Daniel Heider

Universals in Second Scholasticism: A Comparative Study with Focus on the Theories of Francisco Suárez S.J. (1548–1617), João Poinset O.P. (1589–1644) and Bartolomeo Mastri da Meldola O.F.M. Conv. (1602–1673)/Bonaventura Belluto O.F.M. Conv. (1600–1676).

Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014. Pp. xi+344. Hb, \$158.

As readers of this journal well know, early modern Jesuits played many roles—educator, missionary, apologist, and more—but one role, philosopher, has perhaps been obscured by the traditional focus on “modern” exponents, such as Descartes and Locke. Only one of the four figures examined in *Universals in Second Scholasticism*, Francisco Suárez, was a Jesuit, although two other members of the Society—Pedro Fonseca and Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza—make significant appearances. Nonetheless, Heider’s work does draw attention to the Jesuit contribution to philosophy. Not only was Suárez, along with Gabriel Vásquez, the father of a vibrant tradition of Jesuit philosophy and theology, his influence was also felt outside the Jesuit order. As Heider’s erudite exposition makes clear, the Dominican João Poinset and the Scotist Franciscan co-writers Bartolomeo Mastri da Meldola and Bonaventura Belluto were intimately familiar with Suárez’s view, all three incorporating parts of it into their own accounts while rejecting and responding to other parts.

The philosophical issue Heider focuses on is the problem of universals. Few philosophical topics exercised medieval and early modern Scholastics to so great an extent. The basic problem, and a crude division of responses, can be drawn easily enough. Common names are ubiquitous in language. But what, if anything, is the extra-mental foundation for such names and their correlative concepts? For example, “dog” is predicated of both Rover and Lassie. Realists say there is a universal “dogness” that is really common to, or helps constitute, both Rover and Lassie, while nominalists deny that there is any one thing instantiated in both Rover and Lassie.

It immediately becomes clear, however, that the division between realism and nominalism is much too crude for Heider’s purposes. He argues that it is “historically inadequate” to define nominalism simply as the rejection of abstract entities (304). (Contemporary philosophers usually distinguish between nominalism about abstract entities and nominalism about universals, but Heider’s intent is clear enough.) Heider prefers a three-fold division among Platonism or ultra-realism, moderate realism, and nominalism or conceptualism. Even with this more fine-grained division, the three approaches studied in this volume all fall under the same category, namely, moderate real-

ism. As Heider sees it, the crucial feature of moderate realism is its acceptance of objective precision (16). As is the case with many of the book's technical terms—usually derived from Scholastic Latin—everyday usage of either component term in contemporary English is of little help in understanding its use here. “Precision” here refers to the intellectual act of separating predicates, while “objective” indicates the *object* of cognition rather than the cognizing subject (the contrast term is “subjective precision”). Hence, to say that the moderate realists accept objective precision is to say that they think that one can, for example, cognize rationality apart from, or without immediately cognizing, animality, even though rationality and animality are united in human nature. Rationality and animality can be cut apart intellectually and the joints to be cut are in the object (in this case, human nature), so to speak.

Part of Heider's project is to argue that Suárez was in fact a moderate realist, despite widespread characterizations of him, both by his immediate successors and by recent scholars, as essentially a nominalist. Such characterizations gain strength from Suárez's own statement that he perhaps differed from the nominalists only *modo loquendi* (97). Heider, however, argues that it makes more sense to regard Suárez as a moderate realist, of broadly the same stripe as Poinset, Mastri, and Belluto. It is not always entirely clear, though, wherein Heider disagrees with other commentators. Do they offer substantively different interpretations of Suárez, or are they using different taxonomies, with more or less strict usages of the term “nominalist?” In particular, it is worth noting that, if the crude, but widely used, division between realism and nominalism is employed, moderate realism is a species of nominalism, rather than the realism its name suggests.

The great strength of this book is Heider's masterful, detailed examination of three representative accounts from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scholasticism. Suárez offers an original blend of Thomist, Scotist, and nominalist elements; Poinset's account is more purely *ad mentem Thomi*, while Mastri and Belluto take an approach *ad mentem Scoti*. Of course, there were other streams of thought in the period, but Heider reasonably takes these to be the most important ones. He knows the terrain well. In addition to a familiarity with the primary texts that few could rival, he has an exemplary command of the secondary literature. A key benefit of this erudition is that his analysis is not limited to the narrow ontological problem of universals, but also encompasses the psychological questions about the processes of cognition and the formation of universal concepts. The book is well structured, and each element is nicely integrated into the whole. As each new theory is presented, it is brought into detailed comparison with those already presented, thereby illuminating its distinctive features.

Heider rightly presents Suárez as the first Scholastic of a venerable early modern tradition, rather than as the last schoolman (17). The present volume decisively dismantles the latter characterization. At the same time, there is an obvious sense in which Suárez stands late in a tradition, rather than at its source, and here we find a weakness in Heider's work. By the time Suárez enters the scholarly dialogue, he was the beneficiary of all the subtle distinctions and highly technical terminology of centuries of sophisticated theorizing on the subject of universals. This makes entering into the argument with Suárez a daunting challenge for anyone not already well versed in the Scholastic tradition on this question. Heider does little to ease the reader in. The discussion remains unremittingly abstract, with very few examples and a host of unfamiliar technical terms, used with minimal introduction or (ostensible) motivation. Since the philosophical interest in the later Scholastics' theories lies not in their overall positions—inherited from earlier theories—but in their subtle details, some more handholding would have helped readers appreciate the significance of the theories under discussion. However, for readers prepared to tackle the heights of Scholastic philosophical debate, *Universals in Second Scholasticism* offers many riches.

Sydney Penner

Asbury University

sfp@sydneypenner.ca

DOI 10.1163/22141332-00202007-06