

SUÁREZ'S INFLUENCE ON DESCARTES: THE CASE OF EPISTLE CDXVIII (AT IV 348–350)

FLORIN CRÎȘMĂREANU *

Abstract This paper discusses the influence of Suárez's *Disputationes Metaphysicæ* on Descartes as can be discerned from one of the latter's little researched letters: *CDXVIII* (AT IV 348–350). The French philosopher is not only clearly influenced by scholastic ideas but he also heavily employs the scholastic terminology as systematized by Suárez. Descartes gives the reader the feeling that, even when he wants to distance himself from the scholastic thought, he nevertheless does this by using its language.

Keywords Suárez, Descartes, Letter CDXVIII, *a priori* argument, *distinctio rationis ratiocinatae*, *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*

The paradigm of medieval thinking can be best understood if taking into account the “history of effect” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) that it generates, similarly to how the reception of the fundamental subjects of modern thinking is more solid if taking into account their sources. Regardless of the paradigm to which one or the other author belongs, I tend to believe that at least sometimes we can better understand their intentions from their epistles rather than their treatises. René Descartes is one of such authors. Although the French philosopher explicitly claimed to be disappointed with the educational programme of the Jesuits that he attended,¹ Mersenne's letter to Descartes, dated 1 August 1638, proves that Descartes was quite familiar with

* *Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași*. fcrismareanu@gmail.com

¹ René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, I (AT VI 4–5). On the other hand, in another letter to a yet unidentified recipient, Descartes also says that “il est très utile d'en avoir étudié le cours entier, en la façon qu'il s'enseigne dans les Ecoles des jésuites [...]. Et je dois rendre cet honneur à mes maîtres, de dire qu'il n'y a lieu au monde où je juge qu'elle s'enseigne mieux qu'à La Flèche” (Lettre CXLV, Descartes à *** [12 septembre 1638]; AT II 378); see also Grigore Vida, “Colegiul din La Flèche și formarea lui Descartes,” in René Descartes, *Correspondență completă* (Complete correspondence), vol. I, trans. Vlad Alexandrescu et. al. (Iași: Polirom, 2014), 719–733.

scholastic philosophy (AT II 287).² In another letter of Descartes to Abbot Picot, also acting as a preface to the French translation of the *Principles of philosophy* (AT IX 1–20), the French thinker speaks about a tree whose roots are metaphysics, trunk is physics, and branches are the other sciences (AT IX 14).³ The very use of this metaphor shows a certain “rupture” from a significant part of the scholastic paradigm. Undoubtedly, for most scholastic thinkers the starting point (the root) was physics. For Descartes, the root was metaphysics (in a letter to Mersenne, Descartes claims that “je n’eusse jamais su trouver les fondements de la Physique, si je ne les eusse cherchés par cette voie ‘métaphysique’” (AT I 144). This statement favours the *a priori* evidence in examining the idea of God. Such an evidence is also the so-called (by Immanuel Kant) *ontological argument* put forth by Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109). The scholastics rejected this argument.⁴ The authors of modernity, Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff and others were those who rehabilitated it.

This *a priori* evidence of God’s existence could also be found in one of Descartes’s letters (CDXVIII – AT IV 348–350), examined in the following lines. Before presenting this hypothesis, I must make some historical and exegetical clarifications I arrived at while reading this letter. Identifying and delimiting certain subjects in this short, and for some perhaps insignificant, text of Descartes will help us better understand the influence that scholastic teachings had had on his thinking.

I. We do not know the question asked by his interlocutor that Descartes answered; it is not clear whether it is about the distinction between essence and existence in God or in the creations, or he tried to answer with reference to both cases. In tend to believe that the terminology used in this letter explains to a certain extent what it was that Descartes tried to clarify.

At the beginning of the letter he also claimed, quite strangely, that he had forgotten where he had treated this fundamental distinction previously,⁵ a subject

² Étienne Gilson, *Index scolastico-cartésien* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1913).

³ It should also be noted that universal mathematics and its singular disciplines like arithmetic, geometry and astronomy are missing from the tree of science described by Descartes in the preface to the *Principles*.

⁴ Like, for instance, Thomas Aquinas in *Summa theologiae* I, 2, 1. and *De veritate*, q. 10, art. 12.

⁵ René Descartes, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, V (AT VII 66). In the few places where Descartes distinguishes the essence of a thing from its existence (AT III 297; VII 66; VII 244; 383; VIII 10), he seems to take into account the work of Suárez DM XXXI, sec. 5, §§ 13–15; see É. Gilson, *Index scolastico-cartésien* (Paris: Vrin, 1979), 105–106. For the distinction between essence and existence at Descartes, see, *inter alia*, Jacques Maritain, “Le conflit de l’essence et de l’existence dans la philosophie cartésienne,” in *Études cartésiennes*, vol. I, ed. Raymond Bayer (Paris: Hermann, 1937), 38–45; and *Descartes’ Meditations: Background Source Materials*, eds. Roger Ariew, John Cottingham, and Tom Sorell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 45–46.

ardently debated by earlier generations. The situation is even more bizarre as he quotes very accurately, just a few lines below, article 60 of Part I of the *Principles of philosophy*.

The roots of distinction between essence and existence lie at the very basis of the origin of metaphysics. Ancient philosophers made no such distinction; however, Aristotle is the first author in whose work there is a passage that can be interpreted in this sense: “what human nature is and the fact that man exists are not the same thing”.⁶ Filtered by the translations of Boethius,⁷ this distinction became one of the most important issues of the High Middle Ages in Western Europe. Even for one of Descartes’s contemporaries, the distinction between essence and existence meant the structure of metaphysics as a whole: “Metaphysica entis scientia est. Essentiam ab existentia sola mens distinguit”.⁸

Although some of its elements had been found earlier in the Aristotelian tradition, the clear distinction between essence and existence appeared first at Avicenna, who presented in chapter XII of his *Metaphysics* his concept on the real distinction of the two.⁹ Avicenna’s teaching had a decisive influence on Thomas Aquinas.¹⁰ There was a certain tradition that defended the idea that Thomas claimed there was a real distinction between essence and existence. However, to the best of my knowledge, the Dominican theologian never treated this problem *ex professo*. Neither in the *De ente et essentia*, nor elsewhere does he speak about a real distinction between essence and existence. This treatment can be found nevertheless at another Thomist author, Ægidius Romanus (1243-1316). Duns Scotus explicitly placed himself against the thesis of the Thomist tradition saying that “nec verum est a in quantum a esse idem essentiae, nec a in quantum a est aliud ab essentia”¹¹ The Franciscan theologian claims that the concept of *ens* is prior to the distinction between infinity (God) and finiteness (creations).

Most probably, Descartes was not directly familiar with the details of the changes about this distinction, he did not read the works of classical scholasticism, but a systematization of these doctrines in a handbook, which became the main

⁶ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, II, 7, 92b.

⁷ Pierre Hadot, “La distinction de l’être et de l’étant dans le *De Hebdomadibus* de Boèce,” *Miscellanea Medievalia* 2 (1963): 147–153.

⁸ Antoine Arnauld, *Textes philosophiques*, trans. Denis Moreau (Paris: PUF, 2001), 22–23.

⁹ Amélie-Marie Goichon, *La distinction de l’essence et de l’existence d’après Ibn Sînâ (Avicenne)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937).

¹⁰ See mainly his work *De ente et essentia*, the only systematic presentation of Aquinas’s ontology, in chapter IV; É. Gilson, *L’être et l’essence* (Paris: Vrin, 1981) and Alain de Libera & Cyrille Michon, *L’être et l’essence. Le vocabulaire médiéval de l’ontologie. Deux traites De ente et essentia de Thomas d’Aquin et Dietrich de Freiberg* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996).

¹¹ *Opus Oxoniense*, I, d. II, q. 4.

source of information for him. In matters of scholastic metaphysics¹², Descartes referred to the authority of the Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548–1617), his work *Disputationes Metaphysicae* (DM), “sind wohl die ausführlichste systematische Darstellung der Metaphysik, die es überhaupt gibt”.¹³ Suárez presents an excellent summary of the entire teaching of this school, which placed itself at the crossroads of all major traditions of Latin scholasticism.¹⁴ In the opinion of a contemporary researcher, “il a une connaissance très précise d’Aristote qui, outre évidemment la lecture directe, s’appuie sur les travaux des grands érudits de son ordre, comme Fonseca. Il n’a pas seulement lu les plus célèbres des docteurs scolastiques, saint Thomas, Duns Scot et W. Ockham, mais aussi Buridan, Gerson, Pierre d’Ailly et beaucoup d’autres parmi lesquels tous les commentateurs de saint Thomas, des espagnols Soto et Báñez aux italiens Cajetan et Sylvestre de Ferrare. A cette culture scolastique s’ajoute la formation initiale de F. Suárez qui fut celle d’un juriste. Il est donc familier du Digeste, de tous ses commentateurs et plus particulièrement des juristes de la Renaissance; c’est pourquoi l’on trouve sous sa plume des citations de Covarruvias, de Tiraqueau, ou de Paolo de Castro. Mais si F. Suárez recueille ce très riche héritage, il est loin de se contenter de le commenter, il élabore une synthèse personnelle qui se transmettra à toute la philosophie scolaire allemande jusqu’à la révolution kantienne. Ses *Disputationes Metaphysicae* forment un fonds commun que C. Wolff, G.W. Leibniz ou A. Baumgarten partagent, alors que son *De legibus* sera lu et utilisé par H. Grotius et T. Hobbes”.¹⁵

Suárez analyses the distinction between essence and existence mainly in DM XXXI, section VI, §§ 13–15 (but also elsewhere, such as DM XXIX, section. III, §§ 1–2). As proved below, there are certain similarities between the concepts of Descartes

¹² See: É. Gilson, *Index scolastico-cartésien* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1913); Jean-Luc Marion, “A propos de Suárez et Descartes,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 1 (1996): 109–131; Idem, *Questions cartésiennes II* (Paris: PUF, 1996); Joël Biard, Roshdi Rashed, eds., *Descartes et le Moyen Âge* (Paris: Vrin, 1997); Roger Ariew, John Cottingham, and Tom Sorell, eds., *Descartes’ Meditations: Background Source Materials* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Marleen Rozemond, *Descartes’s Dualism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 4–8; 40–45; 88–109; 128–149.

¹³ Martin Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben. Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Scolastik und Mystik* (Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1926), 535. É. Gilson, *Index...*, p. IV: “les *Metaphysicæ disputationes* étaient pour la métaphysique le «livre du maître» des professeurs de Descartes”. Martin Heidegger, in *Les problèmes fondamentaux de la phénoménologie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), says that “les concepts ontologiques fondamentaux de Descartes sont directement tirés de Suárez” (156).

¹⁴ José Pereira, *Suárez: Between Scholasticism and Modernity* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006); Victor M. Salas and Robert L. Fastiggi, *A Companion to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

¹⁵ Michel Bastit, “Interprétation analogique de la loi et analogie de l’être chez Suárez: de la similitude à l’identité,” *Les études philosophiques* 3–4 (1989): 430.

and the Jesuit. For the former, it is clear that God “est aussi bien auteur de l’essence comme de l’existence des créatures” (AT I, 152); the same idea also appears at Spinoza: “Deus non tantum est causa efficiens rerum existentiae, sed etiam essentiae” (Spinoza, *Ética*, I, prop. XXV). Even so, the question is: is this distinction real, modal, or rational?

II. In the Aristotelian tradition, there are only two types of distinctions: real or rational. Apart from these two, *tertium non datur*.¹⁶ Duns Scotus introduced a third (*tertia*), intermediary (*media*) distinction between the real and rational one, known as the formal distinction, *ex natura rei* (of the nature of things), or the formal non-identity which proposes to make a perfect correspondence between conceptual forms elaborated by the intellect and forms existing in reality: *omni entitati formali correspondet adæquate aliquod ens*.¹⁷

In *Replies I*, Descartes mentions the formal distinction, making reference to Duns Scotus (AT VII 120). Interestingly, Descartes does not distinguish between the formal and modal distinction; however, he distinguishes both from the real distinction (AT IX, 94–95). Not long before, Suárez also defended a similar position in DM VII, section I, § 16, where he included a third distinction in addition to the classical two, real and rational, namely the *ex natura rei*. This must be understood as a modal distinction, as it is established between a thing and one of its modes.¹⁸ Descartes explicitly refers to Duns Scotus, but his source of inspiration is not the Franciscan Scotus, but the Jesuit Suárez who analyses these types of distinctions.

In DM XXXI, section I, Suárez discusses the *real distinction* between essence and existence in the creations. For him, the essence of a creation is conceived starting from an efficient cause,¹⁹ while existence is a thing different in a real mode from essence (DM XXXI, § 3). In the second section of this dispute, Suárez speaks

¹⁶ André de Muralt, *L’enjeu de la philosophie médiévale: études thomistes, scotistes, occamiennes et grégoriennes* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 64–70.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁸ Kim-Sang Ong-Van-Cung, “Substance et distinctions chez Descartes, Suárez et leurs prédécesseurs médiévaux,” in *Descartes et le Moyen Âge*, 217–218.

¹⁹ This aspect also connects Descartes’s concept to that of Suárez. Of the four causes that Aristotle theorized about, he only kept one: the efficient cause, and Suárez seemed to be the most important source for it, mainly DM XII, section III, § 3 (Gilles Olivo, “L’efficience en cause: Suárez, Descartes et la question de la causalité”, in *Descartes et le Moyen Âge*, 94–102). For the problem of causality at Suárez, see also *Suárez on Aristotelian Causality*, ed. Jakob L. Fink (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2015). It is true that in the delicate question of *Deus causa sui*, Descartes admits a formal or quasi-formal cause (*Replies IV*), but, in the opinion of certain exegetes, “la cause équivaut à la raison, la causalité efficiente à la causalité formelle ou même à l’absence de cause – chaque attribut étant démontré *a priori*, à partir de la seule intellection de l’essence infinie de Dieu” (Laurence Devillairs, *Descartes et la connaissance de Dieu* [Paris: Vrin, 2004], 42).

about a *modal distinction*, starting from nature, created or non-created, between essence and existence. This distinction claims that the essence of creation is contingent. As it is a modal distinction, it cannot be a real distinction between essence and existence, as long as the existence of the colour white cannot be separated by the white itself (similarly to how the accidents depend on the substance in the Aristotelian tradition). From the point of view of Christian teachings, this distinction is very important, because it argues that the entire creation exists in God, its Creator *ex nihilo*. In Suárez's terms, before being brought to existence, essence is absolutely nothing (DM XXXI, section II, § 1). In section three, the Jesuit speaks about the *rational distinction* between essence and existence, a thesis he embraced: "Tertia opinio affirmat essentiam et existentiam creaturæ, cum proportione comparata, non distingui realiter aut ex natura rei tamquam duo extrema realia, sed distingui tantum ratione » (*ibid.*, I, § 12). As he explicitly states, this is a distinction of the intellect, and does not involve reality in any way. There is thus no real distinction between essence and existence, as traditionally attributed to Thomas Aquinas.²⁰ This thesis, also adopted by Suárez, with regard to not only what is real, actual, but also to what may exist, in potentiality, seems to also justify his option for the object of metaphysics.

Before it becomes actual, the essence possesses nothing real, it is nothing (*purum nihil* – DM XXXI, section II, § 1).²¹ For Suárez, existence is the fact to be actual, real (*ibid.*, sec. IV, § 4). As Descartes would also claim (AT I 152), for Suárez God is the author of the existence of the entire creation, for he can make a creation pass from the stage of nothing (*purum nihil*), pure essence to real, actual existence (DM XXXI, section IV, § 4); in the absence of existence, essence cannot become actual, and thus existence is what makes the difference between potentiality and actuality.

Suárez establishes a semantic identity between essence and existence, as long as actual essence becomes the equivalent of existence. Consequently, "l'existence n'ajoute rien à l'essence en acte : elles sont une seule et même chose".²² Suárez continues this reasoning, concluding that essence and existence are only separated by a rational distinction, rejecting, in a famous passage in DM, the real distinction between essence and existence: "existentiam et essentiam non distingui in re ipsa" (DM XXXI, sec. I, § 13).

²⁰ Jean-Paul Coujou, *La distinction de l'étant fini et de son être, Dispute métaphysique XXXI* (Paris: Vrin, 1999), 13–15.

²¹ J.-F. Courtine, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique* (Paris: PUF, 1990), 246–293; see also Idem, "Le projet suarézien de la métaphysique. Pour une étude de la thèse suarézienne du néant," *Archives de Philosophie* 42 (1979), 235–274.

²² Jean-Paul Coujou, *La distinction de l'étant fini et de son être*, 34.

III. Descartes, a keen reader of Suárez's work on metaphysics, had in mind the image described above. In accordance with manuals of scholasticism, he discussed three distinctions: "Realis, Modalis et Rationis" (AT VIII 28); elsewhere he speaks about the distinctions "Realem (...) Modalem, et Formalem sive rationis ratiocinatæ" (AT IV 350); he considers that "distinctio formalis non differre a Modali" (AT IV 349; VII 120; the identity of modal and formal distinction could come from: DM VI, section IX, § 6: "formali seu modali"). The "novelty" that the French philosopher brought regarding these distinctions lies in the associations and reconfigurations he achieves; actually, as proved by this letter, Descartes managed to suppress the triad introduced by the tradition of Scotus, speaking only of two distinctions: the real²³ (as an umbrella term encompassing the *modal*, *formal* and *reasoned rational* distinction) and the rational (AT VII, 49; a distinction he took over from DM VII), or more precisely the *reasoning rational* which he rejected. (AT V 270; 343; VII 103; 143).²⁴ Descartes rejects thus the reasoning rational distinction (which is not anchored in things), but not the distinction of reason, as long as it is a distinction of reasoned reason.

When speaking about the *distinctio rationis ratiocinatæ* and *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*, Descartes uses the example of the name of Peter. Suárez uses the same example in a similar context (DM VII, section I, § 4, and DM V, section 1, § 5). The fact that he mentions even the example from DM can be an indication to support the idea that the recipient of the letter, most probably a Jesuit, was familiar with Suárez's work. Suárez's example of Peter became canonical (DM VII, 1, § 5; LIV, 6, § 5)²⁵ with regard to the *distinctio rationis ratiocinatæ* and *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*. Therefore, it is understandable that Descartes also used it, proving this way that the person to whom he wrote was well aware of this tradition.

Normally, as we have seen, philosophers after Aristotle differentiated the real distinction of two objects that can be distinguished in the surrounding world from the rational distinction which only happens in the human mind starting sometimes from a given reality, in which case it is a reasoned rational distinction

²³ For Descartes, the *distinctio rationis* (AT I 153 *et passim.*) is a distinction *per abstractionem intellectum* (AT III 421). He only asks in two instances in his work whether the distinction of essence and existence is real. (AT III 435; IV 348).

²⁴ Following Suárez, Descartes claims that *ens rationis* is not a real being (AT V 343–344; VII 103; 134). For Suárez, "*ens in quantum ens reale esse objectum adaequatum hujus scientiae*" (DM I, sec. I, § 26), only the *entia rationales* are excluded from the objects of metaphysics, because they are not beings in themselves (Ibid., § 4: "*Objectum hujus scientiae esse ens reale in tota suo latitudine, ita ut directe non comprehendat entia rationis*"). For *entia rationes* see DM LIV). Even if for Suárez metaphysics has primacy over logic, the two fields are equally important. The rational being, the object of logic, is just as important as the real being, because it is due to this, to our ideas and reasoning, that we understand the real.

²⁵ Sven K. Knebel, "Entre logique mentaliste et métaphysique conceptualiste: la *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*," *Les Études philosophiques* 61 (2002): 157–158.

(*distinctio rationis ratiocinatæ*) according to which, following Aristotle's example, the road from Thebes to Athens is the same as the road from Athens to Thebes (*Physics*, III, 202b 13). Therefore, even if it is a spiritual product, the *distinctio rationis ratiocinatæ* has its roots in the object itself; however, the situation is different in the case of the reasoning rational distinction (*distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*) (AT IV 349).²⁶ Descartes only rejected the *reasoning rational distinction* which Spinoza equated to a *verbal distinction* (*distinctio verbis – Cogitata metaphysica*, I, 1), a chimera, as it exists neither in the intellect nor in the imagination, and it can only be expressed through words.²⁷

The roots of the difference between *distinctio rationis ratiocinatæ* and *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis* go back to the Franciscan tradition at the end of the 13th century, which had initially distinguished the *distinctio intentionalis* of Henri de Gand (1217–1293) and *distinctio rationis*.²⁸ Petrus Aureoli (cca. 1280–1322) was one of the first authors who proposed a dichotomy of *distinctio rationis*: “*distinctio rationis quædam oritur ex ipso intellectu..., et quædam oritur ex natura rei*”.²⁹ According to Sven K. Knebel, around 1500 the Dominican school also started to adopt this differentiation of the *distinctio rationis*, that has since become canonical: “*Thomistæ...aliqui iterum subdividunt distinctionem rationis, scilicet vel rationis ratiocinantis, vel rationis ratiocinatæ*”.³⁰

The phrase *distinctio rationis* is frequently seen in Thomas Aquinas's works; however, the terms *distinctio rationis ratiocinatæ* and *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis* belong to late scholasticism, appearing, as A. de Muralt claims, in the period between Suárez and Jean de Saint-Thomas, for the first time probably in the writings of Gabriel Vásquez.³¹ This is a false claim nonetheless, as long as this distinction is already formulated in DM: “*Hæc autem distinctio duplex distingui solet: una, quæ*

²⁶ For the *distinctio rationis ratiocinatæ* and *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis* at Descartes see Justin Skirry, “Descartes's Conceptual Distinction and its Ontological Import,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42 (2004): 121–144; Kim-Sang Ong-Van-Cung, “Substance et distinctions chez Descartes, Suárez et leurs prédécesseurs médiévaux,” 216–217; Norman Welle, “Descartes on distinction,” *Boston College Studies in Philosophy* 1 (1966): 104–134; É. Gilson, *Index...*, 86–90.

²⁷ Spinoza, *Cogitata metaphysica* I, III: “*Chimæram, quia neque in intellectu est, neque in imaginatione, a nobis ens verbale commode vocari posse*”.

²⁸ Sven K. Knebel, “Entre logique mentaliste et métaphysique conceptualiste: la *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*,” 145–168.

²⁹ Petrus Aureoli, *Scriptum super primum Sententiarum*, dist. 8, s. 23, n. 124; quoted in Knebel, “Entre logique mentaliste et métaphysique conceptualiste: la *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*,” 148.

³⁰ Bartholomæus de Castro, *Quæstiones pro totius logice prohemio*, Salamanque, 1518, f. 28 r b, quoted in Sven K. Knebel, “Entre logique mentaliste et métaphysique conceptualiste: la *distinctio rationis ratiocinantis*,” 148, n. 7.

³¹ André de Muralt, *L'enjeu de la philosophie médiévale*, 47–89.

non habet fundamentum in re et dicitur rationis ratiocinantis, quia oritur solum ex negotiatione et operatione intellectus; alia, quæ habet fundamentum in re et a multis vocatur rationis ratiocinatæ“ (DM VIII, section I, § 4), and the term *rationis ratiocinantis* (*rationis ratiocinatæ*) has several occurrences; see mainly DM VII (treating various distinctions), section I, § 4 (this paragraph is actually dedicated to this distinction - *Distinctio rationis*), § 5; section II, § 28; LIV, section VI, § 5.

IV. The two occurrences of the term *objective* in the letter are not completely random, but they belong to a wider discourse which is only suggested, but not elaborated in this text. Descartes treated it in detail on another occasion, as we shall see below. Even if not explicit, the reference in this text is to the scholastic distinction between *conceptus formalis* and *conceptus obiectivus*.

The roots of this distinction are also found in the Franciscan tradition, which takes over from Henry of Gand the idea that *esse intentionale* is another name for *esse obiectivum*. Ever since, even if moved to a second level, intentionality has never left *esse obiectivum*. For Duns Scotus, *esse intelligibile* (or *esse cognitum*) equals *esse obiectivum*.³² The theory of *esse obiectivum* as proposed by Duns Scotus changed the connections of the intellect to reality. It transforms the knowledge of things in themselves and constitutes an object of thought. Instead of a direct relationship with the essence of the thing, knowledge becomes the production of a representative image.³³ In his turn, Ockham uses the term *esse cognitum* (*esse obiectivum*) in I *Sententiae*, d. 2, q. 8. when speaking about non-existing entities, especially universals. In short, it is an objective existence in the mind of the subject, a mode of being of the object in question. For other scholastic authors, such as for instance Johannes Capreolus (1380–1444), the object forged by the intellect is objective, a term identical with intentional.

The Dominican Capreolus introduced the distinction between the *formal concept* and the *objective concept* in order to reject Duns Scotus’s univocality. For him, “le *concept formel* est une réalité noétique intramentale, une forme produite par l’intellect dans l’acte de l’intellection. Du point de vue subjectif, le concept formel est un accident, une forme - qualité subjectivée dans l’intellect. Du point de vue objectif, il représente et il exprime de manière intelligible l’objet connu. Le terme – trop polyvalent – *ratio* peut exprimer ce dernier aspect du concept formel. Quant au *concept objectif* – expression évidemment mal choisie, parce que vu que ce concept n’a rien d’un concept au sens habituel du terme -, il n’est autre que l’intelligible situé devant l’intellect qui forme le concept (formel). Par exemple, la nature humaine est le concept objectif de l’intellection par laquelle on comprend

³² Duns Scotus, *Quæstiones in Primum Librum Sententiarum*, d. 36, n. 10.

³³ Olivier Boulnois, *Être et représentation. Une généalogie de la métaphysique moderne à l’époque de Duns Scot (XIII^e - XIV^e siècle)* (Paris: PUF, 1999), 130.

l'homme en tant que tel. Dans cette perspective, il est le fondement de la vérité du concept formel".³⁴

Capreolus's terminology (using the very same examples) is also found in Suárez's DM. At the end of the 16th century, Suárez introduced the distinction between the *formal concept* and *objective concept* as a *vulgaris distinctio*: "Supponenda imprimis est vulgaris distinctio conceptus formalis et obiectivi" (DM, II, sec. I, § 1). Similarly to Capreolus, the Jesuit rejected at first the univocality of Duns Scotus, referring also to the distinction between the *formal* and *objective concept*. For him, the *formal concept* is the action of the intellect through which it gets to know a thing or a *ratio communis*; the *objectual concept* is the thing or *ratio communis*, which is (in)directly perceived via the formal concept (*ibid.*, II, § 1).³⁵ Suárez is so "scholastic" that he takes over the very example that Capreolus uses: the *concept of man* (DM II, section I, §1).

Although this distinction between the *formal concept* and the *objective concept* is a rational one, Suárez still gives the impression (*ibid.*, § 1) that this *objective concept* is capable of identifying, at least occasionally, with the singular and individual thing. J.-F. Courtine seems to have understood this when saying: "le concept objectuel n'est pas seulement le substitut des choses individuelles et concrètes, mais ce qui constitue leur essence même".³⁶ There is a nuance (often avoided) that must be mentioned here, about the subjective or objective nature of such a concept. At this point it can be claimed that Suárez is once again influenced by Capreolus: „l'unité du concept objectif peut être de deux formes. Un première forme d'unité est obtenue par la participation des diverses réalités incluses par le concept à une forme ou à une nature non-divisée : *Attenditur penes aliquam formam vel naturam quae participatur a multis, qualis est unitas generis vel speciei*. La deuxième forme d'unité: *Potest intelligi de unitate attributionis, eo modo qua multa, habentia attributionem ad unum, dicuntur unum attributive*. Cette deuxième unité est plus faible que la précédente. Elle peut être suffisante pour la fondation d'un concept formel".³⁷

Descartes also borrows the distinction between the *conceptus formalis* and *conceptus obiectivus* most probably from DM II, section I, § 1: *Conceptus formalis et*

³⁴ Jean Capréolus, *Defensiones theologicæ Divi Thomæ Aquinatis*, eds. C. Paban, T. Pegues, Tours, 1900-1908, *Def.* I, dist. VIII, qu. 2, a. 2 B (t. 1, 375 a), quoted in Serge-Thomas Bonino, "Le concept d'étant et la connaissance de Dieu d'après Jean Cabrol," *Revue thomiste* I (1995): 109–136.

³⁵ J.-P. Coujou, *Suárez et la refondation de la métaphysique comme ontologie*. Étude et traduction de *l'Index détaillé de la Métaphysique d'Aristote* de F. Suárez (Louvain–Paris: Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1999), 14–15.

³⁶ J.-F. Courtine, *Suárez et le système...*, 193.

³⁷ Serge-Thomas Bonino, "Le concept d'étant et la connaissance de Dieu d'après Jean Cabrol," 109–136.

obiectivus quid sint, et in quo differant. Descartes's use of this distinction is one more evidence for the continuity between scholasticism and modernity.³⁸ Whereas for Suárez the concepts were formal and objective, ideas for Descartes presuppose this duality, a way of thinking (the formal being of the idea) and a representation (the objective being of the idea). He states that ideas, from the point of view of formal being, cannot be distinguished: "je ne reconnais nulle différence ou inégalité entre elles" (AT IX 31). From the point of view of the objective being, that is, the representation of ideas, not only are they distinguished, but they can also be hierarchical (*ibid.*, 32).³⁹ Still, when Descartes refers to reality, he does not stop at the objective–formal distinction, but discusses a triple perspective: first, reality is *objective*, "quatenus est in intellectu", then it is a *formal* reality, as long as he speaks about "*res ipsa*", and thirdly, it is an *eminent* reality⁴⁰ when it becomes an actual reality which exceeds formal reality and reclines on objective reality.⁴¹

What interests us here is only the distinction formal–objective, with special emphasis on the objective: "res est objective in intellectu per ideam" (AT VII 41), that is, "une chose est objectivement (ou par représentation) dans l'entendement par son idée." The objective reality always comes from the formal reality, which represents the former's conditions of possibility. For J.-L. Marion, who comments on this fragment, "la réalité objective reste, de plein droit sans quoi elle ne réclamerait aucune cause, un *esse obiectivum*".⁴² Another commentator, F. Alquié, states that in order to define objective reality, we speak about a represented reality rather than the representation of reality.⁴³ "Étant une forme *représentative*, l'idée est une chose pensée et, à ce titre, une *réalité*".⁴⁴ Thus the Cartesian idea appears as a thing, even if it is a thought thing, a *res cogitata* (AT VI 559).

³⁸ Marco Forlivesi, "La distinction entre concept formel et concept objectif: Suárez, Pasqualigo, Mastri," *Les études philosophiques* 1 (2002): 3–30.

³⁹ See: Descartes, *Œuvres philosophiques*, ed. Ferdinand Alquié, vol. II (Paris: Éd. Classiques Garnier, 2010), 587; É. Gilson, *Index...*, 49; Roland Dalbiez, "Les sources scolastiques de la théorie cartésienne de l'être objectif," *Revue d'histoire de la philosophie* 3 (1929): 464–472; T.J. Cronin, *Objective Being in Descartes and Suárez* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1966); Norman J. Wells, "Objective Being: Descartes and his Source," *The Modern Schoolman* 45 (1967): 49–61; Kim Sang Ong-Van-Cung, *L'objet de nos pensées. Descartes et l'intentionnalité* (Paris: Vrin, 2012).

⁴⁰ On Descartes's concept of eminence, most probably taken over from DM XXX, section 1, see André Robinet, "Descartes: critère logique de l'éminence et cause de soi (Sources hispaniques et françaises)," *Revista de Filosofía* 25 (2001): 7–22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8; see also Josiane Boulad-Ayoub et Paule-Monique Vernes, *La révolution cartésienne* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2006), 111–112.

⁴² Jean-Luc Marion, *Sur le prisme métaphysique de Descartes* (Paris: PUF, 2004), 99.

⁴³ Descartes, *Œuvres philosophiques*, II, 438, n. 1.

⁴⁴ Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, text and commentary by Étienne Gilson (Paris: Vrin, 1987), 320–323.

It has already been noted that “the objective reality of ideas plays an important role in the Cartesian system, for upon it rests the whole force of his demonstration of the existence of God”.⁴⁵ *Esse obiectivum* is for Descartes the reality represented in the idea I have in my mind, which is not a simple *ens rationis*, but a specific mode of being of the object. One can see here a nuance in comparison with the majority of scholastics, who considered that *esse obiectivum* is an *ens rationis*, non-real. Descartes’s interpretation helps, to a certain extent, to “demonstrate” the existence of God, because leaving from this objective reality of the idea of God, he reaches to God himself, the only possible cause of the idea I have. In Descartes’s terms, I cannot be the cause of the objective reality of the idea of finite substance, “parce que je suis fini” (AT IX 36).⁴⁶ For Descartes, there are two ways to prove the existence of God: through his effects or through his essence. In his opinion, theologians only admit the proof through effects (AT VII 120; 167; 244). One may conclude that they, to whom Descartes referred, did not admit any other evidence than *a posteriori* (used by Descartes in *Meditation* I and II), based in a certain sense on analogy. Even if we only had in mind the metaphor of the tree of knowledge, mentioned by Descartes in his letter to Abbot Picot (AT IX 14), which overthrows the scholastic paradigm largely grounded on analogy, we can say that Descartes privileges *a priori* evidence (*Disputatio XXIX - De Deo primo ente et substantia increata, quatenus ipsum esse ratione naturali cognosci potest*). Another interpreter claims that “la reformulation de la preuve *a posteriori*, à partir de la notion de *causa sui*, est identique à la preuve *a priori*, où c’est l’essence de Dieu qui commande la détermination des attributs. S’appuyant sur la définition anselmienne de Dieu, la preuve par les effets convertit l’argument du *Proslogion* en preuve *a priori*, où c’est la nature de Dieu, sa puissance ou son essence, qui donne le pourquoi de son existence et de toutes ses autres perfections”.⁴⁷

As it is well known, in *Meditations* III and V, Descartes proposes two (or according to some interpreters, even three) arguments as evidence for the existence of God. For a historian of philosophy, it is possible to prove the existence of God starting from the perfection contained in the idea of God, “for existence is itself one of the perfections of God and belongs to the divine essence”.⁴⁸ Moreover, an author who did research into Cartesian arguments claims that “grâce à la notion de *causa*

⁴⁵ T.J. Cronin, 1.

⁴⁶ A discussion on this matter is also found in Devillairs, *Descartes et la connaissance de Dieu*, 35. Moreover, “Dieu est connu comme *causa sui*, alors que j’ai conscience de ma dépendance et de mon incomplétude” (Ibid., 39).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁸ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophie*, Volume IV: *Modern Philosophy: From Descartes to Leibniz* (New York: Doubleday Image, 1960), 112.

sui, la preuve dans *Meditatio III* est devenue une preuve *a priori*, comme l'argument d'Anselme est devenu, dans *Meditatio V*, une démonstration *a priori*".⁴⁹

Still, even some of his contemporaries considered the construction of Descartes's arguments too weak, such as for example Arnauld, who criticised the circularity of the argument in *Meditation III* (AT IX 160-167): there is the idea of God, which presupposes that God must exist in order to produce that idea. Another criticism refers to the origin of the idea of God. Where does this idea come from? The innatism embraced by Descartes, which claims that ideas are all *mentibus nostris ingentis* (AT I 145) seems to solve the problem, but not all agreed to such a hypothesis. Also, the principle of causality involved in the construction of this argument also raises several questions.

As far as I know, the concept *causa sui*⁵⁰ appears only twice in Descartes's works: in *Replies I* (AT VII 109) and in *Replies IV* (AT VII 242).⁵¹ In his answers to Caterus, Descartes distinguishes a positive and a negative meaning of the term *causa sui*: in the negative sense, God has no cause (AT VII 110), in the positive sense, God relates to Himself as the efficient cause relates to its effect (AT VII 110). Caterus brings in the authority of Thomas Aquinas, who repeatedly states in *Summa theologica* (I, q. VII, art. 2; q. VIII, art. 1 and 3) that *Deus est prima causa, non habens causam; Deus non habet causam*, and also that of Suárez, who claims, at the single occurrence of this terms in his work (DM I section V, § 38) that *Deus non habet causas*, reproaching Descartes that he thinks of God starting from the cause. Marion claims that the Cartesian innovation (*causa sui*) is only intelligible in a Suárezian horizon.⁵² A prime text that could have determined Descartes to use *causa sui*⁵³ was the *Disputatio XXIX*, section III, § 1: "non posse demonstrari a priori Deum esse, quia

⁴⁹ Emanuela Scribano, *L'Existence de Dieu* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 128.

⁵⁰ Most probably, this term appeared in the 12th century in the works of Alain de Lille, but it does not apply to God, who was called, throughout the entire period of scholasticism, *principium sui* and not *causa sui* (R. Eucken, "Cause", in A. Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* [Paris: PUF, 1960], 128).

⁵¹ For an interpreter, "l'ego cartésien ontologise d'une façon anselmienne cette autocalusalité en Dieu" (Yvan Morin, "Le rapport à la *causa sui*: de Plotin à Descartes par la médiation du débat entre Ficin et Pic," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* XXVI/2 (2002): 56). Contrary to the opinion of J.-M. Narbonne and J.-L. Marion, the author of the mentioned study claims that Descartes borrowed the idea of *causa sui* via the orator Gibieuf, from Marsilio Ficino, who used in his Commentary to Philebos the formulation "sui ipsius esset causa" (Marsilio Ficino, *The Philebus Commentary*, ed. Michael J. B. Allen [Tempe, Arizona: MRTS, 2000], 318).

⁵² J.-L. Marion, *Questions cartésiennes II* (Paris: PUF, 1996), 160 sqq; see also V. Carraud, *Causa sive ratio. La raison de la cause de Suárez à Leibniz* (Paris: PUF, 2002), 103–167.

⁵³ Spinoza, the philosopher who is usually associated with this concept, claimed that "*per causam sui intelligo id cujus essentia involvit existentiam sive id cujus natura non potest concipi nisi existens*" (Spinoza, *Etica*, I, definition I).

neque Deus habet causam sui esse per quam a priori demonstratur, neque si haberet, ita exacte et perfecte a nobis cognoscitur Deus, ut ex propriis principiis (ut sic dicam) illum assequamur. Quo sensu dixit Dionysius, c. 7, de Divinis nominibus, nos non posse Deum ex propria natura cognoscere". According to Marion, the phrase *neque Deus habet causam sui esse* is not much different from the *causa sui* used by Descartes.⁵⁴

In the case of the second argument, Descartes gives up causality, but not the innate idea of God, that he finds in his mind besides the idea of the figure (such as a triangle) or the number (AT VII 65). Therefore, Descartes uses the comparison between the idea of the triangle and the idea of God, both existing independently from a subject. The idea of God, or the "new idea of God"⁵⁵ which is there in my mind completely differs from God Himself, which is beyond my ideas. In a Cartesian language, God is infinite, but the idea of God is not infinite; on the contrary, it is "finita et ad modulum ingenii nostri accomodata" (AT VII 114). The balance of this Cartesian construct seems rather fragile to me, and favours a unidirectional interpretation. This is, I think, Heidegger's way of interpreting *causa sui* as the principle of a strictly rationally founded onto-theology.⁵⁶

The proofs of the existence of God failed to convince even Descartes's contemporaries, or many of the later exegetes. For instance, Blaise Pascal seems to capture this excellently when saying about Descartes that he is "ridicule, car cela est inutile et incertain et pénible".⁵⁷ But as long as „la connaissance sans Jésus Christ est inutile et stérile“ (*Pensées*, § 556), Descartes is "useless" with regard to salvation, for he attributed to God only the role of giving a "chiquenaude" to this world, and then was content to just watch, distancing Himself thus from the Living God of Christian tradition (*Pensées*, § 77). And if Descartes is useless, it is really not important if he is or is not "uncertain" or anything else.⁵⁸

For some contemporary researchers, "even as a philosophical supreme cause, the God of Descartes was a stillborn God. He could not possibly live because,

⁵⁴ J.-L. Marion, *Questions...*, 160.

⁵⁵ É. Gilson, *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien* (Paris: Vrin, 1984), 224; see also P. Guénancia, *Lire Descartes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 168 sqq.

⁵⁶ M. Heidegger, "Identité et Différence," in *Questions I et II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 294 sqq.; see also F. Crişmăreanu, "Causa sui et sa postérité. Réflexions critiques en marges de quelques moments de la métaphysique," *Analele ştiinţifice ale Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iaşi*, LIX (2012): 51–64.

⁵⁷ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, § 77: "Descartes... est inutile et incertain et pénible"; and § 702: "Descartes *inutile et incertain*"; see also Michel Le Guern, *Pascal et Descartes* (Paris: Nizet, 1971), 164–167.

⁵⁸ One clarification must be made here: Pascal does not speak about a rational theology, but a revelative one. However, as we know, Descartes always tried to remain within the field of philosophy or a rational theology. In a letter he admitted modestly and cautiously that the problems of theology exceed the capacity of his mind (Lettre XXI, à *Mersenne*, 15 avril 1630).

as Descartes had conceived him, he was the God of Christianity reduced to the condition of philosophical principle, in short, an infelicitous hybrid of religious faith and of rational thought”.⁵⁹ For this reason, Descartes’s metaphysics is a failure, in agreement with C. Wolff who claimed that it was Descartes who destroyed traditional metaphysics. Kant perfected the Cartesian project, “expelled the methodological concept of God from the theory of science and grounded the universality of natural law and uniformity of nature without it; but its shadow persisted. The concept of God, he argued, is a natural shadow or projection of principles we use to structure nature. The shadow, Kant seems to have claimed, is virtually inescapable. But it is only a shadow”.⁶⁰

V. It can be concluded that this letter of Descartes is decisively influenced by the work of Suárez, especially section I of dispute VII: *Utrum præter distinctionem realem et rationis, sit aliqua alia distinctio in rebus*. This is not the first place where Descartes paraphrases fragments of DM (see, for instance, AT I 148–150).

The core of this text is built on a series of scholastic distinctions undoubtedly taken over from Suárez’s DM. In addition to the distinctions mentioned by the author, another essential distinction seems to be between the *formal* and *objective* reality of ideas, which in Descartes’s terms could justify the difference between things invented by our minds and those outside our minds. Due to the density of the philosophical ideas seen in this letter, I also tend to believe that F. Alquié’s choice not to include this letter with Descartes’s philosophical works (*Œuvres philosophiques*) was both regrettable and inexplicable.⁶¹

Another of these final observations is the fact that the change of language, for which Descartes apologises at the beginning of the letter, does not seem accidental. Firstly, he chose Latin because the subject presupposed a technical discussion, using terms already fixed in Latin, most probably with a partner who also mastered the subject discussed. Secondly, this change may lead one to think that Descartes’s correspondence partner was very familiar with Suárez’s text, decisive not only for this letter. Descartes’s partner may well have been a Jesuit, or a person who had attended a Jesuit college, where the basic text for metaphysics was Suárez’s DM (in my opinion, it is possible that the addressee of the text was Descartes’s Jesuit confidant, Father Denis Mesland [1615–1672]). Thirdly, the use of Latin, summarising certain ideas of DM, only represents an appeal to the authority in that age of Suárez’s teachings, through which Descartes masked his own convictions, in this case about scholastic distinctions. And finally, it must be mentioned that

⁵⁹ É. Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 89.

⁶⁰ Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the scientific imagination from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 356.

⁶¹ Yannis Prelorntzos, *Temps, durée et éternité dans les Principes de la philosophie de Descartes de Spinoza* (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris Sorbonne, 1996), 123, n. 3.

Descartes's choice of Latin in some cases, or the vernacular French in other cases is also visible in his letter to Marsenne (written around 20 April 1637), when speaking about the *Discourse*, “écrit en langue vulgaire, de peur que les esprits faibles, venant à embrasser d'abord avidement les doutes et scrupules qu'il m'eût fallu proposer, ne pussent après comprendre en même façon les raisons par lesquelles j'eusse tâché de les ôter, et ainsi que je les eusse engagés dans un mauvais pas, sans peut-être les en tirer. Mais il y a environ huit ans que j'ai écrit en latin un commencement de Métaphysique, où cela est déduit assez au long ; et si l'on fait une version latine de ce livre, comme on s'y prépare, je l'y pourrai faire mettre » (AT I 347-351).⁶² It is clear therefore that the addressee of the letter in question was not a “feeble spirit”.

Descartes's choice to write in Latin is helpful for those who wish to mirror this letter with fragments of DM, especially *Disputatio* VII. It is readily visible that there are several similarities between the two texts. Here are some of them: 1. the Cartesian formulation “Ita figura et motus sunt modi proprie dicti substantiæ corporeæ, quia idem corpus potest existere” could have had its source in DM XXXI, section I, § 2: *Quomodo se habeant ratio substantiæ materialis et ratio substantiæ corporeæ*; 2. the phrase “in Deo iustitia, misericordia” seems to follow DM VII, section I, § 5: “in Deo iustitiam a misericordia”; 3. the discursive sequence “vocari potest Modalis” could have been influenced by DM VII, section I, § 16: “proprius vocari potest distinctio modalis”; 4. in addition to the abovementioned example of Peter, this letter also contains the example of the triangle, used by Descartes in his *Meditation* V: “mon esprit étudie la nature du triangle”. In this case it is possibly the influence of DM VII, section I, § 4 (for the same example see also DM XXIX, section 3, § 5; *ibid.*, § 14; XLII, section II, § 6). Rigorously speaking, the example of the triangle comes from Aristotle, used also to demonstrate the difference between essence and existence.⁶³

In *Objections* I, Caterus mentions Suárez (AT VII 95). Formulating answers to the objections of the Dutch philosopher, Descartes does not explicitly quote the Jesuit. He only quotes him in his answer to Arnauld, in a very accurate way: “Fr. Suarem, *Metaphysicæ disput. 9, sectione 2, numero 4*” (AT VII 235)⁶⁴. To the best of

⁶² Bruno Clément, “La langue claire de Descartes,” *Rue Descartes* 65 (2009): 20–34.

⁶³ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, II, 7, 92b.

⁶⁴ Descartes knew well Suárez's text (DM IX – “*De falsitate seu falso*”, section II, § 4), decisive for the discussion on “material falsity” (*Meditation* III). The Jesuit's text on the “deceptive god” (“*Deum inducere intellectum ad falsum*”) and the “evil angel” (“*angelus malus*”, at Descartes the “evil genius”) is found in DM IX, section II, § 7. This passage, that É. Gilson missed in his *Index scolastico-cartésien*, was noted by N. J. Wells in 1984 (N. J. Wells, “Material Falsity in Descartes, Arnauld, and Suárez,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* XXII [1984]: 26, n. 10). See on these matters E. Faye, “Dieu trompeur, mauvais génie et origine de l'erreur selon Descartes et Suárez,” *Dans Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 1 (2001): 60–72. In this article E. Faye engages in fact into a polemics with Italian researcher Emanuela Scribano, in her work *Guida alla lettura delle “Meditazioni metafisiche” di Descartes* (Bari-

my knowledge, this is the only place in the entire Cartesian corpus where he accurately quotes Suárez. Fragments of his work are also cited elsewhere throughout Descartes's work, such as in the *Meditations*, *Principles*, *Letter to Marseenne* (6 May 1630), but without mentioning the name of the Jesuit.

Francisco Suárez, this *spiritus rector* of scholastic philosophy, had a significant influence on Descartes. The works of the Jesuit were the interface through which Descartes had access to the synthesis of scholastic doctrine. There are certain attempts in the scholarly literature to indicate and interpret the ideas of Suárez within the Cartesian corpus. Some of these have been mentioned in the pages above, but a thorough research to inventory and analyse the influence of Suárez on Descartes is still a desideratum. The main reason for this hiatus is the insufficient research of Suárez's work, which has only been studied sporadically and fragmentarily as yet.

Translated from the Romanian by Emese Czintos

Rome: Laterza, 1997). At the colloquium *Descartes et la Renaissance* (1996), E. Faye proposed a first study that showed that DM was a source for Descartes when he used in his argumentation the "evil genius" and the "deceptive god" (even if in the latter case he distanced himself from the teaching of the Jesuit). For more details, see E. Faye, *Philosophie et perfection de l'homme, de la Renaissance à Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), 333–335 and *Descartes et la Renaissance. Actes de Colloque international de Tours des 22–24 mars 1996*, réunis par E. Faye (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), 22–26.