

The Mind's Focus as an Efficient Cause: Francisco Suárez's Re-interpretation of the Traditional Understanding of the Idea

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Abstract. Central to early modern Scholastic theories of artistic production (whether the artist is God or a human being) is the term “idea,” which, in the traditional account, signifies “that which is being imitated in the process of artistic production.” Francisco Suárez rejects this account, on the grounds that, by making the idea depend on being imitated, it obviously leaves the idea without any (efficient) causal role. On his alternative account, the exemplary cause governing the production process is not an “objective representation” or preconception, but the act of thought itself, the “formal representation” by which the mind is directly referred to the thing outside. This does not imply that this thing has to pre-exist the act of thought, because for Suárez this act is a kind of focusing (*mentis acies*), or, more metaphorically, “a light which goes before [*praeit*], showing the way, the mode and the terminus of the operation.”

I.

Introduction. The productivity of the intellect has recently been a favourite subject of historians of medieval and early modern philosophy, and the results are most interesting.¹ We learn, for example, that for Theodoric of Freiberg, “to distinguish is to bring forth” (*distinguere est efficere*), so that the intellect is constitutive for natural things insofar as they are distinctively conceivable,² while for Nicolas of Cusa and Marsilio Ficino, the relation between mind and object is “no longer essentially receptive but productive,” and the “reflexive self-referentiality” of the mind tends to turn any presentation

¹Aspects of this article are also treated in my book *Gedanken als Wirkursachen. Francisco Suárez zur geistigen Hervorbringung* (Amsterdam/New York: B. R. Grüner, 2010). An early version of this article was presented at the conference “Suárez's Metaphysics: *Disputationes Metaphysicae* in Their Historical and Systematic Context” which took place in October 2008 in Prague.

²Cf. Burkhard Mojsisch, “The Theory of Intellectual Construction in Theodoric of Freiberg,” *Bochumer Philosophisches Jahrbuch für Antike und Mittelalter* 2 (1997): 69–79.

which the mind makes of other things into some kind of self-representation.³ According to these philosophers, all cognition is in a sense productive (even if artistic production is often singled out as the occasion to make that claim).

The topic of this paper is somewhat different. Suárez and the other authors whose views are analyzed here hold cognition theories in which real things outside the mind are the measure of the mind's understanding. But in such a context it becomes all the more interesting to explain how something which is originally in the mind can manage to leave the mind and become manifest in the material world. This process is called artistic production, and we will consider it as a kind of mirror for Suárez's well-studied views on the cognition process (sharply distinguishing the process of cognition from the process of artistic production). For both processes, it is decisive how the relation between the act of thought and the thing outside is described, but the direction of the relation differs in the two processes.

The center of early modern Scholastic theories of artistic production is the term "idea," which is not a synonym of "concept," but, in traditional accounts, signifies "that which is being imitated in the process of artistic production." This traditional position corresponds to concept theories that propose an intermediary between *actus intelligendi* and *res extra*. This intermediary is the *verbum mentis* for the Thomists and the *res in esse obiectivo* for the Scotists.

For God, who is the most perfect artist, the imitation model does not imply that there is a gap between thought and reality. But, if the human artist is the focus of the examination, one realizes that on the imitation model the thought itself is quite powerless to serve as a cause of the artistic product, because it depends on the artist's intention to create something similar to it. Thus, we must not be surprised if Suárez drops the imitation model, because in his 25th Metaphysical Disputation, the human artist (not God) is really the focal point of the discussion on the *idea* or the *causa exemplaris* (as it is called in early modern Scholasticism).

Instead of taking the starting point and the endpoint of the production process as the basis of his analysis, and positing a similarity between these termini which nobody can really prove (as the starting point is some invisible intramental plan), Suárez considers the process as a whole. His question is: What is it that guides this process? If it is not a preconception (i.e., an "objective representation") of the endpoint of the process, it can only be the act of thought itself, the "formal representation" by which the mind is directly referred to the thing outside. This does not imply that this outside thing has to exist already, because Suárez understands the act of thought as a kind of focus (*mentis acies*)—a kind

³Cf. Thomas Leinkauf, "Kunst als *proprium humanitatis*. Zum philosophischen Verständnis künstlerischer Gestaltung in der Renaissance," in *Erzählende Vernunft* (Festschrift für Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann), ed. Günter Frank, Anja Hallacker, and Sebastian Lalla (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 221–36, at 225.

of mental framework which the artist creates within himself and which will, during the production, translate into a certain awareness or preference for specific colours, shapes, etc. More metaphorically, Suárez calls the act of thought “a light which goes before, showing the way, the mode and the terminus of the operation” (*lumen, quod praeit ostendens viam et modum, ac terminum operationis*).⁴

So for Suárez, the idea is not the *verbum mentis* or the *res in esse obiectivo*, but the act of thought itself. Any objective representation, or preconception, is dispensable, even if some “imperfect artists” might make use of such a preconception to create and to sustain a certain focus of the mind.

The uniqueness of Suárez's theory of ideas derives in great part from the uniqueness of his epistemology. So by examining Suárez's position on ideas, I hope to illuminate also his position on concepts—a field where he is often considered to be ambiguous—falsely so in my view.⁵ Our analysis will show that, like Ockham in his *intellectio* theory, Suárez rejects any kind of objective representation in the case of a perfect cognition.

II.

Traditional Theories of Artistic Production. Before Suárez, there were two basic models for art production. We will argue that there is a logical progression from the first to the second and ultimately to Suárez's model.

Thomas Aquinas, who gives a very clear description of the first basic model, defines the idea as a “form which is imitated by an artist with the intention to create something which is similar to this idea.”⁶ For Thomas, it does not matter here whether the idea is in the mind of the artist or whether it is outside.⁷ This equivalence of inner and outer exemplar to which Thomas subscribes goes back to Seneca.⁸

⁴Francisco Suárez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae* (= *DM*), d. 25, s. 2, n. 28; *Opera omnia* 25/26, ed. Carolus Berton (Paris: Ludovicus Vivès, 1861).

⁵Marco Forlivesi observes that the treatment of ideas in the *Cursus philosophicus* of Mastri and Belluto is one of the best discussions of the distinction between formal and objective concepts. Cf. Marco Forlivesi, “La distinction entre concept formel et concept objectif: Suárez, Pasqualigo, Mastri,” *Les Études philosophiques* 60 (2002): 3–30, at 19.

⁶Thomas de Aquino, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* q. 3 (“De ideis”), a. 1 (in corpore), in *Opera omnia*, iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita, cura et studio Fratrum praedicatorum, v. 22 (Rome: Ed. di San Tommaso, 1975), 100a: “Haec ergo videtur esse ratio ideae, quod idea sit forma quam aliquid imitatur ex intentione agentis qui praedeterminat sibi finem.”

⁷*Ibid.*: “Dicimus enim formam artis in artifice esse exemplar vel ideam artificiatum, et similiter etiam formam quae est extra artificem.”

⁸Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, trans. Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979 [first published 1917]), 448 [Epist. 65, § 7]: “Nihil autem ad rem pertinet, utrum foris habeat exemplar, ad quod referat oculos, an intus, quod ibi ipse concepit et posuit.”

Wolfgang Hübener has suggested that those philosophers who advocate this equivalence seem to locate the inventive arts on the side of the inner exemplar and the mimetic arts on the side of the outer exemplar.⁹ This means that in the case of a portrait, the painter or sculptor always uses the face of the person portrayed as an exemplar, whereas an architect, for example, normally does not imitate a house which already exists, but creates one in his mind which he then builds. (Of course, if the divine ideas are the main focus, the outer exemplar plays a very small role—except in Ockham's theory.)

This general theory of inner and outer exemplars was in place for a long time. It was abandoned only in early modern Scholasticism where authors, at least from Fonseca on, considered only the inner exemplar necessary for art production. It is the artist's conception which determines the production; anything which is outside the mind might help the artist produce the inner conception, but it is not relevant to the causality of art. Thus, Fonseca says:

Whence Aristotle and the other philosophers do not call these external exemplars the ideas of artists. These external exemplars are not necessary for acting, notwithstanding that they assist in forming or retaining the internal exemplars.¹⁰

So, at this stage, the outer exemplar is an exemplar only in a remote sense, and all the arts, be they inventive or mimetic, work in the same way, that is, the artist uses his preconception in order to produce something which is similar to what he conceives.

The main question then concerning ideas in Second Scholasticism was whether the exemplar is the formal concept (the act of conceiving, or rather the *verbum* closely tied to this act) or the objective concept (the thing conceived in objective being). The former position is held by the Thomists, the latter by the Scotists.

III.

Suárez's Criticisms of the Preconception Model. Let us now turn to Suárez. Suárez focuses his theory of artistic production neither on the thing outside nor on the preconception of the artist, but on the next step in the production process, that is, the way a thought is being translated or translates itself into an outer effect, or more specifically, a piece of art.

⁹Cf. Wolfgang Hübener, "Idea extra artificem," in *Festschrift für Otto von Simson*, ed. L. Grisebach and K. Renger (Frankfurt: Propyläen, 1977), 34.

¹⁰Pedro da Fonseca, *Commentaria in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, lib. 7, cap. 8, q. 2, s. 4; v. 3 (Cologne: Lazarus Zetznerus, 1615, reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1964), 287a A–B: "Unde Aristoteles, et caeteri Philosophi non vocant ideas artificum ipsa exemplaria externa, quae non sunt ad agendum necessaria, tametsi iuvant ad formanda, aut retinenda interna."

In order to understand how Suárez gets to this level, one has to analyze his criticism of the traditional understanding of an idea as a preconception. Basically, this criticism consists in two main points. First, Suárez argues that the artist's preconception lacks proper causality, which for Suárez is always efficient causality. This point of criticism is based on the analysis that the preconception model, like the model of the artist imitating something which is outside the mind, is built upon imitation and therefore depends on the artist's will to imitate. But this would transform exemplar causality into some kind of final causality, which is not sufficient.

Suárez starts by rejecting the claim that the outer exemplar has a proper causality:

That the artist may intend to assimilate the effect to an extrinsic object is only an extrinsic relation (*habitudo*) or denomination which arises from the artist's act of will, and it does not add to the effect an essential dependence on another object, which (*sc.* dependence) then would pertain to the class of formal cause. Actually, it would pertain to no class of cause at all—unless perhaps, as I said, such a representation or similitude is understood as an end.¹¹

He goes on to deny that artistic production generally requires an extrinsic object. All the artist needs is a proper conception of the form which he is about to produce:

For the artist *per se* only intends to give a form to his effect. But for this, he only needs a proper conception of that form. That this form is similar to another, extrinsic one is accidental to the causality of art as such, and therefore also to exemplar causality.¹²

Then, Suárez generalizes this argument to make it valid also for preconceptions:

And therefore, I do not share the view which some hold, namely that exemplar causality consists in the passive imitation of the thing produced to its exemplar. For this passive imitation belongs to final causality properly.¹³

¹¹*DM* 25, s. 2, n. 10: "quod artifex intendat assimilare effectum extrinseco objecto, solum est habitudo vel denominatio extrinseca proveniens ab actu voluntatis ejus, et non addit effectui essentialem dependentiam ab alio objecto, quae ad genus causae formalis pertinet; imo neque ad ullum genus causae per se, nisi fortasse, ut dixi, talis repraesentatio vel similitudo sub ratione finis intendatur."

¹²*Ibid.*: "Artifex enim per se solum intendit talem formam inducere in suum effectum, ad quod per se solum indiget propria conceptione illius formae; quod vero haec forma assimiletur alteri extrinsecae, per accidens est ad causalitatem artis ut sic; ergo et ad causalitatem exemplaris."

¹³*DM* 25, s. 2, n. 3: "Et ideo mihi non placet quod quidam aiunt, causalitatem exemplaris consistere in passiva imitatione rei factae ad instar illius; nam haec passiva imitatio fini proprie convenit."

According to Suárez, the idea that the intention to produce something similar is essential to the exemplar stems from a confusion of *exemplar* and *fnis*:

About the final cause, one might be uncertain [whether it is the cause under which the exemplar cause can be subsumed]; because it is said that it is the task of the exemplar that an effect is being brought about which is similar to the exemplar, or imitates the exemplar; but this is a property of the end (*fnis*). . . . In which discourse there seems to be a confusion of exemplar and end.¹⁴

The point here is that the intramental content cannot be the cause of its own expression. It does not include the rules, let alone the power, for its own implementation. Rather, it depends on the artist's will to produce something that is similar to the content. So the idea is not the intramental content.

The second point of criticism which Suárez brings against the preconception model is an epistemological one. He claims that the preconception is completely superfluous, as is clear in the case of the perfect artist, who has no such thing:

That mode of preconception is not *per se* in the artist as such, but only in the imperfect artist, or in the artist who cognizes imperfectly.¹⁵

The reason for Suárez's view lies in the theory of concepts which he proposes. In the case of perfect cognition, no intramental content is produced. First, he rejects the Scotist way of allowing for such a content:

The objective concept (*conceptus obiectivus*), if it is completely proper and adequate to the thing which is being brought about, is not distinguished from the thing itself.¹⁶

Then, he rejects the Thomist theory of the *verbum mentis* as a *medium in quo*:

Many say that the *verbum mentis* is a quality which is distinct from the act of cognition and which serves the cognition as the nearest object, in which the thing represented is being cognized. . . . This opinion of the *verbum mentis* is false.¹⁷

¹⁴*DM* 25, s. 2, n. 2: "De causa vero finali posset aliquis dubitare; nam munus exemplaris esse dicitur, ut ad illius similitudinem vel imitationem effectus fiat; sed haec est habitudo finis. . . . In quo discursu plane videtur exemplar cum fine confundere."

¹⁵*DM* 25, s. 1, n. 18: "ille modus praeconciendi non est per se in artifice ut sic, sed in artifice imperfecto, aut imperfecte cognoscente."

¹⁶*DM* 25, s. 1, n. 29: "conceptus obiectivus, si sit omnino proprius et adaequatus rei faciendae, non distinguitur ab ipsamet re."

¹⁷*DM* 25, s. 1, n. 37: "multi censent, verbum mentis esse qualitatem distinctam ab actu cognoscendi, deservientem cognitioni, ut objectum proximum, in quo res representata cognoscitur

But the *exemplar* is in the field of operation what the *verbum* is in the field of speculation.¹⁸ Therefore, the exemplar cannot be an objective representation of the thing which is going to be produced:

Neither can this mode of objective representation be thought to be in that quality (*sc.* the act of thought) through a formal similitude, because that quality has neither a formal nor a real conformity with the external object; nor can it be thought how in that quality the external object shall be directly cognized, as the quality itself is not cognized at all.¹⁹

IV.

Suárez's Theory of Ideas. For Suárez, the formal concept is immediately terminated by the thing outside, and refers the intellect to the thing outside. This is what Suárez calls *repraesentatio intellectualis* or *formalis*. There is no objective representation (*repraesentatio obiectiva*). Now the exemplar is exactly this formal concept:

I hold that the formal concept is immediately terminated by the thing itself which it represents and that it does not represent the thing other than by referring the object to the intellect—as an intellectual form which constitutes the intellect itself *in actu ultimo*; and the same formal concept is called *verbum mentis*, insofar as it is the internal terminus of the mind's intellectual action or conception; and it is called *exemplar* when it is about an artificial thing or a thing which is being brought about (*de re artificiosa seu operabili*).²⁰

Interestingly, in his *De anima* commentary, Suárez even uses art production to argue for the identity of *verbum* and mental act. We experience that the image of the work (the *verbum mentis* or *exemplar*) evolves only in the process of conceiving the work as it is outside. Therefore, the image (in the sense of

. . . illa sententia de verbo mentis falsa est.”

¹⁸Ibid.: “quod in speculabilibus est verbum, creditur esse exemplar in operabilibus.”

¹⁹Ibid.: “neque ille modus repraesentationis obiectivae per formalem similitudinem intelligi potest in illa qualitate, quae nec formalem, nec realem convenientiam habet cum externo objecto, nec etiam intelligi potest quomodo in illa directe cognoscatur externum objectum, illa nullo modo cognita.”

²⁰Ibid.: “suppono conceptum formalem immediate terminari ad rem ipsam quam repraesentat, ipsumque non aliter repraesentare quam referendo intellectui objectum ipsum, ut intellectualem formam constituentem in actu ultimo ipsum intellectum; et eundem conceptum formalem dici verbum mentis, quatenus est internus terminus intellectualis actionis seu conceptionis ejus; exemplar vero dici, quando est de re artificiosa seu operabili.”

repraesentatio intellectualis/formalis) is the act. There is no other image (in the sense of *repraesentatio obiectiva*) in the intellect.²¹

We see here that Suárez is using the words “repraesentatio” and “imago” in a twofold sense. The Thomist *verbum*, traditionally, is an objective representation or an objective image, but for Suárez, this is not true. He supports only a formal representation or a formal image—two expressions which both signify the act of referring the intellect to a thing outside:

My answer is: The locution that the exemplar is that to which the effect becomes similar and which the artist imitates in his operation, can be easily verified of the formal concept, because these locutions must not be taken to refer to a formal similitude, which is natural and entitative, but rather to a similitude according to an intellectual repraesentation, which the formal concept has about the thing which it expresses. And it is this imitation or conformity which the artist intends in his operation.²²

Another example for this use of “formalis imago” / “formalis repraesentatio” is the following passage, which is part of the argument that *species impressa* and *conceptus formalis* are not identical:

The *species impressa* is neither a formal image, nor does it in any way represent formally.²³

Suárez moves on to give three definitions of the idea, all expressing the core characteristic.

1. The idea is the practical formal concept of the thing which is being brought about.²⁴
2. The idea is the act by which the artist represents to himself the thing

²¹Francisco Suárez, *Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in libros Aristotelis “De Anima”*, d. 5, q. 5, n. 23; ed. S. Castellote, vol. 2 (Madrid: Editorial Labor, 1981), 396, lines 406–11: “illud idolum [sc. verbum mentis] est ipse actus quo res concipitur, et per illud artifex operatur tamquam per conceptum proprium, neque oportet fingere aliud idolum ab artifice formatum. Unde experimur quod idolum non formatur, nisi dum res cognoscitur; signum ergo est illud consistere in formali conceptione.” Cf. Id., *De anima*, lib. 3, cap. 5, n. 17; *Opera omnia* 3 (Paris: Vivès, 1856), 634 sq.

²²*DM* 25, s. 1, n. 41: “respondetur, illam locutionem, exemplar esse, ad cuius similitudinem fit effectus, et quod artifex imitatur operando, facile verificari de ipso conceptu formali, quia non sunt illae locutiones intelligendae de similitudine formali, quae naturalis est, seu entitativa, sed de similitudine secundum repraesentationem intellectualem, quam habet conceptus formalis, circa rem quam exprimit, et hanc imitationem vel conformitatem intendit artifex in sua operatione.”

²³*DM* 6, s. 6, n. 7: “species impressa neque est formalis imago, neque ullo modo formaliter repraesentat.”

²⁴*DM* 25, s. 1, n. 27: “[Exemplar est] conceptus ipse formalis practicus rei efficiendae.”

which he is about to produce, with this production having the function of giving the representation its terminus, or object. (At first, the representation is empty; the act is not complete. It acquires completeness only when the piece of art is being completed.)²⁵

3. The idea is that which the artist forms in his intellect while he is operating or producing.²⁶

What Suárez is highlighting here in all his definitions is the simultaneousness of the act of thought on the one hand and the “emergence” of the piece of art on the other hand. There is no intermediary between the act of thought and the thing outside, no preconception.

Suárez's description of art production allows for some kind of process—the thinking is a process. The concept formation takes at least as long as the production of the piece of art. One naturally wonders how this process is controlled. What Suárez describes might sound like a completely chaotic process in which the artist is surprised by his own deeds, and in which (in the context of theology) God seems to become a spectator rather than the creator. But this is not the case, because for Suárez, there is always a reflection on the act of thought, and from this reflection results the possibility of controlling the underlying act.

In the case of God, Suárez says that such reflection is necessary not for the sake of causality but for the sake of the infinite perfection of God's knowledge. God's knowledge cannot be terminated at an object without intrinsically knowing itself “with respect to its entire *ratio* and representation”:

In God, this quasi-reflexion is always necessary, not primarily because of the causality but because of the infinite perfection of this knowledge, which cannot be terminated by another object without intrinsically intuiting itself with respect to its entire *ratio* and representation.²⁷

The human artist, too, requires some kind of reflection on his idea or cognition. But Suárez rejects the claim that this has to be a formal reflection, a reflexive act. Instead, he introduces the notion of virtual reflection. Any act of thought, Suárez argues, knows itself by virtual reflection—not as a *quod*, but as a *quo*. That is, it knows about its tendency towards an object:

²⁵*DM* 25, s. 1, n. 41: “[Exemplar est] illud quo artifex sibi repraesentat rem quam effecturus est, . . . ut illius repraesentationem expleat.”

²⁶*DM* 25, s. 1, n. 43: “exemplar semper est illud quod ipsum operans in suomet intellectu format.”

²⁷*DM* 25, s. 1, n. 36: “in Deo enim semper est necessaria illa quasi reflexio, non tam ob causalitatem quam ob infinitam perfectionem illius scientiae, quae non potest ita terminari ad aliquod objectum, quin intrinsece seipsam sub omni ratione et repraesentatione intueatur.”

So it is not necessary that the exemplar be cognized as *obiectum quod*, but it suffices that it is cognized implicitly and by way of its tendency towards the object (*per modum tendentiae ad obiectum*). This is achieved by a merely implicit and virtual reflexion which every act of the mind includes in itself and which is the reason that the act is said to know itself as *quo*, even it is not known as *quod*.²⁸

So the decision to have a certain focus—as we may call it—is not tied to the decision to have a certain content. It is possible to set the focus in a definite way without setting it to a certain content—and without the necessity for this content to exist already. There is a possible tension between the inner alignment and the outer reality. Nevertheless, no being of reason is produced, because this only happens if one conceives something which is not as something that is (*per modum entis*).²⁹ But the mere focussing will not include the assumption of something being at the place to which one's focus tends. There is some similarity here to the case of God, who alone is his own primary object of knowledge, whereas creatures are known to him as secondary objects, through the knowledge he has of himself.

“Focus” or “focus of the mind” is my translation of *mentis acies*—an expression which Suárez uses as a synonym for *formalis conceptio* when defining the objective concept as “the object and the matter upon which the formal concept is being directed and to which the mind's focus directly tends” (*obiectum et materia circa quam versatur formalis conceptio, et ad quam mentis acies directe tendit*).³⁰ What he wants to express here, in my opinion, is exactly this kind of direct controllability we have described above: the act of thought, due to the virtual reflection, can be controlled separately—whereas in the traditional model, the act and its intramental term are related to each other in a more direct way.

V.

Suárez and Ockham. I will now briefly discuss the influences on Suárez's theory of ideas, and I will then review Suárez's claim that his theory is supported by Scotus's notion of *productio in esse intelligibili*.

Of course, if one looks at the epistemological side of Suárez's theory, one is reminded of Ockham's late *intellectio* theory of cognition. The late Ockham, like Suárez, does not recognize any intermediary between the act of thought and the

²⁸DM25, s. 1, n. 39: “Tunc ergo non est necesse ut exemplar cognoscatur tanquam obiectum quod, sed satis est ut implicite et per modum tendentiae ad obiectum aliquo modo cognoscatur, ea tantum implicita et virtuali reflexione, quam quilibet actus mentis in se includit, ratione cuius dicitur cognosci seipso ut quo, quamvis non cognoscatur ut quod.”

²⁹DM 54, s. 2, n. 15.

³⁰DM 2, s. 1, n. 1.

thing outside. But in contrast to Suárez, he considers not the act of thought, but the thing outside to be the idea: "The creature itself is the idea."³¹ For Ockham, this does not contradict the fact the ideas are thought: "The ideas are that which is thought by God, other from himself."³² Ockham's theory of ideas seems to a very high degree tailored to the case of God, so that it does not really fit the human artist. Strangely enough, Ockham uses just the human artist to prove his claim that something can be the idea of itself:

One house can be called the idea and exemplar of another house, because the artist can conceive the first house and produce a similar house. And in the same way, if that house as a particular thing had been preconceived (*praecognita*) by the artist who then had produced that same house, then that house would have been the idea and exemplar of itself.³³

So on the one hand, the idea is a preconception, and on the other hand, it is the thing which is produced outside. This might be conceivable for God, especially as Ockham, generally, stresses God's simplicity.³⁴ But, as shown by the discussion concerning Suárez's theory, for the human artist a preconception requires some intermediary between the thing and the act of thought. At least, all the proponents of a preconception model grant the existence of such an intermediary, and Suárez, who rejects preconception, does not do so. And even for God, Ockham understands "preconception" in a very metaphorical way, as indicated by the following statement concerning the eternity of the ideas: "The ideas are the creatures themselves which come forth and perish."³⁵

This short review of Ockham shows that we can also regard Suárez's theory of ideas as an application of the nominalistic theory of conception to the field

³¹Guillelmus de Ockham, *Ordinatio* I (= *Ord. I*), d. 35, a. 3; *Opera theologica* 4: *Scriptum in librum primum Sententiarum. Ordinatio, Distinctiones XIX–XLVIII*, ed. Girardus I. Etzkorn and Franciscus E. Kelley (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute, 1979) (= *OT* 4), 488 sq.: "ipsa creatura est idea."

³²Ibid.; *OT* 4, 493 sq.: "ideae sunt ipsamet cognita a Deo, alia ab eo."

³³Ibid.; *OT* 4, 490: "Sicut una domus potest vere dici idea et exemplar alterius domus, quia scilicet aliquis artifex illam domum cognoscendo, potest per hoc aliam consimilem fabricare. Et eodem modo, si ipsamet domus in particulari esset ab artifice praecognita et virtute illius posset domum illam eandem producere, ipsa domus esset exemplar et idea sui ipsius, ad quam artifex aspiciens posset ipsamet producere in esse reali."

³⁴This has been shown, for example, by Heiko Oberman, who quotes the following passage: "Similiter non videtur bene dictum quod Deus velit prius finem quam illud quod est ad finem, quia non est ibi talis prioritas actuum, nec sunt ibi talia instantia qualia iste [*sc.* Scotus] ponit" (Guillelmus de Ockham, *Ord. I*, d. 41 q. 1; *OT* 4, 604); Cf. Heiko Augustinus Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), 213 n. 74.

³⁵Guillelmus de Ockham, *Ord. I*, d. 35 q. 5; *OT* 4, 505: "ideae sunt ipsamet creaturae quae oriuntur et intereunt."

of artistic production. Suárez sees from Ockham's theory that it does not work to take the thing outside as the idea. So the only possibility is to take the idea to be the act of thought—and that is what Suárez is doing.

VI.

Suárez and Scotus. Suárez tries to convince his reader that Scotus is on his side. He says that the expression or formation of the things through the divine cognition is exactly what Scotus calls *feri in esse cognito* (or *productio in esse intelligibili*). The low probability of this claim can be derived from the fact that those Scotists who examine Suárez's position, such as Mastrius or Poncius, reject it very decidedly.

But still, there are eminent researchers who think that ideas, for Scotus, have only a relational being.³⁶ This would actually bring Scotus very close to Suárez, since for Suárez, in the case of a perfect cognition, the "being thought" of the thing conceived is just an extrinsic denomination of that thing. I will argue, against these interpreters, that for Scotus the thing *in esse intelligibili* is not just a relational being arising from the relation between God's act of thought and the creature. Rather, the thing *in esse intelligibili* is a foundation of such a relation, which is produced before God's act of thought can refer to it.

The misunderstanding about the *esse intelligibile* stems from the statue example which Scotus gives when explaining the nature of the *esse deminutum*. The position which the statue example shall clarify is that the thing *in esse intelligibili* is not only a relational being, but also a foundation of a relation:

The *productio* (*sc.* in esse intelligibili) is in a different sphere from the *esse simpliciter*—and what is produced is not only a relation, but also a foundation. This foundation has no *esse essentiae vel existentiae*, but only an *esse deminutum*. The *esse deminutum* is an *esse secundum quid* which is also possessed by absolute beings. It is that aspect of an absolute being which enables it to become part of a relation of reason.³⁷

³⁶Cf. Dominik Perler, *Repräsentation bei Descartes* (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1996), 101–5; Id., *Theorien der Intentionalität im Mittelalter* (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 2004), 217–30; Tobias Hoffmann, *Creatura intellecta. Die Ideen und Possibilia bei Duns Scotus mit Ausblick auf Franz von Mayronis, Poncius und Mastrius* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters—Neue Folge, Bd. 60) (Münster: Aschendorff, 2002), 142.

³⁷Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio I* (= *Ord. I*), dist. 36, q. un., n. 44; *Opera omnia* 6: *Ordinatio, Liber primus, a Distinctione vigesima sexta ad quadragesimam octavam* / iussu et auctoritate Augustini Sépinski; studio et cura Commissionis Scotisticae ad fidem codicum edita, praeside Carolo Balić (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1963) (= ed. Vat. 6), 288: "productio ista (*sc.* productio in esse intelligibili) est in esse alterius rationis ab omni esse simpliciter—et non est relationis tantum, sed et fundamenti; non quidem secundum esse essentiae vel existentiae, sed secundum esse deminutum (quod est 'esse verum'), quod esse est esse secundum quid etiam

This relation of reason between God's act of thought and the thing in *esse deminutum* is then illustrated by the statue example. Scotus says that the statue of Caesar can represent Caesar even after he has been annihilated. For this, the statue alone is not enough. Something of Caesar has to remain—it is his *esse deminutum*. This *esse deminutum* is not diminished in the sense that it is the *esse* of some partial Caesar. It is diminished rather because it is not Caesar's *esse essentiae et existentiae*, but only his *esse secundum quid*. In accordance with this *esse secundum quid* there can be a relation to the statue.³⁸

It is true that the *esse secundum quid* of the thing depends on the act of thought, or more specifically on the *verum esse secundum quid* of this act.³⁹ But in the sequence of creation which Scotus proposes, we are here still in the second instance (*in secundo instanti*), where the only relation is the one from things to the intellect:

In the second instance he (*sc.* God) produces the stone *in esse intelligibili* and cognizes the stone, so that there is a relation in the cognized stone to the divine act of thought, but not yet a relation in the divine act of thought to the stone. Rather, the divine act of thought is just the terminus of the relation which goes from the stone insofar as it is thought (*lapidis ut intellecti*) to the divine act of thought.⁴⁰

Only in the third instance does the divine intellect enter into a relation to the things *in esse intelligibili*:

entis absoluti, quod tamen 'ens absolutum' secundum istud esse deminutum concomitatur rationis."

³⁸Ibid., n. 45; ed. Vat. VI, 288 sq.: "Exemplum huius: si Caesar esset annihilatus et tamen esset statua Caesaris, Caesar esset representatus per statuum. Istud 'esse representatum' est alterius rationis ab omni esse simpliciter (sive essentiae sive existentiae), nec est esse deminutum Caesaris, quasi aliquid Caesaris habeat hoc esse et aliquid non,—sicut Aethiops est deminute albus, quia aliquid eius est vere album et aliquid non. Sed totius Caesaris, 'esse eius a causa' est verum esse essen-[289]tiaae et existentiae, et eius totius—secundum tale esse suum—est istud esse secundum quid, et in ipso, secundum istud esse secundum quid, potest esse aliqua relatio ad statuum."

³⁹Ibid.; ed. Vat. VI, 289: "Et licet posset poni calumnia in exemplo, non ita potest in proposito dici de intellectione et obiecto, quin obiectum totum et secundum totale esse suum, 'deminutum esse' habeat in actu. Et si velis quaerere aliquod esse verum huius obiecti ut sic, nullo est quaerere nisi 'secundum quid', nisi quod istud 'esse secundum quid' reducitur ad aliquod esse simpliciter, quod est esse ipsius intellectionis; sed istud 'esse simpliciter' non est formaliter esse eius quod dicitur 'esse secundum quid', sed est eius terminative vel principiative, ita quod ad istud 'verum esse secundum quid' reducitur sic quod sine isto vero esse istius non esset illud 'esse secundum quid' illius." There is a *distinctio formalis* between the object according to its *esse secundum quid* and the act of thought. Cf. Hoffmann (cited above, n. 36), 143.

⁴⁰Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord.* I, dist. 35, q. un., n. 32; ed. Vat. 6, 258: "in secundo instanti producit lapidem in esse intelligibili et intelligit lapidem, ita quod ibi est relatio in lapide intellecto ad intellectionem divinam, sed nulla adhuc in intellectione divina ad lapidem, sed intellectio divina terminat relationem 'lapidis ut intellecti' ad ipsam." Cf. Hoffmann (cited above, n. 36), 96, n. 154.

It is only in the third instance that the divine intellect can compare its act of thought to anything intelligible to which we can compare [this divine act of thought], and then, by comparing itself to the stone in the intellect, it can cause in itself a relation of reason.⁴¹

The mistake is to think that the *esse deminutum* of Caesar is in the statue, or that the *esse deminutum* of the things *in esse intelligibili* is in the divine act of thought. That would really bring Scotus very close to Suárez. But, with Scotus's emphasis here that the thing *in esse intelligibile* is not only a relational being, but also a foundation which is produced before the divine act of thought refers to it, the distance between the two thinkers seems quite large.

This distance is highlighted by the fact that early modern Scotists consider the idea to be the objective concept, not the formal concept, as Suárez does. (It seems safe to assume that Scotists are closer to Scotus than Suárez is; this is especially true of Mastri, whose faithfulness to Scotus is remarked by Marco Forlivesi and other Mastri scholars.)

Just how helpful the authors of Second Scholasticism can be, when it comes to analyzing the views of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Scholastics, is illustrated by a passage, cited by Mastri, where Scotus uses the statue example in a manner different from that just explained. In this passage, Scotus says that even the statue which represents Caesar—or, correspondingly, the divine act of thought containing an *imago Caesaris*—can be regarded as the idea of Caesar.⁴² This, Mastri says, appears to support the position that the idea is the *conceptus formalis*⁴³—which, in turn, appears to entail that either our interpretation of Scotus (on which the idea is a *conceptus objectivus*, not a *conceptus formalis*) is incorrect or Scotus's views on this point are inconsistent. Fortunately, neither of these alternatives need be granted. As Mastri explains, in this passage Scotus takes the term “idea” in an unusual sense—as meaning the cause of the external production of the effect (*ratio producendi effectum ad extra*) or the formal principle

⁴¹Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord.* I, dist. 35, q. un., n. 32; ed. Vat. 6, 258: “in tertio instanti, forte, intellectus divinus potest comparare suam intellectionem ad quodcumque intelligibile ad quod nos possumus comparare, et tunc comparando se ad lapidem intellectu, potest causare in se relationem rationis.”

⁴²Cf. Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ord.* 4, d. 1, q. 1 Q et R;—quoted by Mastrius/Bellutus, *In Phys.*, d. 7, q. 7 *De causa Ideali, seu exemplari*, n. 147, in: *Cursus philosophiae ad mentem Scoti*, t. 2 (Venice 1678), 243 b.

⁴³Cf. Bartholomaeus Mastrius and Bonaventura Bellutus, *Cursus philosophiae ad mentem Scoti*, t. 2 (Venice: Pezzana, 1678), 243b (In Phys., d. 7, q. 7 “De causa ideali, seu exemplari,” n. 147): “Tum quia quamvis lapis Caesarem repraesentans, vel speculum, in quo alicuius effigies relucet, secundum esse formale proprium, non sint exemplar, et figura Caesaris, et effigiati, tamen ut continent illas figuras, possunt dici exemplar illorum, ergo a simili etsi conceptus formalis secundum proprium esse non sit idea, quia tamen est expressa species rei, imaginemque eius continens poterit dici idea.”

of eliciting (the effect) (*principium formale elicitionis*). This, according to Mastri, is not what Scotus usually means by “idea”—but, we might add, this is exactly what Suárez means by the word.

VII.

Conclusion 1: Suárez's Equivocal Use of “Being Objectively in the Intellect.” By way of conclusion, I want to add two examples of how the foregoing results could be applied to bring greater clarity to other fields.

It is important to see that Suárez makes equivocal use of the phrase “being objectively in the intellect.” A thing which is conceived in a proper and adequate concept is said to be objectively in the intellect, because through its *species impressa*, it causes in the intellect an assimilation or representation:

Apart from this (*sc.* being in reason by way of inherence) something is said to be in reason by way of an object. For as the cognition comes into being through some assimilation, and through a quasi-attraction of the known thing to the knower, the known thing is said to be in the knower not only by way of inherence (*inhaesive*) through its image, but also objectively according to itself.⁴⁴

In this case, “being objectively in the intellect” is only an extrinsic denomination of the thing—which has to be a real being, because only a real being has its own *species impressa*. But there are also beings of reason (*entia rationis*) which “do not possess any nobler or more real mode of being”⁴⁵—which means that there is nothing to which an extrinsic denomination could be added. And here we are at the root of the equivocation, because “being objectively in the intellect,” considered as an extrinsic denomination, is completely opposite to “being objectively in the intellect,” considered as a mode of being. At least this is what an examination of Disputation 25 shows, where Suárez emphasizes that in the case of an adequate and perfect cognition, no special mode of being occurs.

These two ways of “being objectively in the intellect” are mixed up by, for example, Norman J. Wells.⁴⁶ When Suárez says, “being only objectively in the

⁴⁴*DM* 54, s. 1, n. 5: “Alio ergo modo dicitur aliquid esse in ratione per modum objecti, nam quia cognitio fit per quamdam assimilationem et quasi attractionem rei cognitae ad cognoscentem, dicitur res cognita esse in cognoscente, non solum inhaesive per suam imaginem, sed etiam objective secundum seipsam.” For the causal role of the thing's *species impressa* cf. *DM* 6, s. 6, n. 7: “species impressa neque est formalis imago, neque ullo modo formaliter repraesentat, sed effective, quatenus est veluti semen seu instrumentum objecti ad efficiendam formalem repraesentationem intentionalem, quae fit per conceptum mentis.”

⁴⁵*DM* 54, s. 1, n. 6.

⁴⁶Cf. especially Norman J. Wells, “Esse Cognitum and Suárez Revisited,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 67 (1993): 339–48; Id., “Descartes' Idea and Its Sources,” *American*

intellect is not being, but being thought or being fashioned” (*esse obiective tantum in ratione non est esse, sed est cogitari aut fingi*),⁴⁷ he does this explicitly to argue that there is no common concept of being for real beings and beings of reason. In other words: This “being only objectively in the intellect” is specific to beings of reason. Wells, in contrast, claims that all things—real beings as well as beings of reason—are in the intellect in this way. This claim is part of Wells’s strategy to find in Suárez a unified description of how real beings and impossible beings are the objects of our thought. But Suárez’s text refuses to be read in this way, which Wells himself senses, since in translating the words “*esse obiective tantum in ratione non est esse, sed est cogitari aut fingi*” he leaves out the word “only” (for *tantum*).⁴⁸ After all, for Suárez, impossible beings are the most extreme case of beings of reason. Most of Disputation 54 is dedicated to the normal case, which consists of negations, privations, and relations of reason.

VIII.

Conclusion 2: Suárez No Essentialist. How finely balanced Suárez’s theory of ideas is, becomes apparent when one considers its theological implications. According to Jacob Schmutz, theologians have always been confronted with the choice between mentalism and realism. Mentalism is the view that God’s idea precedes the creatures, and realism is the view that God’s idea has to agree with the creatures or their essences⁴⁹—but Suárez, in his treatise *De Deo uno*, sees between the two theses only a controversy about words. As a result, Schmutz accuses Suárez of “limping” and of being not as bold as Vasquez.⁵⁰

I prefer to take Suárez’s theory as a proof that there is no strict alternative between mentalism and realism and that Suárez is actually choosing the middle way. He is well prepared for this choice, because in his theory of ideas, there is no intermediary between the divine act of thought and the things outside which

Catholic Philosophical Quarterly 67 (1993): 513–35; Jorge J. E. Gracia, “Suárez’s Metaphysics: A Step in the Direction of Mentalism?” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991): 287–310; “Suárez and Metaphysical Mentalism: The Last Visit,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 67 (1993): 349–54.

⁴⁷*DM* 54, s. 1, n. 10.

⁴⁸Wells, “*Esse Cognitum*” (cited above, n. 46), 347.

⁴⁹Cf. especially Jacob Schmutz, “Un Dieu indifférent. La crise de la science divine durant la scolastique moderne,” in *Le Contemplateur et les idées. Modèles de la science divine du néoplatonisme au XVIIIe siècle*, éd. Olivier Boulnois, Jacob Schmutz, and Jean-Luc Solère (Paris: Vrin [Bibliothèque d’Histoire de la Philosophie], 2002), 185–221; J. Schmutz, “Science divine et métaphysique chez Francisco Suárez,” in *Francisco Suárez: “Das ist der Mann.” Libro Homenaje al Profesor Salvador Castellote Cubells* (Valencia: Facultad de Teología San Vicente Ferrer [Analecta Valentina 50], 2004), 347–59.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 364.

God causes and conceives.⁵¹ Therefore, the answer to the question whether God's act of thought is the measure or that which is measured becomes just a matter of perspective. God's knowledge, insofar as it is practical and therefore the cause of things, is the measure for its objects. But God's knowledge, insofar as it is speculative, as is his knowledge concerning the future or the pure essences, is measured by its objects:

But if this knowledge is being compared to the created things insofar as it is a practical knowledge and the cause of these things insofar as they exist, it is clearly not measured by them, rather, it is their measure; and it does not have its truth from them, rather, they are true insofar as they are similar to the divine ideas, as we constantly say. But if we consider the divine knowledge only insofar as it is the simple understanding (*simplex intelligentia*) of the creatures according to their essential or possible being or insofar as it is the intuitive vision of [their] existence, then it seems that one can concede without inconvenience that the truth of this knowledge consists in conformity to those objects; because according to this precise consideration, it [*sc.* God's knowledge] is not the cause of those objects, but a mere intuition and quasi-speculation, and therefore, according to this consideration, the thing is not of such an essence because it is cognized by God as such, but rather conversely, it is cognized as such because it is of such an essence, and it could not otherwise be cognized truthfully. And similarly, the Saints and eminent theologians say that the thing is not in the future because God thinks of it as being in the future, rather, God thinks of it as being in the future because it is in the future.⁵²

Nevertheless, the two propositions, namely that (a) God's knowledge qua speculative is measured by its objects, while (b) his knowledge qua practical is the measure of creatures, do not entail any priority-conflict over which of the

⁵¹Such an intermediary provides God with the ability to be always ahead of the things (in terms of knowledge). First, he creates some content on the intermediary level, and then he creates the things according to this content.

⁵²*DM* 8, s. 5, n. 5: "Si vero scientia illa comparetur ad res creatas quatenus est scientia practica et causa illarum prout existentes sunt, sic constat non mensurari ab illis, sed esse potius mensuram earum et non habere ab eis veritatem, sed potius illas esse veras quatenus conformes sunt divinis ideis, ut statim dicemus. Considerando vero divinam scientiam, solum prout est simplex intelligentia creaturarum secundum esse essentiae seu possibile vel quatenus est intuitiva visio existentiae, sic videtur sine inconveniente posse concedi etiam illius scientiae veritatem consistere in conformitate ad illa obiecta; nam secundum hanc praecisam considerationem non est causa talium obiectorum, sed mera intuitio et quasi speculatio, et ideo secundum eandem considerationem non ideo res est talis essentiae quia talis a Deo cognoscitur, sed e converso, ideo talis cognoscitur quia talis essentiae est, neque aliter poterat vere cognosci. Et similiter dicunt sancti et graves theologi non ideo rem esse futuram quia Deus illam futuram intuetur, sed quia futura est ideo Deum illam intueri."

two—God’s knowledge or creatures—determines the other. What prevents such a conflict is the infinity of God’s knowledge, which implies a quasi-reflexion upon the formal concept by which he grasps creatures. This formal concept is just a formal representation, and not an objective representation. So God does not conceive the images of creatures (which would again make him lose his priority), but he sees (or determines) his own tendency towards creatures, and this suffices for him to know them. In this sense, the primary object of God’s knowledge is God himself, and the things outside are only secondary objects:

To speak properly and carefully, we must not say that the divine science is under these considerations measured by these objects. First of all, because God has knowledge of these objects in such a way that he does not receive it from them, but he has it out of himself, and he has all his rectitude and infallibility from inside and by virtue of his essential perfection. Second of all, because this knowledge attains these secondary objects in such a way that it has no true real relation (*relatio seu habitudo*) to these objects. Rather, God attains all these [objects] in an eminent way through understanding himself.⁵³

To summarize: In Suárez’s theory of ideas, there is a unique balance between knowledge and its objects. There is nothing in the middle—no intermediary—which could be determined only by the thing or by God. In this situation, the virtual reflection (in the case of the human artist) or the *quasi reflexio* (in the case of God) become the foundations for establishing a priority for the knowledge side, in that they allow the knower to determine his formal concept or act of representation.

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⁵³*DM* 8, s. 5, n. 6: “Ut tamen proprie et caste loquamur, dicere non debemus divinam scientiam sub his considerationibus mensurari ab his obiectis, tum quia Deus ita habet scientiam horum obiectorum ut ab eis illam non accipiat, sed ex se illam habeat, et ab intrinseco et ex vi suae essentialis perfectionis habeat omnem rectitudinem et infallibilitatem eius. Tum etiam quia illa scientia ita attingit haec secundaria obiecta ut nullam veram relationem seu habitudinem realem habeat ad illa, sed eminentiori modo illa omnia attingit Deus per hoc quod seipsum comprehendit.”