

RESEARCH INTERESTS

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1 Translation

Since very little of Francisco Suárez's work has been translated, my recent work has included a significant amount of translating. Many of my translations are still in a fairly rough state; some are more polished. Numerous examples can be seen at <http://www.sydneypenner.ca/translations.shtml>. *Disputatio Metaphysica* XXIII.1 is an example of a relatively polished translation. I plan to continue translating Suárez and hope to see some translations through to publication.

2 Research Interests

I would like to use my dissertation area (Francisco Suárez's moral psychology) as a base from which to explore (i) forwards and backwards in time, keeping moral psychology in view, and (ii) sideways, so to speak, into other branches of philosophy, e.g., metaphysics. Most of the following projects fall on one of those two axes; the last one is an outlier.

2.1 Ethics

I am interested in the eudaemonist tradition as it develops from Greek sources through the modern period, especially with reference to Sidgwick's dualism of practical reason. How do dualistic conceptions of practical reason enter into ethical discussions? Can eudaemonist accounts offer an escape from such dualism but still provide a satisfying account of moral concern for others? Interest in such questions lies in the background of the following projects:

2.1.1 Scotus's Two Affections of the Will

Scotus famously distinguishes between two affections of the will: the *affectio iustitiæ* and the *affectio commodi*. If, as many interpreters think, the *affectio commodi* represents an orientation to one's own happiness and the *affectio iustitiæ* represents an impartial orientation, then it looks like we see here a forerunner of a distinctively modern conception of morality. Hence, Scotus's doctrine of the two affections has received significant scholarly attention. Oddly enough, however, late medieval and early modern Scotists pay little or no heed to this doctrine. In fact, they often explicitly affirm eudaemonist claims that could have come directly from Aquinas. This is puzzling, if Scotus's doctrine really marks a radical divergence from Aquinas's thought. I would like to see if there are any clues to be found to help explain this puzzle.

2.1.2 Early Modern Ethics

We tend to focus on metaphysics and epistemology when reading early modern philosophy. But early modern philosophers had not abandoned ethics, so there are stories waiting to be told. I would like to use my expertise in Suárez's ethics, particularly moral psychology, as a launching pad for exploring early modern ethics.

2.1.3 Augustine's Ethics

Some recent interpreters take it as obvious that Augustine is a classical eudaemonist; others take it as obvious that his Christian commitments lead him to reject classical eudaemonism.

There are puzzles to be sorted out here. Augustine is, of course, also one of the main influences on later medieval philosophy, which provides me with additional reason for wanting to think about Augustine's thought.

2.2 Metaphysics

The systematic character of much historical philosophy encourages one to step across the disciplinary lines we draw. In my case, not only do I find metaphysics intrinsically interesting, but I expect that mastering views in metaphysics would help me master views in ethics. Both of the following projects grew out of my interests in ethics (in the first case while thinking about Suárez's metaphysics of goodness and in the second while thinking about his account of action), although I have long since developed independent interest in them.

2.2.1 Suárez on Relations

Suárez had a great deal to say about the metaphysics of relations and I would like to return to this subject, especially in the context of thinking about his claim that goodness is neither something absolute nor a relation. I find this claim puzzling. If absolute qualities are monadic properties and relations are polyadic properties, then isn't the division exhaustive? If so, how can goodness fail to be either? But perhaps something in his account of relations will show that not all polyadic properties are relations (at least in his sense of the term), in which case there might be room for a third category to which goodness might then belong. I have yet to find such a solution, but I would like to search some more.

2.2.2 Final Causation in Late Scholasticism and Early Modern Philosophy

The role given to teleology in early modern philosophy is the subject of much scholarly controversy. Some illuminating work has been done setting the early modern views in the context of medieval scholastic disputes about final causation. But we still need a better understanding of late scholastic views on final causation. For example, John Carriero has a fascinating study of Spinoza on final causality in which he spends considerable time examining Aquinas's views as background. But scholastic philosophy was not static in the centuries between Aquinas and Spinoza, so one wonders what accounts of final causality were given by more immediate predecessors to Spinoza such as Suárez.

2.3 Epistemic Goals and the Epistemic Significance of Disagreement

A number of recent papers have staked out opposing positions on the epistemic significance of disagreement. Thomas Kelly, for example, argues that one can rationally continue to believe that p in the face of finding out that an epistemic peer believes that not- p . But Adam Elga and David Christensen, among others, have argued that epistemic rationality requires giving equal weight to the credences of one's peers. It seems to me that much of this literature relies on unspoken assumptions that could be challenged. I am sympathetic to the claim that epistemic rationality is relative to epistemic goals in the way that practical rationality is often thought relative to practical goals. I would like to explore the implications of that claim for the debate on the significance of disagreement. If the claim is right, then we would need to determine what our epistemic goals are in order to establish what epistemic rationality requires. It is not immediately obvious that all the plausible candidates for such epistemic goals will deliver the same verdict in cases of disagreement.