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Aspects of Intentionality in Two 16th Century Aristotelians

The inheritance of the medieval notion of intentionality, especially as it was presented in Thomas Aquinas, is a complicated story. In what follows, I want to trace out and assess a key component of the discussion of intentionality in two sixteenth century thinkers and then think about some of the consequences of this inheritance. The two thinkers I will focus on emerge from two traditions that are rarely brought together in direct comparison, the later scholasticism that shaped the thought of Francisco Suárez¹ and the return to the text of Aristotle that emerged in the so-called Paduan School of Aristotelianism, exemplified here by Jacopo Zabarella². The common thread that links both thinkers is that they both explicitly reject Thomas's account of intentionality and try to improve on it, although each strikes out on his own from different foundations. In doing so, I think they map out the main approaches that 16th century Aristotelians took to the question of intentionality, whether in the Scholastic or Paduan traditions.

¹ The standard biography of Suárez is R. SCORRAILE, *François Suárez de a Compagnie de Jesus*, 2 vols., Paris 1911. More recent discussions include J.J.E. GRACIA, «Francisco Suárez: The Man in History», *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 55 (1991) 259-66; C. NOREÑA, «Suárez and the Jesuits», *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 55 (1991) 267-86. For overviews of Suárez's influence, see J. IRRARTE, «La proyección sobre Europa de un gran metafísico, o Suárez en la filosofía en los días del Barroco», *Razón y Fe*, número extraordinario (1948) 229-265; J.-F. COURTINE, *Suárez et le système de la métaphysique*, Paris 1991, 405-418; J.P. DOYLE, «Suárez – The Man, His Work and His Influence», in *Francisco Suárez, Disputation LIV*, trans. John P. Doyle, Milwaukee 1995, 1-15; V. SALAS – R. FASTIGGI, «Francisco Suárez, the Man and His Work», in V. SALAS – M. FASTIGGI, ed., *A Companion to Francisco Suárez*, Leiden 2015, 1-28.

² For Zabarella's life and writings, see W.F. EDWARDS, *The Logic of Jacopo Zabarella* (1533-1589), Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University 1960, 1-82; C. LOHR, *Latin Aristotle Commentaries II. Renaissance Authors*, Firenze 1988, 497-503; A. POPPI, *La dottrina della scienza in Giacomo Zabarella*, Saggi e Testi 12, Firenze 1972, 15-24.

To narrow the topic, I shall begin with some basic definitions. Victor Casten has nicely summarized the two questions any theory of intentionality must address³. One question, a more general question, concerns that which makes a mental state intentional, that is, what provides the content of a mental state. The second, and more particular question, concerns that which makes a given mental state have the content it happens to possess. That, of course, is a much more difficult question since there is no good reason to think that there is only one way to answer the question. Most obviously, in many medieval answers to this question we would have to talk about what makes sensation intentional in very different ways from what makes intellection intentional – after all, sensation is an organic operation while intellection is a wholly immaterial one. In this essay, I restrict myself to the first, more general question: what provides the content of a mental state? Of course, Aristotelians in the 16th century did not discuss the issue in exactly these terms. Instead, they framed the question in terms of efficient causality. What cause or set of causes is sufficient to produce an act of cognition having intentional content? Since the answer to this question can vary depending on whether we talk about sensory or intellectual cognition, I shall further restrict my remarks to sensation. However, it is worth pointing out that one notable feature that both thinkers considered here bring to the debate is a desire to minimize the dis-analogies between sensory cognition and intellectual cognition, and they try to lay out accounts of sensation that are at least structurally similar to their accounts of intellectual cognition. Restricting myself to sensation permits me to start with a common assumption that both, indeed almost all, 16th century authors share, namely, that sensible species are required for sensory cognition. The divergences in theories follow from the different accounts that can be given of the relationship between the sensible species and sensory cognition.

There are four main answers to this question given in the sixteenth century. One, positing a distinct sensory power, an agent sense, that makes sensible species actually sensible, is outside the scope of this paper. However, it is important to note that most accounts of sensation take that view to be one that must be refuted before moving on to expound a true theory of sensation. The other three views, then, reject the need for an agent sense to render the species sensible. Nonetheless, despite that basic point of agreement, the remaining divergences are quite significant. The first account holds that the sensible form, transmitted to the sense power through the medium of a sensible species is the total efficient cause of the act of sensing. The second view holds that the sensible species is a partial efficient cause of the operation of the sense power, but not a complete one. On this view, the sense power contributes its own

³ V. CASTEN, «Aristotle and the Problem of Intentionality», *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 (1998) 249-298.

proper causality to the complete sensory act. Finally, the third view holds that the sensible species plays no efficient causal role in the sensory act.

Both Suárez and Zabarella took Thomas Aquinas to be the primary exponent of the first view, and so his position is at the center of their accounts, rejecting Thomas's view, the view that denies that there is any contributing efficient causality on the part of the sense power, and proposing alternatives that address issues not found in Aquinas. I will treat Suárez as a representative of the second position, while my example of the third position will be Zabarella. Other representatives could be possible, but Suárez's *Commentary on the De anima* (c. 1573) and Zabarella's *De sensu agente* (published in 1590, posthumously, but representing work from his years as an ordinary professor at Padua) were written within 20 years of each other. Not only are these two thinkers roughly contemporary, however, they also represent two very different strands of sixteenth century thought, one a Jesuit scholastic approach and the other a radically secular approach. Indeed, Zabarella published little even on metaphysics and said nothing about theological topics. Nonetheless, interestingly, they both diagnose the same problem in the Thomistic approach and come up with rather different solutions to that problem.

Both thinkers identify Thomas as committed to the view that the sensible species is the sole provider of intentional content. Of course, that is not the way they state the problem, but that in essence is the view they attribute to him. In short, both hold that Thomas claims that the sensible species received, for example, in the visual power, causes the intentional content of the act of seeing. Thus, what makes a sensory act a sensory act is the reception of some representational image or likeness in the relevant sense power. And *that* is all there is to the story. A couple of representative texts from Thomas are used in support of their interpretation:

- a) It must be said that the sense being affected is its sensation itself⁴.
- b) The cognition of the external sense is perfected through the alteration alone of the sense from a sensible. Hence, through a form that is impressed on it by a sensible, it senses⁵.

Indeed, Thomas goes so far as to say that the reception of the species is sufficient for sensory cognition:

For there is one sort of agent that is sufficient of itself for bringing about its form in the recipient, as fire is sufficient of itself for warming. There is another sort of

⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 17, 2 ad 1: «Dicendum quod sensum affici, est ipsum eius sentire».

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibet* V, Q. 2 ad 2: «Cognitio sensus exterioris perficitur per solam immutationem sensus a sensibili: unde per formam quae sibi a sensibile imprimitur, sentit».

agent that is not sufficient of itself for bringing about its form in the recipient unless another agent comes to assist it [*superveniat*], as the heat of fire is not sufficient for bringing to completion the action of nutrition except through the power of the nutritive soul. From this consideration the power of the nutritive soul is what chiefly acts (*principaliter agens*), while fiery heat [acts only] instrumentally. There is similarly also diversity on the part of the recipient. For there is one kind of recipient that does not work together with an agent at all, as the stone when it is thrown upward or the wood when a bench is made from it. And there is another kind of recipient that does work together with the agent, as the stone when thrown down and the body of a human being when it is made healthy by the art [of medicine]. According to this, things that are outside the human soul are related in a threefold way to the diverse powers of the soul. For things are related to the exterior senses as sufficient agents with which the recipients do not work together, but only receive [their action]. The fact that color through itself cannot move what is seen unless light comes to assist it is not in conflict with what was said, because both color and light are counted as among those things that are outside the soul. The exterior senses receive only from the things by way of being affected without it being the case that they work together in its formation, although already the things formed have a proper operation, which is the judgment of proper objects. But for the imagination the things that are outside the soul are considered as sufficient agents. For the action of the sensible thing does not remain in the sense but penetrates further to the phantasia or imagination. Nevertheless, the imagination is a recipient that works together with an agent, for imagination itself forms for itself likenesses of certain things that it has never perceived through sense from those that it received through sense, by composing and dividing them. For example, we imagine gold mountains that we have never seen from our having seen gold and mountains. But the things are related to the possible intellect as insufficient agent⁶.

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibet* VIII, a. 2, q.1: «Dicendum quod anima humana similitudines rerum quibus cognoscit, accipit a rebus illo modo accipiendi quo patiens accipit ab agente: quod non est intelligendum quasi agens influat in patiens eandem numero speciem quam habet in seipso, sed generat sui similem educendo de potentia in actum. Et per hunc modum dicitur species coloris deferri a corpore colorato ad visum. Sed in agentibus et patientibus distinguendum est. Est enim quoddam agens quod de se sufficiens est ad inducendum formam suam in patiens, sicut ignis de se sufficit ad calefaciendum. Quoddam vero agens est quod non sufficit de se ad inducendum formam suam in patiens, nisi superveniat aliud agens; sicut calor ignis non sufficit ad complendum actionem nutritionis nisi per virtutem animae nutritivae: unde virtus animae nutritivae est principaliter agens, calor vero igneus instrumentaliter. Similiter etiam est diversitas ex parte patientium. Quoddam enim est patiens quod in nullo cooperatur agenti; sicut lapis cum sursum proiicitur, vel lignum cum ex eo fit scamnum. Quoddam vero patiens est quod cooperatur agenti; sicut lapis cum deorsum proiicitur, et corpus hominis cum sanatur per artem. Et secundum hoc, res quae sunt extra animam tripliciter se habent ad diversas animae potentias. Ad sensus enim exteriores se habent sicut agentia sufficientia, quibus patientia non cooperantur, sed recipiunt tantum. Quod autem color per se non possit movere visum nisi lux superveniat, non est contra hoc quod dictum est; quia tam color quam lux, inter ea quae sunt extra animam, computantur. Sensus autem exteriores suscipiunt tantum a rebus per modum patiendi,

Here, then, is the big point of controversy: for Thomas Aquinas, there is little for the external sense power to *do* in the act of sensing other than receive the species.

Such a picture of the act of sensing threatens, however, to contradict a characteristic of cognitive acts that distinguishes them from non-cognitive acts: their immanence. Recall that for Aristotelians activities come in two broad types: transitive and immanent. In transitive activity, the agent causes a change in another reality while immanent actions remain within the agent. All of our thinkers agree that cognitive actions are paradigmatically immanent activities⁷. Indeed, Thomas argues that since the end of every transitive activity is outside the agent, and the end of every immanent activity is within its agent, the sensible species, an image and likeness of a sensible object, is required for playing the role of an end in the sensory act⁸. Both Suárez and Zabarella, though, read Thomas as actually undermining the immanence of the sensory act. The problem is clearest when we consider the long passage above. It in-

sine hoc quod aliquid cooperentur ad sui formationem; quamvis iam formati habeant propriam operationem, quae est iudicium de propriis obiectis. Sed ad imaginationem res quae sunt extra animam, comparantur ut agentia sufficientia. Actio enim rei sensibilis non sistit in sensu, sed ulterius pertingit usque ad phantasiam, sive imaginationem. Tamen imaginatio est patiens quod cooperatur agenti: ipsa enim imaginatio format sibi aliquarum rerum similitudines, quas nunquam sensu percepit, ex his tamen quae sensu recipiuntur, componendo ea et dividendo; sicut imaginamur montes aureos, quos nunquam vidimus, ex hoc quod vidimus aurum et montes. Sed ad intellectum possibilem comparantur res sicut agentia insufficientia. Actio enim ipsarum rerum sensibilem nec etiam in imaginatione sistit; sed phantasmata ulterius movent intellectum possibilem. Non autem ad hoc quod ex seipsis sufficient, cum sint in potentia intelligibilia; intellectus autem non movetur nisi ab intelligibili in actu. Unde oportet quod superveniat actio intellectus agentis, cuius illustratione phantasmata fiunt intelligibilia in actu, sicut illustratione lucis corporalis fiunt colores visibiles actu. Et sic patet quod intellectus agens est principale agens, quod agit rerum similitudines in intellectu possibili. Phantasmata autem quae a rebus exterioribus accipiuntur, sunt quasi agentia instrumentalia: intellectus enim possibilis comparatur ad res quarum notitiam recipit, sicut patiens quod cooperatur agenti: multo enim magis potest intellectus formare quidditatem rei quae non cecidit sub sensu, quam imaginationem».

⁷ *Summa theologiae* I, Q. 54, a. 2. For a discussion of the two types of activity in Thomas and other references to the distinction in Thomas and Aristotle, see the helpful account in J. OWENS, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, Milwaukee 1963, 192-204.

⁸ *Summa theologiae* I, Q. 14, a. 2. The literature on the notion of cognitive species in Thomas is extensive. Helpful orientation can be found in G. PICARD, «Essai sur la connaissance sensible d'après les scolastiques», *Archives de philosophie* 4 (1926) 1-93; G. VAN RIET, «La théorie thomiste de la sensation externe», *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 51 (1953) 374-408; B.J. LONERGAN, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Notre Dame 1967, 128-33, 158-181; A. WILDER, «On the Knowing Species in St. Thomas: their Necessity and Epistemological Innocence», *Angelicum* 68 (1991) 3-32; L. SPRUIT, *Species Intelligibilis: From Perception to Knowledge* Vol. 1: Classical Roots and Medieval Discussions, Leiden 1994, 156-74. Spruit, in chapters 1 and 2, also provides a helpful overview of the development of the notion of a cognitive species.

troduces an important dis-analogy between sense cognition and intellectual cognition. If the sensible species is sufficient for sensory cognition, there is no need for any activity in the sense power to effect such cognition. The lesson is straightforward: the sensible qualities existing in objects are actually sensible in a way that the phantasm in the imagination is not actually intelligible. I shall return to this di-analogy at the end of the paper.

For now, though, I want to turn to a second important dis-analogy Thomas introduces between acts of sensory cognition and acts of intellectual cognition, one that we can call an operational dis-analogy⁹. The second dis-analogy consists in the fact that the intellect produces an «expressed species», that is, a concept or a *verbum mentis*, as the result of the act of intellection while sensation produces no such result in the act of sensing¹⁰. It follows, then, that there is no problem in viewing intellection as an immanent act: once the potential intellect is informed by the intelligible species, it begins its immanent act that has as an end the concept it expresses. The picture is not nearly as clear, however, in the case of sensation. The only ends of sensory activity are the sensible species and the sensory act. But, the sensory act is precisely what requires an immanent end, so it cannot play that role by itself, and the only other candidate in sight for an end is the sensible species. Now, the sensible species cannot be the end of an immanent act since its production is outside the sense power. Suárez and Zabarella both think this issue is fatal to Thomas's account of sensory cognition as an immanent act. While it is easy to imagine why Thomas wants to hold that the reception of the species alone is adequate to explain sensation, namely, since it preserves the directness of sensation, nonetheless, Thomas thereby appears to jeopardize the immanence of the act of sensing. Here is how Suárez frames his objection:

For if it [a cognitive power] operated through a species as through an accident inhering in it (as water heats through heat), it would follow that the power is not cognitive from itself (*de se*) but because it would have it from something extrinsic through the species. Therefore, this proposition, «the intellect understands», would not be *per se*, but *per accidens*, just as «this water heats»¹¹.

Zabarella, too, agrees that Thomas is committed to the view that the sensible species is the sole efficient cause of sensation. His argument against

⁹ There is a third dis-analogy between the two that I will not be discussing here because all the thinkers I am considering in this paper agree on it, namely, sense's organic status and the intellect's non-organic status.

¹⁰ For the rejection of an expressed species in sensory cognition, see *Summa theologiae* I, Q. 85, a. 2 ad 3; *Quodlibet* V, a. 9, ad 2.

¹¹ F. SUÁREZ, *Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in libros Aristotelis De anima*, disp. V, q. 4, no. 5 [Vol. 2, 356], S. Castellote ed. 3 vols. Madrid: Sociedad de Estudios y Publicaciones [vols.1 and 2] and Fundación Xavier Zubiri [vol.3], 1978–1991.

Thomas, though, takes a rather different tack. Zabarella believes that such a view reverses the relative «nobility» of sensible object and power. Now everyone agrees that the sensible object is an «ignoble» accident and the sense power is exceedingly noble. After all, the latter is a power of the soul while the former is an accident of a material form. If one thinks that it is possible to rank reality by degrees of nobility, it certainly is plausible that a power of the soul is nobler than the color in a leaf floating on the wind. Given this rather obvious point, Zabarella goes on to show how a view like Thomas's would imply, counter-intuitively, that the sensible object is nobler than the power:

That thing is more perfect than another whose most perfect operation is nobler than the most perfect operation of the other, for the operation indicates the essence. The most perfect operation of sense, according to Thomas, is to be passive (*pati*) and to receive sensation, for he concedes no active power in it. However, the most perfect operation of the object or species is to act and produce sensation. Now it is nobler to act than to be passive (*pati*) and, therefore, the object will be nobler than the sense¹².

Moreover, Zabarella points out that the operations at issue here are the ones that are most perfect and proper to the two entities under consideration on Thomas's account. Thus, he blocks the potential response from Thomas and his followers that we are talking only about relative nobility and inferiority to the extent that the object is in act and the power is only in potency. For this reason, Zabarella concludes, the sensory power must be the primary agent, indeed the sole agent, responsible for sensation. This is, admittedly, a very difficult argument. Fortunately, it is not his only argument against Thomas's view since he, too, will argue that Thomas puts into jeopardy the immanence of the act of sensing. I think this argument is worth stressing, however, *because* of its oddness. I think it shows emphatically just how puzzling the experience of sensation had become to philosophers in the sixteenth century. For his part, Thomas takes sensory experience to be rather unproblematic. Thanks to a special kind of alteration (*immutatio*) effected by the impressed sensible species, the sensory power senses¹³. Of course, Thomas has recourse to a technical

¹² J. ZABARELLA, *Liber De sensu agente in his De rebus naturalibus libri XXX, quibus quaestiones quae ab Aristotelis interpretibus hodie tractari solent, accurate discutiuntur* (Frankfurt, 1606/07), cols. 831-856, VIII, 849. In what follows, I refer to this work as *De sensu agente* and cite it by chapter and column number. I use the reprint edition published by Minerva G.M.B.H. in 1966. The work was first published in 1590. For further information concerning the notion of an agent sense, see E.P. MAHONEY, «Agostino Nifo's De sensu agente», *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 53 (1971) 119-42; A. PATTIN, «Pour l'histoire du sens agent au moyen âge», *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 16-17 (1975-75) 100-113; idem., *Pour l'histoire du sens agent : la controverse entre Barthelemy de Bruges et Jean de Jandun, ses antécédents et son évolution: étude et textes inédits*, Leuven 1988.

¹³ *Quodlibet*, V, q. 2 ad 2: «Cognitio sensus exterioris perficitur per solam immutationem sensus a sensibili: unde per formam quae sibi a sensibile imprimitur, sentit».

vocabulary here: the alteration is an «intentional» or «spiritual» alteration. Zabarella's argument, though, seems designed to call into question this special kind of alteration—a kind of alteration that just might make the sensible object more noble than the sense power if we take «spiritual» in this context to mean immaterial. Whatever Thomas means by «spiritual» or «intentional» alteration, he does not mean immaterial alteration—although that misunderstanding seems to be fairly persistent in the literature¹⁴. Even if intentional and spiritual in this context, however, do not mean immaterial, they do point to something very mysterious about sensible objects, namely, that they can affect us in two ways. It did not take long for subsequent thinkers to worry about this. Indeed, there's a rather famous anomalous passage in Thomas's *De potentia* in which he seems to suggest that what makes sensible objects peculiarly able to effect us in two ways is their participation in the causality of separate substances. I have no good story to tell about how that passage is to be read within the context of Thomas's account of sensation, but Cardinal Cajetan in the 16th century placed great stress on that very passage to explain how sensible objects can effect us in two ways¹⁵. Also, many thinkers opted for an agent sense theory for precisely the same sort of reasons. The sensible object cannot be nobler than the soul, yet it must be the case that the senses are passive. Thus, the sensible species needs to be made ontologically on a par with the sense power and only a sense power can do that. It is striking that both Suárez and Zabarella reject the accounts of Cajetan and agent sense theorists. That is, both want to deny that there's some special agent that provides the sensible species with some unusual power to produce two sorts of alteration. I will return to this point in my concluding remarks.

In summary, then, both Suárez and Zabarella reject Thomas's apparent view that the reception of the species is a sufficient condition for sensation to occur. For both, the alternative each chooses consists in expanding the range of activity of the sense power, although each differs on the extent of that expansion. I will examine Suárez's account first.

Suárez holds that the sensible species can only be a «partially completing immediate instrument» (*partialiter complens immediatum instrumentum*)¹⁶.

¹⁴ M. BURNYEAT, «Aquinas on 'Spiritual Change' in Perception», in D. PERLER, ed., *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, Leiden 2001, 129–53. For additional discussion of Thomas's account of «intentional» and «spiritual» alteration, see J. SOUTH, «Suárez and the Problem of External Sensation», *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 10 (2001) 218–224.

¹⁵ *De potentia*, V. 8. For Cajetan, see II. 11 of his *Commentaria in De anima*, P.I. COQUELLE, O.P., ed., 2 vols. Rome 1939, 252–254.

¹⁶ *DA* V.4.16 (2: 366). PICARD, «Essai sur la connaissance sensible», 38–41, J.M. ALEJANDRO, *La gnoseología del Doctor Eximio y la acusación nominalista*, Comillas 1948, 196–199, S.C. CUBELLS, *Die Anthropologie des Suárez*, Munich 1962, 112–117, and T. RINALDI, «Il problema delle "species" conoscitive nel *De anima* di Suárez» in A. LAMACCHIA, ed., *La filosofia nel Siglo*

Its role is to bring the passive sense power to a higher level of actuality, while reserving for the sense power the actual operation made possible by the newly attained level of actuality¹⁷. The impressed species has a determinative role to play in the process, but the power itself plays the crucial role. Suárez goes on to distinguish three components of the activity of the sense power. There is the production of the act (*productio*), the reception of the act (*receptio*) and the act itself (*actio*). This last is the intrinsic end or terminus of the sense experience, thereby ensuring the immanence of the sensory act¹⁸. Note that the reception mentioned here should not be confused with the reception of the impressed sensible species, but rather refers to the fact that the cognitive power is brought to a higher level of actuality. In other words, the act is «received» in the power as a qualitative change in that power and the produced act of cognition is itself a quality (*qualitas*)¹⁹. It is the sense power informed by the impressed species, not the impressed species itself, that is, the intrinsic necessary condition of the act of sensing, while the completed act is the terminus. Thus, the power begins its activity once it is informed by an impressed sensible species and once the activity is finished, sensation has taken place. The two terms, the production of the act and the act itself, Suárez clarifies, are not to be understood as two really distinct moments, but are instead only formally distinct. This clarification may or may not be helpful depending on how clear one finds the notion of formal distinction. Nonetheless, the point of Suárez's account is clear enough: like intellection, sensation is productive of an expressed species that is an immanent terminus of a wholly immanent act. In this way, Suárez preserves the analogy between sense and intellect in a way that Thomas cannot, but does so by expanding the causal role of the sense power. Having said all of this, it is necessary to note that Suárez identifies the expressed species with the completed act of sensing itself. Thus, the entire process that he delineates might seem to be merely a more complicated description of Thomas's account—after all, for Thomas the act of sensing did not result in an expressed species. But this view breaks down when one recognizes that Thomas takes the expressed species to be something distinct from the act itself. If there is no distinction between the completed sensory act and

de Oro: Studi sul tardo Rinascimento Espagnola, Bari 1995, 429–64 all correctly stress the instrumentality of the species in the context of the immanent process of sensation.

¹⁷ *DA* V.4.8 (2: 258). W. NEIDL, *Der Realitäts Begriff des Franz Suárez nach den «Disputationes Metaphysicae»*, Munich 1966, 12–17 provides a succinct account of the background for Suárez's understanding of the various levels of actuality in the process of cognition.

¹⁸ *DA* III.2.16 (2: 100).

¹⁹ *DA* V.5.6 (2: 376). Cf. *DA* III.2.16 (2: 100) where Suárez states that vision itself is a quality. See T. RINALDI, «Il problema» (cf. nt. 16), 459–62 for further discussion of the notion of «actio» in Suárez. It is unclear whether Thomas agrees that cognition is a quality. For discussion, see J. OWENS, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (cf. nt. 7), 192–203, esp. at note 5 on 194.

the expressed species, what kind of explanatory force does Suárez's account provide? Are we only talking a terminological difference with Thomas? No, we are not and the reason is clear: the causality exercised by the impressed species is not sufficient to produce an act of sensing. Suárez's rather baroque description is designed to show that the sensory power plays the primary role in producing the sensory act.

While in Suárez we see the downplaying of the causal efficacy of the impressed species, he still admits that it plays an instrumentally efficient causal role. Turning to Zabarella, though, we find a denial that the impressed species plays any efficient causal role at all: the sense power alone is *the* efficient cause of the sensory act:

Thus, the object can have no power (*vis*) in the production of cognition, although it can furnish something to sense that is necessary for sensation. For it produces (*efficit*) the species without which sensation could not arise, but it in no way is the efficient cause. Therefore, the species itself does not have the role of the agent in sensation, but only the role of generated form and produced effect²⁰.

So, while the reception of the species is necessary for sensation to occur, it plays no efficient causal role in the act of sensation. Here Zabarella makes an interesting move in claiming that an account like Suárez's does not properly save the immanence of the sensory act. His objection is that a view like Suárez's does not really save the immanence of the sensory act because it makes the sensible species what he calls a «true agent»²¹. For Zabarella, «every true agent needs a patient in which it might act and the same thing cannot undergo and receive something from itself»²². In short, he turns Suárez's argument against Thomas against the very view that Suárez defends. In other words, if, for Suárez, the sensible species cannot be the principle efficient cause because that jeopardizes immanence, we can ask why we should think that instrumental causality is any less problematic. Consider a paradigm case of instrumental causality: the role of the pen in writing. The primary efficient cause of writing is the hand that holds the pen, while the pen is an instrumental cause. Nonetheless, the action of the pen is a real action and thus it is, in Zabarella's terminology a «true agent». And indeed, the action of the pen is not received within the pen, but is transitive, that is, it makes marks on paper. For

²⁰ *De sensu agente*, VIII, 850-51: «Obiectum vero nullam potest vim habere efficiendi cognitionem, licet possit aliquid sensui subministrare necessarium ad sensationem, efficit enim speciem, sine qua sensio non fieret, sed ipsius sensationis nullo modo est causa effectrix: ipsa vero species in sensatione non habet locum agentis, sed solum formae genitae, et effectus producti». For additional discussion of Zabarella's account of sensation, see J. SOUTH, «Zabarella and the Intentionality of Sensation», *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 57 (2002) 5-25.

²¹ Zabarella does not refer to Suárez in this context, but attributes the view to Scotus.

²² *De sensu agente*, X, 853-4.

Zabarella, reserving any efficient causality for the species, however instrumental, destroys the immanence of the sensory act. What needs explaining is how the *same* power can be both passive and active, how it can both undergo and act without jeopardizing immanence. The key to solving that problem for Zabarella, is found in the role that the *soul* plays in the process of sensation.

The soul goes to work in the second stage of the sensory process, consequent on the reception of the species, and its role is to make a «judgment». It is important to be very clear about this point. Zabarella is not saying that the sense power judges, he is saying that the *soul* judges. There are two questions that must be asked here: a) what is the soul doing in the story (as opposed to the ensouled organ or sense power)? and b) what does «judgment» mean in this context? The second issue is easily explicated. Judgment in this context means only a kind of awareness:

For it often happens that we do not see a colored reality (*res*) placed before the eyes because although an impression of the species arises in the eye (for if no impediment exists, this cannot be denied), nevertheless the soul, intent on other realities, judges nothing about the species²³.

The second problematic issue is rather more difficult and before we can deal with it, two potential misunderstandings require addressing. First, it might seem that Zabarella is proposing an account in which the species received in the sense organ is subsequently *sensed* by the soul itself. That cannot be correct, though, because that would mean that the object of sense would *be* the species. However, for Zabarella the nature of the species is intrinsically representational and to be representational is to refer to something other. We see the red of the rose, not its sensible species. In short, then, Zabarella is not suggesting that the soul is somehow only able to be aware of the species. Second, it would be tempting to read Zabarella as arguing that the soul is somehow moved, perhaps even «excited», by the sensible species and that the reception of the species explains why Aristotle says that «to sense is to undergo». Again, this cannot be correct and the reason is that sensation is an immanent, not a transitive activity. Accordingly, the reception of a species cannot constitute

²³ *De sensu agente*, IX, 852: «Nam saepe contingit ut rem coloratum ob oculos positam non videamus, quia licet fiat impressio speciei in oculo (nullo enim existente impedimento id negari non potest) attamen anima aliis rebus intenta, speciem illam non iudicat». There are real echoes of the thought of Albert the Great in Zabarella's discussion about the act of sensation, just as there was for his account of the sensible species. Albert, too, placed «judgment» (*iudicium*) at the center of his account of sensation. However, he located the faculty of judgment in the common sense, not the soul itself. For Albert, see *De anima*, II, 4, 8, C. STROICK, ed., vol. 7.1 of *Opera omnia*, B. GEYER, ed., Münster i. Westfalen 1968, 159, 71-80. For discussion, see M. TWEEDALE, «Origins of the Medieval Theory that Sensation Is an Immaterial Reception of a Form», *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992) 219-20.

the manner in which sense is passive since that passivity is not part of the *act* of sensing. Zabarella concludes that the very same sense power must be both active and passive within itself, otherwise sensation would not be *in* the person sensing. Thus, that which is received in the sense power is not the species, but the very act of sensing:

Therefore, in this way vision is an immanent action because it is received in the agent itself, namely, in the soul or in the animate body insofar as it is animate. Thus, if vision had no other agent than material color, it would be without doubt a transitive action.²⁴

Accordingly, Zabarella is committed to the claim that consequent to the reception of the species in a sensory organ, the soul itself turns its attention to the species and through the species is aware of the sensible quality existing in the external object. I will return to a consideration of Zabarella's motivation in bringing in the soul here shortly. First, though, I proceed to the third moment of the sensory process.

This third moment occurs when the soul's awareness of the action of the sensible species on the organ is received in the animated organ, that is, the sense power. The activity of the sensory act, then, is the «judgment» or awareness of the soul consequent on the reception of the species while the passivity is the reception of that very awareness in the sense power, a composite of soul and organ. Zabarella summarizes:

First, from the action of a material object there is a reception of the species in the organ, for example, of color in the eye. Second, the soul brings forth a judgment and in this way is said to act. Third, the judgment is received in the whole composite, namely, the animate organ and thus the soul, as its part, is said to undergo²⁵.

In short, if the species has no efficient causality in the sensory process and if the sense power itself must be the agent in sensing, then there must be some passivity in the sense power to save the notion that sensing is a kind of change. Since the species and the agency of sense cannot provide the necessary element of passivity, some other feature must. Of course, there is one very obvious objection to Zabarella's position: is not the sense power's reception of the soul's awareness the result of some activity of the soul? If so, doesn't that jeopardize the immanence of the sensory act? In other words, why should we think that the soul's awareness is not some kind of «true action»? Zabarella is

²⁴ *De sensu agente*, IX, 852: «Sic igitur visio est actio immanens, quia recipitur in ipsomet agente, nempe in anima, seu in corpore animato quatenus est animatum: quod si nullum aliud agens haberet visio, nisi materialem colorem, esset absque dubio actio transiens».

²⁵ *De sensu agente*, X, 854: «Primum enim ab actione obiecti materialis sit in organo receptio speciei, ut coloris in oculo; secundo anima iudicium profert, et ita agere dicitur; tertio recipitur iudicium in toto composito, nempe organo animato, et ita anima tanquam eius pars dicitur pati».

prepared for this objection. Instead, of its being a true action, Zabarella considers the action of the soul an «emanation», where by emanation he means an action that can be performed within a process of immanent change and such that this emanation of the soul's awareness of the species results in a change within the sense power itself—the third and receptive moment of the sensory process—but not in some real change. Zabarella is quick to add that this distinction between the soul's awareness of the species and its reception in the sense organ is a difference in nature. Temporally, they are simultaneous²⁶.

At this point, I want to discuss a central feature of this account of sensation in a bit more detail. Since Zabarella places a stress on the activity of the sense power itself, its intention and judgment, at the expense of the reception of the species, it is necessary to think more about the nature of this judgment or awareness. A metaphor that Zabarella uses in this context is important. He suggests that the soul «drinks up» or «absorbs» (*imbibere*) the species received in the organ²⁷. This metaphor suggests strongly that the species is causally ineffective and the soul is effective: the soul is «attentive», is «reaching out to» the species. The point he is making seems clear enough, but the process by which the soul is aware of the reception of a species is less than clear. If it were the ensouled organ, the power, that was aware, the thesis would sound less strange. In making it the soul, directly, that is aware of the species and senses through it, however, he accomplishes two things. First, he emphasizes the activity of sense, the attentive awareness that we bring to sensory perception. At the same time, though, the metaphor points to a kind of explanatory «black box». He has relocated, as it were, the place of mystery in sensation. Unlike those thinkers who have to hold a view that builds awareness into the natural processes of sensible objects in such a way that the species is sufficient for cognition, Zabarella opts rather for keeping the naturalness of the creation of the species. Its residual materiality is continuous with the material sensible forms from which it arises. This allows him to attribute the true spiritualizing process to an agent – the human soul operating without an organ – that is both internal to the person sensing, as opposed to God or separate substances, and capable of creating something truly spiritual.

²⁶ *De sensu agente*, X, 854-55.

²⁷ *De sensu agente*, X, 854. This metaphor has deep medieval roots, and also is used by Zabarella in his discussion of intellectual cognition. For discussion of the history of «*imbibere*» in the context of medieval discussions of cognition, see L. SPRUIT, *Species Intelligibilis* (cf. nt. 8), II, 228-230 where he traces the notion of «*imbibere*» back to Olivi. Of particular interest is the fact that Zabarella rejects this metaphor when discussing the relation between phantasm and agent intellect, since the phantasm is not directly accessible to the intellect prior to the production of an intelligible species. See his *De speciebus intelligibilibus*, chapter VI, columns 992-95.

Return now to the original question of this essay, Casten's question: What provides the content of a mental state? On the 16th century reading of Thomas, he would answer that the sensible species provides the content. By contrast, both Suárez and Zabarella reject that view opting instead for views that make the species causally problematic for content. Instead, both stress the activity of the power as contributing to intentional content. Recall earlier that I deferred discussion of a dis-analogy between sense and intellect introduced by Thomas namely, the dis-analogy between sensibles as actually sensible and phantasms as merely potentially intelligible. It seems clear that both Suárez and Zabarella, surprisingly enough, have tried to overcome that dis-analogy. Sensibles as they exist in the world are not actually sensible apart from some efficient causality on the part of the sense power. What we have here in Zabarella, and in a less radicalized form in Suárez, is a rather startling departure from a view that we take to be paradigmatic to Aristotle, namely the two-fold alteration of the sensible object on the sense power; one material and one «intentional». Of course, this use of «intentional» to describe this peculiar type of alteration is not Aristotle's, though it is Thomas's, and I think here Thomas gets Aristotle right. But both Suárez and Zabarella now seem committed to the view that the content of our sensory acts is not exhaustively provided by the sensible species. In other words, there is some content in our acts of sensing that cannot be reduced to the activity of the sensible species.

I do not think that there is any way to say more about this claim that is conjecture, but permit me to try nonetheless. Although I do not have the space in this paper to show it, both Suárez and Zabarella match their reconfigurations of the activity of the sense power with reconfigurations of the nature of the sensible species. For both thinkers, the sensible species is not immaterial (in our modern sense of immaterial), but physical—and physical in a way that comes close to meaning what we take material to mean today. Sensible species are admittedly not material in that they are constituted by matter, but they are material in the sense that they are material forms—that is, they are extended in space. They are imperfect participations of the sensible forms present in things. They have a kind of defective existence being radically dependent on the activity of the originating sensible form. Consequently, by stressing the «materiality» of the species and concomitantly arguing that the species is not causally responsible for content, both Suárez and Zabarella seem to have separated the realms of the mental and the physical to an extent that would shock Aristotle. Zabarella at least is clear, however, that what he is doing is a reconceptualization of the notion of intentionality within the tradition. He points out that the Latin thinkers (*Latini*) understood the term to refer to «that through which the soul, as through a formal reason, tended (*tendit*) to the object to be known. Consequently, they call all species, sensible and intelli-

gible, «intentions»²⁸. Zabarella, by contrast, argues that an intention is only an «attention» (*attentio*) and «attentiveness» (*diligentia*) in the soul to the consideration of some reality²⁹. Now *that* seems strikingly Augustinian, and Casten, when talking about Augustine on intentionality, points to the notion of selective attention as a central, if not unique feature of Augustine's account of intentionality. Moreover, both Suárez and Zabarella adduce selective attention as evidence for the activity of the sense power. Again, as Casten points out, commentators have «endlessly (and unconvincingly)» looked for an account of this phenomenon in philosophers earlier than Augustine. So, there seems to be something about selective attention that strikes Augustine, Suárez and Zabarella as essential to any account of intentional content. Does this mean that Suárez and Zabarella have gone back to Augustine as a philosophical source?

I don't think so. First, I know of no place in Zabarella's writings where he even *mentions* Augustine. Suárez, obviously, has a much more extensive acquaintance with Augustine, but does not refer to him in the context of his discussion of sensory experience. But if not Augustine, what is the source of their critique of the Aristotelian position? What follows is partly speculative on my part, but I do have some evidence. There is a mysterious passage in Averroes that is central to accounts of sensation in the later middle ages and Renaissance. Both Suárez and Zabarella are certainly familiar with it, since proponents of an agent sense theory appeal to it repeatedly and they both go to great lengths to reject an agent sense view³⁰. The passage I have in mind is from the *Long Commentary on the De Anima*:

One can say that sensibles do not move the senses in accord with the way that they exist outside the soul, for they move the senses insofar as they are intentions, since in matter they are not intentions in act, but in potency. And one cannot say that this difference occurs by virtue of the difference of subject such that the intentions come to be on account of a spiritual matter which is the sense, not on account of an external mover. For it is better to think that the reason for the difference of matter is the difference of forms, rather than that the difference of matter is the reason for the difference of forms. Since it is so, we must assert that the external mover in the case of the senses is different from the sensibles, as was necessary in the case of the intellect. It was seen, therefore, that if we concede that the difference of forms is the reason for the difference of matter, it will be necessary that the mover be external. But Aristotle was silent about this because

²⁸ *De visu*, I, 6, 870: «Latini quidem huius vocis etymologiam considerantes, dicunt intentionem vocari id, per quod tanquam per rationem formalem anima tendit in obiectum cognoscendum».

²⁹ *De visu*, I, 6, 871.

³⁰ In passing, too, it is worth remarking that it is rather difficult to imagine a thinker with less affinity to Augustine than Averroes.

it is hidden in the case of sensation and is apparent in the case of intellect. You ought to give this consideration, since it requires investigation³¹.

This notoriously opaque passage was *the* source of late medieval discussions of the agent sense. I do not claim to understand the passage fully, but its central point is that sensibles are not actually sensible without some external agency. While both Suárez and Zabarella reject the need to posit an agent sense, a really distinct sense power in which sensibles in act are produced in order to be received in the potential sense power, they nonetheless do accept agency on the part of sense. If there is a common source for their thought, I think it is more likely to be in the ramifications of this passage than in some common return to Augustine.

Let me close by pointing to two interesting consequences of Suárez's and Zabarella's accounts. First, it turns out that in the case of sensation, at least, both have abandoned Aristotle and Aristotelian methodology. Myles Burnyeat has recently made this point clearly:

A true Aristotelian is one who is content with [an] appeal to a power or potency, who resists the demand for underlying material processes to activate the power or a categorical (non-dispositional) base to explain it³².

On this criterion, both Suárez and Zabarella clearly are not Aristotelian in their accounts of intentionality. If Burnyeat is right about Aristotle and Thomas, as I think he is, then both are committed to an out of date physics anyway, one in which sensible objects can perform mysterious alterations upon sense powers that are different from ordinary kinds of material alterations. Second, there is a connected issue, if I am right in my account above, a study of these two authors points the way towards rethinking the relation between Augustine and Descartes. It is sometimes assumed that Suárez is deeply imbued with an Augustinian heritage³³. However, while he is clearly adopting a variant of an «active theory of sensation», he is doing so only because of what he sees as problematic within the Aristotelian theory of sensation. The comparison with Zabarella makes that point even clearer. If any thinker shows less concern for Augustine, it is hard to imagine who it might be. Nonetheless, his position is even more «Augustinian» than Suárez's. Perhaps it's time we learned to take

³¹ AVERROES, *Commentarium magnum in Aristotelis de anima libros*, F. STUART CRAWFORD, ed., (*Corpus Commentarium Averrois in Aristotelem*, V. 1; Cambridge (Mass.) 1953), II, comm. 60, p. 221, lines 40-57. The translation is that of R. Taylor's in AVERROES (IBN RUSHD) OF CORDOBA, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, New Haven 2009, 172.

³² M. BURNYEAT, «Aquinas on 'Spiritual Change' in Perception» (cf. nt. 14), 150.

³³ See the discussion in N. ABERCROMBIE, *Saint Augustine and French Classical Thought*, New York 1972 [reprint of the 1938 edition].

the late 16th century on its own terms and recognize it as the real source of the philosophical atmosphere Descartes breathed.

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SUMMARY

The two 16th century philosophers, Francisco Suárez and Jacopo Zabarella are rarely considered together, since they represent two strands of Aristotelian thought: the Scholastic and the «Paduan». In this paper, I consider their accounts of the intentionality of sensation, showing how they both depart from Thomas Aquinas by trying to maintain a principle of immanence to the sensory process. In doing so, I show how they both reject the notion of an «agent sense», but develop very elaborate accounts of sensation while doing so. By comparing these thinkers, I show that the two traditions of Aristotelianism they represent have a closer affinity than is usually thought to be the case. In addition, it becomes easier to see the milieu in which Descartes develops his own account of sensory experience and mind/body dualism.

Keywords: Francisco Suárez, Jacopo Zabarella, Thomas Aquinas, Intentionality, Sensation

I due filosofi del XVI secolo, Francisco Suarez e Jacopo Zabarella, sono stati raramente accomunati rappresentando due filoni (diversi) del pensiero aristotelico: quello scolastico e quello padovano. In questo saggio, prendendo in considerazione la loro teoria dell'intenzionalità della sensazione, dimostro che tutt'e due si scostano da Tommaso d' Aquino, nel tentativo di mantenere il principio di immanenza al processo sensoriale. Dimostrerò, quindi, che tutt'e due rifiutando la nozione di un «agente sensoriale», sviluppano teorie della sensazione molto elaborate. Confrontando questi filosofi dimostro, altresì, che le due tradizioni di aristotelismo, che essi rappresentano, hanno più affinità di quel che normalmente si pensi. Inoltre si può scorgere più facilmente l'ambiente in cui Descartes sviluppa la sua teoria dell'esperienza sensoriale e del dualismo mente-corpo.

Parole chiave: Francisco Suárez, Jacopo Zabarella, Tomaso d'Aquino, Intenzionalità, Sensation

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