

MARCO FORLIVESI

FRANCISCO SUÁREZ AND THE ‘RATIONES STUDIORUM’  
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS\*

[...] nec temere novas excogitent,  
nisi ex constantibus solidisque principiis.  
*Ratio atque institutio studiorum*  
*Societatis Iesu*, Neapoli 1599.

1. *Introduction*

In a previous article of mine I have already tried to show, at least concerning a determinate subject, the specifically philosophical nature of Suárez’s thought. In particular, I have tried to show this fact also in relation to the prescriptions contained in the various *rationes studiorum* of the religious order to which he belonged.<sup>1</sup> Here I shall address a more limited question which is somehow symmetrical with respect to the one I discussed previously: the question of Suárez’s conformity – or at least proximity – to the prescriptions, or the ‘spirit’, of the *rationes studiorum* formulated within the Society of Jesus in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> I shall examine this question in the context of the three following themes: *i*) Suárez’s relationship with the *auctoritates* (more precisely, with Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas); *ii*) the relationship between philosophy and supernatural theology as it is outlined by Suárez in the foreword (*Prooemium*) and the introduction (*Ratio et discursus totius operis*) to his *Disputationes metaphysicae*; *iii*) the structure of his works.<sup>3</sup>

---

\* This study was made possible by a scholarship granted by Prof. Ida Rossi Santinello in memory of Prof. Giovanni Santinello.

<sup>1</sup> I am referring to Marco Forlivesi, “C’è una filosofia nell’opera di Francisco Suárez? Il caso della dottrina sul ‘verbum mentis’ tra ‘auctoritates’ e argomenti di ragione,” *Rinascimento* 49 (2009): 397-450.

<sup>2</sup> There exists abundant literature on the educational legislation of the Jesuits and its relations with the intellectual production of the members of the Society of Jesus. See, for example: Marcus Hellyer, *Catholic Physics. Jesuit Natural Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Mario Zanardi, “La «Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu»: tappe e vicende della sua progressiva formazione (1541-1616),” *Annali di storia dell’educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche* 5 (1998): 135-164; Ulrich G. Leinsle, “‘Delectus opinionum’. Traditionsbildung durch Auswahl in der frühen Jesuitentheologie,” in *Im Spannungsfeld von Tradition und Innovation. Festschrift für Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger*, ed. G. Schmuttermayr [et al.] (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1997), 159-175; La «Ratio studiorum». *Modelli culturali e pratiche educative dei Gesuiti in Italia tra Cinque e Seicento*, ed. G. P. Brizzi (Roma: Bulzoni, 1981), in particular Gian Mario Anselmi, “Per un’archeologia della ‘Ratio’: dalla «pedagogia» al «governo»,” 11-42; Charles H. Lohr, “Jesuit Aristotelianism and Sixteenth-Century Metaphysics,” in *Parádoxis. Studies in memory of Edwin A. Quain*, ed. H. G. Fletcher III - M. B. Schulte (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), 203-220; *La Ratio studiorum e la parte quarta delle Costituzioni della Compagnia di Gesù*, ed. M. Barbera (Padova: CEDAM, 1942).

<sup>3</sup> I quote the *Constitutiones* of the Society and the relative *Declarationes* from the edition *Monumenta Ignatiana. Series tertia. Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Constitutiones Societatis Iesu*, vol. 3: *Textus Latinus* (Roma: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1938). I quote the educational legislation of the Society from the edition *Monumenta paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, ed. L. Lukács, vol. 2: (1557-1572) (Romae: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1974) (in particular: *De artium liberalium studiis*; *De sacrae theologiae studiis*) and vol. 5: *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu* (Romae: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1986) (in particular: *Ratio atque institutio studiorum per sex patres [...] conscripta*; *Ratio atque institutio studiorum S. I. 1591. Pars prior: Ordo et praxis studiorum*; *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu [1599]*). I quote Suárez’s *De anima* from the edition Francisco Suárez, *Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in libros Aristotelis De anima - Comentaríos a los libros de Aristóteles Sobre el alma*, ed. S. Castellote, 3 vols (Madrid: Sociedad de Estudios y Publicaciones - Labor - Fundación Xavier Zubiri respectively, 1978-1991); however, I add in square brackets the details of the corresponding places in the Parisian edition of 1856-1878, i.e. Francisco Suárez, *Opera omnia* (Parisiis: Apud Ludovicum Vivès, 1856-1878), vol. 3, ed. M. André (this edition indirectly adheres to the edition edited and published in 1621 by Baltasar Álvares). I quote Suárez’s *Disputationes metaphysicae*

## 2. The educational legislation of the Society and Suárez's relationship with Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas

In the fourth part of the *Constitutiones* of 1558 of the Society of Jesus, it is prescribed, briefly and clearly, that “In Theologia legetur vetus et novum Testamentum, et doctrina scholastica divi Thomae [...]”<sup>4</sup> Still, the clearness of this norm is merely apparent. Indeed, the meaning of the term ‘*legere*’ lends itself to discussion (all the more so because it is not referred to a text but to a *doctrina*), and in fact the Jesuits debated about it. The later educational legislation of the Society alternates between two normative orientations: the tendency that confines the whole teaching activity concerning the theological field to the mere exposition of the letter of Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*; and the tendency that acknowledges the need to interpret the writings of the medieval Dominican and, in some cases, even to abandon his views. Both the *De sacrae theologiae studiis* (drawn up between approximately 1565 and 1572 but never sent to the provinces) and the draft of the *Ratio studiorum* divulged in 1586 prescribe that a professor of theology must, while teaching, explain the individual articles of Aquinas’s *Summa* and that he must do it following the order of this work. The professor, as the two texts make clear, must not develop the subjects as distinct treatises. Nevertheless, immediately after this prescription, both texts add that, according to the special needs of the circumstances, this can be allowed. Further, the trial *Ratio* of 1586 provides that, regarding subjects such as the primacy of the Pope or the nature of the Church, the text written by Aquinas must be supplemented with addenda.

“Modus docendi scholasticam theologiam. Explicabuntur singulae quaestiones et singuli articuli eodem ordine, quo sunt dispositi a d. Thoma [...]. Deinde <magister> moveat dubia et quaestiones, si quae occurrant dignae scitu; sed tamen non nisi quae ad illum articulum proprie pertineant [...]. Non efficiet autem tractatus materiarum a seorsim; versabitur tantum in expositione diligenti articuli. Sicubi tamen ratione temporis aut loci videbitur excurrendum, poterit id facere, sumpta occasione articuli, quem tractat.”<sup>5</sup>

“Regulariter non fiant tractatus, sed servetur ordo s. Thomae; nisi cum vel illius ordo obscurior distractiorve est, vel cum materia aliqua in compendium videtur redigenda, vel cum addendum est s. Thomae, ut de Ecclesia, de papa etc. Dummodo in iis singulis prius s. Thomae mens (quatenus haberi potest) exponatur, ut sit potius ordinata quaedam s. Thomae explicatio.”<sup>6</sup>

The trial *Ratio* of 1586 is a particularly toilsome text. It begins with a laborious *Commentariolus* that addresses several problems: for example, which opinions are admissible and which opinions are not admissible; or else whether the supernatural theologian can or cannot discuss philosophical themes. In order to provide examples, some theological-supernatural questions are examined as well. Nevertheless, and what’s more, the *Commentariolus* closes with the following statement:

“Illud vero non dissimulandum, ex locis s. Thomae obscurioribus longe plura primum fuisse hic exposita a patribus deputatis; qui tamen postea, multis recisis, pauca retinuerunt; tum ne horum multitudo videtur onerosa, tum quo minus de suo apponerent, magis integro s. Thoma relicto liberis ingeniorum exercitationibus.”<sup>7</sup>

As concerns the normative part of the text, it determines first of all that professors of supernatural theology not only have to adhere to Thomas Aquinas’s theses, but also have to show high esteem for his argumentations and advise their pupils to read his works frequently.

“Frequentem s. Thomae lectionem auditoribus suis professores commendant et ipsi praeceant exemplo, nec in accumulandis quaestionibus suis ita sint profusi, ut s. Thomae exponendo vix locus aliquis reliquus fiat. Dubitandum est enim, ne paulatim excidat nobis e manibus s. Thomas, cuius doctrinam tanti facit Ecclesia,

---

from the Parisian edition of 1856-1878: Francisco Suárez, *Opera omnia*, vol. 25-26, ed. C. Berton. I quote Suárez’s *De Deo uno et trino* and *Opus de triplici virtute theologica fide, spe, et caritate* from the Parisian edition of 1856-1878: Francisco Suárez, *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, ed. M. André, and vol. 12, ed. C. Berton, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> *Constitutiones Societatis Iesu*, pars. 4, cap. 14, n. 1, 150.

<sup>5</sup> *De sacrae theologiae studiis*, <nn. 5-6>, 268.

<sup>6</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum per sex patres [...] conscripta*, § <De theologia scholastica>, cap. 3, <n. 3>, 56.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibi*, *Commentariolus*, 18-33.

quamque nostrae Constitutiones sequendam conscribunt, cum s. Thomas probe intellectus praebeat fundamenta ad tuendas omnes catholicas veritates. Quare parvi faciendae non sunt illius distinctiones et rationes, sed explicandae et aliunde muniendae, cum aliis in locis se ipsum explicet.”<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, in a paragraph entitled ‘*De opinionum delectu in theologica facultate*,’ the fidelity to Aquinas is considerably restricted. First of all it is made clear that there are some (few, it is stated) opinions of Aquinas that the members of the Society are not obliged to defend. Then there follows the list of these opinions: 17 relating to subjects which are discussed in the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*; 16 relating to the *prima secundae*; 3 relating to the *secunda secundae*; 13 relating to the *tertia pars*.<sup>9</sup> There follows a list of the theses to be adopted even if Aquinas does not mention them or disagrees with them (these cases are very rare, it is stated), or if he is commonly interpreted in the opposite sense; 21 relating to subjects which are discussed in the *prima pars*; 13 relating to the *prima secundae*; 7 relating to the *secunda secundae*; 37 relating to the *tertia pars*.<sup>10</sup> It is then made clear that, when a teacher explains opinions about which there are no prescriptions, he must not defend one part more than the opposite part and, if possible, he must try to reconcile the different positions.<sup>11</sup> Finally, two important remarks are formulated: first, as concerns all the subjects other than those considered up to that point, the Jesuit teachers must be obliged to adhere uniquely to the conclusions formulated by Aquinas (hence, it is implied, not to his argumentations); second, they must not be obliged to adhere to Thomas Aquinas’s philosophical theses.

“In caeteris ita nostri s. Thomae adstringantur, ut non nisi ad eius conclusiones cogantur, nec ad res, quae non tam theologiae quam philosophicae sunt; de quibus ea libertas vel obligatio sit, quae in philosophia statuetur.”<sup>12</sup>

The *Ratio studiorum* of 1599 presents a lighter text. The prohibition to deal with the themes of supernatural theology in a systematic way is no longer present. Nor are present the list of Aquinas’s theses that the members of the Society were not obliged to follow and the list of the theses they were obliged to follow although they were not ascribable to Aquinas. Of the aforementioned obligations, two are kept. When a teacher presents opinions that are free from constraints, he must not defend one part more than the opposite part and, if possible, he must try to reconcile the different positions.<sup>13</sup> Professors of supernatural theology not only have to adhere to Thomas Aquinas’s theses, but also have to show and transmit high esteem for the argumentations formulated by the medieval master.<sup>14</sup> The obligation to teach following the letter of the *Summa theologiae* is no longer there; nor is present the distinction between adhering to Aquinas’s conclusions (an obligation according to the *Ratio* of 1586) and adhering to his argumentations (not an obligation according to the *Ratio* of 1586). Lastly, the *Ratio* of 1599 does no longer contain the remark that professors of supernatural theology are not obliged to adhere to Aquinas’s philosophical doctrines; on the contrary, it affirms that deference to this medieval author is needed also in this field.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, this does not imply that the range of freedom allowed by the previous educational legislation of the Society is now reduced. Actually, it is preserved – and, paradoxically, enlarged – by adding some clarifications which in fact give more room to discretionary choice. It is prescribed deference to Aquinas in the philosophical field too, but at the same time the possibility to dissent from him is also indirectly conceded. In the same places where it is ordered to follow Aquinas’s doctrine in the theological-supernatural field, it is also made clear that this adherence must not be understood

<sup>8</sup> Ibi, § <De theologia scholastica>, cap. 3, <n. 1>, 55-56.

<sup>9</sup> Ibi, § De opinionum delectu in theologica facultate, 7-9.

<sup>10</sup> Ibi, § De opinionum delectu in theologica facultate, 9-12.

<sup>11</sup> Ibi, § De opinionum delectu in theologica facultate, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu [1599]*, Regulae communes omnibus professoribus superiorum facultatum, n. 5, 380.

<sup>14</sup> Ibi, Regulae professoris scholasticae theologiae, n. 2, 386; ibi, Regulae professoris scholasticae theologiae, nn. 11-12, 388.

<sup>15</sup> Ibi, Regulae professoris philosophiae, n. 6, 397.

as absolute. Facing the possibility that Aquinas's position needs to be interpreted, or that questions he does not address need to be addressed, the norms prohibit the formulation of new doctrines "in a temerarious way" while allowing it "on the basis of sound principles."

"Contra vero de sancto Thoma nunquam non loquatur honorifice, libentibus illum animis, quoties oporteat, sequendo; aut reverenter et gravate, si quando minus placeat, deserendo."<sup>16</sup>

"Sequantur nostri omnino in scholastica theologia doctrinam sancti Thomae, eumque ut doctorem proprium habeant; ponantque in eo omnem operam, ut auditores erga illum quam optime afficiantur. Non sic tamen s. Thomae astricti esse debere intelligantur, ut nulla prorsus in re ab ea recedere liceat; cum illi ipsi, qui se thomistas maxime profitentur, aliquando ab eo recedant; nec arctius nostros sancto Thomae alligari par sit, quam thomistas ipsos."<sup>17</sup>

"Si quando vel ambigua fuerit s. Thomae sententia, vel in iis quaestionibus, quas s. Thomas forte non attingit, doctores catholici inter se non consenserint, licebit quamcumque partem sequi, ut dictum est in regulis communibus regula quinta. In docendo corroborandae primum fidei alendaeque pietatis cura habeatur. Quare in iis quaestionibus, quas s. Thomas ex professo non tractat, nemo quicquam doceat, quod cum Ecclesiae sensu, receptisque traditionibus non bene conveniat, quodque aliquo modo solidae pietatis firmitatem minuat. Quo pertinet, ut nec receptas iam, quamvis congruentes tantum rationes, quibus fidei res probari solent, refellant; nec temere novas excogitent, nisi ex constantibus solidisque principiis."<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, since the General Congregation of 1593 the Society of Jesus dropped the project of codifying the permitted and the forbidden theses, despite the fact that the *Ratio* of 1599 obliged the Jesuit professors of philosophy and supernatural theology to convey the impression that they highly regarded Aquinas, the question concerning which theses they should or could actually support remained substantially undefined.

Now, let us come to Suárez. First of all, we may observe that the Spanish Jesuit frequently tries to reconcile the different authors. Instead of merely blaming Suárez's 'eclecticism', the Neothomists who opposed Suárez should have reflected on the fact that this feature precisely expresses the prescriptions of the educational legislation of the Society.

As concerns the relationship of our Jesuit with Thomas Aquinas, and more precisely his deference towards the medieval author, we may observe that this appears to be in perfect agreement not only with the prescriptions seen above, but even with the 'spirit' of these texts and with some particular parts of them. We may first observe, for example, that when Suárez faces the texts and doctrines of other authors, he frequently uses expressions such as '*admittit*', '*affert*', '*insinuat*', '*sentit*', '*supponit*', '*mihi placet*' and '*mihi displicet*'. And when he refers to Aquinas, he employs all these expressions except '*mihi placet*' and '*mihi displicet*'. Very seldom there are places in the texts where Suárez declares himself in disagreement with Aquinas, and even then the position of the medieval master is never rejected as simply false. Our Jesuit thus shows his deference to the medieval author in any case. Still, the typical lexicon of interpretation and mediation appears in these cases much more frequently than when he reports the thought of authors different from Aquinas. In some cases, Suárez observes that Aquinas does not explicitly declare (*non declarat*) some position his interpreters ascribe to him. In other cases, he writes that a certain thesis *videtur esse sententia d. Thomae*, although he then opposes that interpretation. Again, in other cases he affirms that the texts are problematic: "loca autem illa d. Thomae obscura sane sunt", he writes in his *De anima*; and in his *De Deo uno et trino* he writes that "ibi etiam de testimoniis d. Thomae aliquid dicemus: est enim difficile in hac materia intelligere mentem ejus."<sup>19</sup>

Besides, we may observe that Suárez, in his works, seems to follow the double catalogue of theses contained in the trial *Ratio* of 1586 we have mentioned above. He does not defend the theses of Aquinas that the trial *Ratio* of 1586 does not oblige to defend, and adheres to those theses, even

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> Ibi, *Regulae professoris scholasticae theologiae*, n. 2, 386.

<sup>18</sup> Ibi, *Regulae professoris scholasticae theologiae*, nn. 4-5, 386.

<sup>19</sup> Respectively: Suárez, *De anima*, disp. 5, q. 5, n. 29 [lib. 3, cap. 5, n. 22]; Suárez, *De Deo uno et trino*, tract. 1, lib. 2, cap. 11, n. 11.

when contrary to Aquinas's theses, that the *Ratio* obliges to adopt. This is surprising, in a way, because since 1593 the Society stops codifying these theses on a normative level. We should consider, however, that the theses had been classified owing to the requests made by some important Jesuit academics and reflected at least one of the cultural orientations followed by the Society.

Just as regards Thomas Aquinas, so as regards Aristotle too, the *Constitutiones* of the Society contained a precise, short and apparently clear directive: "In Logica, et Philosophia Naturali, et morali, et Metaphysica, doctrinam Aristotelis sequenda est [...]." <sup>20</sup> This directive was to be developed in a variety of ways in the later legislation. The *De artium liberalium studiis* (drawn up between 1565 and 1570 and sent to the provinces since 1571) softens the obligation to hold to Aristotle, but warns to take into consideration the canon of the eighth session of the Fifth Lateran Council (that is the bull *Apostolici Regiminis* of December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1513). <sup>21</sup> The trial *Ratio* of 1586 urges to follow and examine Aristotle's text itself instead of developing questions. <sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the *Ratio* of 1591-1592 (a text promulgated by the General Curia of the Society as compelling, but sent to the provinces in order to be experimented during three years) already provides more articulated directives, in which the obligation of the *expositio textus* is preserved and meanwhile the *quaestionum pertractatio* is allowed and regulated too. <sup>23</sup>

In particular, this text (which is followed, with style changes, by the *Ratio* of 1599) determines with precision the way in which the Jesuit professors of philosophy had to explain Aristotle's writings: fixing mnemonically the Aristotelian text in the synthetic form of a sentence; distinguishing between thesis and argument; performing a textual analysis of the passage, possibly making use of the Greek original; comparing the various interpretations.

"Strenue conetur philosophiae professor aristotelicum textum bene interpretari [...]. Itaque tam ipse quam discipuli, Aristotelis librum ferant in scholam [...]. Tum memoriter praesentis textus sententiam colligat; distinguat etiam sedulo id, quod ab auctore probatur, ab argumento quo probatur, ne unum pro altero sumptum, totum confundat ordinem. Quodlibet etiam illius argumentum in syllogismi redigat formam, ut eius usum auditores in Aristotele observent et imitentur. Quin etiam si textus sit paulo perplexior, descendat ad aliquam verborum constructionem; graviter tamen, ut iuvenes Aristotelis phrasibus consuescant; et una aliqua fere interpretatione, quae optima videatur, contentus, alias non congerat. Cum incidit in textus aliquos admodum celebres, et in disputationibus saepe iactari solitos, variis etiam usibus accommodos, eos accurate perpendat, atque explanet, non omnibus quidem, sed illustrioribus aliquot interpretationibus inter se collatis, ut quae quibus anteferenda sit, innotescat ex antecedentibus et consequentibus, vel ex vi graeci sermonis, vel ex aliorum locorum observatione, vel ex insigniorum interpretum auctoritate vel ex rationum momentis." <sup>24</sup>

The *Ratio* of 1599 readopts both the obligation to conform to Aristotle and the admonishment not to follow him when university authors and orthodoxy prevented from following him. <sup>25</sup> Further, it readopts the directions provided in order to balance and to bring together textual analysis and treatment of the theoretical problematic aspects involved by the text itself. <sup>26</sup>

Also the way in which Suárez relates to Aristotle seems to accord totally with the prescriptions laid down in the educational legislation of the Society. In some cases, Suárez mentions the Stagirite in reference to simple propositions. When Suárez mentions Aristotle in this way, the writings of the

<sup>20</sup> *Constitutiones Societatis Iesu*, pars. 4, cap. 14, n. 3, 151.

<sup>21</sup> *De artium liberalium studiis*, <n. 4>, 255: "In logica et philosophia naturali et morali et metaphysica doctrinam Aristotelis profiteri oportebit; et meminerit praeceptores canonis concilii lateranensis, octava sessione hac de re; sic enim Constitutio nostra intelligitur".

<sup>22</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum per sex patres [...] conscripta*, De studio philosophiae, n. 5, 98-99.

<sup>23</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum S. I. 1591. Pars prior: Ordo et praxis studiorum*, Regulae professoris philosophiae, 279-284.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibi*, Regulae professoris philosophiae, n. 5, 280-281.

<sup>25</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu [1599]*, Regulae professoris philosophiae, n. 2, 397: "In rebus alicuius momenti ab Aristotele non recedat nisi quid incidat a doctrina, quam academiae ubique probant, alienum; multo magis, si orthodoxae fidei repugnet; adversus quam, si quae sunt illius aliusve philosophi argumenta, strenue refellere studeat iuxta Lateranense Concilium".

<sup>26</sup> *Ibi*, Regulae professoris philosophiae, 397-401.

ancient author are not seen as texts whose contents are to be investigated and interpreted; rather, they are seen as a collection of fundamental philosophical doctrines. But in other cases Suárez analyses particular passages from Aristotle's works. This mostly happens when the analysed passages are used to maintain theses opposed to the theses he defends. In these cases, our Jesuit discusses the texts adopting the same attitude he adopts towards Aquinas's texts: i.e., he tries to give an interpretation of them which is in favour of himself.

We may also observe that, when Suárez faces Aristotle, he uses an interpretative instrument he does not use when he addresses Aquinas's texts: i.e., a comparison between the different translations and a critical evaluation of their correctness. Let us consider, for example, the answer given by Suárez, in a part of his *De anima* dating from 1572, to a contrary argument based on a passage from the Stagirite.

“Ad Aristotelem respondetur. 1°. Quod alii non sic legunt, sed Philoponus vertit sic: “Sed fieri non potest, ut alia sit eius natura, quam haec – addit Philoponus – quae dicta est”, scilicet quod sit immixtus et separatus a corpore. Perionius vertit: “Ex quo efficitur nullam esse eius naturam, nisi eam <qua vim> intelligendi habere dicitur”. Simplicius vertit alio modo. Tamen Argyropoulos habet ut citavimus. Et graeca etiam littera, ut aiunt, et consonat sequenti textui, qui ait: “<Is> igitur intellectus, qui anima nuncupatur [...] nihil est actu prorsus eorum quae sunt antequam <intelligat> ipse. Et iuxta hoc respondetur, <2°,> quod Aristoteles tantum significat quod intellectus secundum se est pura potentia, quia non habet ex se speciem alicuius intelligibilis; et ideo dicitur pura potentia, non simpliciter, sed in genere intelligibilium. Et ideo inquit quod “nihil est actu eorum quae intelligit”. Et infra ait quod intellectiva pars est “locus formarum”, non actu, sed potentia. Unde non negat activitatem ipsi potentiae. Idem est sensus d. Thomae.”<sup>27</sup>

As we can see, the way in which Suárez here examines Aristotle's text closely corresponds to the prescriptions that, as I have shown above, were later laid down in the *Ratio* of 1591-1592 (*Cum incidit in textus aliquos admodum celebres, et in disputationibus saepe iactari solitos...*).

### 3. *The educational legislation of the Society and the relationship between philosophy and supernatural theology in the foreword and the introduction to the Disputationes metaphysicae*

The foreword and the introduction to the *Disputationes metaphysicae* as well reflect particular sections of the educational legislation of the Society of Jesus. In the fourth part of the *Constitutiones*, it is said that the *artes vel scientiae naturales* are the object of the intellectual efforts of the members of the Society because – and insofar as – they are at the service of supernatural theology.

“Sic etiam, quoniam Artes vel scientiae naturales ingenia disponunt ad Theologiam, et ad perfectam cognitionem et usum illius inserviunt, et per seipsas ad eundem finem iuvant; qua diligentia par est, et per eruditos Praeceptores, in omnibus sincere honorem et gloriam Dei quaerendo, tractentur.”<sup>28</sup>

The *Declarationes* of the *Constitutiones* specify which are the sciences at issue: logic, physics, metaphysics, ethic and mathematics.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the two texts (the passage from the *Constitutiones* and the relative *declaratio*) are repeated as a unit almost literally both in the directive *De artium liberalium studiis* and in the *Ratio studiorum* of 1599.<sup>30</sup>

Well, Suárez begins the *Prooemium* to the *Disputationes metaphysicae* precisely with a statement of this kind.

“Divina et supernaturalis theologia, quamquam divino lumine principiisque a Deo revelatis nitatur, quia vero humano discursu et ratiocinatione perficitur, veritatibus etiam naturae lumine notis iuvatur, eisque ad suos discursus perficiendos, et divinas veritates illustrandas, tamquam ministris, et quasi instrumentis utitur.”

<sup>27</sup> Suárez, *De anima*, disp. 5, q. 4, n. 11 [lib. 3, cap. 4, n. 10].

<sup>28</sup> *Constitutiones Societatis Iesu*, pars. 4, cap. 12, n. 3, 145.

<sup>29</sup> *Declaratio* of *Constitutiones*, pars. 4, cap. 12, n. 3, 146: “Tractabitur Logica, Physica, Metaphysica, Moralis scientia, et etiam Mathematicae, quatenus tamen ad finem nobis propositum conveniunt”.

<sup>30</sup> *De artium liberalium studiis*, <n. 1>, 254; *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu [1599]*, Regulae professoris philosophiae, n. 1, 397.

Also the *Ratio et discursus totius operis ad lectorem* echoes at least one directive contained in the educational legislation of the Society. The trial *Ratio* of 1586 explicitly mentions the duty of each Jesuit teacher to *seligere* the opinions he presents to the students.

“In opinionibus a Societate constitutis non est satis, doctorem referre sententias multas et de suo nihil apponere, sed defendat opinionem praescriptam, vel relinquat quaestionem vel differat donec melius cogitet. Sicut vero boni doctoris est, opiniones seligere tutiores ac magis receptas, ita ad superiorum pertinet vigilantiam curare, ne quid in eo genere peccetur; et si quid peccatum fuerit, emendare.”<sup>31</sup>

Now, in his *Ratio et discursus*, Suárez writes not only that he elaborates his philosophy with the end of serving supernatural theology, but also that this end affects the development of his philosophical thought, so much so that he is guided by it in adopting his philosophical positions.

“Ita vero in hoc opere philosophum ago, ut semper tamen prae oculis habeam, nostram philosophiam debere christianam esse, ac divinae theologiae ministram. Quem mihi scopum praefixi, non solum in quaestionibus pertractandis, sed multo magis in sententiis, seu opinionibus seligendis, in eas propendens, quae pietati ac doctrinae revelatae subservire magis viderentur.”

Strictly speaking, we should note that the professors to which the disposition of 1586 applies are not the professors of metaphysics but of supernatural theology. Moreover, the *seligere* discussed here concerns the opinions “tutiores ac magis receptas” in theology, not those that “doctrinae revelatae subservire magis viderentur.” Nevertheless, there is a clear resemblance between the passage by Suárez examined here and the aforementioned passage from the *Ratio* of 1586.

#### 4. *The educational legislation of the Society and the structure of Suárez’s works*

There are precise correspondences connecting the educational legislation of the Society of Jesus and its development with the very structure of Suárez’s works.

As was said above, both the *De sacrae theologiae studiis* of 1565-72 and the trial *Ratio* of 1586 prescribed that professors of theology while teaching were to explain the individual articles of Aquinas’s *Summa* and that in doing so they were to follow the order of this work. By contrast, the *Ratio* of 1599 implicitly allows that professors of theology explain the various subjects through relatively autonomous treatments.

Now, the theological works published by Suárez up to 1595 consist of *disputationes* and *sectiones* intermingled with commentaries on individual articles of the *Summa theologiae*: this is the case of the first three tomes of the *Commentaria ac disputationes in tertiam partem divi Thomae* (*De Verbo incarnato, Mysteria vitae Christi, De sacramentis*). The theological works published from 1599 to 1603 are only composed of *disputationes* and *sectiones*: this is the case of the *Varia opuscula theologica*, of *De poenitentia* and *De censuris*.<sup>32</sup> The works published from 1606 to Suárez’s death consist of books and chapters: this is the case of *De Deo uno et trino*, of the first two tomes of *De virtute et statu religionis*, of *De legibus* and *Defensio fidei catholicae*. Among the works which were published posthumously, all those that Suárez was able to revise before his death are structured into books and chapters or at least into *disputationes* and *sectiones*.

Furthermore, the educational legislation of the Society drastically restricted the possibility to treat subjects of a philosophical nature in a theological-supernatural context. The following prescription relative to the second year of theological studies is already contained in the *De sacrae theologiae studiis*: “De quaestionibus de anima nihil dicimus, quoniam in philosophiae studiis hanc

<sup>31</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum per sex patres [...] conscripta*, § <De theologia scholastica>, cap. 7: *De opinionum delectu, censura, retractatione*, <n. 1>, 77.

<sup>32</sup> One may observe that the *Disputationes metaphysicae*, although published in 1597, are only composed of *disputationes* and *sectiones*. It should be noted, however, that they are not a work of supernatural theology, hence the aforementioned prescriptions of the trial *Ratio* of 1586 cannot be – at least directly – applied to this work.

materiam exacte auditam esse ante theologica studia oportet.”<sup>33</sup> Precise and restrictive norms regarding this point appear both in the trial *Ratio* of 1586 and in the version of 1599.

“Quae propria sunt logicorum, physicorum, metaphysicorum, supponantur ut alibi tractata; et si quid ex iis necessarium proprio subiecto theologiae fuerit, potius recitetur quam disputetur.”<sup>34</sup>

“Ut autem facilius in theologia scholastica huiusmodi progressus faciant, par est, ut a quibusdam rerum generibus abstineant, quoad eius fieri poterit. Sunt autem in primis haec quatuor: [...]. In tertio genere sunt philosophicae res; quas haud quaquam ex instituto tractent, nec tam disputent, quam vel ab aliis vel a se explicatas promant.”<sup>35</sup>

Further, both the trial *Ratio* of 1586 and the version of 1599 contain a list of topics that the professors of theology in Jesuit colleges either were not allowed to treat or were obliged to treat at a certain moment of the course and in no other. With regard to some of these topics, it is explicitly affirmed that their treatment is exclusively assigned to *philosophia*. In other cases, it is prescribed that the teacher must limit himself to a mere exposition of the theme. For example, the point that in the aforementioned catalogue is listed as *Ex prima parte s. Thomae*, q. 27, a. 1 reads as follows: “De verbo mentis nihil aliud tractetur quam, an producat ab intellectu nostro ut terminus actionis, et quomodo ab ea distinguatur.”<sup>36</sup>

Actually, in Suárez’s works about supernatural theology there are various places where he declares that he is unwilling to address problems of a philosophical nature in that place. See, for example, what he writes regarding the theological virtue of faith when, addressing the question of the nature of the causality performed by the will on the intellect in producing the act of faith, he evades the possibility to address the subject by writing: “Sed haec quaestio physica est (a quibus quaestionibus abstinere soleo).”<sup>37</sup> With regard to the theme of the nature of the human *verbum mentis*, we may observe that Suárez’s *De Deo uno et trino* – in which this theme plays an important role on various occasions – certainly contains partial treatments of this doctrine, recapitulations of it, expositions of this or that aspect of it, deeper analyses of some particular aspect, but no systematic exposition of the subject and no exhaustive justification of Suárez’s theses on the matter.

Symmetrically, in some sections of the *Ratio* of 1591-1592 (which were actually resumed and summarized in the *Ratio* of 1599) it is laid down that professors of philosophy have to deal with some fundamental themes of rational theology just concisely. For example, let us consider the following passage:

“In metaphysicis prooemium ac quinti, septimi, duodecimi librorum textus magna ex parte diligenter explicetur. In caeteris libris seligantur ex unoquoque quidam praecipui textus, tanquam fundamentata quaestionum, quae ad metaphysicum pertinent. Quaestiones de Deo et Intelligentiis, quae aut omnino, aut magno opere pendent ex veritatibus revelatis, praetereantur; si quis tamen velit de supposito et natura et concursu etiam Dei cum secundis causis aliquid attingere, non tam disputando, quam rem declarando brevissimeque probando, in gratia externorum, quorum plerique theologiam audituri non sunt, liberum permittitur.”<sup>38</sup>

If the scholars of Suárez’s thought focused more attentively on this norm laid down in the *Ratio* of 1591-1592, and considered the entire work of this thinker, they would not so easily make the mistake of thinking that the *Disputationes metaphysicae* contain the entire metaphysics elaborated by the Jesuit thinker.

<sup>33</sup> *De sacrae theologiae studiis*, <n. 4>, 267.

<sup>34</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum per sex patres [...] conscripta*, § <De theologia scholastica>, cap. 2, n. 6, 54.

<sup>35</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu [1599]*, § Regulae professoris scholasticae theologiae, n. 9, 387-388.

<sup>36</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum per sex patres [...] conscripta*, § <De theologia scholastica>, cap. 4: *Catalogus quaestionum quae a theologo tractandae non sunt vel si tractantur, non tractandae, nisi certo quodam loco nec in alio repetendae*, 61; *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Iesu [1599]*, § Regulae professoris scholasticae theologiae, 390.

<sup>37</sup> Suárez, *De Deo uno et trino, Opus de triplici virtute theologica fide, spe, et charitate*, tract. 1, disp. 6, sect. 10, n. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Ratio atque institutio studiorum S. I. 1591. Pars prior*, Regulae professoris philosophiae, n. 4, 280.



There is another well-known passage contained in the *Ratio et discursus* which opens the *Disputationes metaphysicae* that could be referred to the same norm. It is the following one: “mihi nunquam visus sum luminis naturalis, atque adeo nec metaphysicae, limites transilire.” This text manifests the intention of Suárez to develop an essentially philosophical discourse (except for possible theological-supernatural digressions) in that place, but also echoes the division of tasks assigned by the *Ratio* of 1591-1592 to the professors of the different disciplines taught within the Jesuit *curriculum* of studies.

## 5. Conclusion

The historical data that have been presented in this paper describe a coherent picture. Francisco Suárez is a perfect product of the Society of Jesus and its educational code of laws. He avails himself of all the freedom he is given in the doctrinal field, still he rigorously remains within the limits imposed on him. He defends only the theses he was authorized to defend; but some of these theses are different – and are recognized as such – from those maintained by Thomas Aquinas. He structures his texts of supernatural theology according to the permitted methodology: it is not groundless the fact that the most ancient part of Suárez’s works concerning this field comprises a commentary *ad modum expositionis* of the *Summa* (in agreement with what is prescribed up to the trial *Ratio* of 1586), whereas the most recent part is written according to the style of a treatise (in agreement with what is implicitly allowed by the *Ratio* of 1599). He frequently seeks to reconcile the different authors. As regards in particular Thomas Aquinas, we have seen that the *Constitutiones* and the *rationes studiorum* of the Society urged and forced our author, like all Jesuit professors, to endorse and defend the positions of the medieval author. More radically, they obliged him to show high esteem for Aquinas and to maintain that his doctrines were, at least for the most part, free from error. Yet, they did not oblige him to adhere to Aquinas’s theses on all occasions; still less did they oblige him to adopt the interpretations of Aquinas’s texts proposed by some or some other author – especially in case this is a contemporary Dominican author.