the formal concept. The great number of different quotations, on many different topics, of the notion of ‘objective concept’ should have led him to acknowledge that Suárez did not formulate a peculiar understanding of this notion, but rather, one which he in fact drew from the overall scholastic context. Yet Elorduy simply could

the ‘principle of individuation’ in fully conceptual common natures (see GRACIA 1979; GRACIA 1982; GRACIA 1994). As noted by South (SOUTH 2002, 788n), Suárez’s theory of the cognition of the singular “has generated some interest among Suárez interpreters” in the twentieth century (including some further accusations of nominalism; see PECCORINI 1974). However, “one drawback shared by all these interpreters is the need to view Suárez as a kind of Thomist,” whereas “he is not just modifying one theme from Thomas but is elaborating a position that has deep roots in his metaphysics, psychology, and natural philosophy.”

51 MUÑOZ 1949; MUÑOZ 1950.

52 ROIG GIRONELLA 1959; ROIG GIRONELLA 1961a.

53 MAHIEU 1921.

54 ELORDUY 1948a, 351–355.

not renounce the idea of the general cohesion and originality of Suárez's work; accordingly, he blatantly misses Suárez's notion of the objective concept, especially in relation to the formal one and with the claim that the latter constitutes a "formal and intrinsic term" of the mind's conception.⁵⁵ He ends up claiming that the objective concept is an intra-mental additional representation, formed reflexively as a "factitious idea"⁵⁶ (this lexicon is obviously Cartesian), which endures in the knowing subject and is not strictly dependent upon the presence of the *verbum mentis*.

This reconstruction is gently rectified by Hellín's 1962 work, a keen and lucid reply to Siewerth's interpretation of Suárez's notion of the objective concept.⁵⁷ Like Elorduy, Siewerth misunderstood Suárez's notion of 'formal concept', thereby resulting in a questionable interpretation of Suárez as a "Cartesian and a Kantian," i.e. a subjectivist. According to Siewerth – who effectively mistook the fact that the formal concept disposes the mind towards objective knowledge for the fact that it is the ultimate knowledge of the mind – Suárez held that the mind never knows its external object, but can direct its attention only to its intra-mental contents. Hellín's point-for-point analysis of Suárez's claims, especially of *Disputatio 2*, is an example of clarity, and definitely sheds light on the Uncommon Doctor's view:

for Suárez, the formal concept is the act of understanding, and not the thing understood. It is a quality produced by the possible intellect and the impressed species. The action by which it is produced is a predicamental action distinct from the intellect and from the act of understanding itself; the formal concept is an *intrinsic term* of that action, i.e. it is a term that is merely *produced* by that action, and not *known* by it. The act of understanding, or mental verb, is *extrinsically* terminated, as into an object, into the thing itself, and not to any internal image, and hence not into the formal concept itself. [...] If one takes into account

55 SUÁREZ 1861, *Disputatio 2*, s. 1.

56 ELORDUY 1948a, 350.

57 SIEWERTH 1959, 138–141.

Suárez's own words, the theories that these words presuppose, and the explanation that Suárez makes of his own claims, it is impossible to attribute to him the slightest shadow of subjectivism or idealism.⁵⁸

Interestingly, Elorduy's reading would be recovered almost ten years later in another paper, authored by José Aleu Benítez S.J. which was issued in 1970. Like Elorduy, Aleu Benítez (who mentions every paper published in *Pensamiento* on this topic, save for Hellín's) subscribes to the idea that the objective concept may exist just by virtue of reflexive knowledge; however, he seems especially worried about avoiding, for the Suarezian mind, a purely representative understanding of knowledge, which would entail a pivotal issue of criticism. Indeed, how could representative knowledge representatively 'grasp' an extra-mental reality which is radically indeterminable *a priori* for the intellect? Aleu Benítez's idea is that the production of the objective concept structurally depends upon an undefined "vital operation" and by the intrinsic proportion between the thing and our cognitive power; such a proportion somehow guarantees the objectivity of our representations.⁵⁹ The vital act also coincides with the reflexive knowledge mentioned by Elorduy, and also with the "vital adhesion" by which a subject consciously subscribes to the correspondence between its formal concept and the extra-mental thing.⁶⁰ Although this reconstruction hits the bull's-eye in certain respects, perhaps one should not take it too seriously.⁶¹ It is, nevertheless, quite revealing in il-

58 HELLÍN 1962, 432.

59 ALEU BENÍTEZ 1970, 405–406.

60 ALEU BENÍTEZ 1970, 415–416.

61 This whole interpretation is grounded upon a few passages in Suárez's works (*De anima*, III, 2, § 5) that Aleu Benítez over-interprets. Herein, Suárez speaks about the non-resemblance between the intentional species and the thing. Although the intentional species does pertain to the formal concept (which is, materially, a species in the intellect), Suárez does not actually refer to the objective concept. Nor does Suárez say that the thing has some proportion with our mind (ALEU BENÍTEZ 1970, 406) so that this "vital operation" produces the objective concept. Suárez simply claims that while the impressed species in the intellect does not formally reflect the extra-mental object (unlike-

illustrating which problems were at stake in the debate about Suárez's objective concept and its possible usage against Kant's criticism.

2.4 Essentialism or Existentialism?

However, besides the 'abstraction problem', yet another issue that, starting especially from 1948 – the publication date of Gilson's *L'être et l'essence*⁶² –, appears in some papers from *Pensamiento* and would contribute immensely to shaping the subsequent debate on Suárez's metaphysics. Indeed, for an ardent Neo-scholastic who wanted to associate Suárez with Aquinas, and who aimed at founding a Neo-Suarezianism, Suárez's thought was embarrassing especially on one particular point; namely, following Duns Scotus, Suárez overtly rejects the real distinction between essence and existence. As is well-known, the idea that the real distinction of essence and existence was a specific mark of Aquinas' thought was stressed especially in the work of Maritain and Gilson, and in the Neo-Thomistic historiography of medieval thought as a whole. On the other hand, its importance was implicitly connected with contemporary debates on the notion of 'existence', and with the rise of an 'existentialistic' philosophy in the '40s, against which the Church did not take an official position before 1950, with Pius XII's encyclical *Humani generis*.⁶³ Especially via Heidegger and his critique of classic ontology, the problem

ness), it does have some analogy with it, in the sense that the cognitive power conforms with it in order to be in analogy with the thing. Aleu Benítez is right, however, in stressing that for Suárez, complete knowledge only comes when the intellect forms a reflexive species by a reflexive act, which is also involved in the process by which the intellect know *in actu signato* that a certain connection represented in the mind conforms with thought. But this is not the "vital operation" by which the intellect actively participates in the generation of the species. Such an operation rather seems to be the active production of the species, as in Scotus' view, to which Suárez subscribes and which for him explains the process of the generation of the species itself, and not, however, that of the objective concept.

62 GILSON 1948; condensed English edition GILSON 1949.

63 PIUS XII 1950, § 5: If anyone examines the state of affairs outside the Christian fold, he

of 'existence' came to touch quite closely on the role played by scholasticism in this dispute. In turn, Gilson interpreted Aquinas's philosophy as mainly 'existentialistic', and labeled Suárez as intrinsically 'essentialistic', i.e. built upon a rationalistic pre-eminence of essence as the ultimate core of the *ens*.⁶⁴

Gilson's reading was at least questionable, since – as noted by Hellín⁶⁵ – it was grounded on a prior understanding of the whole problem along the lines of the essence-existence distinction, which yet Suárez (along with most of his Jesuit colleagues) reduced to a rational distinction. Nonetheless, Gilson's influential reading managed to trigger a vivid debate that compelled Iberian Neo-Suarezians to stress Suárez's strong realism, to which his alleged rationalism also owes a great deal. The *Pensamiento* Jesuits reacted in a number of different ways. A paper by Luis Martínez Gómez S.J., featured in 1948,⁶⁶ stressed the intrinsic connection between Suárez's theory of analogy of intrinsic attribution with his position about the essence-existence problem.

will easily discover the principle trends that not a few learned men are following. Some imprudently and indiscreetly hold that evolution, which has not been fully proved even in the domain of natural sciences, explains the origin of all things, and audaciously support the monistic and pantheistic opinion that the world is in continual evolution. Communists gladly subscribe to this opinion so that, when the souls of men have been deprived of every idea of a personal God, they may the more efficaciously defend and propagate their dialectical materialism. Such fictitious tenets of evolution which repudiate all that is absolute, firm and immutable, have paved the way for the new erroneous philosophy which, rivaling idealism, immanentism and pragmatism, has assumed the name of existentialism, since it concerns itself only with existence of individual things and neglects all consideration of their immutable essences. There is also a certain historicism, which attributing value only to the events of man's life, overthrows the foundation of all truth and absolute law, both on the level of philosophical speculations and especially to Christian dogmas." Interestingly, CUESTA 1951 (a paper written before the publication of *Humani Generis*, but published a year later) recalls that "in Spain, this controversy took place during the Theological Week of September 1949, and still remains present in the view of those writers who profess to be sincerely Catholic and judge essentialist philosophy – elaborated through abstraction and reasoning – to be less suitable or insufficient to support religious beliefs, and legitimize ethical principles in an effective, vital and human way" (55).

64 GILSON 1948, 144 and following.

65 HELLÍN 1956.

66 MARTÍNEZ GÓMEZ, 1948.

Gómez stresses that, for Suárez, existence is a fundamental constituent of any being; accordingly, he argues, Suárez could in no way embrace Cajetan's analogy of proportion, which is based upon a real distinction of essence and existence, which is why the Uncommon Doctor instead subscribes to the analogy of intrinsic attribution. Besides Gómez's work, the major voices of this debate were Iturrioz and Hellín. The former authored a paper published outside *Pensamiento*,⁶⁷ where he aligned with the idea – put forward by the Italian Jesuit Nicola Monaco – that one can find in Suárez a surrogate of the essence-existence distinction. Monaco and Iturrioz especially pointed to the fact that even though Suárez subscribes to the essence-existence identity doctrine, nevertheless opened the possibility to a real distinction between the actual essence and its *subsistence*.⁶⁸ Accordingly, they argued, one can consider such real distinction as equivalent to the essence-existence one, so as to assimilate Suárez's doctrine to Aquinas's, and to look at the two theories as mutually equivalent.⁶⁹

Hellín discusses this view in a note dating back to 1953,⁷⁰ where he subscribes to the parallelism between the subsistence-essence real distinction (Suárez) and the essence-existence real distinction (Aquinas). Yet, he denies that one can, in this way, reduce Suárez's "system" to Aquinas's. Rather, Hellín argues that one should reduce Aquinas's view to Suárez's, since subsistence does not confer any more existence to the essence, which (in Suárez's

67 ITURRIOZ 1949.

68 SUÁREZ 1861, *Disputatio* 31, s. 5, § 5.

69 One might dare to note that Monaco and Iturrioz misunderstand Suárez's distinction, since individual subsistence has nothing to do with existence in general; it is rather the metaphysical component that 'completes' a certain individual and makes it be really 'this', besides the logical 'thisness' bestowed on it by the principle of individuation. It is not by accident that this doctrine was formulated by Suárez (like others) within the personalistic-Trinitarian context of the problem of 'supposality' or 'personality', and was also accepted by the Thomists (Cajetan). See MUÑIZ 1946; QUARELLO 1952; REICHMANN 1959; RAMELLA 2019; GUIDI 2023.

70 HELLÍN 1953.

doctrine) already and intrinsically exists. Hence, one can reconcile Aquinas's view with Suárez's essence-existence identity by asserting that subsistence, and not existence, adds up to the actual essence and generates the supposit.

More importantly, a few years after this intervention (1956–1957), Hellín went on to publish a two-part paper on the issue, in which he challenged Gilson's⁷¹ tenet.⁷² Even though Hellín's other essays are not of inferior quality, this one is surely one of his most important, both in its content and in its influence. Hellín very lucidly questions Gilson's overall approach, by arguing that his classification of Suárez as an essentialist is formulated entirely as if the real distinction between essence and existence was effectively the only theoretical paradigm. Hellín set out three possible classes of scholastic positions within those who admit the real distinction between essence and existence: 1) the essentialists, who afford essence with the ultimate role in bringing about the being; 2) the existentialists (*existencialistas*), who contend that existence is the crucial constituent in being; 3) the existentists (*existentiales*), who argue that both existence and essence are indispensable for the coming into being of a being. Yet, he notes,

these schemes presuppose the real distinction of essence and existence, and claim that the total intrinsic perfection of the being comes from essence alone, or from existence alone, or partially from essence and partially from existence; all of which make no sense if essence is the same reality as existence. For Suárez, one should invent a fourth view, or scheme. He could be said an *ontist* or an *existential integralist*, since the real entity, which is opposed to nothingness, is at once essence and existence. All the reality of the entity considered as a degree or special order of being, is called essence; and the whole same reality, taken as that which is there, opposed to nothingness, is existence.⁷³

71 Along with Gilson, another representative of this essentialistic understanding of Suárez's metaphysics, challenged by Hellín, is Ignazio Bonetti (BONETTI 1951).

72 Hellín's defense of Suárez's 'existentialism' continued in three papers published in *Es-píritu*: HELLÍN 1961 (on Suárez's understanding on the possibles) and the two posthumous articles HELLÍN 1980 and HELLÍN 1981.

73 HELLÍN 1956, 162.

The second part of Hellín's masterful analysis is devoted to showing that existence is the main constituent in Suárez's doctrine. Though essence is just a limitation of existence, this does not at all make Suárez an existentialist. Surprisingly, after having neutralized Gilson's accusations, Hellín goes on the counter-attack. Suárez's "existential integralism," he argues, constitutes a distinct form of existentialism; the only one which is compatible with Catholicism, and which is immune from the irrationalist tendencies of existentialism:

Such a Suarezian existentialism shows well how scholastic philosophy, properly understood, is not a philosophy of abstractions, nor a rationalist philosophy, but a philosophy of realities, and one in which existences are not deduced *a priori*, but are taken from reality and verified only *a posteriori*. Modern existentialism allows that the object of philosophy must be realities, and not mere abstractions, and that, in being, the main element is existence. This was a great progress, ascertained by modern existentialism; but it was not a progress with respect to scholastic philosophy, since it had this doctrine already in ancient times, but [only] with respect to Wolffian and Hegelian philosophy [two forms of rationalism, for Hellín]. The real being (*ser*) is nothing but the singular and concrete, and it is this very being that is to be saved or condemned, not Hegel's abstractions. Yet scholastic existentialism fairly corrects modern existentialism by reminding it that in addition to the existence of the moment and the becoming, there is the existence of what is permanent and of substance. It further claims that universal concepts are true with respect to the thing represented, though not as to the mode of abstraction; this allows us to make universal judgments of absolute value, by which we can intellectually ascend to the real knowledge of supra-experiential entities, higher than pure becoming, such as God, the substanceness and spirituality of the soul, and the immutability of normative morality.⁷⁴

In sum, Suárez's metaphysics of existence is the way out of both the irrationalist temptations of existentialism and the anti-realistic ones of essentialism, and allows us to remain within a metaphysics of substance. As I hinted at before, Hellín's anti-Gilsonian championing of Suárez's genuine view on this topic is very important, both conceptually and historiographically. Effect-

74 HELLÍN 1957, 37-38.

ively, if Gilson's tenet gave birth to a generation of (mainly French) interpreters, who were inclined to read Suárez as an essentialist akin to Clauberg and Wolff, Hellín's reply paved the way for a scholastic reaction to such readings, which would continue with José Pereira's works⁷⁵ and continues today in the work of many scholars.⁷⁶

2. *Aristoteles Lusitanus*

As previously mentioned, this immense undertaking to construct Neo-Suarezianism is not immune from a number of historiographical decisions. The most blatant of them is that of isolating the many late scholastic doctrines discussed and improved by Suárez, making them as many parts of a Suarezian 'system' and putting them forward as personal ideas of Suárez himself. In this reconstruction, Pedro Fonseca and the Portuguese tradition appear to be the 'sacrificial victim' of the rise of Spanish Neo-Suarezianism, according to a historiographical tendency that was dominant in Spain. It suffices to say that the aforementioned Solana, in his *Historia*, treated Fonseca and the Coimbra as Spaniards, likely based on the fact that, from 1580 to 1640, the crown of Portugal was united to (and under) that of Spain (the Iberian Union). On the other hand, the major Portuguese figure welcomed among the great authorities of Neo-Thomism was João Poinset, a representative of the Salamanca School who mainly lived in Spain.

It is therefore understandable that the devotion of such great attention on Suárez polarized the debate, setting the Portuguese to work to construct a nationalistic valorization of their own darlings, and to stress the presence of a Lusitanian line of early modern scholasticism, represented especially by Fon-

⁷⁵ See especially PEREIRA J. 2004; PEREIRA J. 2007.

⁷⁶ And, as the investigations go on, the interpretation of Suárez as an essentialist appears weaker day after day.

seca and the Coimbrans. The spirit of this endeavor is still well represented in Bacelar e Oliveira's 1960 paper, which takes advantage of Baltazar Telles's praise of the Coimbra Curse in his *Chronica* to stress the following:

Baltazar Telles refers here to a transformative work by the Coimbrans's action. He vigorously judged, with a critical stance, a positive happening encompassing the entire scope of Latin American, and even Eastern, philosophical studies that were influenced by the Portuguese. He emphasized the philosophical and the teaching spirit of the Masters but, above all, he saw in them the capability of the fifteenth century to bequeath the History of Culture as peculiarly their own, and this was the result of the organic discipline acquired in the Renaissance universities: an *excellent Method*, with, keeping in mind the problem of teaching, the prerogatives of clarity and the grace of brevity. What Telles applied to Portugal could be extended, in a much broader observation, to all the European centers where the vigorous influence of the College of Arts was felt. The chaos of Commentaries, Sentences, and Disputes gradually received comprehensive constructions, to which the Iberian Peninsula contributed with systematic works that remain to this day.⁷⁷

Overtaking Solana's operation, Portuguese historiography advanced an approach which interestingly involved Suárez, who lived in Coimbra from 1597 to 1617 and died in Lisbon in 1617, hence leading most Portuguese scholars to consider him a fellow compatriot and representative of the Coimbra school. As I will show, almost the same thing happened with another great Spanish philosopher, Luís Molina, whose fortune fared less brightly among Portuguese scholars due to his controversy with Fonseca about the authorship of the doctrine of the "middle science."

However, the *Revista portuguesa de filosofia* played an important role in the relaunching of Portuguese scholasticism, especially on two occasions. The first one was the 1953 special issue *Pedro da Fonseca: o Aristóteles Português (1528-1599)*, which collected seven important papers on Fonseca, and was put together on the four-hundredth anniversary of Fonseca's first course in Coim-

⁷⁷ BACELAR E OLIVEIRA 1960, 140-141.

bra as a Professor in the College of Arts (1553). This special issue follows another (1952) which was devoted to another major figure of Portuguese (or alleged Portuguese) scholasticism, Peter of Spain, who, like Fonseca, was the author of a widespread treatise on logic. The second was the 1955 issue which collected proceedings from the First Portuguese National Congress of Philosophy, an important event that gathered, among others, several Portuguese and Spanish scholars working on these topics.

2.1. *A Genuine Thomist*

Regarding Fonseca, one clear testament to the notion that Portuguese scholars had of him, still in 1953, is the brief anonymous foreword which opens the special issue of the *Revista* devoted to him:

If the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were, philosophically speaking, faint centuries in Europe, the same cannot be said about the Iberian Peninsula. The Renaissance took place in the Iberian Peninsula in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and then died only to rise again in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the Iberian Peninsula, with the great philosophical renewal in which the Salmanticenses, the Complutenses, and the Conimbricenses took a remarkable part. Portugal was represented by names that cannot be forgotten: John of St. Thomas, Suárez, Molina, Fonseca and the whole Coimbra School. Of this School, Fonseca was undoubtedly the most notable representative. Critics dubbed him the "Portuguese Aristotle" for his sharpness of wit, breadth of knowledge, and vigor of thought. However, his name and his work are almost unknown to us. Only quoted, when quoted, as a representative of scholasticism, a term that means nothing, or very little to us, in the rare books written about philosophical culture, his work sleeps a long oblivion in the dust of the libraries, those being rare who take it out to leaf through for curiosity or interest.⁷⁸

These few lines apparently repeat Giacom's historical narrative recalled above; actually, they tend to present Portuguese and Spanish philosophy as an exception, and the *siglo de oro* as the age of a substantive rebirth of Iberian

78 UNKNOWN 1953, 343.

philosophy. Among the main characters of this venture are some authors who lived in Portugal, even though they were not themselves Portuguese, and almost all related to Coimbra. Among the representatives of the Coimbra School, Fonseca especially was the – now neglected and forgotten – great philosophical genius of Portuguese Aristotelianism.

Already in 1946, Cassiano Abranches devoted a paper to the genesis of Fonseca's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, and pledged to show that the Portuguese Aristotle "was the most profound philosopher we had, and the most appreciated metaphysician in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries."⁷⁹ His presentation of Fonseca as a great metaphysician remains quite significant. Despite constant associations of him with Peter of Spain, and even though Fonseca's *Institutiones* was one of the most popular and influential texts of logic in the early modern age (overtly mentioned in the *Ratio Studiorum*), the treatment of Fonseca's work is indeed entirely focused on the *Metaphysics* and his role as the frontman of the Coimbra Schools; a role that makes Fonseca a perfect *alter-ego* of Suárez, the great methodological reformer of Aristotelian philosophy.

This particular approach compares Fonseca and Suárez in terms of the general reorganization of Aristotelian thought, with respect to which Fonseca appears to be still constrained to the form of the commentary. One peculiar strategy that many scholars implemented in the *Revista* was that of following Suárez's lead in praising Fonseca for his philological work on the Greek text of the *Metaphysics*, and for having provided a clearer translation of Aristotle's words.⁸⁰ At the same time, they also tended to stress Fonseca's charisma as an

79 ABRANCHES 1946b, 57.

80 GIACON 1953, 410; SUÁREZ 1861, *Index Locupletissimus*, c. 7, q. 1: "[...] ideo inutile reputo in illis rationibus aut explicandis aut defendendis immorari, sed legantur expositores, et praesertim Fonseca, cuius translatio tam est elegans et dilucida, ut fere sine expositore a quovis intelligi possit."

innovator. Let us read, for instance, how Abranches again circumvents Fonseca's loyalty to the commentary tradition, and presents his work as an independent treatise, like Suárez's:

His scholarship was vast and solid, and in investigating the various doctrines he is extremely thorough and subtle. In setting out his doctrines he is brilliant and clear, without too much extension, and above all he abhors useless subtleties. He knows all the doctrines and all the authors, both ancient and scholastic, being charitable and inclusive with all opinions. We might take the questions of Fonseca, order them logically, and we would have a new and personal treatise on metaphysics. Therefore, his work is not a mere commentary on Aristotle, but an original work due to his very fruitful metaphysical talent. He keeps full freedom and independence in judging the authors and schools, without committing himself to any one in particular.⁸¹

These words are somehow consonant with those of Giaccon, who participated directly in this discussion through a paper which appeared in 1953 and which was devoted to "Fonseca's Neo-Aristotelianism" (read: Fonseca is not a Neo-Thomist or a Neo-scholastic, but a Neo-Aristotelian). Here the Italian Jesuit remarks that

Fonseca was not concerned with reporting Aristotle's genuine thought, but above all he sets out what must be admitted according to the truth. Some questions are discussed at length, and one cannot deny that, for those interested in Aristotle's thought, these discussions render the development very heavy. Under the excuse of commenting on Aristotle, Fonseca intended to develop the whole of philosophy.⁸²

One contrasting voice – which, albeit agreed about the general aim – was that of Diamantino Martins, who attributed Fonseca's decision to write a commentary to pedagogical concerns.⁸³ However, it is not accidental that, apart

81 ABRANCHES 1946a, 56.

82 GIACCON 1953, 411.

83 MARTINS D., 1953, 405.

from the keen reconstruction of his doctrines, the *Revista* group consistently remains interested in Fonseca's relation with Suárez. These scholars dwell especially on how Fonseca, despite his Scotism, was closer to Thomas Aquinas than Suárez, and to what extent Suárez contributed to the corruption of Thomism in the modern age. Severiano Tavares, one of the main characters in this story, concludes, for instance, as follows:

Fonseca always had Thomas Aquinas [’s work] under his eyes, and one can say, generally speaking, that his philosophical positions, despite being close to Duns Scotus in many points, are much closer to those of Aquinas, which would not be the case with the continuators of the School of Coimbra. Suárez is much further away [from Aquinas] and, although he calls himself a disciple of the Angelic Doctor, his most fundamental doctrines are much more distant from the positions of this holy Doctor. However, due to various circumstances, Suárez succeeded in influencing the ideology and the philosophical paths of the Coimbra School much more strongly than Fonseca. Certainly, the latter exerted a great influence, in turn, on Suárez himself, who held Fonseca's opinions in great regard, sometimes following them openly, but much more implicitly, in his *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, although he also departed from him on many points, yielding over and over to other doctrines of the time. This is how the Coimbra School found its man, whom it had been searching for from the beginning, and leaned on him. Was it a pity? Perhaps. What would have become of it if it had followed Fonseca's more orthodox Thomism?⁸⁴

Tavares's surprising claims present Fonseca as the staunchest advocate of Thomism, and an influential figure on Suárez himself, whereas the latter is portrayed as a philosophical ouster who, through his influence on the School of Coimbra with his eclectic views, contributed to leading it astray. Besides these radical statements, Suárez's intellectual debt towards Fonseca is a constant subject of interest for the works featured in the *Revista*. For instance, in his 1953 paper, Ramon Ceñal S.J. recalled that "Fonseca's *Commentaries* are the immediate precedent of Suárez's *Metaphysical Disputations*, and it is undoubtedly a great credit to the Portuguese Jesuit to have prepared the way

84 TAVARES 1953, 353.

for the Spanish Jesuit's great architecture through this work."⁸⁵ But the most unexpected contribution in this sense is surely that of the aforementioned Spanish Jesuit Eleuterio Elorduy, who devoted a whole paper⁸⁶ to illustrating Fonseca's influence on Suárez, also via quantitative analysis. Significantly, Elorduy allowed himself to make such an acknowledgment in a Portuguese journal, specifically in the 1955 proceedings of the *Congresso Nacional*, whereas he rarely mentions Fonseca in *Pensamiento*, as well as his sway on Suárez's ideas. Nevertheless, Elorduy's tone is conciliatory, as he affirms that "Fonseca found in Suárez his most competent reader, the most authorized censor, and the most loyal admirer he could desire."⁸⁷

2.2 A Great Unknown Thinker and a Good Portuguese

Apart from these attempts to articulate Fonseca's role in a general history of Iberian scholasticism, the Portuguese Aristotle's thought remains in part enigmatic and, in some aspects, untouched. It would remain this way until at least Miguel Baptista Pereira's 1967 monograph⁸⁸, António Coxito's works⁸⁹ and, above all, António Manuel Martins's 1994 book.⁹⁰ Indeed, among the papers published by the *Revista*, only a few delve in-depth into Fonseca's doctrines. Most of them were authored by Abranches, who (on a much lesser scale) played for Fonseca the role played by Hellín for Suárez.

Abranches' papers concentrate on Fonseca's position about the analogy of being (closer to Cajetan and in contrast with Suárez's),⁹¹ his theory of uni-

85 CEÑAL 1953, 375.

86 ELORDUY 1955.

87 ELORDUY 1955.

88 PEREIRA M. B. 1967.

89 COXITO 1966; COXITO 1980; COXITO 1982a; COXITO 1982b; COXITO 2005.

90 MARTINS A. 1994.

91 ABRANCHES 1946b.

versals,⁹² and his theory of the exemplar cause.⁹³ These works must especially be credited for pointing out some specific themes of Fonseca's metaphysics, which were previously unknown. Yet, their stance is merely reconstructive and lacks an overall consideration of Fonseca's philosophy as a whole, as well as a critical approach that reads Fonseca in dialogue with his contemporaries. Considering other articles published in the *Revista*, in most cases, the Portuguese Aristotle is portrayed as an advocate of the knowledge of the singular, as a true Scotist concerning the principle of individuation, and for his understanding of absolute space which anticipates Suárez.⁹⁴ Another important topic is his formulation of the "middle science," which I shall address below.

Lacking a unitary reconstruction of his thought, most of the contributions in the *Revista* dwell on Fonseca's role as the main promoter of the *Cursus Conimbricensis*, with endless (and quite repetitive) year-to-year reconstructions of the making of his *Commentary* and his role in the genesis of the *Cursus*. The reason behind this stance may be quite simple, and is well stressed by Manuel do Santos Alvez. Unlike Suárez's, Fonseca's works have never received a modern edition, nor have they been translated into modern languages:

It is now about three years since I have been dwelling on Fonseca [...] and, despite that, I feel myself increasingly far from this giant of thought. However, the wish to make him known soon arose in me; not through a work of synthesis, for which I still do not have basic conditions, but by making it possible for those curious about our philosophical thought to refer to his works directly. Those dusty volumes lying in some rare libraries, and dating back to early seventeenth century editions (the most recent ones, of course), eloquently cry out the forgetfulness to which men destined him. It is urgent to pull Fonseca (as well as

92 ABRANCHES 1956.

93 ABRANCHES 1958.

94 GIACON 1953.

the other great masters of the second Scholastic) out from the criminal oblivion in which men and ideologies buried him. Yet, when men wake up to justice, Fonseca, there, so distant, will already philosophize in a language that, after the death of the classical humanities, only a few will understand. I thought then of a bilingual edition of his works, starting with the “*Institutionum Dialecticarum Libri Octo*.”⁹⁵

Santos Alvez then also promised a bilingual edition of the *Commentary*. Unfortunately, his whole project never saw daylight, save for the bilingual edition of the *Institutiones* carried out yet by Joaquim Ferreira Gomez at the University of Coimbra in 1964 (in the four-hundredth anniversary of its first publication in 1564).⁹⁶

For now, Fonseca scholars concentrate particularly on his historical role, sometimes treating him and the Coimbra Course purely in terms of national pride. In this respect, one extreme case is Gomes dos Santos’s 1955 paper, entitled *O Curso Conimbricense. Expressão do Patriotismo Português (The Coimbra Course. Expression of Portuguese Patriotism)*, which pivots especially on Fonseca’s diplomatic work in view of the authorization of the *Cursus*, and some nationalist reasons behind his endeavor. Santos focuses especially on Fonseca’s effort to prevent Molina from being the general reviewer of the Coimbra Course after the election of Acquaviva as the Society’s General; a battle that, for Santos, was motivated by the Portuguese people’s desire for a Portuguese person to accomplish this representative work.⁹⁷ By doing so, Fonseca hence acted as a patriot in contrast to a stranger (and an occupier, given the political situation that occurred unfolded after 1580), even though “al-

95 SANTOS ALVES 1955, 4.

96 An edition of the *Commentary* remains an idea from time to time entertained by some Portuguese scholars, but was never really accomplished. By contrast, great work has been done on the *Cursus Conimbricensis* by Mário Santiago de Carvalho, who is coordinating a huge bilingual edition (Latin-Portuguese, *Portugaliae Monumenta Neolatina*), which is still partially work in progress and in press for Coimbra University Press.

97 GOMES DOS SANTOS 1955, 464.

most his [Molina's] humanist and scientific education was Portuguese."⁹⁸ Fonseca's pledge for the Coimbra Course thus resulted in a "genuinely Portuguese work," which is "wholly Portuguese," while Molina is portrayed as an intruder and a rival of Fonseca.

In this regard, Santos's narrative even tries to develop, from such atmospheres, a way of shedding light on the long-standing issue of the authorship of the "middle science" theory. For him, indeed, the two parallel claims of Molina and Fonseca, of being the father of this doctrine, cannot both be taken seriously. Indeed, Molina shows "Freudian complexes" (!) that "haunt the minds of those who try the primacies of originality."⁹⁹ We leave the reader to judge the arguments here invoked by Santos.

2.3. Fonseca, Molina, and the Problem of Freedom

Santos Alvez's attack on Molina led us to touch on a final, albeit crucial, point concerning the representation of Fonseca's thought, i.e. his role in the development of the "middle science" doctrine. Effectively, the *Revista portuguesa* is the battleground for a controversy between scholars upholding Fonseca's authorship. The main challengers of this dispute are the aforementioned Severiano Tavares and José de Oliveira Dias, two supporters of Fonseca's authorship, whereas, outside the *Revista* and the Portuguese environment, another protagonist is Johannes Rabeneck, S.J., who is the main supporter of the Molina thesis. Even if it could seem bizarre that two scholars disagree so harshly with each other while they agree about the overall thesis, Dias and Tavares animated (partially via the *Revista*) an important (and often crude) exchange which especially concerns the arguments invoked to support their reconstruc-

98 GOMES DOS SANTOS 1955, 465.

99 GOMES DOS SANTOS 1955, 467.

tions, and notably the different chronologies used to show that Fonseca conceived the doctrine of the “middle science” before Molina. The discussion is very technical, and might not be particularly interesting for the reader of this article; on the other hand, it has been well reconstructed in a recent paper by João Rebalde.¹⁰⁰ As Abranches himself acknowledges,¹⁰¹ it is not so crucial to solve this problem, and surely, it is certainly less important for us than knowing how Fonseca came to be represented in these disputes.

“The bright initiator of such a great system” – as Tavares calls him with reference to the “middle science” doctrine –, Fonseca is seen as a stalwart defender of both human and divine freedom, a topic to which the Portuguese would effectively owe some of his posthumous notoriety.¹⁰² As for the divine freedom, Ceñal remarks in his 1953 article how Fonseca’s work is addressed especially in strengthening Cajetan’s doctrine, preserving God’s absolute autonomy and considering God’s free action as a perfection.¹⁰³ Ceñal also dwells on the legacy of Fonseca’s position, by focusing on the endorsement of two Portuguese Suarezians, João Salas and Cristovão Gil. As for human freedom, for Abranches, Fonseca’s pledge to construct a theory by which God’s eternal knowledge and human free acts can be taken together expresses Fonseca’s humanism:

Integrated into his era and seeking to save human values challenged by humanism, he was a staunch defender of human freedom. Fonseca addresses this question when dealing with the reconciliation of the universal dominion of God and man’s free action. God knows what was, what is and what will be. How does he know, however, what neither was nor will be, but *could be if*? This is the free act of the human being and what follows from that act which is dependent on the free position of the human free act that he calls ‘conditioned contingent

100 REBALDE 2023, 68–71.

101 ABRANCHES 1960, 123.

102 CERQUEIRA 2011.

103 CEÑAL 1953.

futures'. God knows, by natural science, all that is feasible and, by free science, all that depends on his divine decree: this is what has been called the 'science of simple intelligence' and the 'science of vision'. Fonseca institutes a new science, that of the things that would be if God had freely decreed them, but which will not be for lack of this decree; or the things that depend on the free action of human freedom, which can act or not act, act in this or in that way, and all the things that depend on the free action of human freedom and all the things that depend on this or that free human act.¹⁰⁴

As is well-known, Fonseca's theory of human freedom is one of the most characteristic aspects of his thought, and one that has captured the attention of today's scholars.¹⁰⁵ Its possible role, together with Descartes's in Brazilian eighteenth-century culture, as hypothesized by Cerqueira,¹⁰⁶ has yet to be proven. Yet it looks like one of the many potential research paths indicated by Abranches and his colleagues via the *Revista*, and, among others, a promising exploration in Fonseca's philosophy and legacy.

3. Conclusion

The historiographical fate of both Suárez and Fonseca depends, albeit in different ways, upon two intertwined phenomena that can easily be inferred by analyzing the papers featured in *Pensamiento* and the *Revista portuguesa de filosofia*. First, there is the endeavor of carving out a specific place for Neo-Suarezianism within Neo-Thomism, also via a substantive reassessment of Suárez's importance in the history of scholasticism and of philosophy in general. Second, there are nationalist claims to an Iberian, Spanish or Portuguese, identity. Against this background, the philosophies of the two most important early modern Jesuit metaphysicians appear to be two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, Suárez's thought undergoes triumphant reevaluation,

104 ABRANCHES 1960, 122.

105 MARTINS A. 1995.

106 CERQUEIRA 2011.

which even aims at ousting Aquinas as the ultimate reference of scholasticism, to make Suárez's Thomism the principal authority of contemporary schools. Suárez would be the one who was able to bring scholasticism into the age of modernity and who, still today, is able to vindicate it against the philosophical drifts the Middle Ages, i.e. Nominalism, and of modernity, i.e. criticism and phenomenology. On the other hand, Fonseca remains a rather obscure and neglected figure, dug up by his fellow compatriots against this attempt at establishing a Suarezian, Spanish egemony. Still today, Fonseca's thought is partially unknown in all its complexity and vastness, and the challenge for a scholarly discussion of his ideas out of any ideological pattern remains open.

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