First Matter in the Philosophy of Suarez

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FIRST MATTER IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SUAREZ

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>A HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM ......................... 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>SUAREZ'S DOCTRINE ON PRIME MATTER ............... 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SUAREZ'S DOCTRINE .......... 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>CONCLUSION ......................................... 51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................................................ 57
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In times such as these when science is the god to whom the age pays homage, it is profitable to have some knowledge of a philosopher whose metaphysical ponderings were an attempt to establish a middle course along which science and metaphysics could travel. Since "science seeks to describe in terms of the phenomenal",¹ it is well to discuss a philosophical system which helps to give depth and breadth to the confined sphere of the scientist and which bolsters science with a rational basis.

Francis Suarez made just such an attempt throughout his famous philosophical treatise, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*. More than any of the scholastics before him, he strove to strengthen his scheme of thought by use of empirical facts. What success he obtained by this novel mode of procedure may be decided from these words of an eminent Suarezian scholar. In an interesting article on the Metaphysics of Suarez, while treating of the Doctor's theory of

cognition, this author says:

Another great thesis flowing directly from this central doctrine of creaturehood is Suarez's position on cognition. This doctrine is of paramount importance for the present day because it represents the one serious gesture which scholasticism has made to join hands with science.\(^2\)

The prime purpose and definite end of this thesis, therefore, is a study of Suarez's concept of prime matter, the ultimate material cause of things, and the rejection of Suarez's concept as a safe middle course. A brief history of the problem of change which comprises the views of the more important philosophers both ancient and scholastic, is thought to be the logical approach to the entire discussion. Such an approach gives the reader a broader and more comprehensive view of the subject. Under a separate heading Suarez's position will be brought to light. In this section some stress will be placed on his concept of entitative act which is essential to prime matter according to his metaphysical reasoning. Herein lies his point of departure from the traditional teaching of Aristotle and the Angelic Doctor.

Through a critical analysis of this entitative

act it is hoped that its nature and its function will be clearly defined. Reductively, it leads to an admission of composition in the essence of prime matter. From this it will be further concluded that, since prime matter has composition in its very essence, being cannot be considered as a substantial unity but merely an accidental aggregation of complete substances.

The conclusion of this thesis will but reiterate the findings of chapter four, but with this important addition: The influence of Nominalism on the metaphysics of Suarez will be pointed out in order to add weight to the conclusion that being cannot be anything but an accidental composite if entitative act is permitted metaphysical validity. With the Nominalists Suarez denied the real distinction between essence and existence, thereby forcing himself by way of a corollary to postulate entitative act for prime matter. Furthermore, his approach to metaphysical problems was highly empirical, and from an empiricist's point of view prime matter must possess some degree of perfection. This degree of perfection is the entitative act which leaves prime matter with essential composition, and gives rise once more to the dilemma of Parmenides.

This chapter can now be brought to a close with a
statement of the central point towards which the thesis is directed: What is this entitative act of Suarez and what is its metaphysical validity as an essential constituent of prime matter?
CHAPTER II

A HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

It has been deemed advisable, before beginning any analysis of Suarez's position on the essence of prime matter, to set down by way of a history of the problem, what some of the more important thinkers who attacked the problem before Suarez, thought on this point and what conclusions they reached. This procedure will give a clearer picture of the subject as a whole, and will make subsequent analysis much easier.

The crux of the whole problem lay in the famous dilemma of Parmenides, who was the first to give lasting impetus to the perplexing enigma of change. His denial of change of any kind and his adherence to a monistic and materialistic concept of being followed directly from his theory of cognition which can be stated in the following terms: "idem est cogitare et esse". Unlike Berkeley's principle, that of Parmenides sets forth the complete intelligibility of being which, however, was joined with

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perfect imaginability, making the being with which he dealt, sensible being.

From this principle of cognition is immediately deduced his first metaphysical principle, "ens est, non-ens non est", which implies within its scope, that being, since it is sensible, exists in its fulness, but a vacuum, which according to Parmenides is non-being, does not exist.

Furthermore, since being does not differ from being by reason of being, and since being cannot be differentiated by reason of non-being (which is not), Parmenides was forced to conclude that being was absolutely and unequivocally one. From this premise he is led to declare that the actual multiplicity of being along with the potential multiplicity is utterly absurd, and an illusion of the senses.

Why must the mutability of Parmenides's monistic being be denied? Change would imply that something new would result. But this change, according to the famous Parmenidean dilemma which Aristotle formulates in his Physics, is im-

\[\text{Ibid., Nos. 2, 6. 231, 232.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
possible. The dilemma is sufficient proof for the utter impossibility of change: "aut fieret ex ente aut ex non-ente; ex ente autem fieri non potest, hoc enim jam est; sed nec ex non-ente; ex nihilo nihil fit". Therefore being as it is found is the one and only possible thing. Nothing new can be had; nor can what is already had, be in any way changed.

If the second horn of the dilemma be considered in relation to the purely corporeal world in which creation in the strict sense plays no part, then it is obviously true that, "ex nihilo nihil fit". The first half of the dilemma, a finding consequent upon the metaphysics of Parmenides, is also true if being and non-being are contradictorily opposed, as Parmenides expressly states. In fact not only must the multiplicity of being be denied, but also intrinsic change of any kind whatsoever.

Parmenides and his followers went even further in their far-reaching denial of local motion. What was there in the idea of local motion that was not in agreement with their metaphysics? According to their way of viewing the problem, local motion postulated the existence of a vacuum. But, as has already been stated, a vacuum which is non-being is utterly absurd. Therefore the local motion which de-

5 Diels. No. 8. 236.
mends this vacuum is equally preposterous.⁶

Examined in the light of Parmenidean metaphysics, mere numerical division of indivisible beings was found wanting and so, rejected. The reasons for this rejection are as follows: division would imply change and being is immutable; division supposes that all the parts of the being divided would be actuated simultaneously and so could be dissolved into parts which had no extension; finally division would require a vacuum which does not and cannot exist.⁷

Parmenides, therefore, on metaphysical grounds argues to the unicity and absolute immutability of being. Since his conclusions are the result of intellectual cognition and since the senses seem to contradict the data presented by the intellect, he denies the veracity of these gates to the outside world. However, in spite of the errors he championed, he did leave to those who followed him a problem which could be solved only on metaphysical grounds. Unless the solution were metaphysical, and not purely empirical, as was that of Diogenes who attempted to solve the problem of local motion by merely walking, the dilemma would remain untouched, and leave to puzzled posterity an

⁶ Ibid., 238.
⁷ Ibid., 237.
apparent contradiction between metaphysical and sense cognition. Therefore a theory which purposed to save the appearances of things was necessary. Such was the solution offered by the Atomists, Leucippus and Democritus.

Leucippus and Democritus, though staunch defenders of the doctrine of Parmenides, wanted so to apply his principles that the conflict between intellectual and sense perceptions would be allayed. In the supremely mechanical system they propounded the material cause of all things was made up of an infinite number of indivisible atoms, which were similar and of the same nature. So far, the Atomists are of one mind with Parmenides. Change, substantial and accidental, corruption or generation, was wrought by variations in the position, figure, or relationship of the atoms. All mutation in being could be explained with the help of the vacuum, non-being, which, according to Leucippus and Democritus, "non minus existit quam ens". As can be seen, this was decidedly a radical departure from the first principles of Parmenides. However, the Atomists were of the opinion that if the vacuum were introduced, the gap between the world that is perceived by the senses and that which is perceived by the intellect, would be bridged. 8

Multiplicity was the first type of change which

8——Ibid., II, Leucippus and Democritus. No. 156. 174, 175.
this theory of the Atomists was to save. Through the medium of the vacuum would be had ideal conditions for the infinite and actual multiplication of being. Yet these multiplied beings would retain the unicity and indivisibility which Parmenides predicated of his being. They would be extrinsically and intrinsically incapable of change; though extended, they would be indivisible; for from two, one could not be had; nor two from one. The metaphysics of Parmenides excluded any such possibility.

Local motion in the vacuum was to be the solution for the apparent multipliability of being, and consequently, would account for generation and corruption. The former would be brought about by an orderly arrangement of the atoms; the latter, by disorder among the infinite particles. Yet, as must be insisted, all this corporeal activity was merely apparent. Nothing became; being remained unchangeable. 9

Subsequent philosophers endeavored to give greater cogency to the position assumed by Parmenides and the Atomists, or they allied themselves to principles diametrically opposed. To the former belonged Zeno and Melissus who went to great lengths in order to advance convincing proofs which would demonstrate the metaphysical tenets of 9 Ibid.
Parmenides. Zeno, indirectly proposed proofs which had for their theme local motion, which he totally rejected, since he considered it an illusion of the fallible senses. Melissus, his contemporary, attempted the same thing, with this exception—Melissus's method was more direct. The conclusions at which he arrived were the same as those reached by Zeno. However, he did add one new note to the idea of being which cannot be found in the teachings of either Parmenides or Zeno. Being as conceived by Melissus was infinite. But by this it would seem that he meant infinity in a sense in which it was not used in later philosophical systems. His infinity was one which belonged to magnitude. His final conclusions, however, were those of Parmenides: Being is immutable and one.10

The school of Greek thought which set out to disprove the doctrines of Parmenides, had for its chief exponent, Heraclitus, whose fundamental thesis was: "Nothing is; all is becoming".11 According to this principle, which he claimed to be the result of much intellectual labor, things are in a constant state of flux. They are constantly being evolved from the first material by a process of con-

10 Ibid., I, Melissus, No. 1. 268.
densation, or are returning to it by rarefaction.

What is the first matter with which Heraclitus was concerned? According to him it was a subtle substance, ethereal and invisible, which partook of the nature of fire. Further, it was intelligent and living.\(^{12}\) Hence it was not only the world-body, but also the world-soul. It was a god of some sort which governed the world, while at the same time it gave the universe its bulk or mass. Though intelligent, it was not free. Blind and inexorable necessity ruled it.\(^{13}\)

While little can be said in behalf of the theory of Heraclitus, since it left the first part of Parmenides's dilemma unsolved, two points are worthy of note. In the first place,

Heraclitus did not conceive the primordial fire as a mere mass of matter shaped into various accidental forms (mechanistic monism), but as an all pervading reason operating by its own power (dynamism), according to fatalistic necessity, forming bodies that differ essentially (pluralism), and reducing these again to its own substance.\(^{14}\)

The other point which merits attention is the

\(^{12}\) Diels. No. 113. 176.
\(^{13}\) Ibid. No. 90. 171.
\(^{14}\) Paul J. Glenn, Ph.D. History of Philosophy. B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, Mo. 1934, 53.
deep and lasting influence Heraclitus had on those who followed him. It is especially noticeable in Plato's ideas on prime matter and the problem of change. As has been said, his theory was in itself of little value as a solution to the enigma, but it did show one thing: a theory which would explain the dilemma and would contradict neither metaphysics nor sense cognition, had to be found. In other words Heraclitus put the question more directly and in a manner that was a challenge.

Before going on to the true solution of the whole problem of change, a few words on the teaching of Plato would not be amiss. To decide precisely what Plato's views on this subject were, is no easy task. At times it seems that the problem was not entirely clear to Plato himself. That he had ideas about the essence of prime matter is evident from his works; but these ideas were subject to change without notice.

In general, it can be said that Platonic prime matter was a determined substance of a sort which in some way came under the influence of the world-soul. Corporeal bodies were made up of earth and fire, the former giving solidity, the latter, light and heat. These two elements

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had nothing in common, and so demanded two further elements, air and water, that they might fuse and give a new substance.

Now if the first two elements are ultimately composed of prime matter, as he says they are, why have they not at least this as a common substratum which will form a basis for fusion? Why is it necessary to have recourse to two other elements which are equally diverse? Plato himself realized the haziness of his concept of prime matter. In the Timaeus he tells us that it is known by a sort of spurious reason and that it is something scarcely to be considered a matter of belief. In this, some inkling of Plato’s difficulty is to be found. He realized that a principle of limitation and a substratum of change was required, but such a principle as finally formulated by Aristotle, was out of gear with Plato’s first principles and with a system that was idealistic. Here again another philosopher tries to solve the problem of change, and still another was left hanging on the first horn of the dilemma: "ex ente non fit ens."

It was not until the time of Aristotle that a

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16 Ibid., 30a, 35a.  
17 Ibid., 52b.  
18 Glenn. 55, 56.
theory of being was formulated and presented which satisfied the exigencies of metaphysics and natural sense phenomena. This was the famous doctrine of Potency and Act. Between the two extremes of the Parmenidean being and the Heraclitean "becoming" Aristotle placed his tertium quid, potency, which merely said that being already existing had the capacity to acquire further perfections which it did not possess. From this principle he could explain the phenomena which for centuries had troubled the philosophers. By applying this general principle of Potency and Act to natural bodies he was able to account for change on metaphysical grounds. He argued somewhat in this manner: All bodies have something within them, common to all, by reason of which they are bodies; they have some principle or substratum which makes them bodies. What is this common element? Aristotle said that,

Matter, in the most proper sense of the term, is to be identified with the substratum which is representative of coming-to-be and passing-away.\(^{19}\)

From other texts of his, various generic and specific descriptions of the material cause of all things can be culled. In the *Metaphysics* he describes matter thus:

By matter I mean that which in itself is neither a particular thing nor of a certain quantity nor assigned to any other of the categories by which being is determined.20

In the **Physics** is found the following:

> For my definition of matter is just this- the primary substratum of each thing, from which it comes to be without qualification and which persists in the result.21

Appealing to an analogy Aristotle further enlarges upon his notion of prime matter.

> For as bronze is to the statue, the wood to the bed, or the matter and the formless before receiving form, so is the underlying nature to the substance, i.e. to the **this** of existent.22

Prime matter, therefore, is a medium between being and non-being; it is not absolute nothing because every natural body has prime matter as an essential part of itself.

Our doctrine is that although there is a matter of the percept-

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22 Ibid., 7, 191a, 32.
ible bodies (a matter out of which the so-called "elements" come to be), it has no separate existence, but is always bound up with the contrariety.\(^{23}\)

In other and more familiar words, the matter for its existence requires the form which specifies the matter, i.e. which distinguishes one body from another. Of itself matter is utterly passive; all activity comes to it through the form. For to begin with, it is characteristic of matter to suffer action, i.e. to be moved; but to move, i.e. to act, belongs to a different 'power'.\(^{24}\)

Or it can be more briefly expressed: "As to the 'matter' it (qua matter) is passive".\(^{25}\)

With certain reservations Aristotle goes so far as to class prime matter as a substance, understanding always that it is an incomplete substance and a co-principle of being. When he does call it substance, there is always at least implied the notion of "potential".

The substratum is a substance, and this is in one sense the matter (and by matter I mean that which, not being a 'this' actually, is a 'this' potentially.)\(^{26}\)

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 9, 335b, 29.
\(^{25}\) Ibid., 8, 324b, 18.
It is the stuff from which, through union with the substantial form, the composite becomes; and for almost the same reason, prime matter, which of itself is incorporeal, is spoken of by Aristotle as a potential nature.

Prime matter is one because it is the substratum or first subject of all change. As Aristotle says:

\[\text{It is therefore better to suppose that in all instances of coming-to-be matter is inseparable, being numerically identical and one with the 'containing' body, though inseparable from it by definition.}\]

Prime matter is unchangeable because, 

--- we have stated that the substratum is the material cause of the continuous occurrence of coming-to-be, because it is such as to change from contrary to contrary and because, in substances, the coming-to-be of one thing is always the passing-away of another, and the passing-away of one thing is always another's coming-to-be.\[\text{28}\]

Prime matter is pure potency and not pre-determined to receive this form rather than that. "As to the matter, it \(\text{(qua matter) is passive}\).\[\text{29}\] In itself it is absolutely indeterminate; its sole function is to form the substantial

\[\begin{align*}
\text{27 \text{Aristotle. De Generatione et Corruptione. I, 5, 320b, 12.}} \\
\text{28 \text{Ibid., I, 3, 319a, 15.}} \\
\text{29 \text{Ibid., I, 8, 324b, 18.}}
\end{align*}\]
substratum of all bodies and to be the basis of change without ever being changed. Aristotle brings out this idea of prime matter being pure potency in his famous description.

By matter I mean that which in itself is neither a particular thing or of a certain quantity nor assigned to any other of the categories by which being is determined.30

It is real but by no means actual. To become actuated it is necessary that it receive the substantial form for which it has an essential attraction.

The truth is that what desires the form is the matter, as the female desires the male, and the ugly the beautiful—only the female or the ugly not per se but per accidens.31

So much for Aristotle's doctrine. It is very important, in view of what will be said of Suarez's notions of prime matter, to note what Aristotle lays down as its essence. He insists on its being pure potency and on its being indeterminate. Otherwise there would be no complete solution of the problem of change. Philosophers prior to Aristotle's time failed to solve the problem precisely because they were ignorant of the idea of pure potency. For them there were two extremes: being and non-being; from neither could

being be derived. With Aristotle's clear notion of a prime matter which was an incomplete being and which of itself was totally indetermined, change could be explained. Being in potency is capable of receiving any form whatsoever in its own order. In the case of generation and corruption in the wide sense, the result of the change is substantial which it would not be if prime matter were in any way determined by its very nature. Any union with prime matter already determined would be merely accidental, thereby admitting no fundamental and complete explanation of the problem of change.

As will be seen, this is Suarez's point of departure from the teaching of Aristotle and St. Thomas.

With Aristotle's doctrine on this subject presented more or less clearly, little need be said of the teaching of St. Thomas, since he merely reiterates Aristotle's theory. For him all being which is subject to change is composed of potency and act. Bodies were composed of matter and form. Prime matter is pure potency and has no existence apart from the substantial form.

In the system of philosophy and theology which has come to be known as the Thomistic system, the Aristotelian principle of potency and act along with the notions of matter

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32 St. Thomas. Summa Theologica I, q. 66, art. 1. ad 3. q. 77, art. 1. ad 2. q. 15, art. 3, ad 3.
and form, and essence and existence, were more widely applied by St. Thomas than by Aristotle himself. Nevertheless, the principles remain basically the same, and they alone offer the true metaphysical solution to the Parmenidean puzzle.
CHAPTER III

SUAREZ'S DOCTRINE ON PRIME MATTER

Now that some familiarity with the problem of change as a whole has been achieved, a non-contentious discussion of Suarez's position regarding this problem is possible. Since there are many points on which he was in complete accord with Aristotle and St. Thomas, these will be treated briefly, that time and consideration may be given to those ideas of his which show divergences from the commonly accepted opinions of Thomas and Aristotle. The discrepancies in the two schools of thought will become evident in the latter part of this chapter which deals with the reality of prime matter.

If Suarez's notions of matter are to receive the comprehension they deserve, it is necessary, as a preliminary step, to bear carefully in mind his denial of the real distinction between essence and existence. On this single principle hinges Suarez's postulate of the entitative act in prime matter. The logic in the postulate is evident. If essence and existence are identical, then in the essential order prime matter, though considered as pure potency in
relation to the informing act, cannot be without some act which will give it reality independently of this informing act. Various citations from the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* show beyond the shadow of a doubt that he held and defended a logical distinction between essence and existence.¹

However much Suarez may have differed with Aristotle on certain definite phases of the problem, he had no fault to find with the theory of matter and form in its broader aspects. In fact, up to a certain point there is not the slightest note of discord. In the beginning of his treatise on prime matter Suarez's chief concern is to prove that there is such a thing as a basic material cause of all things. His arguments for its existence, though long and searching, are all reducible to one head, substantial change in living substances. Prescinding from its nature and the form which it may receive, Suarez finds that such a thing as prime matter is as evident as the substantial changes which are constant occurrences within the experiences of everyone.² As can be seen at a glance, this statement is based on empirical observations rather than on any metaphysical exigency.

² Ibid., Disp. XIII, Sect. 1, No. 4.
However, from these empirical facts Suarez is easily able to transfer his line of argumentation into the realm of metaphysics, and produce a proof which carries conviction. Arguing from the repugnance the intellect finds in explaining anything by recourse to an infinite series, he deftly shows that prime matter is not only the basis of all change, but also the ultimate basis.

\[ \text{Igitur vel illud subjectum supponit aliud subjectum vel non, si non supponit, illud est primum et habetur intentum. Si vero supponit aliud, quaeram de illo; est autem evidens non posse procedi in infinitum; ergo necessario sistendum est in aliquo primo subjecto seu materia prima.} \]

If any further proof is needed to make this argument conclusive, it can be readily found by considering other forms of change, such as generation, corruption, and nutrition. Deny an ultimate basis of change and these everyday phenomena will have to be attributed to nothing less than creation and annihilation; an explanation as repugnant to metaphysics as it is to ordinary experience.

As an immediate corollary from what has been said, Suarez is easily able to prove that there is but one first

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3 Ibid., No. 4.
4 Ibid., Nos. 5, 8.
material cause. Again his reasoning flows from the impossibility of an infinite series, but this time the principle is considered from a different angle. This constant regression is out of the question because in the series one would be faced with a procession of mutually dependent subjects of change. Furthermore, these dependent subjects are composed and can be further resolved into simple substrata. With metaphysical necessity a wholly independent and simple subject must be reached and this is prime matter.5

From this it is but a simple step to conclude to the fact that primordial matter is a simple substance. So after refuting Thales and those ancients who taught that prime matter was something integral, and after rejecting the forma corporeitatis of Scotus and Henry of Ghent, Suarez takes sides with Aristotle in defending the simplicity of matter.6

So far Suarez has explained, "quid non sit materia, quam quid sit".7 Now he feels himself to be in a position to take up the positive and more contentious side of the problem. It is at this juncture that the force of his denial of the real distinction makes itself felt. Granted the necessity

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5 Ibid., No. 10.  
6 Ibid., Sect. 3, No. 6.  
7 Ibid., Sect. 4. No. 1.
of identifying essence and existence, some kind of act must be given to prime matter. Suarez's mode of argumentation will help to throw light on this statement before this chapter is ended.

Suarez opens this section with a consideration of those facts in the case upon which there is mutual agreement. From Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and other works, he shows that the material cause of things joined to the substantial form has true reality, and that it is really distinct from the form. Matter must have reality or real entity; otherwise it would be nothing. Matter must have reality of itself because of the part it plays in the generation and corruption of substances. If it had no reality of its own, change would be nothing more or less than creation and annihilation. Furthermore this reality must be substantial reality. The reasons for this are obvious. A complete substance can be made up only of substantial parts. But prime matter is a co-part of every natural substance. Therefore it is a substantial reality. But matter, besides being a substantial part

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8 *Ut ergo ab his, quae certa videntur, incipiamus, primo indubitatum esse videtur, materiam, quae actu est sub forma, et cum illa componit substantiam corpoream, habere aliquid entitatis realis et substantialis, et realiter distinctae ab entitate formae. Ibid., Sect. 4, No. 2.*

9 Ibid., No. 3.
of the complete substance, adds something to the composite; and this something is substantial, not accidental. So argues Suarez, and since he is discussing an uncontroverted point, nothing further need be added by way of comment.

In conclusion to all this he asserts that matter must be really distinct from the form, "quia materia est entitas realiter separabilis a qualibet forma particulari determinata, quod satis est ut a forma sit in re ipsa distincta". This distinction between matter and form, since the form is not a mode, is a real distinction. *Distinguitur ergo materia a forma tamquam res a re*.

Now Suarez is ready to venture forth alone and give his answer to the question, "an materia ex se habeat aliquam entitatem actualem?" He is fully cognizant of the difficulties of his position and the criticism to which he is exposing himself. Yet he positively asserts:

... materia prima ex se et non intrinsece a forma habet suam entitatem actualem essentiae, quamvis non habeat illam, nisi cum intrinseca habitudine ad formam.

10 Ibid., No. 4.  
11 Ibid., No. 5.  
12 Ibid.  
13 Ibid., No. 8.  
14 Ibid., No. 9.
Suarez insists that he is here using the terminology of his adversaries lest controversy should arise. How a difference of opinion is at all possible is beyond him! Matter as found in the composite must have a real essence if it is to retain its title as a real being.\(^{15}\) Nor can it have this reality from the actuating form. For form can give essential entity to a nature only when it is the act of a real passive potency, in union with which it forms a composite. Therefore not the potentiality but the composite is the term of the form's causality. Consequently, the essential reality of matter cannot be communicated to it by the form; for prime matter is essentially a simple entity like its form, and the primary composition results from the conjunction of the two.\(^{16}\) Further confirmation can be gathered if it is remembered that every simple entity is of itself constituted in its own essential nature. No intervention of another entity can bring this about. If it were otherwise, there would be nothing to distinguish it from the composite.\(^{17}\)

Suarez's next argument is based on the incomplete nature of the material cause and the fact that such a nature cannot be intrinsically derived from the form. To his mind it is valid and conclusive:

\(^{15}\) Ibid.  
\(^{16}\) Ibid.  
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
... quia si formam includeret, nihil illi deesset ad rationem completae entis. Tandem ex ipsa ratione purae potentiae, hoc ipsum colligitur; nam si materia haberet suum esse essentiae intrinsece per formam, in suo essentiali conceptu includeret actum formae, non ut intrinsecum terminum, seu additum, sed ut intrinsecum actum formaelem constituentem, atque non esset pura potentia.

Although prime matter has its own reality independently of the form, Suarez is most insistent that it does not have this reality without a transcendental relation to the form, "quia essentialiter est potentia", and in the words of Aristotle is, "primum subjectum". His argument is based on the intrinsic relationship which exists between potency and act. This relationship is not to some specific form, but to form in general. In matter the forms may vary in proportion to the changes which occur, but the intrinsic relation which matter has to form never changes. Furthermore, the fact that this relationship never changes is but a further vindication of the thesis that matter does not get its essential reality through a union with the substantial form. Since this argument is so important, it is here given in full.

omnia potentia dicit intrinsecam habitudinam ad suum actum; pro-

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., No. 11.
Suarez now sets out to reconcile his doctrine on the essence of prime matter with Aristotle's teaching that it is pure potency. At first glance the two positions seem irreconcilable. Suarez thinks not. For him the crux of the difficulty lies in a proper interpretation of "pure potency". According to Thomas and the Thomists, matter is pure potency, "Quia neque ex se neque in se habet ullam existentiam nisi per formam." Capreolus, Socimus, and Javellus are cited as opponents of this theory. Scotus and Henry of Ghent, on the other hand, are of the opinion that there is a twofold kind of act, formal and entitative. In their writings,

Materiam docent ex se habere actum entitativum, non tamen formalem, et consequenter aiunt materi-

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., Sect. 5, No. 2.
am vocari puram potentiam in ordine ad actum formalem, non vero in ordine ad actum entitativum. 22

Following Scotus and Henry of Ghent, Suarez incorporates this entitative act into his concept of prime matter. Going even further, he makes bold to state that the concept is not at all foreign to Aristotle. How does he justify this assertion? Act is the correlative of potency. Now there must be as many types of act as there are of potency. He enumerates three: passive, active, and logical, but excludes active as having no bearing on the question. Now a thing may be thought of as in act with respect to receptive potency, and also merely with respect to objective potency. Matter, therefore, though pure potency with reference to informing acts, is not mere objective potency and so must be said to be in act, or to have its own entitative act.

Materia ergo prima, quamvis sit prima pura potentia receptiva, atque ita in sua essentia nullum includat actum formalem, quod significatur per istud vocabulum, pura, nihilominus postquam creatae est, non potest dici in pura potentia objectiva; ergo hac ratione recte dicitur esse vel habere actum entitativum.23

However, a mere assertion that the idea, "pure potency", does not exclude every act is not sufficient unless there be con-

22 Ibid., No. 9.
23 Ibid., No. 4.
vincing evidence for the contention. Suarez offers the following:

Primo quia materia prima in conceptu essentiali potest intelligi ex genere et differentia composita; ut, verbi gratia, si materia coeli et horum inferiorum distinguuntur specie, haec materia de qua nunc agimus, non stat genere materiae in communi et propria differentia, quae sumi potest ex ordine ad formam entis generabilis; habet ergo materia suum ac tum formalem metaphysicum, quo in suo essentia consti tuitur.24

The gist of this proof can be given briefly. For genus the earthly bodies can be considered as having certain matter common to both earthly and celestial bodies, and for difference, its relation to the form of a corruptible body. From this, matter of itself can be said to have its own metaphysical act.

This last argument gains greater force, according to Suarez, if the following line of reasoning is taken into consideration. Matter of itself has some perfection and goodness which belong to it regardless of the form. Suarez states his position in the following manner:

24 Ibid., No. 9.
From all this reasoning it can be concluded that matter is pure potency in relation to the informing act, because such a concept is not included in the formal concept. However, it cannot be said that, "materia prima ita est pura potentia, ut excludat omnem actum metaphysicum actuantem". Whether or not all this ratiocination brings Suarez's theory of prime matter into line with that of Aristotle, may still be a doubtful issue for some, but not for Suarez. Aristotle may state in express and open terms that prime matter is something entirely without form. For Suarez this causes not the slightest hesitation.

... per haec autem et similia dicta solum excluditur a materia omnis actus formalis et com-

Ibid., No. 10.
Thus we have briefly sketched the more important ideas which Suarez conceived of the essence of prime matter. Most important of these ideas for the purpose of this thesis are those notions on the actuality of matter considered by itself. It is here that Suarez sets himself apart from his master, Aristotle, as well as from the Angel of the Schools, St. Thomas. All else he has to say on prime matter has its roots in that one notion: Matter has of itself and independently of the form, something of reality.

Yet in this he is but being logically loyal to his first principles, and particularly to his denial of the real distinction between essence and existence. That Suarez has been logical, there is little doubt; that he is correct is another question. This question we shall now attempt to answer in the following chapter which will be a critical analysis of the Suarezian position.

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CHAPTER IV

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SUAREZ'S DOCTRINE

This chapter purposes to analyze critically and evaluate a series of objections which Suarez proposes after his treatise on prime matter as pure potency. While the objections themselves merely anticipate the obvious attack an adversary would make against the Suarezian doctrine and concept of matter, and offer no particular difficulty in understanding, the answers given are of interest as well as of importance. In these is to be gained a clearer knowledge of Suarez's position and of the metaphysical difficulties to which it leads. Furthermore, it is hoped that this analysis will likewise show, or aid in showing, that the entitative act in prime matter as conceived by the Doctor Eximius, if pushed to its logical extremities, leaves all metaphysical explanations of change in the same unhappy pass Parmenides found them.

Why should Suarez's theory of prime matter cause this reversion to the Parmenidean dilemma? This question can best be answered by a statement of his position. Either Suarez's theory of prime matter is the same as that of Chapter II, 1, 2.
Aristotle or it is different. From what has been said in the preceding chapter, it is obvious that Suarez was propounding a system that was a radical departure from the traditional view. But if the Suarezian system is different, then this entitative act is act in the strict sense of the term as used by the scholastics. Otherwise entitative act would be a modus loquendi, and would affect the essence of prime matter not at all. However since the system is different, this act is act strictly interpreted. It can be concluded, therefore, that prime matter is composed of essence and existence. In other words matter is the complete being Parmenides said it was, and not the incomplete being postulated by Aristotle and the scholastics. The analysis which now follows will help, by specific examples, to make this deduction clearer and more concrete.

The first difficulty which Suarez proposes is worded as follows:

Prima, quia absque esse nullus est actus, quia nihil habet actualitatem nisi in quantum est, et ideo ipsum esse est actualitas omnium rerum,...; sed materia non habet esse, nisi per formas..., ergo.

What precisely is the state of the question? The adversary

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Chapter III, 20, 21.

is saying that without existence there is no act. However, matter has no existence except through its form. Therefore matter has no act of itself.

Although Suarez's handling of the objection is brief, it is sufficient to deepen one's insight into the Suarezian concept of prime matter. Before analyzing the response which is based on an interpretative exposition of the scholastic principle, OMNE ESSE EST A FORMA, the answer as given by Suarez will be quoted.

Omne esse est a forma duobis modis exprimi potest. Primo, de esse specifico et completo. Secundo, quod omne esse est a forma, vel intrinsecamente et componente illud, vel saltam terminante aliquo modo dependentiam ejus, et hoc modo ipsum esse dici potest esse a forma, quatenus ab illa pendet...

For the sake of greater clarity the formal distinction which Father Harper makes in his treatment of this same objection will here be given in summary fashion. In substance it is the same as Suarez's answer, but put in language which is more readily understood.

Harper's response centers around the notion of being which is absolute and complete, and being which is incomplete. Applying these notions to the difficulty of the

4 Ibid., No. 17.
adversary, he finds that it would be a valid objection if it states that without existence coming from the form, there is no act complete or incomplete, absolute or dependent. However, if the adversary wishes to imply, (and he does) that without existence coming from the form there is no incomplete and dependent act, then the objection must be denied. Prime matter, he says, can and does have incomplete and dependent act.  

While this response can be attacked on several scores, facility in handling it seems to demand that the examination be restricted to a discussion of incomplete and dependent act. St. Thomas, following Aristotle, considered prime matter as incomplete being. In the terms of the school, it is an *ens quo*, as opposed to the composite which is an *ens quod*. This *ens quo*, prime matter, was pure potency, capable of receiving any form decided upon by the efficient cause. In itself, it could not determine: it could only be

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5 The Major must be distinguished. *There is no entitative act without being,* either absolute and complete or incomplete and dependent, -- granted; absolute and complete only, -- denied. The Minor is contradistinguished. The form gives absolute and complete entity or being to Matter, -- granted; incomplete and dependent, -- there is room for a subdistinction: It gives being by reducing the potentiality to act, -- granted; it gives being in the sense that it communicates to Matter the special imperfect entity of the latter, -- denied. (Thomas Harper, S.J. The Metaphysics of the School. II. Peter Smith, New York, 1881, 267.)

6 St. Thomas. *De Spiritualibus Creaturis.* art. 1.
determined. Alone, it could neither exist nor be known. For both, another incomplete being, another *ens quo*, the form, was required. Setting aside the cognoscibility of prime matter, it might be added that St. Thomas went so far as to say that even by divine omnipotence, matter could not exist without the form. Why did Aristotle, and St. Thomas after him, go to so much bother to stress the absolute potentiality of prime matter? As was said in chapter two, any solution which was to give the lie to Parmenides's dilemma had to be a metaphysical solution, which was natural enough since the whole problem was founded on a metaphysical basis. As can be easily recalled, being was one for the great Eleatic, and from being which was already one, being could not be produced. Aristotle's *tertium quid* between complete being and nothing was being in potency.

Would entitative act give birth again to this disturbing Parmenidean dilemma? As was stated in the beginning of this chapter, Suarez considered his teaching on the essence of prime matter to be different from that of St. Thomas and Aristotle. His divergence from his predecessors is found

7 St. Thomas. *In I Phys. lect. 13.*
8 St. Thomas. *Summa Theologica. I, q. 7, art. 2, ad 3.*
9 Chapter II. 4.
in this concept of entitative act which is not a mere *modus loquendi*. If it were, Suarez's notions on prime matter would differ in no way from the theory of Aristotle and St. Thomas. Therefore, it must be act in the strict scholastic sense of the term. Then prime matter has essential composition and consequently, must be complete being. Finally, if it is complete being, it cannot be the substratum of change, and Parmenides's problem remains unsolved.

An analysis of the act itself will bring this into clearer focus. It is, according to Suarez, as much a part of prime matter as the substantial form is of the composite.\(^{11}\) Yet, although act, it does not destroy the incomplete nature of prime matter. It does not prevent matter from being pure potency.\(^{12}\) In short, it seems to be act and not to be act, which is an obvious contradiction. Now if it is act and metaphysically required by prime matter, matter has composition and so is logically reduced to complete being, an *ens quod*. Union with the substantial form would demand a substantial change which in turn would demand another substratum to serve as the basis of change, or leave the union of matter and form a mere accidental aggregate.

This conclusion seems to be metaphysically valid.

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\(^{11}\) Ibid., 17, 18, 19.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., 21.
On metaphysical grounds a first subject which is the substratum of change, while remaining unchanged, must be had. Furthermore, some metaphysical principle which differentiates one being from another is required. This is the form or the act. Since prime matter is the first subject and is pure potency capable of receiving all forms, it, as such, has absolutely no need for act or form. To give it act of any kind implies a contradiction and disrupts the metaphysical explanation which is the one solution to Parmenides's dilemma.

The next objection which Suarez offers against his doctrine claims that his theory makes of prime matter an actual entity. This actual entity would be united with a second actual entity, the form, thereby destroying the possibility of substantial union and making of the composite, not an unum per se, but an unum per accidens. Though this has been mentioned above in passing, it will be here considered more fully. In the words of Suarez the objection is put thus:

Secunda, quia alias ex materia et forma non fieret per se unum, quia ex duobis entibus in actu non fit unum per se; ideo enim ex subjecto et accidente non fit unum per se, quia aliquid est esse subjecti, aliquid accidentis.13

13 Suarez. Disputationes Metaphysicae. Sect. 5, No. 16.
Suarez answers as before by explaining another famous scholastic dictum:

Ex duobis entibus in actu non fit unum per se non potest intelligi de quibuscumque entitatis actualibus: nam potius est impossibile ens per se ac completum actu componi nisi ex entibus incompletis; nam quod nihil est, ut saepe diximus, non potest realiter componere, et praesertim ens per se unum. Debet ergo intelligi de entibus in actu completis in suis generibus; illa enim nec per se ordinantur, nec recte cohaerent ad compostum unum per se. Non dicianus autem materiam esse hoc modo ens actu, sed potius dicianus esse velut quaedam incohationem entis, quae naturaliter inclinatur, et per se conjungitur formae ut complenti integrum ens.14

Suarez's answer is rather long and not altogether to the point. In brief, he states that prime matter and substantial form are two incomplete and dependent entities, not two complete and independent realities. Yet he does not dispose of the main point of the difficulty, the entitative act in prime matter. It can be granted that matter is, "quandam incohationem entis, quae naturaliter inclinatur, et per se conjungitur formae ut complenti integrum ens", but the

14 Ibid., No. 17.
main question remains unanswered. If this entitative act is true act and is found in prime matter, how can prime matter be an incomplete being? Again, there seems to be had the basis for a contradiction. Matter has its own act, yet it is an incomplete substance. Matter has its own act, yet it can be united with the form in such a way that the resulting composite is a substantial unit. The too obvious conclusion here is that Suarez's concept of prime matter leaves the problem of change in the same curious position in which Parmenides found it when he first established his monistic theory of being.

The third objection further elucidates the manifest contradiction apparent in Suarez's notions on prime matter. The difficulty takes its roots in the simplicity, a negative simplicity it is true, which Aristotle and the scholastics predicated of prime matter. If matter is simple, it must be exclusive of all act. Any kind of act implies composition and so destroys the note of simplicity in matter. The objection as found in the *Disputationes Metaphysicae* takes the following form:

\[
\text{Tertia, materia est omnino simplex; ergo vel tota est actus, vel tota potentia, quia simplex entitas non potest constare ex actu et potentia physicis. Sed non potest dici quod tota est actus, cum essentialiter sit}
\]
In answer to this Suarez hinges his refutation on the real identity he claims for essence and existence. From this principle which is at the root of his idea of matter, a fact which has already been mentioned in chapter two, he argues:

... materiam totam esse potentiam et totam esse actum, quem nos explicuimus, non per compositionem actus potentiae, sed per identitatem, et (ut ita dicam) per intimam et transcendentalem inclusionem; non enim omnis potentia opponitur omni actui, sed cum proportione, potentia igitur receptiva non opponitur actui entitativo incompleto, sed potius illum essentialiter includit.

This response to a very fundamental difficulty seems to be a begging of the question. Rather, Suarez goes back to explain the relationship that exists between the various potencies and their acts; and ends by asserting that potency essentially includes entitative act. What is the core of the objection? It proposes a complete disjunction: prime matter is either pure potency or it is pure act.

15 Ibid., No. 16.
16 Ibid., No. 18.
According to Suarez's theory neither member of this disjunction can stand. Since no one favors the latter part, attention can be centered on the first. How can matter have this act and still be, "omnino simplex"? Suarez gives no answer. According to him essence and existence are identical. Therefore matter must have existence. If this be admitted, the same contradiction is evidenced that was pointed out in the two preceding objections. Matter is entirely simple, yet it has act. Matter is pure potency which implies total absence of act, yet it has its own entitative act. Carry this out further and it must be concluded that matter is not simple, but composite, and being comes from being which is a further contradiction.

The fourth objection follows as a subsumption from the one treated above. Based on the opposition which exists between pure potency and pure act, it proceeds as follows:

Quarta, quia purus actus ita est actus, ut nihil habeat admistum potentialitatem, seu potentiam receptivam; ergo e contrario pura potentia ita est potentia ut nihil habeat actualitatis admistum; nam oppositorum eadem est ratio; et quia pura potentia debet summe distare a summo actu; non distaret summe si aliquid actualitatis incluseret.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{17}\) Ibid., No. 17.
Suarez's refutation demands a few words of explanation lest the gist should be lost. It would seem that he intends in this instance, to exclude Infinite Being from his consideration and confine himself to finite act. Now finite act does not exclude active potentiality; nor indeed all entitative potentiality. A fortiori it does not exclude all metaphysical potency, which is essentially included in the contingency of its being. What it does exclude is a passive potentiality. In like manner, pure subjective and passive potency does not exclude entitative act. How could it avoid being but a mere concept of the mind if it did? What it does exclude, as was stated before, is all actuating or informing act.\textsuperscript{18}

The refutation to the objection runs along the same lines as the answers to the three that have gone before. Everything is granted the adversaries, except the denial of entitative act. Pure potency has nothing of actuating or informing act included in it, but it does have entitative act. Otherwise, it would be nothing. Its one and only claim to reality is derived from this entitative act. Suarez cannot understand how it could be otherwise.

If prime matter were being in the strict sense of

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., No. 19.
the term, Suarez's stand might be tenable. But according to
the Aristotelian concept, it cannot be being in the strict
sense. As Aristotle conceived it, prime matter is being in
an analogous sense only. It is being in potency; it is a
principle of being; it is the subject from which complete
being is derived. In other words, prime matter does not
have being in the same sense as the composite has it. Only
by rational deduction and analogy is this difficult concept
reached. Deduction also shows that it must be incomplete
being, and incomplete being in such a way that act of any
kind not only is not necessary, but utterly impossible if
the problem of change is to be explained metaphysically.

The conclusion to these observations must be the
same one that has been drawn from the answers to the last
three objections. The Suarezian concept of prime matter
carries with it contradictions of such a nature that the
system can hardly be used as an adequate solution to the
problem of change. Indeed, it is feared that this solution
reduces the problem of change to the statement of Parmeni­
des: "ex ente non fit ens".

There is a fifth and final objection which we in­
tend to examine. The gist of the difficulty is that if
there is act in prime matter, then prime matter is sub-
stance in the strict sense, or it is an accident. In the
words of the great Doctor himself the objection reads as follows:

Quinta, quia materia aliquid est actu, ergo vel substantia vel accidentes; non secundum ut per se constat; neque primum, quia est potentia ad substantiam; quod autem est potentia ad aliquid, non est actu illudmet, nam duo repugnat haec.19

In the answer to this Suarez says:

Ad quintam respondetur, materiam esse substantiam. . . Unde materia non est potentia ad totam latitudinem substantiae, sed ad formam et ad esse compositi; ad substantiali- em autem entitatem materiae non est in potentia, sed actu est talis entitas. Repugnat enim dari potentiam realem et receptivam respectu totius generis et latitudinis substantiae, ut completam et incompletam comprehendit, quia substantia prior est accidente; et ideo talis potentia, cum sit primum subjectum, non potest esse accidentes sed substantia; neque etiam potest esse in potentia ad se- ipsum; ergo nec potest esse in potentia ad totam latitudinem substantiae.20

This objection, if the first member be considered, has force against Suarez's position and further shows the precariousness of a theory that demands entitative act in

19 Ibid., No. 16.
20 Ibid., No. 20.
the first subject and material cause of all things. Falling back upon Aristotle's principles which have validity in Suarez's eyes, the mind finds it difficult to conceive of a pure potency which has some act. Therefore, it finds difficulty in not conceiving a pure potency with entitative act as anything but a substance, in fact as a complete substance.

Pushing this notion of prime matter and its cognoscibility a bit further, we can question Suarez's idea of what is meant by "pure potency". He says that prime matter has a potency for the form. Appealing to Aristotle through Father Hoenen, one can better say:

\[\text{Materia est potentia ens simpliciter, quod ulterius determinari debet ad esse simpliciter, sive substantiale, i.e. ad esse primum, unde non est aliquid quod habet potentiam, sed ipsa est potentia ad esse simpliciter.}\]

In other words Suarez makes a very subtle distinction between matter as pure potency and matter in pure potency. For him they are not the same. With Aristotle he maintains that "pure potency" looks only to the informing act; while "in pure potency" is considered an incorrect way of speak-

ing if by it one intends to exclude from matter all actuality.\textsuperscript{22} By such a process of reasoning it would seem that Suarez, in fact though not in theory, is denying a very fundamental thesis of the scholastic system, subjective passive potency.\textsuperscript{23} He adheres faithfully to the traditional terms, but reductively, he seems to be treating only of logical potency.\textsuperscript{24} Had he done otherwise and handled his study of prime matter in the traditional manner, both in theory and in fact, he would not have been forced to postulate this entitative act. Without this entitative act he would not open his theory to the same censure that has been put upon so many of the explanations of change given after the time of Parmenides. Finally he would not have had an \textit{ens quod}, and would not have endangered the validity of his metaphysics by incorporating into his theory of prime matter contradictions which renew the age-old dilemma of Parmenides.

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\textsuperscript{22} Suarez. \textit{Disputationes Metaphysicae}. Sect. 9, No. 13.
\textsuperscript{24} P.G.M. Manser. \textit{Das-Wesen Des Thomismus}. F.Rutschi, Freiburg (Schweiz), 1935, 606.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

After the preceding discussion and argumentation it is now possible to draw some conclusions from Suarez's teachings on the essence of prime matter as well as from his philosophy in general. That his concept of prime matter is one that is at variance with the doctrine of Aristotle and St. Thomas is a fact that can hardly be controverted.\(^1\) Beyond controversy, too, is his point of departure from the tenets of the Aristotelian and Thomistic school. As has often been repeated in this paper, Aristotle and Thomas taught that prime matter was pure potency devoid of any act, while Suarez postulated for it what he is pleased to call entitative act.

This entitative act upon which Suarez builds his notions of prime matter was not a concept unheard of prior to his time. Long before, it had made its appearance in the writings of philosophers of great repute and of repute not so great. Scotus, Henry of Ghent, Ockam, Gregory of Rimini, Durandus, and Gabriel Biel, to mention but a few, were staunch

defenders of the entitative act, if not in name, certainly in idea. That Suarez came directly under the influence of all of these save Ockam, is evident from his writings wherein he calls upon them to substantiate his arguments. At least indirectly, Ockam, the father of Nominalism, helped to color Suarez's opinions. This can be deduced from the fact that he recognized in Biel an authority upon whom he could rely. Now Gabriel Biel, the last of the scholastics, in his chief work, Collectorium, shows himself a faithful and painstaking exponent of the Nominalistic doctrines. Ockam, Biel's master, following the lead of Peter Aureolus and Durandus, was the single individual who crystallized and most widely propagated the philosophical heresy known as Nominalism or Terminism.

That Suarez saw something good in Nominalism can be gathered from one passage of the Disputationes Metaphysicae where in speaks in a strain that shows more than a healthy tolerance for the whole system.

Et merito reprehendendi sunt Nominales quoad loquendi modos, nam in re fortasse non dissident a vera sententia: nam eorum rationes hunc solum tendunt, ut probent universalitatem non esse in rebus, sed convenire illis prout in intellectu, seu per denominationem ab aliquo opere intellectus, quod verum est.2

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While the super-tolerance of the first part of the quotation might be passed off lightly, one is led to be more than amazed upon consideration of the second part. While even this may admit favorable interpretation, as it stands it is a dangerous and surprising commitment. This passage, along with others which can be gathered from his works, adds weight to the contention that Suarez was unable to purge his metaphysics of the blight of Nominalism. With the Nominalists, though not necessarily because of them, he denied the real distinction between essence and existence. In accord with them and as a direct corollary to this concept of essence and existence, Suarez held that prime matter had its own entitative act, though it had this act with a transcendental relation to the substantial form. These Nominalistic tendencies of the great Doctor can be succinctly summarized in the following quotation:

... Suarez... esprit éminent, sans conteste... vivat, comme ses contemporains, dans une ambiance créée par le nominalisme, et que, malgré sa réaction expressément réaliste en logique, il n'ayait pas réussi à se dégager complètement en métaphysique, d'influences qui diminuaient... d'aucuns disent: qui faussaient... d'avance la portée d'un effort méritoire. Suarez en effet, comme Duns Scot, comme Occam, pose en thèse la connaissance intellectuelle directe du singulier matériel, l'individuation
Yet again Suarez's whole approach to philosophy may be set down as a partial cause for the attitude he took towards many problems, including the essence of prime matter. In outlook Suarez was intent on satisfying the exigencies not only of metaphysics, but also those of the empirical sciences. To accomplish this it was necessary to bring under a unified system the doctrines of Thomas and Scotus. So preoccupied was he with this that he, "avowedly pursues the path of balance between Scotism and Thomism". By this method he hoped to find a common ground for the meeting of philosophy and the physical sciences which were beginning to gain popularity in his day. In all this it seems that Suarez failed to remember that many metaphysical concepts would never suffer boiling in a test tube. Prime matter, empirically considered, cannot be conceived as an incomplete being which has not at least a grain of perfection. Empirically viewed,

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prime matter had to be endowed with some kind of act. In other words, Suarez directed all his attention to the singular individual and to direct experience, intellectual or sensible, which alone could grasp it. This is but the flowering of Suarez's first principles. To the end he was a man who followed the inevitable force of logic to its inevitable conclusion.

Though brutally logical, such a concept of prime matter and its essential composition seems to take the problem of change back to where Parmenides found it. Why? As has been argued in chapter four of this thesis, entitative act is act or it is not. Since there is absolutely no doubt that Suarez considers it to be act, prime matter is essentially composed. Granted that matter has composition, then two problems arise. First, how can matter function as the ultimate substratum of change and still be called first matter? Secondly, how can this matter with its entitative act be united with the substantial form? Suarez offers a solution to this latter difficulty by appealing to a mode of union. Yet this mode does not seem to be a true metaphysical answer to the problem.

Quo in casu unio relate ad constitutiva elementa videtur extrinseca: non per se sed per aliud efficitur. Praeter unio-

nem elementa concipi possunt; quare aliud est compositum et alia sunt componentia, nisi componentibus modus addatur.  

By means of this mode matter would not only be joined to the form "per aliud," but the resultant would be an accidental and not an essential composite. The substantial form would be something superadded to the matter, and according to St. Thomas, ..."illud quod superadvenit non dat esse actu simpliciter materiae, sed esse actu tale, sicut accidentia faciunt; ... Unde, quando talis forma acquiritur, non dicitur generari simpliciter, sed secundum quid?" Finally, from this it would seem that Suarez is forced to conclude that prime matter is an ens quod or a complete being.

Suarez vero distinctionem real-em metaphysicam in ordine essendi non applicans, neque in ordine quidditatis illam applicare valet, ideoque materiam ut quoddam ens tractare cogitur et subjecti unitatem servare nequit.  

In other words it seems that logic would force him to admit that, "ex ente non fit ens!" And so the circle is completed and Parmenides's problem once more clamors for solution.

6 DeRaeymaeker. 315.
8 DeRaeymaeker. 316.
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