

## 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*<sup>1</sup>. 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 orthodoxy<sup>2</sup>. 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.

### I

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.

treatise<sup>3</sup>. In all of them Suárez understands modes in a metaphysical rather than in a logical sense (modes of the syllogism, *modus ponens*, etc.). Metaphysical modes are either the contractions of the transcendental concept of being (necessary or contingent, substantial or accidental) or some actual modifications of finite being which are absolutely incapable of existing without the entity they modify. It is in the last sense that modes will be discussed here.

Modes for Suárez are not only philosophically important but theologically indispensable. The emphasis of late Renaissance scholasticism upon modes was prompted by the need to create a philosophical idiom finely tuned to deal with two religious dogmas under the Reformers' attack: the Incarnation and the Eucharist. The former entailed a substantial mode of personality; the latter imposed the distinction between absolute and modal accidents.

Catholic dogma holds that, as in the Trinity a single divine Nature is communicated to three different Persons, so in Christ two different natures (one divine and one human) subsisted in a single and divine personality or hypostasis<sup>4</sup>. The human nature of Christ is therefore lacking in a real determination called *suppositum* which would have made impossible for such nature to subsist in another personality (DM XXXIV, 2, 1-20). Suárez then proceeds to argue both with theological and philosophical arguments that such determination cannot be an accidental one, since no accident can complement a substance in the very order of substantial perfection: «What the *suppositum* adds to nature belongs to the perfection of the substance itself» (*quod suppositum addit naturae pertinet ad substantiae complementum*; DM XXXIV, 3, 4). The *suppositum* therefore is a substantial mode. Such mode is the ultimate determination of human nature, not because such nature is a rational one or because such nature is composed of matter and form, but because human nature is a finite and created substance. Far from being a hindrance to philosophical speculation, Suárez implies that Revelation confirms the systemic principles and conclusions of scholastic philosophy. To the inalterable simplicity of a Necessary Being, Suárez opposes the all-pervasive composition of contingent being, even within the inner realm of substantial perfection itself.

The Council of Trent (Sess. 13, Can. 2) formally defined Transubstantiation as «the changing of the whole substance of bread into the body, and of the whole substance of wine into the blood of Jesus Christ, the appearances of wine and bread remaining». Catholic theologians in the post-Tridentine period unanimously interpreted this definition in the sense that in the Eucharist the accidents of bread and wine —such as size, shape, weight, color, and taste do not further «inhere» in any substance but are miraculously sustained by God's Omnipotence without

3 In DM VII Suárez discusses the various kinds of distinctions; in DM XXVI, the mode of substantial union; in DM XXXIV, subsistence and personality; in DM LX and XLI, the modes of quantity; in DM XLII, the modes of quality; in DM XLVII, relations; in DM XLVIII and XLIX, action and passion; in DM LI, ubication.

4 See H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Freiburg 1954) 111a, 113-16, 148 and 877.

any subject of inhesion. The philosophical implications of this dogmatic definition were far-reaching, and Suárez discussed them with typical thoroughness.

From the Tridentine definition Suárez drew the conclusion that not all accidental determinations of substance exist as far as they actually inhere in it, but that, some at least, and by a miraculous intervention of God's Omnipotence, can actually exist without actually giving a substance any formal determination (DM XVI, 1, 21-23; XIV, 4, 1; XXXI, 11, 25; DM XXXIV, 39, 15). It is therefore not logically impossible—the only limitation to the divine Omnipotence—that accidents, which are transcendently related to the substance they are ordained to modify, exist in separation from it and without actually affecting it (DM XXX, 17). Such accidents—which Suárez sometimes calls «absolute» in opposition to modal accidents—have their own existence different from that of the substance they can modify and cannot be considered the ultimate determinations of substantial being since they require actual inhesion to have their formal effect. Actual inherence, therefore, is not another accident of substance, but rather a mode of absolute accidents, a modal accident (DM XXIX, 1, 18). Once again, Suárez claims, Revelation has brought to light recondite, subtle and important aspects of reality which lay hidden in the Aristotelian division of being into ten categories.

Suárez' philosophical speculation into modes begins with a nominal definition of modal beings and a double proof of their existence: a proof from induction and an *a priori* proof. Modes are defined, first of all, as *real* determinations of entities which are really different from them. Modes are «something positive» (*positivum quid*; DM VII, 1, 17), have their own existence (*includit proprium esse*; DM XXXI, 11, 3), enter in composition with the entity they modify (DM XXXI, 6, 9), and are the effect of an action different from the action resulting into the modified thing itself (XXX, 5, 10). The distinction between the mode and the modified entity is a distinction which precedes the activity of the mind and is not merely an extrinsic denomination issuing from the intellect (DM VII, 1, 18).

Modes are also *formal* determinations of a very special kind. They are forms because they actualize possible determinations of finite beings by imparting to them their own perfection. They are of a very special kind because, unlike absolute accidents, «they do not affect their subject by a manner of union really different from themselves but are immediately and by themselves joined to it» (*seipsis immediate coniunguntur*; DM XVI, 1, 22; LI, 5, 13). This means that their formal causality consists precisely in their actual formal union with the subject (DM XVI, 1, 21). The being of a mode is to be the mode of a being. To be and to modify are one and the same reality. It is logically impossible for a mode to exist without the entity it modifies.

A similar manner of expressing the same doctrine is to say that modes are both *actual* and *ultimate* determinations of finite and contingent being. Absolute accidents are both something (*ens quod*) and by which (*ens quo*) something else's possibilities are brought into

actuality. Modal beings, on the contrary, are merely beings by which other beings are further determined in either their substantial or their accidental perfection. Modes are never capable of modifying, they always actually modify.

In his effort to emphasize the unique frailty and feebleness of modal being, Suárez occasionally resorts to a philosophical idiom which some interpreters have found baffling or inconsistent, but which, as we shall see later, Spinoza probably found admirably suited to his own metaphysical projects. In DM VII, Suárez tackles the question whether, in addition to a real distinction between two things such that «one thing is not the other and vice versa» (*quod una res non sit alia neque e contrario*) and a distinction between two different conceptions by the mind of one and the same reality (a «distinction of reason»), philosophers ought to admit a third type of distinction mediating between the first two (*veluti medium quid inter illa*; DM VII, 1, 9). After rejecting Scotus' «formal distinction» as «excessively equivocal», Suárez proceeds to prove the existence of a distinction which he sometimes calls «a minor real distinction» (*in rebus ipsis alia minor distinctio*; DM VII, 1, 16), a «distinction from the nature of the case» (*distinctio ex natura rei*; *Ibid.*), and, more frequently, a «modal distinction» which is «invariably found between a thing and its mode»<sup>5</sup>. A modal distinction is real because it precedes any activity of the mind, but it is not real in the sense of being a distinction between two different things. Although modes are not «absolutely nothing» and «add something over and above the complete essence of the thing they modify», it is still accurate to say that «a being and its mode are the same in reality», that «a being and its mode are properly speaking a being rather than two beings», that «modes are not true entities», and that «modes do not possess being or entity except for the thing to which they adhere» (DM VII, 1, 17, 19, 20, 30; also 2, 10).

Suárez' first proof of the existence of modes is based upon induction (DM VII, 1, 17). This inductive process is guided by the criterion that «in all probability wherever a mutual separation between two extremes is not possible, even by God's Omnipotence, there is no other distinction than a modal one» (DM VII, 2, 8). Led by this norm, Suárez discovers modal entities at the substantial and at the accidental level of finite reality. It seems obvious to Suárez that God's Infinite Perfection excludes any composition, even a modal one, since the sum total of parts which are themselves incomplete and dependent on each other or on the entire order of the universe, would itself be limited and imperfect (DM XXX, 3, 4-7).

Induction discovers four substantial modes: creation, generation, substantial union, and the *suppositum*. All of them are designed to bring about the existence of substance or to confer upon substance its ultimate determination and perfection. By creation, substance exists; by generation, substantial forms are deduced from matter; by the substan-

5 The distinction between two modes of two really different entities can be considered a real distinction: DM VII, 1, 25.

tial union, matter and form become a single entity or *unum per se*; by means of the *suppositum*, created substance is rendered subsistent by itself and incommunicable to others<sup>6</sup>. Of these four modes, the last has already been discussed in its theological context; the first two will be dealt with under the heading of action and passion. The mode of substantial union, on the other hand, deserves closer attention since its assumptions and implications help to clarify Suárez' general conception of modal being.

Suárez' teaching on the mode of substantial union presupposes the theological data about the Resurrection of Christ, the Aristotelian theory of hylemorphic composition, and the allegedly philosophical «proofs» of the immortality of the soul<sup>7</sup>. Based upon these revealed and philosophical theories, Suárez argues that the union of matter and form is a substantial mode which belongs properly to the form and unites the form to its material cause by either making the form dependent upon matter (inorganic forms and the forms of animals and plants) or keeping the form at least potentially separable from it (rational soul). Such union of matter and form fulfills the nominal definition of mode. The union is a real manner of being, not a relation or a mere extrinsic denomination, both of which result but do not constitute the union itself. Nor is the union identical with either the matter or the form, but is rather separable from them by a non mutual separation. Not even by an act of the divine Omnipotence can the union of two extremes remain in existence apart from the extremes themselves; the matter and the form, however, can remain in existence separated from this particular matter, even in plants and animals, by the process of metabolism; or it can be separated from any matter, as in the case of the rational soul after death (DM XIII, 9, 13; XV, 6, 8; XXVI, 2, 8). Nor can the union of matter and form be explained by the (alleged) fact that both are actualized by a single existence (as some disciples of Saint Thomas taught), since the sharing of a common existence presupposes the substantial union itself.

Suárez distinguishes three kinds of accidental modes: modes which are constitutive components of accidents, modes which further determine the being of other accidents, and modes which constitute new predicaments by themselves. To the first kind belongs the mode of union among the extended parts of a continuous quantity<sup>8</sup>. To the second kind belongs the mode of inhesion which complements such absolute accidents as quantity and quality, and also the limiting or

6 Suárez deals with creatio on DM XX, 4; with substantial union, on DM XXVI, 2 and 3; with the *suppositum*, on DM XXXIV, 2 and 3; with generation, on DM XVII, 1 and 2.

7 The Resurrection of Christ plays here a part because Catholic theologians commonly teach that during the time which intervened between Christ's death and his resurrection, the body and the soul of Christ existed in separation from each other. See DM XXVI, 3, 8.

8 Sáñez teaches that quantity is really different from substance (DM XL, 2), that quantity makes substance not measurable but divisible into extended parts. Quantity is divided into line, surface, and bodies. Continuous quantity consists of extended parts and the *indivisibilia* (point, line, surface).

bounding modes (*indivisibilia terminantia*) of a continuous quantity when one of its parts is separated from the others by an external agent (DMXL, 5, 46). To the third and more important kind belong the following modes: figure, action, passion, movement, ubication, and the relative position of the parts within a whole.

Suárez discusses the mode of figure with unusual brevity in DM XLIII by attempting to justify the Aristotelian division of quality into four different kinds (habit, power, passion, and figure)<sup>9</sup>. Although Suárez defines figure in quantitative terms—a mode resulting in a body from the limits of size—he still claims that as far as figure contributes to the embellishment (*ornamentum*) of the substance, it proceeds from the form and belongs therefore to the predicament of quality (DM LXII, 1, 6). Quantity, on the other hand, is totally a material accident since matter is «the primordial root (*prima radix*) of that corporeal mass (*molis corporeae*) which quantity is ordained to establish and to complement in a unique way» (*Ibid*). Figure therefore is a qualitative mode of bodies, and only in a metaphorical sense can the term be used to designate mathematical proportions (DM LXII, 3, 17).

Action, passion, and movement (as different from locomotion) are for Suárez one and the same mode: the actual dependence of the effect upon its cause (DM LXVIII, 1, 6). Such dependence is obviously something real, different from both the agent and the effect. By such mode the agent is truly said to be actually exercising its active power, and the effect is truly said to be actually dependent from its cause. Nor is such dependence a transcendental relation of the effect to its cause, but rather the foundation of such relation. The mode of action-passion proceeds from the agent but does not inhere in the agent; it rather «adheres» to the term of the action<sup>10</sup>. The distinction between action and passion is only a mental distinction with a foundation in reality, a distinction Suárez sometimes calls «a distinction of reasoned reason» (*distinctio rationis ratiocinatae*). One and the same mode is conceived as passion insofar as it intrinsically affects the subject of change; it is conceived as action insofar as it gives the agent the denomination of actually exercising its power (DM LXIX, 1, 8). «Movement» is another name for passion, although it can be mentally conceived as different from it if it is taken to signify «the flowing of the effect toward its completion in abstraction from the subject changed and the acting principle» (DM XLIX, 2, 14).

Suárez' theory of action-passion is far-reaching in scope since it comprehends both substantial and accidental modes, and applies both to transient and to immanent causes. The substantial modes of action are creation and generation. The creature's essential dependence from its Creator—the *a priori* principle of Suárez' metaphysics of contingent and finite being—is a substantial mode which founds a transcendental

<sup>9</sup> According to DM XLII, 2, 1, Aristotle suggested such division in the *Categories*.

<sup>10</sup> Suárez carefully avoids the term «inhesion» because in the case of the mode of action the mode precedes the thing modified, not chronologically, but with a «natural priority». See DM XLII, 2, 1.

relation between the created effect and its Divine Cause (DM XLVIII, 2, 19). The generation of a form from its material cause is a mode of the form itself. Accidental modes of action can be either transient, if the effect is external to the causing agent; or immanent, if the effect remains within the agent itself. The latter kind of modes plays a pervasive role in Suárez' psychology since all acts of the intellect and of the will are immanent modes of action<sup>11</sup>.

The last two accidents to be considered are the mode of ubication and the mode of position. Throughout DM LI Suárez insists that being here or there is a mode of being essential to finite being, both material and spiritual, and that such ubication metaphysically bound to any finite being cannot be confused with the extrinsic denominations or predicamental relations which in created and material beings result from their being in contact with surrounding bodies. In DM LII Suárez teaches that the Aristotelian predicament of position (*situs*) consists in the relation of the parts to the whole, but claims that such predicament is really identical with the internal ubication of the parts themselves. The only distinction between the two predicaments is only a mental one but with a foundation in reality: ubication places a finite being here or there; *situs* «names a thing as laid out in a certain manner resulting from the local arrangements of its parts» (DM LII, 1, 9).

Suárez' theory of modal being adds a new complexity to the scholastic division of finite being into substance and accident, division which nevertheless Suárez characterizes as «the best and sufficient» (DM XXXII, 1, 4). The best, because imposed upon us by the experience of change; sufficient, because every created being is either the subject of some change (substance) or the change of some subject (accident). Modes, however, seem to add a *tertium quid* to this dichotomy. Substantial modes are not accidents because «they belong to the constitution and completion of the substance as such» (DM XXXII, 1, 15); they are not substances, but *of* substances. Accidental modes are not substances because «they presuppose a completely constituted substance which they modify in other respect» (*sub aliqua alia ratione*); they are not accidents either because, not even by a miracle, can they exist apart from the entity they modify. Still, modes are «not absolutely nothing», and as such they must be included under a dichotomy which claims to encompass everything out of nothing. Suárez seems to lean toward the opinion that modes «belong to the kind of things of which they are modes and with which they have a real identity» (*cum quibus habent realem identitatem*; DM XXXII, 1, 14). Substantial modes belong to the first member of the division because they are of substances; accidents belong to the second because they are of accidents. But such tentative solution is weakened by theoretical complications.

First of all, it seems rather odd to call «substance» the substantial mode of creation, since such mode does not «modify» the created entity

11 In DM XLVIII, 1, 9 Suárez deals with the immanent actions of the rational soul both as qualities and as modes of qualities.

but rather brings such entity into existence<sup>12</sup>. Much more important to our purpose are the problems regarding accidental modes, because the attempt to deal with them amounts to an important revision of the Aristotelian division of being into ten categories.

As in other occasions, Suárez begins by accepting the Aristotelian inventory as «pedagogically the best» (*Omnium aptissimam ad doctrinam tradendam*) and, in fact, the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* are divided accordingly<sup>13</sup>. But Suárez recognizes also a grave difficulty (*magna difficultas*) and gives two admonitions which, in my opinion, seriously threaten the philosophical usefulness of the Aristotelian list of categories. The first is to emphasize that the Aristotelian division of predicaments themselves, but that such distinction could be a mental distinction imposed by the nature of things upon our minds (DM XXXIX, 2, 33). The second is to clarify the very concept of «accident» which according to Suárez, is not a univocal and generic concept, but rather an analogous one. «Accident», for instance, is univocal with respect to quality and quantity, but analogous with respect to quality and habit (DM XXXIX, 3, 15).

Based upon such philosophical opinions, Suárez presents a catalogue of accidental modifications of substance which is more complex and richer than its Aristotelian counterpart. Only two of the Aristotelian accidental predicaments, quantity and quality, classify as absolute accidents. As such, however, they require a further determination, the mode of actual inhesion, to affect a substance. Continuous quantity, furthermore, requires the mode of union among its extended parts to be constituted as an accident, and the bounding modes or *indivisibilia terminantia* (point, line, surface) to be completed as accident. Figure, which Aristotle calls a kind of quality, is for Suárez a mode which proceeds from the form and the size of the body. Suárez denies that *locus*, motion, and time are different species of quantity (DM XL, 3, 7-9), and adds significant changes to the Aristotelian division of the species of quality. «Habit» is a most equivocal term, but as a kind of quality it signifies «a form which confers (to the agent) certain facility and promptness in acting» (*confert facilitatem et promptitudinem operandi*; DM XLII, 3, 4). «Disposition» can be another term for *situs* with some implicit reference to bodily beauty or health, but it can also be equivalent to «habit» or with all imaginable qualities (DM XLIII, 3, 5-8). «Power» in its widest sense means any capacity to act, and as such it includes both accidents and substances, creatures and the Creator. As a predicament, «power» is «the immediate principle of action of a created cause».

All the other Aristotelian accidental predicaments include only mo-

12 In DM XXXII, 1, 17, Suárez writes that the mode of creation constitutes substance as «the process toward it, or as its intrinsic production» (*tamquam viam ad illam seu ut intrinsecum fieri eius*).

13 See DM XXXIX, 1, 8. In DM XL and XLI Suárez deals with quantity; in DM XLII-XLVI with quality; in DM XLVII, with relations; in DM XLVIII-XLIX, with passion; in DM XLI, with ubication; in DM XLII, with *situs*; and in DM XLIII, with *habit*.



des or extrinsic denominations. Action and passion, *ubi* and *situs* are not different modes, but only two modes conceived under different respects. «Habit» as a predicament different from quality, is only an external denomination (DM LIII, 1, 3). Relation as a predicament is really identical with the foundation of such relation, but is different from it by a distinction of reason founded on reality (DM XVII, 2, 22).

Suárez' theory of modal being is not only based upon an induction, but, as I pointed out earlier, is also derived from *a priori* reasoning inextricably linked to the fundamental and systemic principles of Suárez' ambitious metaphysical synthesis.

The analogous concept of being as such includes the *Ens a Se* and the *ens per participationem*, God and the creatures<sup>14</sup>. From these predicates Suárez attempts to prove all the divine attributes (absolute perfection, infinity, simplicity, immensity, immutability, ineffability, omniscience, and omnipotence) and all the essential characteristics of created being (finitude, potentiality, composition, mutability). Beings which are essentially dependent, composite, limited, and changeable require modal being to be ultimately what they are supposed to be. If they are simple substances, they require at least the mode of creation by which they come into being and the *suppositum* to be actually incommunicable to others. If they are compounded substances, they further require a mode of substantial union between matter and form. As created and limited, every contingent being requires accidental perfection to actualize in time its limited and still unfulfilled possibilities. Such accidental modifications are themselves modes or absolute accidents. If they are absolute accidents they require the mode of actual inhesion to affect the substance. Modal being therefore is a thin but pervasive layer of all created reality (DM VII, 1, 19).

## II

Before we proceed to contrast Suárez' and Spinoza's vocabulary and thought on modal being, it seems proper to recapitulate what scholarly research has found about the relations between the two thinkers and to present a short review of Spinoza's ideas on language.

Most historians of ideas concede that Suárez' influence upon Spinoza was very likely. By birth and by domestic education Spinoza was obviously attracted to Spanish literature, history, and philosophy. There is little doubt that he considered Spanish his native tongue, and that for recreation he read mostly Spanish books<sup>15</sup>. The *Tractatus theologicus*

14 *Ens a Se* and *ens per participationem* are Suárez' favorite impressions, but he still considered them equivalent to other dichotomies such as Necessary and contingent being, Uncreated and created beings, Pure actuality and potential beings. See DM XXVIII, 1, 6-16. On the possible influence of the Suarezian conception of God as a Self-Caused Being rather than as a Being without a cause, see below.

15 See F. Pollock, *Spinoza, His Life and Philosophy*, 11 and 12; Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, 9; A. Wolf, *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza* (London 1927)

*politicus* confirms his familiarity with Spanish history<sup>16</sup>. In 1656 Spinoza gave the most forceful and tragic proof of a deep attachment to his Iberian background: as the son of a Portuguese Jew expelled from Spain and Portugal by the Spanish Inquisition, he decided to write an apology in the Spanish language addressed to the intolerant Dutch rabbis who had expelled him from the Amsterdam Synagogue<sup>17</sup>. In the Amsterdam ghetto Spinoza learned to appreciate medieval and recent writers who were for the most part Spanish Jews or Spanish Arabs (Maimonides, Crescas, Averroes, Ibn Gabirol, Abraham Herrera, Judah ha-Levi, Leo Hebraeus, Moses Cordovero, Ibn Ezra, and others)<sup>18</sup>. In Rijnsburg, where he lived from 1660 to 1664 and where he wrote the *Principia Philosophiae Cartesianae*, *Cogitata Metaphysica*, and the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, Spinoza undoubtedly felt the influence of the University of Leyde, only a few miles away, where Suárez' influence had been kept alive by the leading professors of philosophy, G. Jacchaeus (fl. 1610), F. Burgersdijck (d. 1636) and A. Heereboord (d. 1651). The latter is particularly important because his influence was still strongly felt in the early 1660's, but mostly because of his unbounded admiration for Suárez whom he called «the Pope and Prince of all metaphysicians»<sup>19</sup>. It is interesting to note that most of Spinoza's friends and correspondents had been trained at Leyde, people like Oldenburg, Hudde, Meyer, Bouwmeester, Schiller, and Steno<sup>20</sup>.

In spite of these data and contrary to Wolfson's opinion, there is no convincing evidence of Suárez' direct influence upon Spinoza. Unlike the names of those philosophers Spinoza had obviously read (Descartes, Bacon, Hobbes, Maimonides, Crescas, Heereboord, and others), Suárez' name never appears in any of his writings. Spinoza's biographers have pointed out that, unlike Leibniz, he was neither a voracious reader, an erudite writer, nor an eclectic thinker. He had a small personal library and often professed his indifference to the authority of classic names. Aristotle and Plato are never mentioned in the *Ethics*.

51, 52, 104; J. Freudenthal, *Lebensgeschichte Spinoza's in Quellenschriften* (Breslau 1899) 160.

16 See the references to the history of the Kingdom of Aragon in ch. 7, section 30.

17 According to Pollock, *Spinoza*, 399, Bayle was the first to inform us that the apology (which has never been printed), was written in Spanish.

18 Wolfson, *Spinoza*, I, ch. 1; J. Collins, 'Interpreting Spinoza: A Paradigm for historical work', *Speculum Spinozanum*, 125, note 9.

19 According to P. Dibon, *La Philosophie néerlandaise au siècle d'or* (Paris 1954) 1, 257, Suárez was «le maître incontesté de la renaissance métaphysique néerlandaise». Jacchaeus', *Primae Philosophiae Institutiones* can be considered a summary Suárez' *Disputationes Metaphysicae* (ibid., 71). With Burgersdijck's *Institutiones Metaphysicae*, Suárez' influence was modified by the impact of Calvinist theology and the ontological speculation of both J. Martini and Timpler. Heereboord's *Meletemata philosophica* signals the increasing impact of Cartesian thought and the reaction against scholasticism. On Heereboord's influence upon Spinoza, see D. Borkowsky, *Der Junge Spinoza* (Münster 1910) and J. Bohatec, *Die Cartesianische Scholastik in der Philosophie und reformierte Dogmatik des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig 1912) I, 18 and 19.

20 Short biographies of these correspondents can be found in A. Wolf, *The Correspondence of Spinoza*, 2 ed. (London 1866).

The philosophical vocabulary of Renaissance scholasticism which Suárez had helped to elaborate in a decisive manner probably reached him through the mediation of Descartes' Latin works and the large number of metaphysical textbooks and Suárezian compendia used in the Dutch universities of the early seventeenth century<sup>21</sup>.

Spinoza's adoption of the scholastic vocabulary on modes is only one more example of a philosophical style prevalent in his time. Even the empiricists' use of the term «mode» preserved, *mutatis mutandis*, some of its scholastic flavor. Locke applied Suárez' criterion of nonmutual separability to define modes as combinations of «the original material of all our knowledge»: the latter can be thought without the former but not the former without the latter<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, and still under scholastic influence, Locke explains the identity of modes by the identity of the substance they are thought to modify, and strikes a middle way between the Aristotelian categories and Suárez' more complex metaphysical account of reality by dividing all ideas into ideas of substance, ideas of modes, and ideas of relations<sup>23</sup>. Hume uses «mode» as equivalent to «accident», but denies we have any original impression of either substance or accident. What we have are collections of ideas which are fictionally referred to as an «unknown something in which they are supposed to inhere» (substance), are simply dispersed (like the idea of dance), or closely connected but without ever implying a unifying principle regarded as the foundation of such complex idea<sup>24</sup>.

Descartes' original intent of creating a vernacular idiom fitting his novel method of thinking was gradually thwarted by practical considerations. He wrote the *Meditations* in Latin and dedicated the book to the Parisian theologians both to gain academic respectability and to emphasize the orthodoxy of his thinking. He recast the same book into a more scholastic format, the *Principia Philosophiae*, with the secret hope of having it adopted as a textbook by his former Jesuit teachers at La Flèche. Although the plan never worked, the *Principia* was precisely the book used by Spinoza to write his own expository and critical analysis of Cartesian philosophy, the *Principia philosophiae Cartesianae*, the only work to which he ever set his name. This commentary proves beyond any doubt Descartes' powerful influence upon Spinoza's formative years, the time when his metaphysical system reached its initial formulation in the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* and the *Korte Verhandelng* (originally written in Latin).

Spinoza, however, differs from all his predecessors in the unique way he accepted almost *in toto* the established philosophical idiom of his age for the explicit purpose of overthrowing that establishment, rather than reinforcing its traditional assumptions and conclusions.

21 According to Dibon, *La Philosophie néerlandaise*, 114, Jacchaeus wrote his textbook at the request of the Leyde students of philosophy who were tired of the lengthy metaphysical treatises (*prolixissima Metaphysicorum volumina*) and the sketchy «summaries of Suarezian concepts» (*compendia Suarezianorum conceptuum*).

22 *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, chs. 13 and 22.

23 *Ibid.*, ch. 27, 2.

24 *A Treatise of Human Nature*, I, sec. 8 (Of Modes and Substances).

As it was generally the case in the seventeenth century, Spinoza's use of Latin was practically convenient, and, in his particular circumstances, almost necessary<sup>25</sup>. But his peculiar use and transformation of scholastic argon was also inspired by important theoretical considerations, most of them initially worked under the influence of Biblical hermeneutics. The study of the Bible taught Spinoza the relativity of meaning to context, the incommensurability of different vocabularies, the conventional and pragmatic character of language, the social and cultural dimension of the spoken and the written word, the ambiguity of central terms<sup>26</sup>. In the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* he attacked the ignorant masses which worship the literal sense of «dead words» (*litteris mortuis*) and praised the few learned people capable of going «beyond words» (*extra verba*) to grasp with a «pure mind» (*pura mente*) what each writer, each language, and each epoch can express through their unique «genius and ingenuity» (*genium et ingenium*)<sup>27</sup>.

First in the *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*, and more comprehensively in the *Ethica*, Spinoza sketched a philosophy of language perfectly consistent with his entire metaphysical outlook. The meaning of a word is determined by the way it is used (*ex solo usu*), but the use itself depends on the author's intention. Although it is extremely difficult to change the meaning of a word in its ordinary usage, writers can allow themselves such changes provided they make their intention explicit. In the *Ethica* Spinoza wrote: «My purpose is to explain, not the meaning of words, but the nature of things. I therefore make use of such terms as may convey my meaning without any violent departure from their ordinary signification (*non omnino abhorret*; *Ethica*, III [Definition of Emotions]; Elwes, II, 178). Spinoza's normal manner of introducing a meaning technically different from the usual one is to capitalize the term or to provide a nominal definition.

More important to our purpose is to keep in mind Spinoza's emphasis upon the limitations of language, a tool of the imagination, and as such, dependent upon «the dispositions of the body» (*Ethica*, III de, prop. 14; IV, schol. to prop. 1; Ep. 17). As imaginative tools, words can be the «cause of many and important errors» for those people who use them as signs of things imagined rather than as signs of things understood. Positive realities are designed by negative words (in-finite, independent, im-mortal) because their negative counterparts are more

25 As a child, Spinoza learned Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch. In his early youth he learned Hebrew, and, about the age of twenty he began the study of Latin, a language which made possible his communication with the intellectual elite of Holland and Germany, and which expanded enormously his philosophical horizons. I think it is reasonable to assume that Spinoza's mastery of Latin coincided in time with the ripening of his thought.

26 See *Cogitata Metaphysica* I, chs. 3 and 6; II, chs. 1, 10 and 12; also *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* chs. 1, 7 and 12. Because of this article's intent, Spinoza's Latin text will be given in most cases, either *in toto* or at least the key words. The English translations will be taken, when available, from R. H. M. Elwes, *The Chief Works of Benedict of Spinoza*, 2 ed. (New York 1955) and from A. Wolf, *The Correspondence of Spinoza*, for some of the letters which are not found in the Elwes' anthology. Otherwise the English translations are mine.

27 See chs. 4, 5, 7 and 10. Also Ep. 21.

easily imagined. For the same reason, affirmations and negations are expressed in language not because the nature of things requires them, but because the nature of language makes them possible<sup>28</sup>. All this, however, does not seem to mean, as some interpreters have suggested, that, according to Spinoza, the very limitations of language make impossible «a simple exposition of truth» or «a consistent account of the nature of reality»<sup>29</sup>. Spinoza's attitude toward language seems to me more akin to Wittgenstein's sense of the complexity and suggestive character of words than to Nietzsche's radical scepticism. As Spinoza himself wrote, the *Ethica* «merely points out» the way to a liberating form of knowledge which is hard to «discover» but which can nevertheless be found «with great labor». It remains, however, true that things understood by the intellect often defy adequate linguistic expression, because language is better adapted to play along with the games of the imagination. Among such things, Spinoza explicitly warns, are «the modes of Substance themselves» (Ep. 12).

### III

The basic insight of Spinoza's metaphysics is the claim that whatever exists in reality is either one unique Substance or the Modes of that Substance. The definition of Substance (*Ethica*, I, def. 3) and the definition of Modes (*Ibid.*, def. 5) are symmetrically opposed to each other, as Spinoza explicitly emphasizes (*Ibid.*, schol. 2 to prop. 8). The very definition of Modes implies the definition of Substance.

The definition of Substance in the *Ethica* represents Spinoza's most controversial departure from medieval scholasticism and from Cartesian philosophy. The word «sub-stance», as Suárez pointed out, has a double etymology (*sub-stare*, *sub-sistere*), and can therefore be conceived as the underlying *substratum* of accidents or as that which has the power to subsist by itself (DM XXXIII, 1, 1). It is beyond the scope of this paper to show that medieval scholasticism favored the first meaning or that

28 On the relation between language and the imagination, see Joachim, *Spinoza's Tractatus*, 134 and 136; also Gueroult, *Spinoza*, II, Appendix 10, 572-77.

29 Such suggestion was, I think, unconvincingly made by D. Savan in 'Spinoza and Language', *Studies in Spinoza*, 236-49. Savan's theories were attacked by G. H. R. Parkinson in 'Language and Knowledge in Spinoza', *Inquiry* 12 (1969) 15-40, and by G. Floistad in 'Spinoza's Theory of Knowledge in the *Ethics*', *Ibid.*, 41-65. Floistad in particular rightly emphasizes the differences between intuition, reason and imagination, and the relation of language to them. R. L. Saw in *The Vindication of Metaphysics* (London 1951) 100-1, insinuates that intuition, reason, and imagination have different languages. P. Wienpahl, 'On Translating Spinoza', *Speculum Spinozanum*, 496-525, contains interesting remarks on Spinoza's use of language, but makes also some controversial generalizations about scholastic Latin. It is highly questionable, to say the least, that the scholastics «tended to» use *esse* as a copula and *existere* as an «active verb» (sic), or that Spinoza explicitly recognized «the fact that the common grammar required violation if he was to make himself understood» (p. 497). Spinoza's laments about the impurity of medieval and even Renaissance scholastic jargon (*invito vocabulo*, *invita Latinitate*) were nothing more than a fashionable echo of certain humanistic attitudes of Renaissance scholars.

Descartes hesitated between the two<sup>30</sup>. My own intent is to relate Descartes' thought and Spinoza's gradual departure from it to Suárez' theory of modal being.

Spinoza's Cartesian commentaries still reflect some traces of the medieval dichotomy of substance (as *substratum*) and accidents which Descartes himself was never able to discard completely, and to which Locke gave his on empiricist interpretation. In *Principia philosophiae Cartesianae* Spinoza offered the Cartesian definition of substance as the subject of accidents (*subjectum extensionis et accidentium*: I, def. 6); in one of the letters of that time (Ep. 14) Spinoza still used the term substance in the plural (a habit he never overcame) and opposed it to «accident». By the time he added the *Cogitata metaphysica*, he explicitly announced his intention of replacing the terminology of substance-accident by that of substance-mode. The use of «accident» was to be limited to the expression *per accidens*, signifying mental distinctions (I, 1). In the *Ethica* the term «Accident» (capitalized) was never used, and the concept of substance as the material cause of accidents and the subject of inhesion, was totally abandoned. It is my contention that the adoption of the term «mode» and the new conception of Substance are two indications of the same intellectual discovery.

The definition of Substance in the *Ethica* combines two of Suárez' most characteristic ways of thinking: the first is his original understanding of the divine Essence as *Ens a Se*; the second is his teaching that «the foremost and essential property of substance» (*prima et essentialis ratio substantiae*) consists in being «in and through itself» (*in se ac per se*), and is therefore found «in its most perfect manner» (*perfectissime*) in God (DM XXXIII, 1, 1). Both teachings are related to Suárez' metaphysical conception of modal being, and both of them combined made possible for Spinoza to conceive of God as a Substance and to infer the metaphysical impossibility of created substances.

Suárez shared with the medieval tradition the conception of God as *Ens a Se*, but, under the likely influence of Scotus, he departed from such understanding by emphasizing its positive character and by making *aseitas* (scholastic jargon for the property of being *a se*) the initial premise of his *a priori* deduction of the divine attributes. Medieval scholasticism had generally understood the *aseitas* as meaning that God was the Uncaused Cause of everything, and then proceeded to demonstrate the divine attributes on the basis of the systemic principle that the perfection of the act is limited by the potentiality into which it is received. Suárez rejected the principle of the limitation of the act by the potency as an unwarranted consequence of Platonizing realism (DM XXX, 2, 18-19), and proceeded to prove the first divine attribute, Omniperfection, by an original and admittedly weak argument which suggests that God should be conceived not as the Uncaused Cause but rather as the Self-caused Being. God, Suárez argues, is Omnipotent,

30 See, e.g., Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 6-14; Brunswick, 'La Révolution Cartésienne et la notion Spinoziste de la substance', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 12 (1964) 764.

because, as every being, it gives itself all the perfection due to its nature without being impeded or limited, as contingent beings are, by any cause external to itself (DM XXX, 1, 2). Gilson has, I think, convincingly shown that Suárez' manner of thinking had an important influence upon Descartes' conception of God as the Cause of Itself (*Causa sui*)<sup>31</sup>. In meeting the objections raised against the proofs for the existence of God in the *Meditations*, Descartes wrote that, when one takes into consideration the divine Omnipotence as included in our nominal definition of God, it becomes impossible to conceive God as merely possible, since God «has the power to be and to exist through Himself» (*la vertu d'être et d'exister par Soi*), «through His own force» (*par sa propre force*)<sup>32</sup>. Descartes obviously went far beyond Suárez. The latter merely claims that God's Absolute Perfection—and hence all the other Attributes—can be inferred from the divine *aseitas*. Descartes, on the other hand, attempts to prove the very existence of God by combining two attributes included in the nominal definition of God: *aseitas* and Omnipotence. Both, however, assume in their way of thinking a novel, unusual, and difficulty ridden conception of «cause». But here again Descartes is more explicit and daring than Suárez. «There is something, Descartes claims, «between an efficient cause and no cause at all, namely the positive essence of something». It is in this sense that the concept of a polygon with an infinite number of sides is the «cause» of the circle<sup>33</sup>. A being which is totally self-caused is also a being which is absolutely self-explained. Suárez' suggestion that the Self-caused Essence of God provides the *a priori* proof of all the divine attributes has been transformed by Cartesian and Spinozist rationalism into the identification of the relation between logical ground and consequence with the relation between efficient cause and effect.

Although Suárez' suggestion that God is His own Cause is not derived from his metaphysics of modes, it is certainly consonant with and reinforced by it. There is no wider gap within the domain of real beings than that between the *Ens a Se* and the being of created modes. While God is the totally Unconditioned Being, modes are so thoroughly conditioned and dependent upon the being of the entities they modify that, as noticed before, «they do not suffice of themselves to constitute an entity in the real order of things».

Spinoza's revolutionary definition of Substance incorporates also the Suárezian metaphysics of substance by shifting the emphasis from the Aristotelian concept of substance as the *substratum* of accidents to the theologically-inspired idea of substance as a being capable of subsisting by itself. This does not mean, however, that Spinoza showed any

31 E. Gilson, *Études sur le Role de la Pensée Medievale dans la Formation du Système artesien* (Paris 1951) ch. 5.

32 Ibid., 225.

33 Ibid., 230-31. Some interpreters of Spinoza have objected to this distortion of the concept of cause in Spinoza's philosophy. J. Martineau, *A Study of Spinoza* (Paris 1882), claims that the two parts of the expression *causa sui* completely cancel each other. Pollock, *Spinoza*, 149, accuses Spinoza of using «cause» in a «really inappropriate sense». See also Hallett, *Spinoza*, 132.

interest in the ecclesiastical definitions about the Trinity or the *suppositum* as a mode which actualizes the capacity of a substance to exist in and through itself, had an undeniable influence upon the *Schulmetaphysik* of the seventeenth century in Holland and Germany, and through it most likely upon Spinoza himself<sup>34</sup>.

By combining the divine *aseitas* and the subsistence of the substance into one single definition, Spinoza opened a new conception of God. Spinoza's Divine Substance is not the Aristotelian Unmoved Mover of the Universe, but rather the Immanent Cause of Itself and all its infinite affections; not the Thomistic Pure act of Being free from any potentiality, but a Self-actualized and Self-actualizing infinite Power; not the Biblical Creator of a contingent universe outside of Itself, but the Necessary Ground of both Itself and its infinite Modes<sup>35</sup>.

Spinoza's definition of Substance negates also the Suárezian division of the realm of being into two domains comprehended under one but analogical concept: the Necessary Being and the contingent beings. Whatever we humans call «contingent» is nothing but a Necessary Affection of the Necessary Being defectively known by our time-bound imagination (*Ethica*, I, schol. 1 to prop. 33). The term «analogy» is never used by Spinoza in the *Ethica*, and when it appears in other writings it is always used loosely and without any definite technical meaning.

The definition, however, leaves entirely unresolved the central dichotomy of all religious thought: the dichotomy of the Infinite and the Finite. On the side of the Infinite we have Substance, its infinite Attributes, and the Infinite Modes of those Attributes; on the side of the finite we have the number of known Attributes and the finite modes of Thought and Extension. Spinoza's teaching on the Divine Attributes and the Infinite Modes is not directly relevant to our purpose; the former because it is plagued by lengthy, incompatible, and often fastidious interpretations; the latter, because, as Wienpahl has put it, «it is relatively inconsequential»<sup>36</sup>. In our following remarks we assume that

34 Among the first doctoral dissertations to signal the renaissance of metaphysical speculation at Leyde were discussions on the notion of substance, the causality of being, the analogy of substance and accident. See Dibon, *La Philosophie néerlandaise*, 64, 70, 71. Jacchaeus followed Suarez' teaching on substance without any significant difference. Heereboord, under J. Martini's influence, divided the domain of being into substance and accident, rather than into infinite and finite being.

That Spinoza was conversant with the scholastic doctrine of the *suppositum* is confirmed by his letter to Meyer, where he professes his incapacity to understand the theological concept of personality (*me fugit quid vocabulo personalitatis intelligant theologi*). See A. K. Offenberg, 'Letter from Spinoza to L. Meyer, 28 July 1663', *Speculum Spinozanum*, 426-35.

35 On Spinoza's definition of substance, see Hallet, *B. de Spinoza*, I, ch. 1 («Cause of Itself»); also T. M. Forsyth, 'Spinoza's Doctrine of God in Relation to his Conception of Causality', *Studies in Spinoza*, 3-15.

36 'On Translating Spinoza', 518. Gueroult presents an exhaustive account of the controversies about the divine attributes in I, Appendix 3 (428-61). Haserot formulates eight different interpretations of the term 'attribute' in the *Ethica*, *Studies in Spinoza*, 28-43. It is worthwhile to emphasize that the *Ethica* contains only three propositions dealing with the Infinite Modes (I, 21, 22 and 23). In Curley's translation of Spinoza's metaphysics into the language of logical atomism the Infinite Modes play an important role. The Immediate Infinite Modes are derivative but



the Attributes are infinite in number, that they are both ontological principles of the Divine Substance and principles of its intelligibility by our finite minds, and that only two (Extension and Thought) are known to us. It seems, however, important to emphasize that the concept of Attribute in Spinoza is significantly different from its scholastic counterpart. Suárez teaches that the divine attributes are properties of the Divine Essence; that each one of them is infinite not only in some generic way (*in perfectione alicuius generis*) but in any manner of being (*simpliciter in genere entis*) and, finally, that they are distinguished from each other not really but only by a mental distinction which follows from the finitude of our own intellect (DM XXX, 6, 10). With respect to the infinite Modes we assume that the eternal constant of Motion-and-Rest flows immediately from the Attribute of Extension, and that the material universe or the sum total of all extended things (*facies totius universi*) flows from the operation of Motion. In a similar manner, the Infinite Intellect follows immediately from the Attribute of Thought, and the sum total of all particular modes of thought (for which Spinoza failed to provide a corresponding expression) results from the operation of Thought<sup>37</sup>.

The most difficult, controversial and allegedly inconsistent tenets of Spinoza's metaphysics deal with the relation between the Infinite and the Finite. Spinoza's next to impossible task was to bridge the Judaeo-Christian gap between the Transcendent Infinite Creator and the contingent and limited world of creation by upholding at the same time the real difference between the two (mostly to salvage the ethical purpose of his entire enterprise) and a monistic view of reality which limits the being of the finite to being a finite expression of the Infinite. What makes Spinoza fascinating in the history of religious thought is the fact that he rejected the mystic vagaries of poetical metaphors and attempted to accomplish his task *more geometrico* and adopting the language of Renaissance scholasticism in the pursuit of that intellectual knowledge which alone makes human beings totally free, virtuous, and happy. More concretely, it was Suárez' elaborate theory of modal being that was the part of scholastic thinking which proved to be best suited to the task at hand.

In the *Ethica* Spinoza uses the term «Mode» both in a systematic and in a non-systematic way, but the distinction between the two usages is often blurred by the inconsistent capitalization of the term, by the large number of idiomatic and non-idiomatic senses of the word (both in singular and plural), and mostly by the very semantics of a locution which often means «manner» or «way»<sup>38</sup>. A typical case of

primary nomological facts described by general propositions, and the mediate Infinite Modes are derivative and secondary nomological facts described also by general propositions. See *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 58-62.

37 In Ep. 64 (Wolf, 306-8) Spinoza presents a summary of his doctrine on the Infinite Modes and points to the *loci* of the *Ethica* where he deals with them. See also Joachim, *Spinoza's Tractatus* 69-70, and Gueroult, *Spinoza*, I, 258-67.

38 See G. L. Kline, 'On the infinity of Spinoza's attributes', *Speculum Spinozanum*, 339.

semantic ambiguity is found in Ep. 12, where Spinoza reminds Meyer that Modes «cannot be rightly understood» if «we separate them from Substance and from *the mode* (my emphasis) by which they flow from Eternity».

In its clearly systematic sense «mode» has two synonyms: *Affectio* (*Substantiae Affectiones Modos Voco*; Ep. 12) and *Modificatio*, a term which in the opinion of some interpreters, Spinoza possibly tried to reserve for designing the Infinite Modes<sup>39</sup>. We assume here that the dichotomy *Substantia-Modi* is identical to that of *Creator-creaturae*, *Natura naturans-natura naturata*, and *Essentia-expressio essentiae*. I think, however, that Spinoza favored the language of Substance-Mode because he found it more attractive to formulate his own metaphysical insights.

The division of reality into Substance and Modes of Substance is clearly inspired in the scholastic theory of distinctions to which Suárez gave its most elaborate form in DM VII. Although Spinoza professed not to care about «the aimless verbiage of the Peripatetics about distinctions» (*Peripateticorum distinctionum farraginem non curamus*; *Cogitata Metaphysica*, II, 5), his own theory of distinctions reveals a great familiarity with scholastic thought and some striking similarities with Suárez' theories and wording. In *Cogitata Metaphysica* (ch. 6) Spinoza notes three different distinctions: real distinction, a distinction of reason, and a modal distinction. The tripartite division and the terms used are identical to those of Suárez, but the characterization of the members of the division and the examples given to clarify the definition, are strikingly different. A real distinction intervenes «between things which can be conceived apart from each other and can therefore exist apart from each other», such as thought and extension, or the parts of matter. A distinction of reason intervenes between substance and its attributes, but it can also be a purely verbal distinction, such as the distinction between a thing and its *conatus* to conserve its own being. A modal distinction intervenes between a substance and its mode or between two modes of the same substance. Both in the case of the real as well as in the case of the modal distinction Spinoza abandons Suárez' realism (separability in reality) in favor of a radical rationalism which presupposes that the order of thought and the order of being are one and the same (separability in thought). For Spinoza to say that a mode cannot be conceived apart from substance and to say that a mode cannot *exist* apart from substance are two statements of the same proposition. Spinoza's remarks about the distinction between different modes of the same substance coincide almost literally with Suárez' opinion and language (DM VII, 1, 26).

A. E. Taylor has argued that the real source of Spinoza's worst metaphysical difficulties was «the fatal admission that there are such things as finite modes of his infinite Substance». To me the real source of Spinoza's metaphysical difficulties was the very nature of his metaphysical project. In attempting to bypass the mysteries of Judaeo-

39 'On Translating Spinoza', 518, note 6.

Christian theology, Spinoza managed to patch together a few mysteries of his own. What is interesting about the «fatal admission of finite modes» is the historical fact that Spinoza's thought was couched in a language which is remarkably close to that of seventeenth century scholasticism. Such fact makes possible a better understanding of Spinoza's alleged «incoherencies» as either radical departures from Suárez' theory of modal being, or as blown up projections of Suárez' ambiguities and hesitations.

The first and probably the most important difference between Suárez and Spinoza concerns the very nature of modal being. As an Aristotelian, Suárez conceives modes as actualizations of possibilities, and as such, metaphysically incompatible with the infinite perfection of the Divine Substance. Spinoza's conception of mode is probably Neo-Platonic in ancestry. To him modes are emanations or expressions of perfection. An Infinite Being therefore has to express Itself in an infinite number of modes which are themselves finite. For Suárez modes are signs of contingency and finitude. For Spinoza modes are necessary expressions of an Infinite Perfection which is *diffusivum sui*, an *essentia actiosa* which expands into infinite modes of self-expression.

Suárez and Christian philosophers in general attempt to solve the mystery of the coexistence of an Infinite Being and a plurality of finite beings by appealing to the difficult and questionable theory of the analogy of the concept of being as such. Spinoza attempts to solve the mystery of the incommensurability between an Infinite and Unique Substance and the sum total of its finite modal expressions by the equally unfathomable claim that God's unity is not an undifferentiated but an infinitely differentiated one, and by insisting that the structure and pattern of the Whole is prior to the being of its constituent parts.

Both Suárez and Spinoza define God as a Self-Caused Being. But Suárez, and all the scholastics, made a fundamental distinction between the sense in which God is Self-Caused and the sense in which God is the cause of the created universe. God is Self-Caused because the divine nature explains (but does not *a priori* prove) both its existence and all its attributes. God causes the universe by actually and freely exercising an active *power* which brings created entities out of nothing into being. Suárez' theory of action as a mode through which the agent is actually producing and the effect is actually dependent on its cause, reinforces the difference between the two senses of «causing». Spinoza recognizes only the first sense of causing. To say that a finite mode «causes» another finite mode is for him the language of the imagination, rather than the language of the intellect.

Suárez' distinction between the two senses of «causing» makes possible a neat separation between the logical order of descent represented in the Porphyrian tree and the real dependence of causes and effects manifested both in creation and in the activity of created causes. Spinoza, like the Neoplatonists before him and like Heidegger in this century, blends the logical and the ontological aspects of language into a philosophical idiom of baffling but intriguing ambivalence. Spinoza's peculiar metaphysics does indeed avoid the mystery of a Necessary

Being who freely creates a contingent universe, but at the enormous price of shackling all finite activity, including human choices, under the same inexorable law of absolute Necessity.

Finally, Spinoza's incomplete and inconsistent monism can be seen as a philosophical extrapolation of cosmic proportions of Suárez' ambiguities in defining the entity of a mode and the composition between a mode and the thing modified. Modes are described by Suárez both as «something positive» and as «not true entities». A thing and its mode are sometimes described as «the same reality» or as two aspects of reality different from each other before any discriminating operation of our intellects. I think that Spinoza found this ambiguity ideally suited to express in words his impossible ideal of reconciling both the pluralistic leanings of common sense and the demands of moral individual responsibility with the inescapable monistic conclusions of his metaphysical project.

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