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De Lubac and Suárez: A Reappraisal

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Abstract

Because of his hostility to pure nature theory, Henri de Lubac has typically been viewed as opposing Francisco Suárez's metaphysics. His proximate target was the neo-Suárezianism to which he was exposed during his Jesuit formation. Suárez was the Jesuit order's intellectual founding father and his ideas continued to shape Jesuit philosophy and theology, sometimes in opposition to neo-Thomism. Although de Lubac contested Suárez's promotion of new and modern theology, Suárez positively informed his approach to key topics: appetite and its end; nature, desire, and the supernatural; the perfection of nature; essences as unique existents; eclecticism; and political resistance.

Keywords

Pedro Descoqs, Jersey, Jesuit, Ignatius Loyola, Henri de Lubac, modern theology, pure nature, Francisco Suárez

The Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) is typically presented as the metaphysical founder of “modernity” by contending that humans are able to pursue only natural ends. Supernatural ends, in contrast, are entirely beyond their natural grasp and are given by God. Discussions of Suárez have tended to situate him on a large intellectual canvas in support of genealogies of contemporary thought.¹

1. Usefully summarized in Robert C. Miner, “Suárez as Founder of Modernity: Reflections on a Topos in Recent Historiography,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (January 2001): 17–36.

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I wish to examine the Suárez debate in its neglected twentieth-century Jesuit context. Suárez's confrère Henri de Lubac was a noted critic, and I shall open by summarizing his charge. After this, I shall discuss Jesuit philosophy in the earlier twentieth century, including its institutional setting and formal pedagogical directives. I shall then introduce Pedro Descoqs and the neo-Suárezianism that was taught at the Maison Saint-Louis on Jersey, where de Lubac studied. I shall then appraise how deep de Lubac's critique of Suárez really goes and suggest that the French Jesuit, despite himself, assimilated key elements of Suárez's metaphysics and theological approach.

De Lubac's Critique of Suárez

In *Surnaturel*, de Lubac suggests that Suárez and other Jesuit contemporaries saw themselves confronting an outmoded theology and metaphysics requiring renewal:

Here we have the members of a new Order, founders of a new scholasticism, anxious, as their second General [Diego Laynez] said, for a theology "better accommodated to the needs of new times," emboldened because of this to promote new theses, of whose novelty they were aware, against the theologians who were the most traditional, fervent defenders of the tradition.²

Suárez was thus, for de Lubac, a founding father of modern theology. This is indeed suggested by his expository style. In the medieval *questio* genre, points for and against a proposition were raised, adjudicated, and clarified, with the result frequently being a degree of reconciliation between positions that initially seemed to be opposed. However, with his *Disputationes metaphysicae*, Suárez moved towards a discursive mode that would come to supersede the *questio*, sometimes dispensing with the traditional form and presenting content in the style of a theological manual or textbook.³

For Jesuits, the debate about Suárez concerned their philosophical founding father.⁴ De Lubac's longest engagement with Suárez's metaphysics occurs in *Augustinianism and Modern Theology* and addresses the theory of pure nature. He critically summarizes the theory in Suárez as follows.⁵ Because humans are natural beings they must

2. Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), 286. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

3. Philipp W. Rosemann, *Understanding Scholastic Thought with Foucault* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 173–74.

4. Suárez's influence extended beyond the Jesuits and indeed the Roman Catholic Church, primarily through his *Disputationes metaphysicae*. This was a widely used textbook in Lutheran and Reformed universities in Germany and the Netherlands. See John Kronen, "Suárez's Influence on Protestant Scholasticism: The Cases of Hollaz and Turretin," in *A Companion to Francisco Suárez*, ed. Victor M. Salas and Robert L. Fastiggi (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 221–47. Non-Jesuit Suárezian reception is beyond the scope of this article.

5. Henri de Lubac, *Augustinianism*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 157–59; exactly replicated from *Surnaturel*, 113–15. In *Augustinianism*, antecedents are identified in John Driedo, Ruard Tapper, Robert Bellarmine, and John of Lens (147–57).

normally have as an end something within the limits of their nature. This accords with Aristotle's principle that a natural being's end is always proportional to its means. If humans are called to a higher end, this can only be superadded (*surajoutée*). The first, natural end is sufficient, naturally knowable, and defines humanity. The objection that the higher end is naturally desired therefore cannot be admitted. It cannot be "natural with respect to appetite, supernatural with respect to attainment." This understanding of a purely natural end results in a diminished conception of the desire for the beatific vision. The natural desire for this higher vision is "purely elicited and conditioned," an inclination or wish (*velleitas*) spontaneously arising in the mind rather than intended by the mind as an end.⁶ Excluding the possibility of a natural desire for the supernatural makes establishing the possibility of a natural end for humans easier.⁷ Even angels are created with only purely natural ends.⁸

De Lubac returns to Suárez when discussing the primitive state of humanity. Medieval theologians had entertained, as a hypothesis, that a human could be created in a purely natural condition without grace, justice, completeness, or immortality. Suárez's innovation was both to accept the possibility of a purely natural state and to contend that, if possible for a finite historical period, it could define the entirety of earthly human life. As de Lubac rhetorically puts it, "Why should not the state of pure nature be prolonged in this way into a natural order, fitted to find its fulfilment in a natural end?"⁹ For him, Suárez segues from entertaining pure nature as a hypothetical possibility into affirming it as in reality sufficient because of the ordering of natural power to natural ends.

In his study *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, which postdates *Surnaturel* by two decades, de Lubac returns to Suárez at two key points. First, when presenting the dual aspects of the hypothesis of pure nature, he describes how the natural and supernatural orders are mirror images of each other. Pure nature and supernaturalized nature, de Lubac writes, "flowed along parallel channels in complete harmony."¹⁰ The only difference, if any, between the two was their designation. Natural desire and supernatural hope were thus presented as bearing a similar relation to their respective natural and divine objects. De Lubac's second point of return to Suárez comes during his discussion of the rejection of the "Christian paradox of humanity" by common sense (*le bon sens*). De Lubac repeats and intensifies what he sees as Suárez's claim that, because every appetite of nature is efficacious in its order, an appetite cannot extend beyond the good of its order.¹¹ A supernatural end cannot be naturally pursued, because the "natural appetite is found only in natural potency." The implication of heavenly

6. De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 162–63. See Francisco Suárez, *De fine hominis* disp. 1, sec. 5, 4, trans. Sydney Penner, <http://www.sydneypenner.ca/su/tract1disp1sec5.pdf>.

7. De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 179 (*Surnaturel*, 123).

8. De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 282–83.

9. De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 226–27 (*Surnaturel*, 148–49).

10. Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed with John M. Pepino (New York: Herder & Herder, 1998), 41–42.

11. De Lubac, *The Mystery*, 147–48.

beatitude being an object of natural appetite is that its perfection is natural. De Lubac thus delineates what he describes, in his chapter heading, as the “paradox rejected by common sense.”¹²

In *Augustinianism*, de Lubac holds Suárez responsible for the theory of pure nature taking a “gigantic new step forward” and credits him with recognizing the novelty of the “system of pure nature.”¹³ This is a significant iteration of his *Surnaturel* argument.¹⁴ In *Augustinianism*, de Lubac adds that Suárez “strained his ingenuity” to find exegetical proof of the system in Thomas, and so endeavored to support his argument with the claim that contemporary theologians assumed it. De Lubac’s key claim is that, in Suárez’s argument, there is “no question . . . of the gratuitousness of the supernatural to be safeguarded (*n’est question . . . de la gratuité du surnaturel à mettre en sûreté*).” He rightly identifies Suárez’s fullest exposition of his “system” as contained in his *De fine hominis* (1592) and in the posthumous *De gratia*. In a key footnote, he quotes *De fine hominis*: “For in order to understand the proper condition of our nature (*proprium nostræ naturæ conditionem*), it is necessary to prescind from everything that is beyond nature, which could have been done not only through the intellect, but itself could really have been done by God, which is almost as certain to me as it is certain that all these supernatural goods are purely (*mere*) by grace.”¹⁵ However, de Lubac omits the end of Suárez’s sentence, which clarifies that these goods are “purely by grace *and in no way owed to our nature (et nullo modo nostræ naturæ debita)*” (emphasis added). Suárez’s full statement thus contradicts de Lubac’s charge that Suárez fails to safeguard supernatural gratuity. Had de Lubac fully quoted Suárez and engaged his explicit interpretation of his position in the passage in question, he would have needed to acknowledge that Suárez justly considered himself also to be assuring the gratuity of grace.

Suárez, Thomas, and the Maison Saint-Louis

De Lubac could have justified engaging Suárez simply on the grounds of his abiding importance within the Society of Jesus. As Helen John put it as late as 1966, with

12. De Lubac, *The Mystery*, 157; also de Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 181, 271.

13. De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 157–58; cf. *Surnaturel*, 113–15. See also, more briefly, “*Duplex Hominis Beatitudo*,” *Communio* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 599–612 at 600; translation and reprint of “*Duplex Hominis Beatitudo* (Saint Thomas, Ia 2ae, q. 62, a. I),” *Recherches de science religieuse* 35 (1948): 290–99. In *Augustinianism* this “system” is not explicitly identified with pure nature. This is because, although the text closely follows *Surnaturel*, some chapter and section headings are altered. In *Surnaturel*, the chapter title “Le système de la ‘pure nature’” (101–27) provides clarification.

14. De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 158; *Surnaturel*, 114.

15. De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 158n26. The English translator renders the final phrase from *De fine hominis* disp. 15, sec. 2, “haec supernaturalia bona esse mere gratuita,” as “these supernatural goods are merely granted.” Yet the Latin *mere* has a much broader and more positive meaning than the English “mere.” See *R. P. Francisci Suárez e societate Jesu, Opera omnia*, ed. Michel André and Charles Berton, 28 vols. (Paris: Vivès, 1856–61), 4:1–156 at 146.

reference to the nineteenth-century neo-Thomist revival, “at the same time, the older Suárezian tradition has continued among the Jesuits down to the present.”¹⁶ Indeed, until the papal suppression of the Society in 1773, Suárez’s *Disputationes metaphysicae* provided its standard metaphysics curriculum.¹⁷ In broad terms, Suárez’s metaphysics was Aristotelian rather than Platonic, assuring Aristotle’s place as the supreme philosophical authority for Jesuits that Ignatius of Loyola had envisaged. The order’s *Constitutions* direct that “in logic, natural and moral philosophy, and metaphysics, the doctrine of Aristotle should be followed, as also in the other liberal arts.”¹⁸ Following the order’s European restoration in 1814, Cartesian and Kantian frameworks had influenced its teaching, against which Suárezianism was more faithful to theological tradition.

De Lubac completed his philosophical formation at the Maison Saint-Louis, above St. Helier on the island of Jersey, a British crown dependency close to the French coast. During the interwar period, the philosophate was a major Jesuit intellectual center. It had opened in 1880 during resurgent secularism in French education, which two years later resulted in the Jules Ferry Laws banning religious teaching in public educational settings.¹⁹ Constructed in 1860 as a hotel, the building had been purchased by the English Jesuits to house the philosophates and theologates of the Paris and Champagne provinces.²⁰ It quickly became the focal point of the so-called “Holy Hill,” which included the Sœurs Auxiliatrices des Âmes du Purgatoire, the naval École de Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours, and Aloysius (later De La Salle) College.²¹ In 1892, de Lubac’s own Lyons province arrived, replacing the Champenois. Despite a building project and acquiring several neighboring properties, the community, of over two hundred people, lacked space. Because of this, the theologate left Jersey in 1899, leaving just the philosophate. By 1900 the Holy Hill had become, in Diane Moore’s description, a “vast Catholic network” that included three houses of Carmelite nuns, the Jesuit Bon Secours boarding school, and the Frères de l’Instruction Chrétienne de Ploërmel.²² Alarmed at this development, the States of Jersey (the island’s legislature, which then included the twelve Anglican rectors) outlawed new religious communities of more than six people.

16. Helen James John, *The Thomist Spectrum* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 72.

17. Gerald A. McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), 25–26.

18. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. George E. Ganss (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), part 4, §470, 220.

19. Jean Liouville, “Jersey,” in *Établissements des Jésuites en France depuis quatre siècles: Répertoire topo-bibliographique*, ed. Pierre Delattre, 5 vols. (Enghien: Institut supérieur de théologie; Wetteren: De Meester, 1940–57), 2:840–61; Diane Moore, *Deo Gratias: A History of the French Catholic Church in Jersey: 1790–2007* (St. Helier: Les Amitiés Franco-Britanniques de Jersey, 2007), 59–63.

20. A philosophate is a study house for philosophy and a theologate is a study house for theology.

21. Moore, *Deo Gratias*, 55–70.

22. Moore, *Deo Gratias*, 119–36.

The philosophate was a place of intellectual conflict, principally between Suárezianism and the emerging transcendental Thomism of Pierre Rousselot and Joseph Maréchal.²³ Erick Hedrick-Moser depicts the curricula diversity: students might attend a morning class in French by Auguste Valensin, discussing ancient and modern philosophers, then later that day hear an ontology lecture by Pedro Descoqs, delivered in Latin, in which he demolished modern philosophy.²⁴ From at least 1915 onward, visitations and correspondence show that this lack of intellectual coherence worried the Jesuit authorities, who thought it confused and disoriented students.²⁵

The Jesuit formational curriculum is defined in the *Ratio Studiorum* (1599). Scholastics (i.e., Jesuits in formation) were to follow the teaching of Thomas. However, they “ought not to be so tied to Saint Thomas that they may not differ from that theology in any issue whatsoever,” not least because even professed Thomists depart from Thomas on certain points and Jesuits need not be more tightly bound to him.²⁶ Moreover, Jesuits are permitted “in purely philosophical questions,” as well as in those relating to Scripture and canon law, to follow “others who have treated these areas of study in a thoroughly detailed way.”²⁷

The question of how closely Thomas should be followed, and the status of Suárez in Jesuit philosophates, was intensely contested. In 1879, Pope Leo XIII had published his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, on the restoration of Christian philosophy, which could in principle have endorsed both figures.²⁸ However, he vigorously promoted Thomas Aquinas as the exemplar of Scholastic philosophy. This presented problems for the Jesuits. In a letter of September 1, 1910, to bishops and superiors of religious orders, Pope Pius X ordered that studies be grounded in Scholastic philosophy and merely

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23. Karl Rahner reports the similar prominence of Suárezian neo-Scholasticism in Germany. See his interview with Jan van den Eijnden, trans. Roland J. Teske, May 1982, in *Faith in a Wintry Season: Conversations and Interviews with Karl Rahner in the Last Years of his Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 41–58 at 42. For Suárezian neo-Scholasticism in Jesuit philosophates in other European countries, see Emerich Coreth, *Christliche Philosophie im katholischen Denken des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, 3 vols. (Graz: Styria, 1987–90), 2:399–401.
 24. Erick H. Hedrick-Moser, “The Auguste Valensin Controversy and the Historiography of *Nouvelle Théologie*,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 90, no. 1 (March 2014): 41–70 at 56, <https://doi.org/10.2143/ETL.90.1.3025878>. On the close relationships within the student cohort generally, see Sarah Shortall, *Soldiers of God in a Secular World: Catholic Theology and Twentieth-Century French Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 34–45; Jon Kirwan, *An Avant-garde Theological Generation: The Nouvelle Théologie and the French Crisis of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 109–21.
 25. Hedrick-Moser, “The Auguste Valensin Controversy,” 57–62.
 26. *The Ratio Studiorum: The Official Plan for Jesuit Education*, trans. Claude Pavur (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2005), §175, 62.
 27. *The Ratio Studiorum*, §176, 62–63.
 28. Pius X, *Aeterni Patris*, in *The Papal Encyclicals*, ed. Claudia Carlen, 5 vols. (Ann Arbor, MI: Pierian, 1990), 2:17–27.

commended the philosophy of Thomas.²⁹ However, in June 1914 the dying pope issued the *moto proprio Doctoris Angelici*, which mandated it in all Scholasticates. Without Thomas, the pope contended, the church would be vulnerable to materialism, monism, pantheism, socialism, and modernism. Lectures should be delivered in Latin and expound the actual text of the *Summa Theologiae*. The following month, the Sacred Congregation of Studies published a decree listing twenty-four approved theses, accompanied by brief commentary, to guide the teaching of metaphysics.³⁰ The first thesis stated that all being must be either pure act or potency mixed with act, the second taught that act is limited only by a thing's potency for completion, and the third posited the real distinction of existence (*esse*) from essence (*essentia*). As will shortly be shown, Suárezian Scholasticism contested all three positions.

In March 1917, the Jesuit superior general, Włodimir Ledóchowski, wrote to his order's Scholasticates.³¹ The letter was endorsed by Pope Benedict XV, who stated that, although the theses represented "safe directive norms," they did not necessarily need to be adopted.³² Ledóchowski himself acknowledged that, regarding the Doctors of the Church, "great reverence must be joined with that respectful freedom of thought which is requisite for the advancement of learning."³³ He then offered an extended eulogy on Thomas Aquinas, affirming both his historic theological supremacy and contemporary relevance. Ledóchowski described Thomas as the Society's "own special Doctor," stating that he should be followed in "all propositions of greater moment," but that in all others Jesuits were free, providing they "do not depart from him *except with greatest reluctance and only very rarely*."³⁴ Ledóchowski thus contested the restrictive Leonine understanding of Thomism, noting that Thomas himself did not give all his theses absolute importance or certitude and "tended to make an honest

29. Joseph Clifford Fenton, "Sacrorum Antistitum and the Background of the Oath against Modernism," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 143, no. 2 (July–December 1960): 239–60.

30. "The Twenty-Four Fundamental Theses of Official Catholic Philosophy," trans. Pedro Lumbreras, *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 23 (July 1923): 1040–53 at 1040–41; also in *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd ed., ed. Heinrich Denzinger, Helmut Hoping, Peter Hünermann, Robert Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2012), §§3601–24, 720–23.

31. "Epistola Włodimiri Ledóchowski de doctrina S. Thomae magis magisque in Societate fovenda," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 42, no. 2 (1918): 207–36; translated as "On Following the Doctrine of St. Thomas," in *Selected Writings of Father Ledochowski* (Chicago: Loyola University, Press, 1945), 479–519.

32. Ledóchowski, "On Following," 479–80.

33. Ledóchowski, "On Following," 486; also 504.

34. Ledóchowski, "On Following," 495 (emphasis in original). The fundamental propositions are later listed: the origin of cognition; the concept of truth as the conformity of the intellect with its object; the possibility of certitude; the infinite difference between the visible world and its creator; distinct natures, especially human nature and the immortal soul; and freedom, morally ordered by natural and positive law, whether human or divine (500–501).

distinction of the important from the inconsequential, of the doubtful from the certain.”³⁵

Throughout the letter’s first half, Suárez is notable by his absence. However, Ledóchowski builds the case for his order’s distinctive brand of Scholasticism by citing the endorsement of Suárez by Zéphirin González. The Dominican cardinal describes Suárez as being “after St Thomas . . . perhaps the most outstanding representative of scholastic philosophy.”³⁶ This prepares ground for the key claim that, contrary to the third thesis, the real distinction between essence and existence is *not* a fundamental Thomist proposition and may therefore be denied. In his support, Ledóchowski cites two of the distinction’s prominent Dominican deniers: the theologians Dominic de Soto and Harvey Nedellec, who was also his order’s Master General. Under his own leadership, Ledóchowski implies, the Society of Jesus sought no more theological liberty than had been enjoyed by Thomas’s own order.

Pedro Descoqs and neo-Suárezianism

In September 1920, de Lubac arrived at the Maison Saint-Louis for his three years of philosophical studies. That summer, Valensin had been dismissed from his teaching position, and the doctrine of Pierre Rousselot on the light of faith strengthening intellectual assent to belief had been prohibited.³⁷ At the philosophate, metaphysics teaching was dominated by the combative Pedro Descoqs (1877–1946), whom John justly designates the “leader of the twentieth-century Suarezians” and Emerich Coreth honors as the “last great representative” of the Suárezian tradition.³⁸

Descoqs had arrived at the philosophate in 1912 and would remain until the year of his death. His major contribution was as librarian. In this role, he secured greatly increased funding, reorganized the collection, traveled widely, obtained collections originating from other Jesuit institutions, built a large extension, and, significantly, controlled student access to books, withholding or restricting those deemed heterodox. He established for the French Jesuit provinces a centralized research library comparable to those already realized elsewhere in Europe.³⁹ Descoqs also cofounded the

35. Ledóchowski, “On Following,” 506, 509.

36. Ledóchowski, “On Following,” 498; citing Zéphirin Gonzalez, *Histoire de la philosophie*, 4 vols. (Paris: Lethielleux, 1891), 3:136, trans. and amended. De Lubac discusses Ledóchowski’s letter in a long footnote in *Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac*, trans. Mary Emily Hamilton (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1988), 44–45, although in referring to Cardinal Zéphirin Zigliara he apparently conflates two Dominican cardinals: Zéphirin González (1831–94) and Thomas Zigliara (1833–93).

37. Hedrick-Moser, “The Auguste Valensin Controversy”; Włodimir Ledóchowski, “Principal Theses of the Position of Pierre Rousselot,” in Pierre Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 113–17.

38. John, *The Thomist Spectrum*, 72; Coreth, *Christliche Philosophie*, 2:400.

39. Georges Chantraine and Marie-Gabrielle Lemaire, *Henri de Lubac*, 4 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 2007), 2:123–30; Sheza Moledina, “La Bibliothèque jésuite de Jersey: Constitution d’une bibliothèque en exil (1880–1940)” (Diplôme d’Études Approfondies thesis, June 2002).

Archives de philosophie (1922), which was a collaboration between the French philosophates of Jersey and Vals-près-le-Puy.⁴⁰

De Lubac describes the “combative teaching” of his “Suárezian master” as a “perpetual invitation to react.”⁴¹ Descoqs’s target was the real distinction of existence (*esse*) from essence (*essentia*) that defined the neo-Thomism of the early twentieth century and was in the third of the theses.⁴² Existence and essence, he contended, cannot be conceived independently and are therefore not strictly ontological principles. Essence, if not itself possessing reality, cannot be the term of a real distinction. Existence without essence can only be the empty form or infinite being, and if the latter, can only be indeterminate from a human standpoint. Concretely, existence must be a self-limiting determination and perfection.⁴³ Descoqs thus contradicted the first of the theses, described above, on the real distinction between act and potency. For him, the only real distinction was between actual being (*ens in actu*) and potential being (*ens in potentia*), such as might be invoked in relation to the act of creation. In all other instances, act and potency are analogous concepts and nothing can be said a priori of their composition or distinction.⁴⁴

Descoqs also called into question the second of the theses, that act is effectively unlimited, by appealing to Thomas’s own *Summa Contra Gentiles*. When considering how genus and species in separate substances are understood, Thomas argues that the essence of a determinate species consists in the place of its common nature in a determinate grade of being. Its genus is therefore material, and its differentiation is formal. This differentiation does not add an extrinsic nature but determines the generic nature. From this, Thomas reasons, a simple nature will be terminated by itself, rather than being composed of terminating and terminated parts. He concludes that the “concept of the genus will be derived from the very intelligible essence of that simple nature; its specific difference, from its termination according as it is in such a grade of beings.”⁴⁵

The Maison Saint-Louis closed in 1946, remaining empty for eight years before reverting to a hotel. The collection of 500,000 items was transferred to Les Fontaines, the château at Chantilly that had been purchased from Baron Henri de Rothschild. It remained there until 1999, when it was relocated to the Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon after the site was sold to become a luxury conference and business education center.

40. Gabriel Picard, “In memoriam: Le Père Pedro Descoqs,” *Archives de Philosophie* 18 (1949): 129–35 at 129. The philosophate at Vals existed from 1842 to 1962 and was a former Augustinian priory. The building was acquired by the municipality in 1969.
41. Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances That Occasioned His Writings*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1993), 42.
42. “The Twenty-Four Fundamental Theses,” 1041.
43. Pedro Descoqs, “Études critiques: IV Métaphysique,” *Archives de philosophie* 10 (1934): 151–76 at 170–73.
44. Pedro Descoqs, “Sur la division de l’être en acte et en puissance, selon S. Thomas, nouvelles précisions,” *Revue de Philosophie* (1939): 232–52; summarized in John, *The Thomist Spectrum*, 76.
45. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles II*, ed. James F. Anderson, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), chap. 95, aa. 2–3, 323–24.

Descoqs thus refuted the Thomism of the theses with a blend of Suárezian and Thomist metaphysics. However, he also accepted the theory of a “natural immediate vision of God,” of which the object was not the trinitarian persons but the divine essence itself. He thus attempted to maintain a view of natural beatitude as the vision of the divine essence although not as a supernatural beatitude.⁴⁶ De Lubac refutes this theory, arguing that, according to theological tradition, supernatural beatitude is precisely the vision of the divine essence. He calls into question Descoqs’s attempt to justify his theory by means of a distinction between immediate vision, which is natural, and intuitive vision, which is supernatural.⁴⁷ Descoqs had noted that the term *visio intuitiva* was far more frequently used than *visio immediata*, but de Lubac counters that the two are synonymous and that a purely natural construal of either, especially the second, is neither required nor justified. De Lubac recognizes that, in affirming the possibility of an immediate natural vision of God, Descoqs breaks with Suárez, and describes him “fighting against the logic of his own position” that natural beings could only attain natural ends.⁴⁸ De Lubac thus aligns himself with Suárez against Descoqs.

While discussing Scotus’s opinion that the desire for supernatural beatitude is innate, Suárez refers to the distinction drawn between the natural and elicited appetites. De Lubac cites this key passage against Descoqs’s idea of an immediate natural vision of God. Of this idea, Suárez writes that

this opinion displeases me most of all, since it proceeds from the elicited appetite, of which more below. And that distinction [between the natural and elicited appetites], as I have said elsewhere, has no place in the clear vision of God, with which we are dealing, because if God or any of God’s attributes is seen, the whole essence of God must be seen. Nature cannot be inclined to the vision of God in one way without being inclined to see God in Godself as three, as one, as simply all-powerful both for the works of nature and for grace, and as the ultimate end of all created things, whether natural or supernatural. This is established because the vision of God, as primary cause, is as supernatural as it can be; the reason for the cause and for the vision of God is therefore the same.⁴⁹

46. De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 439.

47. De Lubac, *Surnaturel*, 444.

48. Henri de Lubac, “The Mystery of the Supernatural,” in *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1996), 281–316 at 289n15.

49. “Haec vero opinio inter omnes mihi maxime displicet, nam et fundamentum ejus ad summum procedit de appetitu elicito, de quo infra. Et preeterea distinctio illa, ut alias dixi, non habet locum in visione clara Dei, de qua agimus, quia si videtur Deus, vel aliqua attributa ejus, necesse est videre totam essentiam Dei: non potest ergo natura inclinari ad visionem Dei sub una ratione, quin absolute inclinetur ad videndum Deum prout in se est trinus, et unus, et simpliciter omnipotens tam ad opera naturae, quam gratiae, et finis ultimus omnium creabilium, sive naturalia sint, sive supernaturalia. Confirmatur, quia illa visio Dei, ut prima causa est, est tam supernaturalis sicut esse potest; ergo est eadem ratio de illa, et de visione Dei, sub quacumque ratione.” Francisco Suárez, *De fine hominis* disp. 16, sec. 2, in *R. P. Francisci Suárez e societate Jesu, Opera omnia*, ed. André Michel and Charles Berton, 28 vols. (Paris: Vivès, 1856–61), 4:152. De Lubac wrongly references this as sec. 1 due to an error in the running header in the Vivès edition. See de Lubac, *The Mystery*, 147.

By thus citing Suárez, de Lubac demonstrates Descoqs's departure from the teaching of his master. This opens the question of whether de Lubac's opposition was ultimately to Suárez or to Descoqs, his self-appointed defender.

Suárez, de Lubac, and Metaphysics: Divergence or Appropriation?

De Lubac contested three elements of what he came to regard as the Suárezian system. As has been shown, these were: (1) natural desire is limited to natural ends; (2) supernatural ends may only be superadded to nature and sought by conditioned desire; and (3) grace is not gratuitous but owed as a debt. As has also been shown, de Lubac considered that the early Jesuits were hostile to theological tradition and excessively solicitous to accommodate theology to the perceived needs of the world. This, in summary, is the whole of de Lubac's critique of Suárez.

De Lubac's critique does not extend to Suárez's rejection of the real distinction, by which Suárez opposes the notion that essences may subsist in a heavenly realm without existing in the world of things. Neither does de Lubac target Suárez's theory of knowledge, according to which universals are functions of reason and language, by which similarities and differences between individuals are identified, rather than subsisting separately from individuals as objective essences on which they are dependent. De Lubac does not question Suárez's stand against political absolutism, instead endorsing, if unconsciously, his predecessor's justification of the rights of citizens against despots.

In comparing de Lubac and Suárez, I shall first address the three metaphysical points enumerated above in which de Lubac directly engages Suárez.⁵⁰ I am here aided by one of de Lubac's most trenchant neo-Thomist critics, Lawrence Feingold. A prominent strand of Feingold's case against de Lubac is that on key points of metaphysics he follows Suárez rather than Thomas.

Appetite and Its End

De Lubac's first contestation of Suárez, then, opposes his view that natural desire is limited to natural ends. Feingold points out that de Lubac in fact agrees with Suárez that appetite can only be directed to a single end.⁵¹ Suárez argues strongly against the possibility that an action may be directed to two different ends where one is not subordinated to the other. The will cannot have two moving principles, stimuli, or beginnings.⁵² Suárez identifies natural appetite with natural ends, thereby preserving natural

50. As Jacob W. Wood, *To Stir a Restless Heart: Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace, and the Desire for God* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 399–423, shows, these elements of Suárez's thought were also received by de Lubac indirectly via the Augustinian Hermits.

51. Feingold, *The Natural Desire*, 250–52.

52. Suárez, *De fine hominis* disp. 3, sec. 2, 1, trans. Sydney Penner, <http://www.sydneypenner.ca/su/tract1disp3sec2.pdf>.

proportionality. However, de Lubac relates natural appetite to supernatural beatitude on the grounds that, if this is an end, nature cannot ultimately be unable to attain it. De Lubac's dispute with Suárez is therefore grounded in a deeper agreement about the relation of appetite to end.

De Lubac's conviction that desire can have only one ultimate end serves, in his eyes, as confirmation that this end must be supernatural. His refusal of dual ends enables him to affirm, for instance, that the supernatural "always represented God's will for the final end of his creatures."⁵³ By excluding the possibility of dual ends, de Lubac avoids ever needing to construe one as the function of the other. In particular, he eliminates the possibility of supernatural ends becoming mere projections of natural ends, even though the latter may always be pursued: the supernatural, de Lubac continues, puts "no obstacle in the way of the normal development or activity of nature in its own order."

Nature, Desire, and the Supernatural

De Lubac's second disagreement with Suárez concerns the latter's view that supernatural ends may only be superadded to nature and sought by conditioned desire. It has sometimes been suggested that de Lubac shifted from an earlier position—that graced desire elevates nature to the supernatural—to a later position more cognizant of the paradoxical, or dialectical, character of any passage from nature to grace, including the need for sanctifying grace to condition desire.⁵⁴ Once his Suárezian heritage is recognized, however, this transition may be more accurately viewed as a return. Aged eighteen, during his novitiate at St. Leonards-on-Sea, de Lubac reflected on how acceptance of a "double end" is intrinsic to Jesuit life. Attributing to Suárez the notion that both ends have equal priority ("*utraque est aequae principalis*"), he identifies the apostolate (which may be naturally pursued) and the interior life (which depends on supernatural grace) as twin ends.⁵⁵ What is distinctive about the Jesuit order, de Lubac suggests, is that rather than the interior life being privileged over the apostolate, the apostolate and its associated praxis are elevated to the same high level as the interior life. The two are mutually dependent such that, without one, the other cannot exist. Grounded in the *surnaturel*, the apostolate is active and universal, extending to the poor and abandoned. It is regulated by obedience, but this demands an interior life that sustains patience and perseverance in the face of failure, obstacles, disapproval, opposition, and persecution. On this view, the apostolate and the interior life are co-requisite ends rather than alternatives and are unified in the classic Jesuit missionary concern for the salvation of the other.

Suárez held, like Aquinas, that ends are divisible into proximate and ultimate. An end willed for the sake of something else is proximate, but only an end in which the

53. De Lubac, *The Mystery*, 34.

54. For recent critical appraisal, see Jordan Hillebert, *Henri de Lubac and the Drama of Human Existence* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), 115–29.

55. Diary entry of February 21, 1915, in Chantraine and Lemaire, *Henri de Lubac*, 1:243–45.

will rests without seeking another is ultimate.⁵⁶ This provides the basis for Feingold's identification of a Suárezian inspiration behind de Lubac's recognition of dual ends in his later *oeuvre*. A creature's supernatural end may be unattainable, even when intended, and natural desire alone may therefore be insufficient to bring the creature to that end. Having previously presented texts in which de Lubac appears to view the creature's supernatural end as attainable, Feingold justly identifies this as an ambiguity in de Lubac's position. As evidence, he expounds a key passage in which de Lubac asserts that natural desire is not a perfect appetite and does not sufficiently desire its object through free willing, striving, or activity.⁵⁷ Identifying imperfection with conditionality, Feingold builds a convincing case that, in admitting that desire may be imperfect, and therefore neither absolute nor innate, de Lubac aligns himself with Suárez.

The co-presence of dual ends is fundamental in de Lubac's political theology. When delineating Augustine's heavenly and earthly cities, he makes clear that these are not two separate realms, but two distinct principles articulated using appropriate equivocation. Church and state are "*mystical* societies, as secretly intermixed in history as they are adverse in principle."⁵⁸ De Lubac identifies Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* as the culmination of this tradition of distinct yet inseparable impulses. Invoking the meditation on the two standards from the fourth day of the second week of the *Exercises*, he pictures Satan as the "leader of the vast camp of Babylon, seated on his great throne of fire and smoke."⁵⁹ In Ignatius's evocative text, demons are summoned and scattered, whereas Christ is seated in the lowly field of Jerusalem, calling disciples and sending them forth. The two standards are not fundamentally associated with different places or institutions but with two principles: one with the knowledge of deceits and the aid to combat them, and the other with the life revealed by Christ and the grace to imitate Christ. De Lubac elsewhere reflects on the possibility of either the church or the state absorbing the other. Although conflicts between the two would thereby be avoided, he rejects this on the grounds that human nature is twofold.⁶⁰

At this point, the question may be pressed of how far Suárez truly espoused the systematic distinction between nature and the supernatural that both Descoqs and de Lubac attribute to him, according to which the two run in parallel channels in harmony yet disconnection. In *De fine hominis* disputation 3, Suárez offers a detailed assessment of how the ultimate end for humans relates to what he terms their qualifiedly and negatively ultimate ends. Of these latter ends, he writes, "it is necessary that a human performing human actions intend some ultimate end at least negatively

56. Suárez, *De fine hominis* disp. 1, sec. 6, 4, trans. Sydney Penner, <http://www.sydneypenner.ca/su/tract1disp1sec6.pdf>.

57. Feingold, *The Natural Desire*, 344; discussing de Lubac, *The Mystery*, 85–86.

58. Henri de Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1989), 251–52, also 246–48; see Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans* 14.28, trans. Philip Levine (London: Heinemann, 1966), 4:404–7.

59. De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 266.

60. Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes of Faith*, trans. Paule Simon, Sadie Kreilkamp, and Ernest Beaumont (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1987), 91–92.

and qualifiedly.” For this reason, Suárez continues, “The first act of a human beginning to operate in a human way necessarily must be about something in the manner of an ultimate end at least negatively.”⁶¹

Conceiving a natural end as a qualifiedly and negatively ultimate end sheds considerable light on the nuances of Suárez’s understanding of the relation between natural and supernatural ends. Every human, he argues, has an unqualifiedly ultimate end for which they aim, which is God. Admittedly, some seek this end by following natural inclination or moral disposition whereas others act on supernatural cognition and virtue. However, rather than portraying these two in disjunction, Suárez sees the first as leading to the second. In his own words, “Although they differ with respect to proximate ends . . . they still all aim at the same ultimate end because that end is indeed the more perfect . . . so that it draws to itself everyone acting well and it alone can satisfy the well-disposed affection.”⁶² Indeed, it would be unrealistic to expect a human person, prior to every intention for a proximate natural end, to intend the unqualifiedly ultimate end, because of the cognitive power this would require.⁶³ It is far more likely that the intellect is moved by the senses and first cognizes particular goods, in which the general good is contained, and that the will is moved by these particular goods. In each of these goods a beginning of the complete good is desired, as a part of a whole.⁶⁴ Even a malicious act, Suárez contends, exists only by divine causality and efficacy, improperly seeks an end, and is motivated by a desire for a kind of happiness.

In discerning whether Suárez’s metaphysics entails the system of pure nature that de Lubac associates with it, the Ignatian context is also pertinent. Suárez believed that humans have direct knowledge of self-individuated, unique existents, in contrast with Thomas’s view that the objects of knowledge are universal abstracts cognized by an immaterial intellect.⁶⁵ However, a metaphysics that privileges individuals and direct intellection of and by them need not exclude the non-intellectual apperception of the supernatural. Ignatius’s spirituality has been described as the “core inspiration in Suárez’s thought”⁶⁶ and points to a possible resolution of Suárez’s perceived grace–nature dualism. In Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*, the retreatant recalls the literal facts of biblical episodes and mentally represents their setting.⁶⁷ Accompanying these intellectual operations is the engagement of the will. The retreatant vividly imagines the events, applying their senses in order to be drawn in more deeply and to elicit an

61. Suárez, *De fine hominis* disp. 3, sec. 1, 5, trans. Sydney Penner, <http://www.sydneypenner.ca/su/tract1disp3sec1.pdf>.

62. Suárez, *De fine hominis* disp. 3, sec. 1, 3.

63. Suárez, *De fine hominis* disp. 3, sec. 5, 1–2, trans. Sydney Penner, <http://www.sydneypenner.ca/su/tract1disp3sec5.pdf>.

64. Suárez, *De fine hominis* disp. 3, sec. 6, 2, trans. Sydney Penner, <http://www.sydneypenner.ca/su/tract1disp3sec6.pdf>.

65. Coreth, *Christliche Philosophie*, 2:406.

66. Juan Antonio Senent-De-Frutos, “Francisco Suárez and the Complexities of Modernity,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 6, no. 4 (October 2019): 559–76 at 574, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00604001>.

67. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. Louis. J. Puhl (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1951), §§45–48 and elsewhere, 25–26.

emotional response. They may then ask for what they desire. Indeed, the shaping of desire and the granting of its objects permeate the *Exercises*. Although desire is here intellectually grounded, it is deepened and extended, via the emotions, by the will, thus transgressing the divide between nature and the supernatural that a purely intellectual construal of knowing entails.

The Perfection of Nature

De Lubac's third point against Suárez is that, for him, grace is not gratuitous but owed as a debt (*debitum*). For Suárez, as for Thomas, what is due to a given nature (*debitum naturae*) allows that nature to be according to the divinely established natural order. Gratuity is, in contrast, the free exercise of divine will. It has already been shown that de Lubac's exegesis of Suárez on grace and debt was faulty. Feingold suggests that, although de Lubac calls Suárez into question, each Jesuit is defending the same principle: "*Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it.*"⁶⁸ Grace may be received only by a free will, which cannot be free if under servitude, coercion, fear of violence, or other necessity.⁶⁹ Each sees this as having different metaphysical implications. Feingold recounts that, for Suárez, it entails that a capacity that is present in a person without grace must also be in a person with grace. The gift of grace does not dissolve the natural perfection nor render it hypothetical. Rather, nature is perfected as nature, being given its due. In contrast, de Lubac views grace elevating nature to a supernatural beatitude exceeding it. On this reading, grace perfects nature by gratuitously transforming it.

Moving beyond the debt discussion, this comparison of the grace–nature relation in Suárez and de Lubac may usefully be related to desire viewed as grace subjectively appropriated by the human subject. Feingold avers that, for both Suárez and de Lubac, an innate and unconditioned natural desire for the vision of God is incompatible with a state of pure nature.⁷⁰ Suárez assures this state by associating desire with a conditioned connatural final end for the creature. Thus grace assures what is due. De Lubac instead privileges the unconditioned character of this desire, relating it to the creature's supernatural end and thereby refusing the possibility of a state of pure nature. For de Lubac, grace is thus gratuitous. This presupposes some notion of nature being given its due: if mere ongoing existence required continual gratuitous divine acts, this would entail divine indebtedness to nature.

De Lubac and Suárez: Further Convergences

The previous section demonstrates that de Lubac's position on key points in Scholastic metaphysical debates points to an underlying endorsement of Suárezian metaphysics.

68. Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed. (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2010), 232 (emphasis in original).

69. Francisco Suárez, *De gratia*, prolegomenon 1, cap. 1, trans. Sydney Penner, http://www.sydneypenner.ca/su/DeGratia_Prol_1_1.pdf.

70. Feingold, *The Natural Desire*, 296–97, 301.

Additional confirmation of the depth of Suárez's influence may be found in de Lubac's approach to three other topics. We are aided here by de Lubac's executor and former archivist, Georges Chantraine, who contends that his thought is rooted in both Suárez's *Disputationes metaphysicae* and Descoqs's *Institutiones metaphysicae*, which interpreted these. Referring to a disparaging description by de Lubac, his long-standing Jesuit confrère wryly ventures, "The 'soup' of Fr Descoqs was, it seemed, more nourishing than [he] wished to recognize."⁷¹ The topics in de Lubac now to be addressed are: (1) his epistemological privileging of unique existents; (2) his preference for intellectual inclusivity over restrictive systematization; and (3) his support for the indirect power of the church in political resistance.

Essences as Unique Existents

De Lubac was profoundly alive to the power of ideas both in spiritual introspection and as the primary causes of social and political change. Chantraine asks, "Is not the dynamic schema of knowledge that takes form in Henri de Lubac, like it or not, underpinned by Suárez's epistemology, which clearly attributes (and this is rarely recognized) the power of the concept to a theory of representation at once intuitive and practical?"⁷² Chantraine contends that Suárez defended the "dynamic role of thought, and we see that de Lubac did not remain insensible to this key dimension of Suárezian conceptualism." He associates this with Suárez's refusal of the real distinction and his interpretation of Thomas centered on the unity of being.

For Suárez, intellectual essences (roughly, ideas) do not exist in the abstract and are not strictly cognizable. They are unique existents rather than subsisting as universal abstracts in an unchanging eternal realm. In this understanding, Suárez anticipates modern theories of ideology. Ideas exist in political and social contexts and for this reason powerfully determine individual and collective action. In *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, de Lubac mounts close and extended engagements with ideas and ideology, acknowledging their power. He repeatedly turns to the Delphic oracle "know thyself" (*gnôthi seauton*) to identify the origins of metaphysics and the knowledge of God.⁷³ Introspection does not, of course, lead inexorably to atheism: on the contrary, in *The Discovery of God*, de Lubac draws on both patristic sources and Blondel to interpret self-knowledge as the knowledge of God in the soul.⁷⁴ However, *Drama* principally addresses the shared, political realm. Its dynamic construal of the relation of ideas to material reality is opposed to Auguste Comte's

71. Chantraine and Lemaire, *Henri de Lubac*, 2:15–16; for de Lubac's own use of the term, 2:288. For more on this thirty-year friendship, 4:13, 355, 513; Jean-Marie Hennaux, "In Memoriam: Georges Chantraine, SJ (1932–2010)," *Bulletin de l'Association Internationale Cardinal Henri de Lubac* 12 (2010): 27–31.

72. Chantraine and Lemaire, *Henri de Lubac*, 2:16.

73. Henri de Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. Edith M. Riley, Anne Englund Nash, and Mark Sebanc (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1995), 19, 32, 87.

74. Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God*, trans. Alexander Dru with Mark Sebanc and Cassian Fulsom (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 13.

theory of knowledge as the reduction of the mind to its so-called “object.”⁷⁵ For de Lubac there is no objective materiality to determine mental representation. In contrast, he avers, “Events take place in the reality of the mind before they make their appearance in the external reality of history.”⁷⁶ Against the Comtean objectification of the mind in the act of knowing, de Lubac invokes Kierkegaard to endorse a “deeper immersion in existence,” including in the aesthetic, ethical, and religious spheres of existence.⁷⁷

De Lubac describes a psychic evolution in modernity through the progressive raising of consciousness that is manifested in faith in the application of science to transform nature and society. This produces an *idée-force* that shapes individuals and group behavior and thus influences events.⁷⁸ The estrangement of ideality from any transcendent or abstract realm culminates in Nietzsche’s insistence that there is no “pure” knowledge that may be objectively contemplated.⁷⁹ Rather, knowledge is always historically situated and historically productive. In Suárezian fashion, de Lubac locates intellectual essences in contingent nature yet views them as open to rational interrogation.

Eclecticism

As has already been seen, Suárez synthesized philosophical traditions and approaches. Carlos Noreña has identified these as extending to Dominican rationalism and Franciscan voluntarism, Platonic realism and Occamist nominalism.⁸⁰ Karl Rahner celebrates this feature of his thought, affirming that multiple sources, contexts, and scientific approaches reflect the inherent plurality of knowledge.⁸¹ Juan Antonio Senent-De-Frutos has set Suárez within the context of a Jesuit modernity of “attention to the particular, in its approach of adaptation or accommodation to what is personal and cultural” that is able to “accommodate people, times, and places to achieve a better match in interacting with other subjects and with reality.”⁸² The imperative of accommodation impels methodological variety, with method and sources dependent on the topic and its cultural context.

75. De Lubac, *Drama*, 146.

76. De Lubac, *Drama*, 65.

77. De Lubac, *Drama*, 95–111; Joshua Furnal, *Catholic Theology after Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 115.

78. De Lubac, *Drama*, 402–9.

79. De Lubac, *Drama*, 62–63.

80. Carlos G. Noreña, *Studies in Spanish Renaissance Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), 15, 44, 55, 156–57.

81. Karl Rahner, “Experiences of a Catholic Theologian,” trans. Declan Marmion and Gesa Thiessen, *Theological Studies* 61, no. 1 (March 2000): 3–15 at 11–12, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056390006100101>.

82. Senent-De-Frutos, “Francisco Suárez,” 559–76 at 561. For an excellent overview, see Avery Dulles, “Jesuits and Theology: Yesterday and Today,” *Theological Studies* 52, no. 3 (September 1991): 524–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056399105200306>.

De Lubac himself states that he has “never claimed to be doing the work of philosophical systematization.”⁸³ In a brief preface to his late *Théologies d’occasion*, he reflects on his chosen title, which was unfortunately lost in translation:

Although the texts reproduced here were all intended to be theological, they did not result from a fully developed body of teaching concerned with some central point of dogma or its history or from a long period of research on a particular subject. . . . And, whether the subject is the history of exegesis, political theology, spiritual life or comparative religions, every text was at first purely circumstantial, either in the ordinary sense that it had to be written in response to an invitation to speak at a certain congress or contribute to a collective publication, or—and here is the true meaning of the title—because a given situation whose outcome could have serious consequences seemed to invite me to enter the debate.⁸⁴

The notion that these writings are “fragmented,” which is suggested by the translated title, is far from what the original indicates. They were theological engagements, occasioned by events and exigences, in a setting in which theology was a shared, communal pursuit.

In his embrace of eclecticism, de Lubac showed himself more truly Suárezian than the systematizing Descoqs. The clearest evidence of the latter’s rejection of this inheritance is his study of the alleged “crisis” in the use of the theory of biological evolution (a notion popularized in 1909 by Félix Le Dantec) as an explanation of human origins resulting from the purported accumulation of argument and evidence contradicting it. Refuting the former Jersey scholastic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Descoqs contended that biological evolution and human descent were mere hypotheses.⁸⁵ As such, they were countermanded by the classic Catholic dogmas that the world was directly created by God, that Adam was the human prototype, and that original sin is transmitted from him through all later generations. Paleontology could, Descoqs concluded, still be undertaken, but the evidence required reinterpretation to support received teaching.⁸⁶

De Lubac’s sympathy for Suárez’s syncretism provides theoretical grounding for his sometimes intense antipathy to neo-Thomism, especially its propositional and systematic tendencies. What, de Lubac asks, characterizes a “Thomist”? He responds by caricaturing his likely assessment of a non-Thomist. De Lubac inveighs:

One such author, for example, could have spent his life defending the plurality of personal spirits: what does it matter? Logically, he can only be pantheist. Another has consistently shown that, in the progress of the universe, there has been continuing creation, orthogenesis [directional evolution], the appearance of new being: what does it matter? His system is, and

83. Comments of 1975 in de Lubac, *At the Service*, 144.

84. De Lubac, *Theological Fragments*, 7.

85. Pedro Descoqs, *Autour de la crise du transformisme* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1944), 50, 85; discussed in René d’Ouinice, *Un prophète en procès: Teilhard de Chardin dans l’Église de son temps* (Paris: Aubier, 1970), 95–96.

86. Descoqs, *Autour de la crise*, 98.

can only be, neo-Eleatism. Yet another has consistently witnessed to divine transcendence: logically, he is an immanentist; etc., etc.⁸⁷

Sketching the character of a neo-Thomist, de Lubac continues:

He is a man who has nothing to learn, nothing at least that requires him in any way to modify or enlarge his viewpoints; [there is] nothing that obliges him to admit that, without being contradicted in anything, one can however perhaps discover other perspectives from his own. He is a man who has constructed, or rather who has bought himself ready made, a shell, making it impermeable to all salutary rain. A man who has hardened his spirit such that he can no longer welcome anything, and above all can no longer understand anything.⁸⁸

De Lubac continues that there are good Thomist historians, good disciples of Thomas, and, of course, Thomas himself. He seeks no dispute with them. However, he also contends that neo-Thomists are “incapable of the ‘discernment of spirits (*discerner les esprits*).” He thus invokes an important aspect of Ignatian spirituality. It may reasonably be assumed that, in Ignatian terms, de Lubac would associate neo-Thomists with those who, in striving for ever-greater perfection, are assailed by anxiety and “raise obstacles backed by fallacious reasonings that disturb the soul.”⁸⁹ This suggests the neo-Thomist is in a state of desolation in which “God has left him to his natural powers.”⁹⁰ This desolation may be experienced as false consolation, that is, as good even though it is bad. Perceiving this demands consideration of the consolation and carefully distinguishing any graced consolation from the false consolation that follows, which may come from resolutions, plans, and reasonings that are not directly related to it.

Political Resistance

During Suárez’s final decade, the question of how far the duty of political obedience extended was intensely controversial. In 1606, King James I of England had promulgated an oath of allegiance by which Catholics were required to affirm his right to rule and to renounce any papal intervention or influence in national affairs. In response, Suárez penned his *Defensio fidei* (1613). This work was condemned in England as well as in France, where King Henri IV, a former Protestant who had promoted religious toleration, had been assassinated three years earlier by a Catholic. In its sixth book, while accepting that a pope could not legitimately claim any direct authority over a monarch, the *Defensio* questioned the oath’s refusal that a pope may have spiritual prerogatives over a king, such as administering or withholding sacraments.

87. Texts from 1961 in cahier 6, in Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxe et mystère de l’Église*, ed. Georges Chantraine and Marie-Gabrielle Lemaire (Paris: Cerf, 2010), 448–49.

88. De Lubac, *Paradoxe*, 449.

89. *The Spiritual Exercises*, §315, 141.

90. *The Spiritual Exercises*, §320, 143.

However, Suárez went further by conditionally justifying tyrannicide. He accepts that, if a tyrant may be killed, this should be done by the political community rather than as the act of a private individual.⁹¹ If it were viewed as potentially just for a private citizen to kill a ruler, even a tyrant, the likely consequence would be unending political instability. Even so, a citizen may kill a ruler in self-defense of their own life or body and may resist or kill a tyrant to defend the republic, if the ruler is unjustly attacking the republic and killing citizens. Moreover, Suárez contends that a private citizen may also kill a tyrant in vengeance for previous acts. Such killing, he continues, is permitted “by authority from God, who by the natural law has given to each one the means to defend himself and his fatherland, indeed to defend any innocent person.”⁹² Moreover, because civil obedience is subordinate to ecclesiastical obedience, it does not bind citizens in a situation when a ruler “prescribes things illicit or contrary to the salvation of the soul.”⁹³

In several places, de Lubac recognizes Suárez’s importance as a key defender of the theory that the church has indirect, but not direct, power over civil rulers.⁹⁴ For Suárez, spiritual power in temporal affairs was indirect because it orders these to a spiritual good that is of a different order.⁹⁵ While recognizing the utility of the indirect power theory in combatting state absolutism, de Lubac held that this was little better than the theory of direct power, which in “making civil power a mere instrument of spiritual power demeans the Church as well as humiliates the State.”⁹⁶ It might appear that de Lubac thus opposes any notion of indirect ecclesial or spiritual power over the state, instead accepting authority over individual consciences alone.⁹⁷ However, his principal concern with the theory of indirect power is its association with historic disputes over papal prerogatives, such as deposing or nominating rulers, enacting laws, or passing legal judgment. De Lubac argues that the church possesses a power “in” (rather than over) temporal matters that derives from its “power over the spiritual” exercised via its power to bind consciences.⁹⁸ He writes, “Since the supernatural is not separated from nature, and the spiritual is always mixed with the temporal, the Church has eminent authority—always in proportion to the spiritual elements present—over everything.”⁹⁹

91. Francisco Suárez, *Defense of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith against the Errors of Anglicanism* VI.4.3–6, trans. Peter L. P. Simpson, 930–32, <http://www.aristotelophile.com/Books/Translations/Suarez%20Defense%20Whole.pdf>. For the importance of Suárez’s theory of popular sovereignty in the political theology of Pope Francis, see Thomas R. Rourke, *The Roots of Pope Francis’s Social and Political Thought: From Argentina to the Vatican* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 26–30.

92. Suárez, *Defense* VI.4.12, 934.

93. Suárez, *Defense* VI.6.10–11, 948–49.

94. De Lubac, “The Authority of the Church in Temporal Matters,” in *Theological Fragments*, 199–233 at 199, 203 and 205.

95. Suárez, *Defense* III.5.2, 305.

96. De Lubac, “The Authority,” 210.

97. De Lubac, “The Authority,” 211–13.

98. De Lubac, “The Authority,” 220–21.

99. De Lubac, “The Authority,” 214–15.

De Lubac's critical appropriation of Suárez for his liberative political theology contrasts sharply with the neo-Suárezian politics of Descoqs, who contended that French Catholics could cooperate with the monarchist nationalist Charles Maurras, theorist and leader of *Action Française*.¹⁰⁰ Even though Maurras had become an atheist and thought the church had no spiritual purpose in society, he thought it deserved a privileged place relative to the secular state so that it might better perform its strictly religious functions. Descoqs's misguided validation of Maurras's collectivist and positivist ideology was grounded in his oppositional association of politics with the natural order and religion with the supernatural. Of Maurras's system, he tellingly states, "The natural order that it presents is the truth; far from opposing the supernatural order, it is in perfect harmony with it, and divine grace may enter it unobstructed."¹⁰¹ On this view, the church's sole concern was the salvation of souls. Even after the 1926 papal condemnation of the movement, the Jesuit authorities believed that Descoqs continued to support it privately.¹⁰²

Conclusion

De Lubac writes of the Jesuits, "In our Company, there have always been some anti-Thomists. . . . One of the last was the good Fr Descoqs."¹⁰³ This article has shown that opposition to neo-Thomism remained a significant marker of Jesuit philosophy into the second half of the twentieth century. This opposition was primarily grounded not in modernism or liberalism, nor even in *ressourcement*, but in Suárezianism. In his theological writings, de Lubac distances himself from the systematic neo-Suárezianism that he was taught at the Maison Saint-Louis on Jersey. His loathing of this presentation of Suárez may well have led him to overstate his subsequent divergence from him. This article has demonstrated that, across a range of topics, de Lubac adopted a classically Suárezian stance against neo-Thomism.

The single point on which de Lubac clearly opposed Suárez was the approach to tradition. Charging the early Jesuit theologians with promoting deliberately iconoclastic methods, de Lubac himself resisted the notion that a *nouvelle théologie* existed or that he was part of it. Rather, he associated the concept with the theory of pure nature¹⁰⁴

100. See Peter J. Bernardi, "French Jesuits and Action Française," in *"The Tragic Couple": Encounters between Jews and Jesuits*, ed. James Bernauer and Robert A. Maryks (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 179–202 at 188–92; Peter J. Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, and Action Française: The Clash over the Church's Role in Society during the Modernist Era* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 99–118, 174–82.

101. Pedro Descoqs, *A travers l'oeuvre de M. Ch. Maurras*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1913), 377. See Michael Sutton, *Nationalism, Positivism and Catholicism: The Politics of Charles Maurras and French Catholics, 1890–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 117–19.

102. Unpublished report cited in Bernardi, "French Jesuits," 198.

103. Letter to Bruno de Solages of April 26, 1947, in "Deux lettres inédites," *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 94, no. 1 (January–March 1993): 47–56 at 50.

104. De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 182, 215 (*Surnaturel*, 125, 140).

and, in the twentieth century, with liberal interpretations of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰⁵ De Lubac was equally dismissive of the notion of “modern” theology, identifying this with pure nature and especially with the systematizing of the theory¹⁰⁶ and with Suárez explicitly.¹⁰⁷

Yet Suárez helped positively shape de Lubac’s understandings of nature and the supernatural, his theological anthropology and theological method, and his political theology, enabling him to engage Christian experience and even to bridge the gap between Scholastic metaphysics and the Christian faith presented in Scripture. In the background of Suárez’s metaphysics stands Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*, especially the notion of distinct yet inseparable impulses identifiable only by means of careful discernment. At the end of a discussion of how the *Exercises* stand at the beginning of modernity, Hans Urs von Balthasar writes:

We must above all take the theological anthropology of the Bible seriously and persevere in it in spite of all the objections advanced by systematic philosophy. The Bible locates the human “essence” not primarily in what distinguishes humans from other beings, but in their concrete and indivisible wholeness.¹⁰⁸

De Lubac pursued metaphysical clarity while respecting the imperatives of lived experience. Because Suárez is now a figure of mainly historical interest it might be supposed that his metaphysics is no longer important, having been finally vanquished by neo-Thomism and its heirs. However, over the past eighty years, Thomism has undergone great transformation. In broad terms, in the readings developed by Cornelio Fabro and Louis de Raeymaeker, the contrast between God as pure act and being as mere potency have been eclipsed and almost refuted by theories of participation, which bring nature and experience into much clearer theological focus.¹⁰⁹ Suárezian metaphysics, including de Lubac’s inflection of it, is now flowing in the theological mainstream.¹¹⁰

105. Henri de Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. Richard Arandez (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1984), 251.

106. De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 106, 115 (*Surnaturel*, 103, 187); de Lubac, *The Mystery*, 37, 80, 207.

107. De Lubac, *Augustinianism*, 179, 207 (*Surnaturel*, 123).

108. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1: *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 380.

109. Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d’Aquino*, ed. Christian Ferraro (Rome: Istituto del Verbo, 2005); Louis de Raeymaeker, *La Philosophie de l’être: Essai de synthèse métaphysique* (Louvain: Éditions de l’Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1946); translated as *The Philosophy of Being* (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1954).

110. An early version of this article was presented at the Christian Theology Seminar in the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge on October 27, 2021. I am grateful to David Fergusson for the invitation and for the discussion that followed.

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