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Russell Hardin

## Suárez, Francisco (1548–1617)

The most original of the Late Scholastics, Suárez was born into a distinguished family in Granada. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1564 and was ordained in 1572. Devoting his life to the study of theology, he taught throughout Spain, in Rome, and from 1597 until 1615 as the professor at Coimbra. His philosophical writings engage the subject with a free and critical spirit and, being the work of genius, have independent interest. The tenth of his fifty-four supremely erudite *Metaphysical Disputations* (1597) examines transcendental good; the eleventh, EVIL. He discussed ethical and moral matters in the posthumously published *On Charity* (1621), *On the Ultimate End of Man and Happiness* (1628), and *On the Goodness and Badness of Human Actions* (1628). He contributed to the philosophy of law, society, and government in *On Laws and God the Legislator* (1612). In a reply to James I of England, *Defense of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith* (1613), he argued against the divine right of kings. He was pontifically honored as the Eximious Doctor.

Following THOMAS AQUINAS (1225?–1274), Suárez took as good for a thing that which perfects the

thing. Good for humans is, properly, what in itself befits human essence. This “honest” good he distinguished from the useful, delectable, or morally worthy. For Suárez, the pleasurable or consequentially beneficial may be contrary to human nature, and only deliberate actions are morally right or wrong. His view was that an act’s moral value depends on conditions which are internal to the agent, but what makes something good or bad is independent of an agent’s attitudes. He claimed further that even God cannot will the good for humans to be other than it is, since human nature cannot be other than it is; and he wrote that human good is not so because it agrees with reason, but that it agrees with reason because it is good. Still, he affirmed that, in the end, all value issues from God, the only true being, absolute creator and supreme legislator.

HAPPINESS or the state of human fulfillment is eternal beatitude. For Suárez, the good life, the life conducive to happiness and lived in agreement with reason, is governed by laws—adequately promulgated, just, and relatively permanent prescriptions. While stressing that moral value is presupposed and not produced by any law, he argued for a system of rules enforced through reward and PUNISHMENT, on the grounds that people are weak and subject to temptation. This corpus of NATURAL LAW is in principle available to all. First moral truths, being divinely inscribed in reason, are self-evident; from them all other natural precepts can be clearly deduced. Thus, Suárez incorporated in an Aristotelian framework elements of a legalistic approach to ethics, centered on the determination of the worth of act-types.

Humans tend essentially toward association in families and larger groups. Accordingly, Suárez found the foundations of society and government in nature and finally in God. But he also held that legitimate rule requires common CONSENT; for humans are born naturally free, and God gives political AUTHORITY to freely established self-sufficient communities aimed at the COMMON GOOD. Since only the community as a whole is endowed with this power, Suárez introduced a second contract to delegate it and institute a specific form of government. Here he delimited a considerable jurisdiction for positive civil law, asserting that effective government must dictate NORMS which, though compatible with moral truth, do not follow from it. Unlike “honest value,” positive value results from an act of will:

what is commanded by civil law is made good by the command. Nevertheless, he was clear that it is an honest good that subjects obey their legitimate rulers. Similarly, he held that political POWER is bestowed on communities originated in free contract, and he thus combined a recognition of personal autonomy with the doctrine that authority comes from God.

Suárez was a man attuned with his times, separating the moral and spiritual jurisdiction of the Church from the material jurisdiction of civil government. Commentators have emphasized his economic or utilitarian conception of the state. All the same, he upheld the preeminence of ecclesiastic authority in cases of conflict between material and spiritual concerns. His treatment of PROPERTY relations, central to his understanding of good government and the common good, reveals the extent to which he submitted the pursuit of material prosperity to moral constraints. Like most Scholastics, he believed that everything is by nature common. Yet he considered the assignment of productive goods to individuals to be a permissible institution of positive law. But an owner ought not to dispose of something superfluous, if someone else needs it to survive with DIGNITY. So, he concluded, owners are mere administrators of their surplus wealth, and they become thieves if they fail to distribute their surplus among the needy.

Christian charity is indeed difficult to reconcile with acceptance of the coexistence of opulence and extreme poverty. The duty to love one's neighbor drove Suárez, as it had many of the Church Fathers, toward austere socialism. He denounced the desire for individual gain, and built self-denial, discipline, and solidarity into the very constitution of the social order. He maintained that, in any system of government, under threat of rightful and possibly violent deposition by the community, political power must be exercised for the common welfare and never against it. Moreover, he defended the overriding claim of the community, when in need, over any citizen's property or life, adding that subjection to communal interest and authority is necessary for individual flourishing. Toward the end of his life, Suárez was able to know of the relatively successful Jesuit *reducciones* in Paraguay, organized in 1610 around the communal ownership of goods.

Scholars have connected these Suárezian doctrines with latter-day MARXISM. However, it is per-

haps more informative to focus on the ethical underpinnings of his politics, and, consequently, to underscore his divergence not only from Protestant INDIVIDUALISM but also from historicist communism. In fact, much remains to be learned here and elsewhere from the unjustly neglected writings of this brilliant thinker, a fully entitled participant in the timeless conversation of philosophy.

*See also:* ALTRUISM; ARISTOTLE; AUGUSTINE; AUTONOMY OF MORAL AGENTS; CHARITY; CHRISTIAN ETHICS; COMMON GOOD; COMMUNITARIANISM; LEGAL PHILOSOPHY; MERIT AND DESERT; MORAL RULES; NATURAL LAW; OBEDIENCE TO LAW; PRESCRIPTIVISM; PROPERTY; PUNISHMENT; SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY; SOCIAL CONTRACT; THEOLOGICAL ETHICS; THOMAS AQUINAS; WELFARE RIGHTS AND SOCIAL POLICY.

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Jorge Secada

### subjectivism

There are different sorts of subjectivism: (1) subjectivism about personal good, (2) subjectivism about PRACTICAL REASON, (3) subjectivism about moral requirement, and (4) subjectivism about evaluative judgments. Subjectivism about personal good, subjectivism about practical reason, and subjectivism about moral requirement are quite different from, and potentially inconsistent with, subjectivism about evaluative judgments.

Subjectivism about personal good includes a family of theories. Each of these holds that personal good—a person's welfare or well-being, or what is best in terms of that person's self-interest—depends on the attitudes of the person, or, we might say, on the attitudes of the subject. One such theory holds that a person's good is constituted by the net enjoyment she or he gets. Another such theory holds that a person's good is constituted by the extent to which his or her desires are fulfilled.

Those are different theories. Of course, normally people enjoy having their desires fulfilled. Nevertheless, in some cases, people do not derive enjoyment from the fulfillment of their desires. For example, they may get no enjoyment from the fulfillment of some of their desires because they never find out these desires are fulfilled. Likewise, people can enjoy believing their desires are fulfilled although their beliefs are in fact false. So increasing people's enjoyment and increasing the fulfillment of their desires do not necessarily go hand in hand.

Still, the theory that personal good resides in enjoyment and the theory that personal good resides in DESIRE fulfillment are alike in being subjective views about personal good. Whether something brings you enjoyment depends on contingent and variable facts about you as a subject. Whether something fulfills your desires also depends on contingent and variable facts about you as a subject. Hence, both of these theories maintain that whether something constitutes a benefit to you depends on contingent and variable facts about you as a subject.

Subjectivism about practical reason is the view that all reasons for ACTION ultimately depend upon an agent's subjective (contingent and variable) desires. This is supposed to be true not only of so-called motivating reasons—*i.e.*, the reasons that as a matter of fact do bring the agent to act. It is also supposed to be true of good REASONS FOR ACTION—*i.e.*, normative reasons determining how people *should* act.

Suppose we accept the subjectivist thesis that what good reasons there are for an agent to do something depend on (and vary with) the agent's desires. Suppose we also accept the thesis that an agent cannot be morally required to do what she has no reason to do. If we maintain these two theses, then we must also accept the subjectivist view of moral requirement. This holds that whether an agent is morally required to do a certain act depends on whether the agent has desires that this act would fulfill.

Subjectivism about moral requirement is highly suspect. It seems to allow agents to reject any requirement simply by denying they have any desire that would be fulfilled by their compliance with the requirement. Yet morality seems to have an authority independent of and superior to the agent's desires. When someone has no desire that compliance with a moral requirement would fulfill, this seems to count against him, not against the requirement. Subjectivism about moral requirement reverses the order of AUTHORITY. This is counterintuitive.

If we therefore reject subjectivism about moral requirement, we have to decide which premise is mistaken in the above argument for this kind of subjectivism. Rejecting the second premise, some philosophers maintain that what one is morally required to do does not depend on what one has reason to do. Rejecting the first premise, other philosophers hold that good reasons for action do not depend on the agent's desires.