

SUÁREZ AND SPINOZA: THE METAPHYSICS OF MODAL BEING

The metaphysics of modal being, a novel and momentous achievement of post-Tridentine scholasticism, found its most articulate and influential expression in Suárez's *Disputationes Metaphysicae*¹. Modes played also a decisive role in Spinoza's metaphysical system wherein they acquired a new sense leading to conclusions radically incompatible with Judaeo-Christian orthodoxy². Our purpose is to probe the approximations and contrasts between the form and the content of both philosophers' theory of modal being while providing more evidence of Suárez' likely albeit indirect influence upon Spinoza. We shall begin our task with a concise but adequate presentation of Suárez' thought on this matter.

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Suárez' theory of modes is not presented in any particular *disputatio* but is spread through several sections of his lengthy metaphysical

1 I have used the Latin-Spanish edition of the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* prepared by S. Rábade, S. Caballero and A. Puigcerver (Madrid 1966). The reference to the text, henceforth DM, will include the number of the *disputatio* (Latin numerals), section and paragraph (both in Arabic numerals).

The reader might consult the following studies on Suárez' theory of modes: J. I. Alcorta, *La Teoría de los Modos en Suárez* (Madrid 1949); C. Vollert, *Suárez: On the Various Kinds of Distinctions* (Milwaukee 1947); J. M. Hellín, 'La Teoría de los Modos en Suárez', *Pensamiento* 6 (1950) 218-26; P. Nolan, 'The Suarezian Modes', *Proceedings, Annual Convention Jesuit Education Association* (Chicago 1931); N. J. Wells, 'Suárez, Historian and Critic of the Modal Distinction between Essential Being and Existential Being', *New Scholasticism* 36 (1962) 419-44; J. P. Burn, 'Action in Suárez', *New Scholasticism* 37 (1964) 453-72; F. García y Martínez, 'El sentido de la realidad en la metafísica suareziana', *Miscelánea Comillas* 9 (1948) 309-22; M. Murray, 'The Theory of Distinctions in the Metaphysics of F. Suárez', unpubl. doct. diss. (Fordham University 1944).

2 The vast literature on Spinoza includes some outstanding studies on his metaphysics of modes. Among the best are: H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, 3 ed. (Cleveland 1961) I, chs. 3, 7, 11; H. F. Hallet, *Benedict de Spinoza* (London 1957) chs. 1-3; M. Gueroult, *Spinoza* (Paris 1968) I, part one, ch. 1 (ss. 20-23) and 12; A. E. Taylor, 'Some Inconsistencies in Spinozism', *Studies in Spinoza*, P. Kashap ed. (Berkeley 1972); G. D. Hicks, 'The Modes of Spinoza and the Monads of Leibniz', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 18 (1917-18) 329-62; Sanat Kumar Sen, *A Study of the Metaphysics of Spinoza* (Calcutta 1966) chs. 6 and 7; H. H. Joachim, *Spinoza's Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (Oxford 1958); E. E. Harris, 'Finite and Infinite in Spinoza's System', *Speculum Spinozanum 1677-1977*, 197-212.