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## WAS SUÁREZ ESSENTIALIST?

### 1. The origin of problem

In the history of the realistic philosophy Étienne Gilson was the first who said that Francis Suárez was, if not simply an essentialist, then at least he paved the way to essentialism. He writes in his work *L'être et l'essence*:<sup>1</sup> "One may wonder [...] whether essentializing of being of which we were witnesses did not provoke a disintegration of the first philosophy and, through the separation, of the natural theology, and the science of Being as Being from the first philosophy based on the abstract notion of being as being did not dissociate the ontology pure from any contact with the being actually existing. Francis Suárez himself did not go so far, but he made his way in this direction and he has certainly influenced greatly the intellectual movement which inevitably conducted to that ultimate dissociation." The Gilson's views concern the problem of the possibility or the impossibility of metaphysics. The problem of the validity of metaphysics became very important, since the classical metaphysical system has been questioned by Kant in his *Critic of the pure reason*. In order to solve this problem, Gilson took into consideration the concept of being as the object of metaphysics. He analyzed the views of many philosophers, intending to prove which of

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<sup>1</sup> Paris 1948, p. 141: "On peut se demander, notamment, si l'essentialisation de l'être à laquelle nous venons d'assister, n'a pas eu pour effet de provoquer la rupture de la philosophie première et, en dissociant la théologie naturelle, science de l'Être en tant qu'Être, d'une philosophie première axée sur la notion abstraite de l'être en tant qu'être, de libérer une Ontologie pure de toute compromission avec l'être actuellement existant. François Suárez n'est pas lui-même allé jusque-là, mais il s'est engagé dans cette voie, et son influence est certainement pour beaucoup dans le mouvement qui devait conduire à cette dissociation finale." Gilson published his book also in English, under the title: *Being and Some Philosophers*, Toronto 1949 and 1962. But the text in these different editions is not identical.

them has worked out a genuine metaphysics. In his opinion such a metaphysics must take into account what is the most fundamental and primary in the reality. It must be the existence or inexistence of which depends the existence or inexistence of all the rest. Gilson affirms that in the history of metaphysics St. Thomas Aquinas was the only who has solved correctly the problem of metaphysics, because he stressed the fundamental element of being: its actual existence.<sup>2</sup> Whereas it was Suárez who was outstanding among philosophers neglecting existence. More, because of his great impact on the future development of the western philosophy, he was, in Gilson's opinion, the most dangerous philosopher.

This Gilson's view on Suárez' would-be essentialism has been shared by M. Gogacz, who wrote: "The essentialism leads, for the most part, to idealism. Suárez' metaphysics misguides essentialism."<sup>3</sup> M. A. Krapiec OP expressed his opinion not so radically. He wrote in his *Metaphysics*: "The philosophical systems which treated the concept of metaphysical being as the most undetermined, extensive and predicating of all essences (Parmenides, Plato, Avicenna, Duns Scot, Suárez, Wolff), formulated the tautological, barren principles of identity. [...] These formulations were logically correct indeed, but they supposed erroneously that their subject and predicate have materially and formally the same meaning and present the same aspect of reality, i.e. being conceived as essence."<sup>4</sup>

There are also some defenders of Suárez. Adam Aduszkiewicz has expressed his positive opinion on Suárez in his studies: *Od scholastyki do ontologii* [From scholastic to ontology]. He presented the philosophical output of Suárez against the background of his scientific activity. Doctor Eximius was active in the time when philosophy began to recover from the crisis caused by Ockham and the Ockhamists. They thought that the metaphysics is nothing but an intellectual contrivance. So they acknowledged many metaphysical concepts as superfluous (the famous Ockham's razor). Suárez, while agreeing with Ockham and the other nominalists that things exist as individuals, tried nevertheless to prove that we are able, thanks to our intellectual activity, to grasp the things in their essential aspects. Aduszkiewicz writes: "Suárez aims in his arguments at the conclusion that the inner coherency of the true sentences allows us to be sure that their objective

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<sup>2</sup> É. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, op. cit., p. 2 ff.

<sup>3</sup> M. Gogacz, *Istnieć i poznawać* [To exist and to come to know], Warszawa 1969, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> M. A. Krapiec OP, *Metafizyka. Zarys teorii bytu* [Metaphysics. Introduction to the Theory of Being], Opera omnia, vol. 7, Lublin 1995, p. 96.

contents present, in their proper domain, the eternal truths. This certainty renders well founded belief that it is possible to know discursively things in themselves. Therefore inclusion of Suárez among the metaphysical essentialists seems overhasty. The reason of this fact was the supposition that Suárez, like the former metaphysicians, in his teaching presents the conception of an ontic structure which elucidates the existence of the real being. Whereas Suárez leaves the task of elucidation of coming to be of the concrete things to the lower disciplines.”<sup>5</sup> Suárez in the first place – writes Aduszkiewicz – will prove, that it is possible to elaborate “such intellectual presentation of a real thing which can be said to grasp the necessary and immutable aspects of being something real. It is clear that such a presentation becomes a definition describing the essence of a thing. It is nothing surprising that the existence has been described by Suárez as an additional predicate complementing the structure worked out by the intellect, the structure thanks to which the thing itself becomes accessible to the human intellect.”<sup>6</sup> We can add to the A. Aduszkiewicz’s opinion a comment that the prevailing trend in the fifteen century philosophy likes somewhere to the nowadays style of postmodern philosophizing. Both now and then call in question the eternal truths and stress the role of the individuals as well as of free will decisions. One tries to found ethics on the consent of many, not on the human nature.

Also Marius Schneider OFM stands for Suárez in his voluminous paper: *Der angebliche philosophische Essentialismus des Suarez* [The would-be Philosophical Essentialism of Suárez].<sup>7</sup> He argues the Gilson’s point of view on Suárez as unjust. I will sum up the Schneider’s opinion later in my paper.

## 2. The notion of essentialism

Before we answer the question, whether Suárez is really essentialist, we must know, what essentialism is like. In order to define the notion of essentialism, I refer to the formulas presented in the PEF [General Encyclopedia of Philosophy], vol. 3, where the entry “Essentialism” has been elaborated by Henry Kieres:<sup>8</sup> “Essentialism – the view which proclaims the cognitive

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<sup>5</sup> A. Aduszkiewicz, *Od scholastyki do ontologii. Dwa studia* [From Scholastic to Ontology. Two studies], Warszawa 1995, p. 56.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> M. Schneider, *Der angebliche philosophische Essentialismus des Suárez*, “Wissenschaft und Weisheit” 24 (1961) p. 40–68.

<sup>8</sup> *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii* [General Encyclopaedia of Philosophy], vol. 3, Lublin 2002, p. 220–222.

(and therefore also) ontological predominance of essence of being (*essentia*) over its existence (*esse, existentia*). Essentialism deliberately disregards the existence when it tries to explain the reality. It reduces it to qualification void of content of an individual being, qualification which contributes nothing essential to its content and – consequently – to the notion of being, because the essence being realized in a concrete or grasped *in abstracto* is the same essence. Or it maintains that the existence of a concrete being is derivative of an essence – preexisting in the intellect of God or objectively – and it is a result of the necessary (non contradictory) arrangements of traits proper to all beings which constitute the so called modes of existence (*modi existentiae*). Essentialism reduces being to its form – essence, and turns the philosophy to aprioristic similar to an art of speculation.” The essentialism was reborn toward the end of the twentieth century as the neoessentialism. Andrew Wawrzyniak so describes this trend: “Neoessentialist notion of being consists, broadly speaking, on giving content to the act of being which is limited by its essence, so that both existential as well as formal actuality is contained in the act of being.”<sup>9</sup>

To the most influential exponents of neoessentialism belongs the German Jesuit J. B. Lotz. He essays to combine the thomistic and suarezian ontology. Doing so he discerns two kinds of composition in the beings: the mental, with a base in a thing, of *quidditas* and *existentia* and the real one of *essentia* and *esse*. When we ask if a being subsists, we mind its existence. This takes place on the pre-metaphysical level. Whereas the composition: *essentia* – *esse* occurs in the domain of the metaphysical cognizance. In the connection with this “relatively to the distinction between the *existentia* and *esse*, we grasp also the distinction between *quidditas* and *essentia*. *Quidditas* is a determined content which can get an existence (*existentia*) and consists in a restricted grade of a content void potency limiting the *esse* which is a perfection and is somehow a matter for the form of *esse*.”<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Suárez’ standpoint

Suárez has presented his standpoint the most distinctly in the Disputation I, *On the nature of metaphysics*, in the section 1, *The object of meta-*

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<sup>9</sup> A. Wawrzyniak, *Nowsze tendencje esencjalizujące w neoscholastyce* [New essentialistic trends in the neoscholastic], “Roczniki Filozoficzne” KUL, 14 (1966) fasc. 1, p. 98.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr J. B. Lotz, *Ontologia*, Barcelona 1962, p. 205–207.

*physics*.<sup>11</sup> Suárez criticizes there different opinions which propose, one after other, six possible objects of metaphysics: mental beings, accidental beings, God, immaterial beings, being as divided into ten categories and substance as such. Last of all he proposes his own opinion, namely that the adequate object of metaphysics is being as being. It contains both God and other immaterial substances as well as material substances and accidents. Instead, the mental and accidental beings are excluded from it (n. 26). Then Suárez analyses in the *Disputatio II* the notion of being as such. So he asks in the section 1: Has being as such in our mind unique formal notion common to all beings? Before he answers this question, he precises the sense of the words: “formal” and “objective” (n. 1). The formal notion got its name because “it is the definitive form of mind or because it formally presents to the mind a thing known, or at least because it is in fact an internal and formal term of mental conception, where through it differs, so to say, from the objective notion. The objective notion means a thing or a content which is properly and immediately known, i.e. is presented by the formal notion. For ex. when we conceive a human being, the notion in our mind is named formal concept, while a human being known and presented by this action is named objective concept.” Whereas there are so many formal objects, as many are the human beings, knowing the objective concept of being as being is unique, though it is relatively to the single beings, ambiguous (n. 9).

In the section 5 he continues to analyze the notion of being as such in its objective aspect. This section is the most important and pivotal for the solving our problem. Suárez begins his analyze by the classic scholastic distinction between *ens* as participle and *ens* as noun (n. 3).<sup>12</sup> Being [*ens*] then as participle (derived from the verb *sum* – I am) designs the act of existence as done, i.e. something actually existing. Whereas being as noun designs formally the essence of thing which it already possesses or can possess. It designs therefore the existence (*esse*) itself, not as actually done, but as possible to exist. The being in this second sense is divided into ten categories and is extratemporal.<sup>13</sup> Being as participle “is something actually existing, i. e. having a very act of existence or an actual reality different from a potential one which is actually nothing. [...] Therefore being can have one

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<sup>11</sup> F. Suárez, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, in: F. Suárez, *Opera omnia*, vol. 25, Paris 1866, p. 2 ff.

<sup>12</sup> He owes this distinction to Fonseca (4 *Metaph.* ch. 2, qu. 3, section 2), what he himself acknowledges.

<sup>13</sup> In order to confirm this opinion Suárez quotes a text of St. Thomas Aquinas from *Quodlibetum* 2, ch. 3, that “the name ‘being’ done to a thing to which such a being (*esse*) belongs, designs so the essence of a thing and is divided into 10 categories.”

formal and objective notion common to all beings actually existing, because they are similar to each other and converge in the actual existing (*esse*) and being (*entitate*)” (n. 4). “Next, if a being is conceived as noun, then its sense consists in having the real essence, i.e. not fictitious or imaginary, but true and apt for real existing” (n. 5). The phrase: “apt for the real existing” can suggest that the essence itself, separated from the existence is also object of metaphysics. In this sense in fact the essentialist thomism evolved. One defined in it being as what exists or can exist. But question is whether a possibility alone, i. e. non contradiction, suffices to treat something as a being, Gilson was right in accusing Suárez of essentialism. Therefore just now we stay in front of the most important problem in our debate to solve: What is a real essence like? This question includes two other questions: What is essence like? (point 6) What is real essence? (point 7) We are interested most of all in the second question. Suárez says at first what the real essence is not. Essence cannot be what is contradictory and what is only a mind’s contrivance. Positively Suárez defines the real essence as a principle or root of the real actions or effects in the domain of efficient as well as of formal and material causes. In other words, the real essence is which can be created by God and constituted in existence (*esse*) of actual being. To sum up, “we can say only that the real essence is which itself is apt to being or to real existing.”<sup>14</sup> The criterion of this aptitude is the presence of essence in an existing being. Let us stress the aspect of essence’s efficiency. We will see later that the ideas alone, even in the God’s intellect, are not recognized by Suárez as real.

The next problem which arises here is the question, whether these two grasps of being, i.e. as participle and as noun, can be somehow put together. Suárez answers the question in the point 9. “Being, in this double aspect, does not mean a double sense of being sharing some common sense or common notion, but means the concept of being more or less distinct. Since the being as noun (*vi nominis*) designs what has a real essence, leaving out of account through abstraction overlooking the actual existence, but without denying or excluding it. The being as participle means the real being itself which have a real essence together with the actual existence. This way it designs the concept of being as more restraint. [...] In the first place “being” seems to design a thing having the real and actual existence (*esse*) as a participle of the verb “be” (*essendi*) and then it is translated in order to more precisely design what has a real essence.”<sup>15</sup> From this follows that being

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<sup>14</sup> F. Suárez, *Disputationes*, Disp. II, *De essentia* entis, sect. 4, n. 7, p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, n. 9, p. 90.

as participle, according to Suárez, has priority over being as noun. Which proves again that our Philosopher is well-disposed towards the existentialism. Still more important is the point 11, where Suárez excludes from the domain of being as noun, being in potency. Though being as noun disregards the existence, it does not deny it. On the contrary, the being in potency does deny the existence. Therefore one cannot say that God is a being in potency. But one cannot say the same even about the creatures which exist. From this follows that the Suárez' metaphysics does not concern what can come to be, but has yet not come, for evidently it does not exist. On the contrary, the metaphysics can deal with the essence of things when their existence is not denied but only overlooked or postponed. It is allowed also to deal with the essences of what does not yet exist, but what will exist in the future, because it is not a time what is here the most important, but only the state of the reality under investigation.

#### 4. Some objections raised by É. Gilson

Marius Schneider proposes to consider and evaluate three Gilson's opinions concerning the metaphysics of Suárez:

1. General evaluation of Suárez' philosophy,
2. Interpretation of Suárezian concept of being,
3. Gilson's opinion on Suárez view concerning the distinction between essence and existence.

Ad 1. The Gilson's opinion on Suárez is negative, though he handles his critic in velvet gloves. First he praises him saying that he was "a sober, well-ordered and uncommonly clear mind."<sup>16</sup> "It seems that Suárez was the first who went in for the whole metaphysics and not for one of its parts in this objective and systematic way. More, doing it he stated precisely the philosophical terminology received from the 'School' with such a strictness and perspicuity in so high degree which we do not find by his predecessors."<sup>17</sup> On the other hand Gilson finds the *Disputationes* to be unhandy philosophical intermezzo in the Suárez' theological activity.<sup>18</sup> This is not quite true.

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<sup>16</sup> É. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, op. cit., p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> "Suarez semble avoir été le premier à traiter la métaphysique et non plus seulement telle ou telle de ses parties, sous cette forme objective et systématique, mais il s'est trouvé conduit, en le faisant, à préciser le vocabulaire philosophique reçu dans l'École, avec une rigueur et une clarté qui ne se rencontrent pas au même degré chez ses prédécesseurs." *L'être et l'essence*, p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> É. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, op. cit., p. 96.

Gilson himself remarks that “in the Preface to his Metaphysical Debate Suárez modestly introduces himself as a theologian who, to facilitate his own work, has felt it advisable to lay down once and for all the philosophical principles of which he makes use in his theological teaching. In fact Suárez enjoys such a knowledge of medieval philosophy as to put to shame many modern historians of medieval thought..”<sup>19</sup> Gilson omitted the significant phrase: “what he in the domain, several years since, as young teacher, worked out and taught.”<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding of the words of praise, Gilson blames Suárez for that he did not exploit rightly his knowledge of medieval authors.<sup>21</sup> He tries to prove this negative opinion in the next points of his criticisms.

Ad 2. Gilson starts to evaluate the Suárezian concept of being with a presupposition that all attempts of philosophizing without recognizing the existence as distinct act, failed.<sup>22</sup> Gilson strives to prove that the concept of being used by Suárez does not correspond with the facts. He identifies being as noun (*ens ut nomen*) with the possible essence and, consequently, he ascribes to Suárez identifying of the possible being with the actual one.<sup>23</sup> M. Schneider noticed that Gilson has changed in his arguments the sense of authentic text of Suárez. Doctor Eximius namely does not writes that the being as noun designs the real essence, but that it designs what possesses a real essence.<sup>24</sup> The concept of being is indeed abstract, but the intellectual knowing of the being’s quiddity is for Suárez conscious grasping of the nature of an existing being. This knowing grasps what in reality is common or similar.<sup>25</sup>

Gilson once more accuses Suárez of essentialism when he interprets the distinction between the being as participle and as noun. He writes: “What Suárez means by the last expression is that actually existing being represents a restricted area of being in general which, as has just been said, includes both possible and actual being. This is a statement which necessarily implies that both possible and actual being are the same being and, furthermore, that actual being is a particular case of being at large. Exactly:

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<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p. 99.

<sup>20</sup> F. Suárez, *Disputationes, Proëmium*.

<sup>21</sup> É. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> Cfr. Ibidem, p. 202.

<sup>23</sup> Cfr. É. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>24</sup> M. Schneider, *Der angebliche philosophische Essentialismus des Suarez*, op. cit., p. 32. Cfr. F Suárez, *Disputationes*, Disp. II, sect. 4, n. 5 and 9.

<sup>25</sup> F. Suárez, *Disputationes*, Disp. II, sect. 2, n. 16.

actual being is being in general, taken in one of the cases when it actually exists.”<sup>26</sup> The French text is more emphatic. The last sentence of it reads: “Shortly, being is essence and the whole reality of essence consists in its aptitude to exist.” I understand by this that Gilson refers to *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, II, sect. 4, n. 8 (because this is hinted in the footnote), where Suárez considers a difficulty (*dubitatio*) concerning the common concept for being as participle and as noun, but does not present there his own solution. Whereas he proposes his own opinion in the point 11 where he states that “being as noun does not design being in potency when it is contrary to actual being privatively or mere negatively, but designs only being as it expresses a real essence, what is quite other case. Because, whereas the privative abstraction differs from the negative one, being as noun, though it privatively expresses being possessing a real essence, yet it does not add a negation, i.e. a statement on not having actual existence, while such a negation or lack of it is done in a potential being. Therefore one should not identify, as does Gilson, being purely possible with being as noun, and in virtue of this impute to Suárez an opinion which is not his own, but of his opponent.

Gilson commits another one misinterpretation of the Suárez’ mind, when he identifies *essentia realis* with *possible*. Suárez’ view is, as we have seen above, that real essence is identical with this aspect of existing being which is left after mental disregard of existence. But disregard is not the same as negation. From the field of the real essences Doctor Eximius excludes chimerical contrivances and plays of our imagination, because they never exist.<sup>27</sup> Suárez gives also name “thing” (*res*) or “something” (*aliquid*) to what has a real essence. Whereas he identifies with nothing so called possible beings and even ideas in the intellect of God. And nothing is not able to be an object of metaphysics.<sup>28</sup> These misinterpretation discarded, we can ascertain that the Gilson’s arguments which should prove essentialism of Suárez, are far from convincing. Now we have to consider the third Gilson’s objection concerning the status of the distinction between essence and existence.

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<sup>26</sup> É. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, op. cit. p. 98.

<sup>27</sup> Cfr F. Suárez, *Disputationes*, Disp. II, sect. 4, n. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Cfr M. Schneider, *Der angebliche philosophische Essentialismus des Suárez*, op. cit., p. 55–57. F. Suárez, *Disputationes*, Disp. II, sect. 4, n. 9 and 11; *Ibidem* Disp. XXXI, sect. 3, n. 1.

## 5. Essentialism and the problem of distinction between essence and existence

M. Gogacz considers as a most grievous error of Suárezian metaphysics, the negation of the real distinction between essence and existence in the beings. In his opinion, Suárez “looks at the reality as at the sum of different, contingent beings, created by the first Being just as individuals concrete not subsistent, particular beings. Because of such their ontic status, according to Suárez, the composition of act and potency is not necessary to them. It must be in them no factor which would make the act imperfect. They are just from the beginning singular and constitute the whole contingent being. Suárez evidently identifies the existence with being.”<sup>29</sup>

Paradoxically, this interpretation of the Suárez’ metaphysics seems to prove the thesis that he is rather existentialist than essentialist, contrary to what Gogacz wrote a few lines above. Using the style like this, M. Gogacz wrote further that Suárez “rejecting the theories which state the inner composition of being, he deprives being of the ontic factor differentiating beings, and treating them as contingent acts of existing, he bases his affirmation already on the factors inaccessible to metaphysics.”<sup>30</sup> Also this sentence would suggest, in my opinion, that Suárez is an existentialist, because normally under the phrase “factor differentiating beings” one understands essence and Suárez should, as M. Gogacz suggests, deprive the being of it. We can presume that saying about “factors inaccessible to metaphysics” Gogacz minds God’s act of creation. But one speaks about this act just in the theodicy which is the most metaphysical philosophical discipline. This debate leads us to the conclusion that Suárez in fact treats the essence and existence on a par, though he accords to the essence more place in his metaphysics than to the existence, because one can say more about essence than about existence which allows only to be affirmed.

It is difficult to prove the real composition of the contingent beings of essence and existence as of two distinct metaphysical factors. M. A. Krąpiec treats this matter on the 14 pages (353–367) of his *Metaphysics*. The argument from the plurality of beings is the most convincing. The argument proceeds in the following terms: Existence itself does not differentiate beings. They owe their variety to their essences, to their quiddities. Because the pluralism is something real, the factors which explain it, must be also

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<sup>29</sup> M. Gogacz, *Istnieć i poznawać* [To be and to come to know], Warszawa 1969, p. 80. Cf. also the footnote 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 81.

real. Notwithstanding this, Suárez admits only the mental distinction between essence and existence with a foundation in a thing. This foundation consists in a fact that the contingent beings have been created. Without act of God's will the essences in God's mind were left undone. The act of creation gives existence to these essences. The commentators (as M. Gogacz and M. A. Krapiec) are unanimous in saying that the explication from outside is insufficient. We should agree with them in this matter, I think. After all, it seems that the problem of distinction between essence and existence is not related necessarily to the question of the would-be essentialism of Suárez. Anyway, he acknowledged the real existence of beings possessing their own essences which besides their specific elements, proper to each of them, have too the traits common to the other individual things.

Gilson sees in the Suárez' doctrine concerning the distinction between essence and existence a confirmation of his own interpretation of Suárez' philosophy. He is persuaded that *actualis essentia*, according to Suárez, is identical with the eternally actual possible essence. It became existing through the act of a cause. Without this, it was only potential (*possibilis*).<sup>31</sup> Contrarily to this, Suárez affirms that after separating existence from essence which is offered to a creature through some efficiency, the essence in itself is nothing.<sup>32</sup> Let us ask why Suárez rejects just the real distinction between essence and existence? He does it for fear to make them independent realities which secondarily would be combined together in a whole. Suárez this way comments the opinion rejecting the real distinction: "One compares the actual essence which is called *in actu exercito* with the actual essence that exists. Thus this sentence affirms that existence and essence, taken as abstracting and omitting i.e. as in potency, differs from the actual essence as nothing from something. I take this statement, so explained, as quite true. In short, it occurs so, because no thing can be intrinsically and formally constituted in its essence of real and actual being through something different of it. For if two things differ as being from being, each of them proves to be a being as differing from each other and consequently, not through that something formal and intrinsic."<sup>33</sup>

"Suárez rejects the real distinction, because he understood well the doctrine of St. Thomas in this respect. A real distinction would mean that the elements distinct of each other exist independently. If then actual essence and its existence stood against each other as real potency and act, essence

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. É. Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. F. Suárez, *Disputationes*, Disp. XXXI, sect. 2, n. 5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, sect. 1, n. 13.

and existence as distinct of each other would be something real, i.e. existing.”<sup>34</sup> By introducing a real distinction, form, essence and substance would become in themselves *entia*. Trying to avoid this problem through the naming these elements *ut quo* would be unsuccessful. For if form or act had to stay as *ut quo*, they must have existence from which they would not differ.<sup>35</sup> If any distinction is to be allowed, it should be a metaphysical and not physical one. Suárez describes the mental distinction with a real foundation this way: “Thirdly I affirm that essence and existence in the creatures differ either as being in act and in potency or, if both are in act, they differ only mentally with a foundation in a thing. And this distinction suffices to affirm absolutely that actual existence does not belong to the essence of creature. In order to understand this distinction and the phrases in which it is used, we should suppose (what is quite sure) that no being, apart from God, does possess by itself its own entity, if it is a true entity at all. I add this, to avoid the ambiguity and to not confuse it with an entity in potency which indeed is no entity but nothing, and in the case of a thing possible to be created, it expresses only non contradiction, i.e. logical possibility, because no entity, apart from God, exists by itself and because this *by itself* implies that it excludes possessing anything through something other, what means that it expresses a nature which possesses the actual entity without undergoing to an action of something else, i.e. it is an actual entity.”<sup>36</sup>

“Further, what follows from it, is that our intellect which can abstract from what in a thing is not separated, can also grasp the creatures without thinking of their actual existence, because since they exist contingently, it is not contradictory to grasp their natures without relating them to any efficiency and, consequently to actual existence. Since they are apt to be abstracted, one disregards also actual entity of an essence, either because, regarded actual entity, one cannot omit its existence, what we have proved above. This our way of thinking implies that when we disregard the actual entity in a thing, we consider something as intrinsic and necessary and as a primary constitutive factor of a thing which is an object of such a concept. And it is just what we name an essence of a thing, because without it, it is impossible to grasp it. Besides, one says that the predicates which are derived from it belong to it, in general, necessarily and essentially, because without them it is impossible neither to be nor to be grasped, though they

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<sup>34</sup> M. Schneider, *Der angebliche philosophische Essentialismus des Suarez*, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 65; F. Suárez, *Disputationes*, Disp. XXXI, sect. 5, n. 8.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, Disp. XXXI, sect. 6, n. 13.

belong to it not always, but only when a thing exists. By the way, for the contrary reason, we deny that actual existence itself. i.e. actual entity would belong to the essence, because it can be disregarded, in the concept above mentioned, and in fact it must not belong to a creature, if it is an object of such a concept.”<sup>37</sup> The actually existing beings are nothing else but actualized essences. They need not to have any other existence, for they have been already realized. Notwithstanding this, they remain still as contingent as contingent is their existence, with which they are identified.<sup>38</sup> The actual essence of a creature stands in the same relation to its *possibilis essentia*, as a being to nothing: *ens ad non ens simpliciter*. As a created essence it can exert the same functions which Suárez ascribes to act of existence. An act of existence really distinct from this created actual essence of a creature is not only needless, but also impossible.<sup>39</sup>

## 6. Recapitulation

Considered these texts of Suárez, we come to the conclusion that there is no reason, according to him, to take the existing creatures in the essentialist way. What more, just the negation of the real distinction between essence and existence, i.e. their identification, makes that there is in his teaching no place for essentialism. Though we concede that Gilson, well intentioned, looked for a right metaphysics after the period of its crisis, caused by the abuse of the Cartesian criteria of the genuine science, clearness and distinctiveness, which led to the skepticism of Locke and Hume as well as to the idealism of Kant and his successors, we must say that blaming Suárez by the French thomist for a would-be essentialism was overhasty. What Gilson would wish, namely to focus our attention on the sensitive impressions concerning that what concretely exists, we find it just in the English empiricism and partly by Kant. What Locke and Hume have done rejecting the notion of substance as well as what perpetrated Kant putting it in the categories of the reason, was quite anti-essentialist. One can hardly suppose that Gilson would be pleased with this turn. On the contrary, the defense of the essences of things or substances corresponded with the spirit of St. Thomas Aquinas.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, n. 15.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ibidem, sect. 4, n. 5.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ibidem, sect. 5, n. 12.

We could see in our analyses that Doctor Eximius distinguished very well really existing beings from the mental contrivances and fictions, collections of beings and accidental complexes, and that he took into account in his metaphysics only really existing beings, though the existence stood not always in the centre of his attention, so that he could disregard it, but not to deny it. If somebody will name such a standpoint essentialism, we can agree that Suárez was essentialist. But since he did not deny existence and only allowed to leave it out of account, we can assert that the most of scholastic philosophers who consider themselves as existentialists are doing the same, because they investigate the essences of things too. Are they also essentialists?

## Summary

The opinion that Francis Suárez SJ was an essentialist appeared for the first time in the Étienne Gilson's book *L'être et l'essence* (Paris 1948) or in *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto 1949). Gilson accuses Suárez to be guilty of the dissent in the modern philosophy, by introducing the essentialist stream in scholastic. Between different philosophers the famous French historian of philosophy essays to find one who created the best metaphysic system. He realized that St. Thomas Aquinas was only one. He opposed to him Suárez as the most dangerous thinker, who spoiled the sane scholastic doctrine. This negative opinion on Suárez has been introduced to Poland by Mieczysław Gogacz, Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec and by the Philosophical School of Lublin. A positive opinion on Suárez' philosophical works has been defended by Adam Aduszkiewicz and Marius Schneider. The author of this paper discusses all the pros and cons, and tries to evaluate different opinions and arrives to conclusion that the Gilson's opinion is unjust. It is too much to say that Suárez would be accused as essentialist.

It is true that the Doctor Eximius stresses the role of essence in a being, as he admits the possibility of making abstraction from the existence in a really existing thing. But to make abstraction of existence it does not mean to deny it. He rejects the mental fictions, sets of beings and accidental units as the object of metaphysics. Gilson' interpretation of Suárez texts seems to be far of true, when he identifies *essentia realis* with *essentia possibilis* and potential being with actual one. Contrary to this Suárez clearly treats the *essentia possibilis* as non being. Gilson's main argument for the essentialism of Suárez is his negation of the real distinction between essence and existence. The author of this paper maintains that not only the art of

distinction is irrelevant to the problem of essentialism, but more, he suggests that the real identification of essence with existence by Suárez rather is in favour of the existentialistic interpretation of his philosophical thought.

So the conclusion is that the Doctor Eximius should not be stigmatized as being harmful to philosophy, but contrary, he should be praised as a respectful thinker who ordered the metaphysics of Aristotle, defended it against the occamist nominalism and clarified the scholastic philosophical terminology.