

ERIK ÅKERLUND

**PEDRO HURTADO DE MENDOZA (1578-1641)
ON MATTER**

Abstract

This paper examines a specific instance of conceptual and terminological reconfiguration in early modern scholastic Aristotelianism: the case of the Jesuit Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza and his account of *materia*, tightly interwoven with the positions of fellow Jesuits Francisco Suárez and Rodrigo Arriaga. After reconstructing Hurtado's position on the ontological status of prime matter, his rejection of the Aristotelian claim that it is pure potency, and his distinction between "physical" and "metaphysical" meanings of *materia*, we turn to Hurtado's treatment of the matter-form relation. Hurtado maintains that matter and form's being could, at least through divine power, be sustained separately. He likewise holds that matter can subsist without categorial quantity while preserving location and the capacity for local motion. We also address the problem of distinct kinds of matter and highlight Hurtado's speculations concerning the possible existence of a hypothetical form of matter, a purely theoretical distinction that nonetheless remained relevant within early modern cosmological debates.

Keywords

Aristotelian Tradition, Matter, Form, Pure Potency, Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza

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1. Introduction

The *Cursus Philosophicus* was the dominant format for philosophical textbooks in the Aristotelian Scholastic tradition in the 17th and 18th centuries. Arguably the first work in this format was *Universa philosophia*, written by the now much-neglected Spanish Jesuit Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza (1578-1641). First published in 1615 under the title *Disputationes a summulis ad metaphysicam*, it came out in different versions until reaching its final form in its 1624 edition, printed in Lyon.¹ This work was to have a huge impact on the later textbook tradition in philosophy.²

Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza was born in 1578 in the Basque town of Balmaseda, approximately 20 miles southwest of Bilbao.³ He was of a noble lineage and had relatives at the court of the Spanish kings. Hurtado de Mendoza entered the Jesuit order in 1595 and continued to study in Salamanca, among other places. Having been ordained as a priest in 1607, he went on to teach philosophy in Pamplona and in Valladolid. From 1618, he taught theology in Salamanca, interspersed by different trips and special assignments given by the Provincial from time to time.

Although he also published in theology, it was for the *Universa philosophia* that he was to become most famous. As noted above, this work proceeded through a number of different editions before reaching its final form.

At the time that Hurtado de Mendoza became active as a teacher, the Jesuits had undergone what Jacob Schmutz has called a “provincialization.”⁴

¹ For the editorial history, see Novotný (forthcoming) and especially Schmutz (forthcoming). It is the 1624 edition that will be used in this article.

² There were earlier works spanning the whole of philosophy, for example Eustachius a Santo Paulo’s *Summa philosophiae* from 1609, known among other things from René Descartes’s references to it. (See Perler 2015.) More famous than Hurtado de Mendoza’s work is also his confrère Francisco Suárez’s (1548-1617) *Disputationes metaphysicae* from 1597. As the title gives at hand, though, this work only spans metaphysics. As will be seen, Suárez exerted a huge influence on Hurtado de Mendoza. Suárez’s work is sometimes said to be the first complete work on metaphysics in the Latin West that was not a commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. There were some immediate precedents also to Suárez, though. See Lohr (1988) pp. 610-3.

³ For the biographical and bibliographical data, see Novotný (forthcoming) and Schmutz (forthcoming).

⁴ Schmutz (forthcoming).

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In the generation before him, with the most famous example being Francisco Suárez, the Jesuit teachers in the colleges on the Spanish peninsula had often visited and taught at different colleges across Europe. Hurtado de Mendoza, however, was to remain teaching on the Spanish peninsula for his entire career, and for 20 years in Salamanca, at that.

There were exceptions to this ‘provincialization,’ of course, in later generations. Hurtado de Mendoza’s student Rodrigo de Arriaga (1592-1667) was to leave for Prague in the mid-1620s, and many other students left similarly to take teaching positions in different parts of Europe and, indeed, in other parts of the world as well. The main trend is still clear, however: It was more common for Jesuits to remain and continue teaching in one province for their entire active lives than it had been before, but their students, as well as their written works, could still carry their teachings around the world.

Something else that is noteworthy in Hurtado de Mendoza’s works, and the *Universa philosophia*, is that a specifically Jesuit philosophical tradition was taking form. He still refers to much of the philosophical tradition when treating a question. But his Jesuit predecessors in general, and “P. Suárez” in particular, play a major role as interlocutors. In Rodrigo de Arriaga’s *Cursus Philosophicus*, from 1632, this trend is even stronger in his referring to Suárez and Hurtado de Mendoza to lay the groundwork in addressing many questions. Other such reference figures among the Jesuits of earlier generations were Pedro da Fonseca (1528-1599), Luis Molina (1535-1600) and Gabriel Vásquez (~1550-1604). In the analysis presented here, Hurtado de Mendoza is related both ‘backwards,’ primarily to Suárez, and ‘forwards,’ primarily to Arriaga, in order to present a kind of ‘micro history’ of certain conceptual changes: ‘micro’ in terms of both the scope of the comparisons presented and the very limited material upon which these comparisons have been made.⁵ The focus, however, is placed on Hurtado de Mendoza’s thinking itself.

The aim of this article is to present at least some main features of Hurtado de Mendoza’s views on matter in general and prime matter in particular. Section 2 addresses the metaphysical status of prime matter, regarding its

⁵ Hurtado de Mendoza’s *Universa philosophia* from 1624 will be related, then, to Suárez’s *Disputationes metaphysicae* from 1597 and to Arriaga’s *Cursus Philosophicus* from 1632. (See bibliography.)

existence, essence and subsistence. Section 3 presents Hurtado de Mendoza's rejection of the labelling of prime matter as "pure potentiality" (*pura potentia*). In this section, Hurtado de Mendoza's distinction between a "physical" and a "metaphysical" sense of "matter" is discussed. The relation of matter to form, and especially the question of whether God could uphold matter without form, is the topic of section 4. This more general discussion of the status of matter leads then to the question of prime matter's relation to quantity, which is treated in section 5. In section 6, finally, some fascinating speculations by Hurtado de Mendoza regarding the possibility of types of matter other than the matter constitutive of our material world are presented.

2. *The Existence and Actuality of (Prime) Matter*

Regarding the question of prime matter in general, Hurtado de Mendoza largely follows Suárez in emphasizing the reality of matter and stating that it has this reality separately from form.⁶ It can be argued that this view is closely connected to the rejection of anything more than a merely rational or conceptual distinction between essence and existence; for if matter has its own essence, its own character so to speak, and if essence is not truly distinct from existence, then it seemingly follows that matter also has its own existence.

This is also the way in which Hurtado de Mendoza lays out the argument when treating the reality of prime matter:

If we speak metaphysically, we call *essence* the first concept that we form of whichever being. But if we speak physically, a thing's *essence* is the substantial parts united amongst themselves, as the essence of a human is the body united with the rational soul. The *existence* is the formal ground (*ratio*) by which each single thing is constituted outside its causes, in actuality, and the ground (*ratio*) by which things are constituted in the nature (*ratio*) of beings in an unqualified sense (because, as I will prove in the Metaphysics section, disputation VIII, section I, that that which does not exist is not a being in an unqualified sense).

⁶ For Suárez, see Åkerlund (2015) and (2019). Novak (forthcoming) takes Hurtado de Mendoza to hold a basically 'Suárezian' view of prime matter, though with some modifications. Suárez understands prime matter, in line with the broad Aristotelian tradition, as "the first subject of changes, or of forms" (*DM* 13.1.4; 25:396b: "primo subjecto mutationum, vel formarum"). Hurtado de Mendoza refers to this passage when he presents what he himself understands by the concept of "prime matter" (in *UPh* *Physica*, disp. II, sectio I, § 1; 167b).

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From the light of this reason alone, one seems to be able to infer that actual essence is neither really, nor from the nature of the things, distinguished from actual existence. For the present controversy, though, a real or modal distinction is to be supposed between essence and existence. For if one rejects this distinction, there is nothing left for the locus of this question. But on the distinction between essence and existence, whose proper place is in the section on Metaphysics, disputation VIII, I will not say a word at present.⁷

As can be seen, Hurtado de Mendoza's argumentation here incorporates a complex dialectic. At its core, the question is whether matter has its own proper existence, that is, apart from the existence of form. Hurtado de Mendoza begins by making a distinction as to how 'essence' is used in metaphysics and in physics, respectively. In physics, 'essence' refers to the entire thing, the union or composite of matter and form, with the human being's body and rational soul as prime examples.⁸ However, in metaphysics, the essence

⁷ *UPh* Physica, disp. II, sectio VI, § 54; 173b: "*Essentia* dicitur primus conceptus, quem efformamus de quovis ente, si metaphysice loquamur; si vero physice, *essentia* rei est partes substantiales inter se unitæ, ut hominis essentia est corpus unitum animo rationali. *Existencia* est ratio formalis, per quam unaquæque res constituitur extra suas causas in actu, et ratio, per quam res constituuntur in ratione entis simpliciter (quia quod non existit, non esse simpliciter ens probabo disput. 8 met. sect. 1) unde ipso rationis lumine videtur inferri, essentiam actualem non distingui realiter, neque ex natura rei ab existentia actuali. Ad præsentem tamen controversiam supponenda est distinctio realis, aut modalis inter essentiam et existentiam. Nam ea distinctione rejecta, nullus superest huic controversia locus, de distinctione autem essentiæ ab existentia nec verbum quidem in præsentem faciam, cujus sedes propria est in metaphysica, disput. 8." As indicated at the end of the quotation, that essence and existence are merely rationally distinct in created things is treated in *UPh* Metaphysica, disp. VIII, especially sectio IV, §§ 38-80; fol. 833b-39b. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

⁸ Cf. here Suárez and the 'metaphysical form,' the form of the whole, which is the same as the essence or the nature of a thing. See *DM* 15.11.3; 25:558a: "It must, therefore, be said that the properly metaphysical form which is the form of the whole is nothing else than the whole essence of a substantial thing which we also call the entire nature of a thing. It is not called a form because it specially exercises the proper causality of a form, but because by itself it constitutes the thing essentially. I explain and prove each of these claims. For in a human being, for example, this form of the whole is said to be humanity which, since it consists of matter and the form of a human being, expresses the whole essence of a human being." (English translation from Suárez 2000, p. 178. "Dicendum est ergo primo formam proprie metaphysicam, quae est forma totius, nihil aliud esse quam totam rei substantialis essentiam, quam etiam integram naturam rei appellamus, quae non dicitur forma eo quod specialiter exercent propriam causalitatem formae, sed quia rem essentialiter constituit per seipsam. Declaro et probo singula; nam in homine, verbi gratia, haec

is the “first concept” we form of something. Notice, however, that as Hurtado de Mendoza is treating *matter* here, it is rather within the *metaphysical* realm that he could presumably be understood to be moving, as matter itself is not a composite of matter and form.

Having defined existence as that by which each thing is constituted in actuality, Hurtado de Mendoza acknowledges the closeness of his present treatment to metaphysics and points out – with a reference precisely to the Metaphysics part of the work – that only by the above definitions can one understand that essence and existence are merely rationally distinct in things. However, because this would end the consideration of the question of whether matter has its own proper existence – presumably on account of its having its own essence or nature, and this being more or less obvious – Hurtado de Mendoza *for the sake of argument* assumes that there *is* a real⁹ or modal distinction between essence and existence.¹⁰ Here, Hurtado de Mendoza is employing a kind of hypothetical reasoning that his student Rodrigo de Arriaga would take even further.

Even with this hypothesis, though, Hurtado de Mendoza can show that matter has its own existence, independently of form. It also follows from matter having its own existence that matter has its own *subsistence*, at least partially, as substantial form also has its own partial subsistence. Hurtado de Mendoza writes:

Matter and form are therefore independent. Further, [they are] absolutely [independent], according to my opinion. Because subsistence is the substantial complement of a nature in its relation to itself. But matter and form are natures. They therefore have this complement. Therefore partial, because it is prior to the union. For subsistence is [relation] to itself, but union [is relation] to another.¹¹

forma totius dicitur esse humanitas, quae cum ex materia et forma hominis constet, totam essentiam hominis dicit [...].”

⁹ A distinction “from the nature of things” (*ex natura rei*) is the same as a real distinction, according to Hurtado de Mendoza. See *UPh* Metaphysica, disp. VI, sectio III, § 55; fol. 794a-b.

¹⁰ Hurtado de Mendoza devotes the whole disputation VI of the Metaphysics part of *Universa philosophia* to the different kinds of distinctions. See *UPh* Metaphysica, disp. VI; foll. 786b-817b.

¹¹ *UPh* Physica, disp. II, sect. VII, § 103; fol. 179a-b: “[M]ateria et anima ita sunt independentes: absolute item in mea sententia; quia subsistentia est complementum substantiale

Matter and form, then, have their own independent subsistence. However, they are directed toward each other, so to speak, and toward the union, so this subsistence can only be said to be partial.

It is a distinguishing feature that matter and form are treated in a highly parallel fashion in many contexts.¹² Here is but one further example, in Hurtado de Mendoza answering to an objection regarding the reality of matter:

Third, because if [matter] had act, it would therefore have substantial and complete being in an unqualified sense. The consequence does not follow, for the separate soul – indeed, any substantial form whatsoever – has its own existence and, if you like, subsistence, but none of these is a complete substance in an unqualified sense.¹³

Once again, the subsistence of matter as the subsistence of form is stressed. In addition, the case of the separate soul is taken as an example that can be transferred to other substantial forms, as well as to matter.¹⁴

3. *The Rejection of Prime Matter as ‘pura potentia’*

As can be seen, matter thus has its own, although partial, existence and subsistence according to Hurtado de Mendoza. What does he do, then, with the traditional understanding of prime matter as “pure potency” (*pura potentia*)?

naturæ in ordine ad se; sed materia et forma sunt naturæ; ergo habent illud complementum: ergo partiale: quia est prius unione: subsistentia enim est ad se, unio autem ad aliud.”

¹² Though this must only be taken as a weak hypothesis here, this seems to be a development or trend from Suárez, through Hurtado de Mendoza, and to Arriaga. To substantiate this claim would demand a more thorough treatment of the former and the latter together with Hurtado de Mendoza than is possible in this article. See, though, for comparison, e.g., Åkerlund (2015) and (2019) for Suárez, and Åkerlund (2024) for Arriaga.

¹³ *UPh Physica*, disp. II, sectio VI, § 59; 174a: “Tertio, quia si habet actum, ergo habet simpliciter substantiale esse, et completum. Nulla est consequentia, animus enim separatus, immo et quævis forma substantialis propriam habet existentiam, et, si placet, subsistentiam, cum tamen nulla ex illis sit substantia simpliciter completa.”

¹⁴ Though not referring to the *separate* soul, it is noteworthy that Suárez takes the human soul as the primary example when arguing for the existence of substantial forms. See *DM* 15.1.6; 25:499a: “The first argument for the existence of substantial forms is that a human being consists of a substantial form as an intrinsic cause; therefore, all other natural things also do.” (Translation from Suárez 2000, p. 20. “Primo igitur ratio sit, nam homo constat forma substantiali, ut intrinseca causa; ergo et res omnes naturales.”)

Following in the footsteps of Suárez, Hurtado de Mendoza does not reject this understanding wholesale. He rather makes a distinction, as does Suárez,¹⁵ between a *physical* and a *metaphysical* understanding of this label, accepting in the *physical* sense but denying that matter would be pure potency in a *metaphysical* sense.¹⁶ In a physical sense, matter is “every being [that is] formally extended, for example including prime matter, quantity and other similar [beings].”¹⁷ This is also what he has in mind when treating ‘matter’ in the Physics section of the work. Taken in a metaphysical sense, however, ‘matter’ seems to come close to the meaning of ‘potentiality.’ As he writes, in God there is no matter, “not only physically, but also metaphysically.”¹⁸ In angels, however, although there is no physical matter composed with form in them, there is still a metaphysical composition as to matter:

An angel, however, although it abstracts according to its being from all physical matter (also intellectual), does not abstract from metaphysical matter. Because in an angel, there is real composition of nature and suppositum, of intellect and understanding, of will and love, of substance and accident.¹⁹

This is, in a sense, a more general way of using the term ‘matter,’ in line with the Aristotelian-Scholastic tradition.²⁰

¹⁵ Cf., e.g., *DM* 13.5.9; 25:416b: “It should therefore be said, first, that prime matter is not called pure potency with respect to every act metaphysically, that is, because it does not include any metaphysical act. For this could not be true.” (“Dicendum est ergo primo materiam non vocari puram potentiam respectu omnis actus metaphysici, id est, quia nullum actum metaphysicum includat; hoc enim verum esse non potest.”)

¹⁶ *UPh* *Physica*, disp. II, sect. VI, § 56; fol. 173b: “[E]st enim pura potentia physice, id est, comparata ad actus physicos tantum habet rationem potentiae receptivae illorum; cui potentiae non repugnat, sed potius est necessarius actus entitativus et metaphysicus.”

¹⁷ *UPh* *Metaphysica*, disp. I, sectio VI, § 162; 718b: “Materiam physica voco omne ens formaliter extensum: verbi gratia, includens materiam primam, quantitatem aut quid simile: [...]”

¹⁸ *UPh* *Metaphysica*, disp. I, sectio VI, § 162; 719a: “Deus abstrahit secundum esse a materia non solum physica, sed etiam metaphysica: [...]”

¹⁹ *UPh* *Metaphysica*, disp. I, sectio VI, § 162; 719a: “Angelus autem, quamvis abstrahitur secundum esse ab omni materia physica etiam intellectuali, non tamen a metaphysica. Quia in eo est realiter compositio ex natura et supposito, ex intellectu et intellectione, ex voluntate et amore, ex substantia et accidenti: [...]”

²⁰ We will not explore this metaphysical sense of ‘matter’ further here, more than when the strictly physical sense of ‘matter’ has to be explicated. As to the brief treatment above, though, compare, for example, how Thomas Aquinas explicates the three ways in which substances have essences in *De ente et essentia*, chapter V (essence here standing as

Returning now to the physical understanding of ‘matter,’ and the labelling of prime matter as *pura potentia*, Hurtado de Mendoza seems to be even more dismissive of this label than Suárez. He writes that as it is “commonly taken,” to call matter pure potency is “neither satisfactory, nor true,” as it must at least have “entitative and existential” actuality.²¹

As stated above, one reason that matter must be real is that it constitutes the entire composite, together with form. But the reality of matter can also be shown from the fact that we need it to account for the very generation of substantial form in material things (excluding the case of the human soul).²² As a point supporting the concept that matter has its own existence, Hurtado de Mendoza writes the following:

The conclusion is proved, second, because the essence of prime matter is a true material cause of the material form. Therefore, matter cannot exist through form. The consequence is proven because a true and proper cause is by nature prior to its effect. The effect is contained eminently in the cause beforehand, but existence is foreknown in the cause beforehand, because no real cause causes – and neither does it proximately have the power to cause – before it pre-exists. Therefore, before the existence of the material form is known, the existing prime matter must be foreknown. But it cannot exist in this by form,

potentiality in relation to the actuality of being), also involving (physical) ‘matter’ into this treatment: “There are in fact three ways in which substances have essence. There is a reality, God, whose essence is his very being. [...] Essence is found in a second way in created intellectual substances. Their being is other than their essence, though their essence is without matter. [...] In a third way essence is found in substances composed of matter and form. In these, too, being is received and limited, because they have being from another. Their nature or quiddity, moreover, is received in designated matter.” (Translation from Aquinas 1968, pp. 60, 62, 65: “Invenitur enim triplex modus habendi essentiam in substantiis. Aliquid enim est, sicut Deus, cuius essentia est ipsummet suum esse; [...] Secundo modo invenitur essentia in substantiis creatis intellectualibus, in quibus est aliud esse quam essentia earum, quamvis essentia sit sine materia. [...] Tertio modo invenitur essentia in substantiis compositis ex materia et forma, in quibus et esse est receptum et finitum, propter hoc quod ab alio esse habent, et iterum natura vel quidditas earum est recepta in materia signata.” Aquinas 1976, fol. 378a-9a).

²¹ *UPh* Physica, disp. II, sect. II, § 24; fol. 169b: “Communiter vero materia prima appellatur a Thomistis *pura potentia*, quod ita fuisse sumptum, nec placet, nec est verum; quia materia prima actu existens habet ut minimum actum entitativum, et existendi, [...] ergo materia prima non est pura potentia universaliter sumpta.”

²² More on the relation between these ‘acts’ of matter below.

because then (or: at that stage) the existing form is not yet known. Therefore, prime matter cannot exist by form.²³

Because matter is a true (material) cause of a (material) form, it would be circular reasoning to state that matter in *its* turn would be an effect of form, and dependent on it for its existence. Matter thus has a reality of its own, independently from form, and can therefore also be a true material cause of a material form.

4. *The Relation of Matter to Form*

As can be seen, matter is therefore relatively independent from form according to Hurtado de Mendoza. So, what is the relation between matter and form *positively* stated?

First, according to Hurtado de Mendoza, the relation from matter to form is *transcendental*. Hurtado de Mendoza follows Suárez in his basic understanding of a *transcendental* as opposed to a *categorical* (or ‘predicamental’) relation, with these two being the only kinds of real relations.²⁴ In both cases, the foundation (*fundamentum*) of the relation must be real. In the case of a categorical relation, the terminus of the relation also must be real. In the case of a transcendental relation, however, the terminus does *not* need to be real. In this case, with a relation *from* matter *to* form, Hurtado de Mendoza understands it so that the status of the relation has to do with the fact that matter is not related to any one *particular* substantial form. It only has a “general” openness to receiving form:

²³ *UPh* Physica, disp. II, sect. VI, § 73; fol. 175b: “Secundo probatur conclusio, quia essentia materiæ primæ est vera causa materialis formæ materialis, ergo materia non potest existere per formam. Probatur consequentia, quia causa vera, et propria est natura prior suo effectui, quem in illo priori continet eminenter, sed in illo priori præintelligitur existens, quia nulla causa realis causat, neque est proxime potens ad causandum, antequam præexistat; ergo, antequam intelligatur existentia formæ materialis, præintelligitur materia prima existens, sed in illo priori non potest existere per formam, quia tunc nondum intelligitur forma existens, ergo materia prima non potest existere per formam.”

²⁴ Hurtado de Mendoza treats the relation between transcendental and categorical relations in *UPh* Metaphysica, disp. XV, sectio VIII, §§ 86-95; foll. 911b-12b. He there primarily, and explicitly, follows Suárez’s treatment in *DM* 47. For Suárez’s division of real relations into transcendental and categorical, see *DM* 47.3.10; 26:797b.

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A transcendental relation consists in a dependence that one thing has on another, without which it cannot be, at least in being possible, as a vital act without a vital power, and this without act, at least a possible act. But matter cannot be without forms being possible; the relation to these is therefore said [to be] transcendental.²⁵

Here, form depends on matter, but not the other way around (at least not in this context).²⁶

As to the relation of matter and form, one could further ask: Could matter and form exist independently of each other?

Now, naturally, matter comes with form, and prime matter also has “an innate desire for substantial forms.”²⁷ However, by God’s power, matter could exist on its own, without form.

As stated above, Hurtado de Mendoza ascribes to matter its own subsistence and existence. Hence, it is nearly a given that he believes that God could uphold matter without form. However, in his argumentation, he wishes to show that *even if* matter had its existence through form, God could still determine some other means to uphold matter without form:

For even if the existence [of matter] came forth from form, why could it not come forth from something else?²⁸

Once again, as in other cases mentioned above, Hurtado de Mendoza makes it more difficult for himself in a way when showing that matter can be

²⁵ *UPh Physica*, disp. II, sect. II, § 20; fol. 169b: “[R]elatio transcendentalis consistit in dependentia, quam habet una res ab alia, sine quam salte in esse possibili, esse non potest, ut actus vitalis sine potentia vitali, et hæc sine actu, saltem possibili, sed materia esse non potest, nisi esse possibile formæ, ergo ad illas dicit relationem transcendentalem.”

²⁶ There is, as far as can be ascertained, no separate treatment of Hurtado de Mendoza’s treatment of relations. Arriaga on relation has been treated in Penner (2012). The specific question of the union between matter and form will not be treated here. For some recent treatments, see Anfray (2019), Schmaltz (2020) and Leinsle (forthcoming). Basically, according to Hurtado de Mendoza, the union consists of two ‘modes,’ one of matter (‘materialization’) and one of the substantial form (‘information’). (See especially Leinsle forthcoming.)

²⁷ *UPh Physica*, disp. II, sect. III, § 32; fol. 170b: “appetitum innatum ad formas substantiales.”

²⁸ *UPh Physica*, disp. II, sect. IX, § 144; fol. 183b: “Licet enim ex natura rei existentia proveniat a forma, cur non poterit aliunde provenire?”

upheld by God's power, and he argues that this can be shown even if a separate existence is ascribed to matter, as he himself contends.

Suárez also argues that matter can be upheld by God's absolute power, just as form can. However, Suárez's argumentation is more straightforward, making references precisely to the proper, although partial, existence and subsistence of matter:

[J]ust as matter has its own incomplete essential entity, so also it has its own incomplete existential entity. For the existence of a substance is composed in the same way as the essence of the substance, and thus, without any contradiction or repugnance, God can conserve matter without form just as He conserves form without matter. For, although the proper receptacle, so to speak, of the complete and entire existence is the complete nature or substantial suppositum, a part of the nature, or a partial nature, nevertheless, is capable of a partial existence which is proportionate with it and which it can, by divine power, subsist alone as a part, just as quantity exists as separate in its proportionate existence by divine power.²⁹

To be a bit speculative, here it is as though this basic point has already been satisfactorily argued for Hurtado de Mendoza; now he desires to show that God could uphold matter *even if* the basic points regarding the existence and subsistence of matter were *ex hypothesi* granted to the opposite side.

Later, in Arriaga, this question would take an interesting and quite unexpected turn. In line with his Jesuit predecessors, Arriaga also affirms that matter can exist without substantial form:

We have denied all *a priori* dependence of prime matter on form. Now, however, I also deny an essential *a posteriori* dependence. For I judge that prime matter can exist without such a substantial form, at least miraculously.³⁰

²⁹ *DM* 15.9.5; 25:533b: “[M]ateria, sicut habet suam partialem entitatem essentiae, ita et existentiae; existentia enim substantiae ita composita est sicut essentia substantiae, et ideo sine ulla implicatione vel repugnantia potest Deus sicut formam sine materia, ita et materiam sine forma conservare. Quia, licet proprium susceptivum (ut ita loquamur) completae et integrae existentiae sit completa natura vel substantiale suppositum, tamen pars naturae seu natura partialis capax est partialis existentiae sibi proportionatae, in qua potest per divinam potentiam partialiter sola subsistere, sicut quantitas in sua proportionata existentia per divinam potentiam separata existat.” (Translation from Suárez 2000, p. 118.)

³⁰ Arriaga (1632), “Physica”, disputatio II, sectio VI, subsectio II, § 98; 261a: “Dependentiam omnem a priori a forma negavimus materiae primae; nunc autem eidem nego dependentiam essentialem a posteriori: arbitror enim, saltem miraculose eam posse existere sine ulla forma substantiali.”

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In this statement, he essentially follows Suárez and Hurtado de Mendoza. Now, however, comes a twist:

I have said *substantial*, since matter cannot exist without some modal form, namely without some ubication and duration (in case these are distinguished).³¹

So, matter can be without *substantial* form. However, matter *must* have a ‘where’ and a ‘when,’ so to speak, with these being designated “modal forms.”³² Arriaga sometimes also enumerates quantity in this list.

Seen from this perspective, Hurtado de Mendoza, with his complex dialectic, stands on a line upon which a clear development on the small scale occurs: between Suárez’s more ‘simple’ affirmation that God could uphold matter without form and Arriaga’s affirmation of the same position but with the addition that matter must still come with *some* (modal) forms.

5. Matter and Quantity

The above arguments bring us to Hurtado de Mendoza’s understanding of how matter is related to *quantity*.

First, quantity comes from matter as from its “root,” and matter is the “material cause” of quantity. Hurtado de Mendoza writes further that quantity is “contained in the power of matter.”³³

Could we, then, have matter *without* quantity? Hurtado de Mendoza affirms this unequivocally. Just as quantity can be without matter,³⁴ all the more so can matter be without quantity, with the even more ‘robust’ ontological status of matter as an independent entity. In this context, Hurtado

³¹ Arriaga (1632), “Physica”, disputatio II, sectio VI, subsectio II, § 98; 261b: “Dixi *substantiali*, quia sine aliqua forma modali, nempe sine aliqua ubicatione vel duratione (casu quo distinguatur) nequit existere materia.”

³² For more on Arriaga on these issues, see Åkerlund (2024) especially pp. 340-1, from where also the above translations of Arriaga are taken.

³³ *UPh* Metaphysica, disp. IV, sect. V, § 94; fol. 757b: “Nam materia prima præhabet quantitatem, estque illius radix, et fundamentum in genere causæ materialis: sed hoc est quantitatem contineri in potentia materiæ: [...]”

³⁴ This would be a standard position that Hurtado de Mendoza could refer to, as this is the case in transubstantiation in the Eucharist. For the Medieval background, with views into the 17th century, see Pasnua (2011) ch. 10, pp. 179-99.

de Mendoza also makes an interesting distinction between extension on the one hand and impenetrability on the other:³⁵

You ask, first, *whether prime matter could be conserved without quantity*. Many reject this, but I don't know on what grounds. For if prime matter were conserved without quantity, it wouldn't from that follow two contradictory predicates. You say that matter will be extended and not extended: extended, indeed, because it has parts, but not extended, because it would lack extension. This is an equivocation [I say]. Because it would not be impenetrably extended, for this is the proper effect of quantity. It would be extended, however, as if essentially. For all material things have this extension, that is, composition from parts. It is shown secondly, for quantity depends more on matter than matter on quantity, as is obvious in itself. But quantity can be without matter, by [the] absolute power [of God]. Therefore, matter [can be] without quantity.³⁶

Thus, impenetrability is an effect of quantity, but not extension. Extension is merely the property of having a “composition of parts” of material things. Matter without quantity, then, would still have extension, although this material thing would be penetrable.³⁷

The question of the nature of matter without quantity raises many consequent questions for Hurtado de Mendoza, the answers to which are interesting in relation to comprehending his general understanding of matter. First, there is the question of whether matter without quantity would reduce to a “point.” For someone contending that extension comes with, or at least

³⁵ For a background on views regarding the relation between extension and impenetrability, see Pasnau (2011) ch. 15, pp. 300-22.

³⁶ *UPh* Metaphysica, disp. XII, sectio VI, § 47; 890a: “Rogas primo. *Utrum materiae prima possit divinitus sine quantitate conservari?* Negant nonnulli, nescio quo fundamento: nam si materia prima conservetur sine quantitate, non inde sequuntur duo praedicata contradictoria. Dices, materiam fore extensa, et non extensam; extensam quidem, quia habet partes: non extensam, quia careret extensione. Hæc est æquivocatio; quia non esset extensa impenetrabiliter, hic enim effectus est proprius quantitatis: esset autem extensa quasi essentialiter; omnis enim res materialis habet hanc extensionem, id est compositionem ex partibus. Secundo probatur; quia magis dependet quantitas a materia, quam materia a quantitate, ut per se patet: sed quantitas de potentia absoluta potest esse sine materia: ergo materia sine quantitate.”

³⁷ Arriaga would later hold an interesting variant of Hurtado de Mendoza's view. Arriaga thinks that quantity is identical to matter, and therefore even calls quantity a “substance.” However, he still speculates at length regarding what matter without quantity *would* be like, and in this comes to quite similar views as Hurtado de Mendoza. See Arriaga (1632), “Metaphysica”, disputatio V, sectio I, subsectio III, §§ 21-6; 879b-80b. See also Åkerlund (2024) pp. 342-3.

is dependent on, quantity, this seems to be the case.³⁸ However, because Hurtado de Mendoza does *not* connect extension to quantity, this conclusion does not follow. Although the fine points of his own answer remain somewhat unclear,³⁹ he seems to maintain that matter would “retain its prior place, unless it would be moved from without,” and “remain in the prior space” by the “preceding ublication.”⁴⁰

Could such matter without quantity then be moved? It would not be possible that it could be moved in the normal way, namely that something else that is material ‘pushes’ it because two bodies cannot possibly occupy the same space (as impenetrability is dependent on quantity). However, because matter without quantity has a place, this place could also be changed, and hence matter without quantity *could* also be moved; that is, its place could be changed. This is also the case with respect to the power of angels. As angels are immaterial, their way of moving matter – insofar as this is within their ability – is not by way of “impetus” and moving in a bodily way (that is, because two impenetrable bodies cannot take up the same space), but rather by a mere ‘act of will.’ This other way of moving matter would in no way be impeded by the removal of quantity from matter.⁴¹

Finally, what would happen to a falling body – say, water falling through air – if it lost its quantity in the air? Hurtado de Mendoza’s answer is that it would keep falling, as this falling occurs on account of the heaviness (*gravitas*) of the falling body, which is not removed by the removal of quantity.⁴² Quantity, and impenetrability, are only needed in order for a body to receive motion (*motus*) from another body, which would not be the case here. Indeed, the

³⁸ Hurtado de Mendoza refers to the Jesuit Antonius Rubius (1548-1615) for this view.

³⁹ A deeper understanding of Hurtado de Mendoza’s position here would require a further exploration of the relation between terms such as ‘point’ (*punctum*), ‘place’ (*locus*), ‘space’ (*spatium*), and ‘ublication’ (*ubicatio*) in his philosophy.

⁴⁰ *UPh* Metaphysica, disp. XII, sectio VI, § 48; 890a: “[...] posset remanere in priori spatio per ublicationem precedentem: imo retineret priorem locum nisi ab extrinseco moveretur; [...]”

⁴¹ *UPh* Metaphysica, disp. XII, sectio VI, § 48; 890a: “Angelus autem non movet impetu, quo ipse feratur in locum: neque propter impossibilitatem ipsius cum alio corpore in eodem loco, sed movet per voluntatem. Quapropter ut corpus moveat, non eget resistentia in eodem corporeut egent cætera corpora.”

⁴² Once again, a full exploration of this position of Hurtado de Mendoza’s would require a fuller treatment of his natural philosophy than is possible here.

falling body of water would move even more easily through the air, as it would not have the resistance that comes from its quantity and impenetrability!⁴³

6. Excursus: The Possibility of Another Kind of Matter

Before bringing this brief overview of Hurtado de Mendoza's understanding of matter to a close, it might be interesting to also mention his speculations regarding a kind of matter other than the matter we know.

These speculations come in the context of Hurtado de Mendoza's treating the question of whether all the matter of sub-lunary creatures is of the same kind, as well as the consideration of the relation between matter in sub-lunary and supra-lunary substances. It is precisely with regard to corruptible – that is, sub-lunary – material substances that he asks whether there could be another kind of matter in these entities:

I say, second, that by the absolute power of God, there can be other matter of corruptible things, of a kind distinct from ours. It is proven, for there are other possible primary qualities that are mutually contrary, from which arise other secondary qualities, which dispose for other forms independent from our qualities. But the matter of such forms differs from ours.⁴⁴

We have here quite a speculative discussion regarding other kinds of primary and secondary qualities distinct from those we know.⁴⁵ Those other kinds of qualities would require another kind of matter than the kind that we have in the material world that we inhabit. Hurtado de Mendoza also refers once

⁴³ *UPh* Metaphysica, disp. XII, sectio VI, § 49; 890a: “Confirmatur tunc corpus posse moveri: demus aquam in aëre existentem, quantitate spoliari, tunc ea aqua motu gravium descendere infra aërem: ergo se posset movere. Probatur antecedens; quia gravitas est principium corpus impellens infra aërem: ergo dum corpus retinet gravitatem, ea impelletur. Neque vero impediatur motus; quia quantitas neque est virtus activa, nec passiva illius, neque requiritur extensio nisi ad recipiendum motum ab alio corpore. Imo facilius gravitate moveretur aqua; quia non haberet resistentiam: [...]”

⁴⁴ *UPh* Physica, disp. II, sect. V, § 52; fol. 173a: “Dico secundo, de potentia absoluta Dei potest esse alia materia rerum corruptibilium, distincta specie a nostra. Probatur, quia sunt possibles aliæ primæ qualitates inte se contrariæ, ex quibus oriuntur aliæ secundæ qualitates, quæ disponant ad formas alias independentes a nostris qualitatibus, sed materia talium formarum specie differret a nostra, [...]”

⁴⁵ Once again, a fuller explication of the quote above would require a more extensive treatment of Hurtado de Mendoza's understanding of qualities.

again to the fact that it does not involve any contradiction as a reason for why God could create this other kind of matter:

Second, that which does not imply a contradiction should not be denied of God. But there does not seem to be any repugnance in such matter. It should therefore not be denied of God that He could make such matter”.⁴⁶

The question remains, though, whether this kind of matter could even be more perfect than ‘our’ kind of matter. In answering this question, Hurtado de Mendoza speculates not only about another kind of matter but also about embodied creatures with an immaterial soul – as we have – that are more perfect than we are:

You ask whether this [other kind of matter] would be more perfect than our [kind] or not. I answer that it is possible that it is much more perfect, and also much more imperfect, because of those qualities; some might be more perfect than our qualities, some others more imperfect. But if the matter would not have the capacity for [receiving] a spiritual form, there is no doubt that ours would be more perfect than this; if, however, it would have the capacity for [receiving] another form more perfect than the soul, there is no doubt that this would be more perfect than ours.⁴⁷

Thus, Hurtado de Mendoza speculates regarding embodied creatures with ‘spiritual’ forms – as we have – who are superior to us. This is, I believe, a strong testament to the speculative power of this thinker.

⁴⁶ *UPh Physica*, disp. II, sect. V, § 52; fol. 173a: “Secundu, quod non implicat contradictionem, non est denegandum Deo; sed nulla apparet repugnantia talis materiae, ergo non est denegandum Deo illam facere posse.”

⁴⁷ *UPh Physica*, disp. II, sect. V, § 53; fol. 173a: “Rogas utrum esset perfectior hac nostra vel non? Respondeo esse possibles multas perfectiores, et imperfectiores multas, quia qualitates illae possunt esse, aliae quidem perfectiores nostris qualitatibus, aliae vero imperfectiores. Si autem nulla materia esset capax formae spiritualis, non dubium, quin haec nostra sit illis perfectior; si autem esset capax alterius formae perfectiores animo, non dubium quin sit perfectior, quam haec nostra.”

7. Conclusion

Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza, standing in a tradition of Jesuit thinkers and instigating the tradition of the school-book format of *Cursus Philosophicus*, unequivocally affirms the separate, although partial, essence, existence and subsistence of prime matter, often incorporating a highly complex dialectic when arguing for this position (section 2). In line with this basic understanding of the status of prime matter, he basically rejects the designation of prime matter as “pure potency” (*pura potentia*). In this context, he also makes a distinction between a “physical” and a “metaphysical” sense of the term “matter” (section 3). As for the relation of matter and form, although matter has an “innate desire” for form, Hurtado de Mendoza affirms that matter and form could be upheld and exist separately, by the power of God. Once again, Hurtado de Mendoza employs a complex dialectic, arguing from a position in which he hypothetically accepts the premises of his opponents. Further, regarding the question of matter as existing without form, Hurtado de Mendoza maintains an interesting position as a ‘middle figure’ between Suárez and Arriaga (section 4).

As for matter’s relation to quantity (section 5), matter can exist without quantity, just as quantity can exist – all the more so – without matter. Matter would not lose extension without quantity, but it would be penetrable. Matter would retain its place, also without quantity, and it could also be moved, although not in the ‘regular’ way but rather, for example, through an act of will by an angel. Indeed, a body moving through the air would even be able to move more easily if it lost its quantity.

Finally, and as an *excursus* (section 6), although all matter around us is ultimately of the same kind, one could without contradiction imagine other kinds of matter for corruptible things. This would be matter that receives other kinds of forms. Whether one would count this other kind of matter as more or less noble than the one to which we have access would depend on the kinds of forms it could receive. The type of argumentation exhibited in this context is a powerful testament to the speculative power of Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza.

Abbreviations

- DM* = Suárez, F. (1861 [1597]) *Disputationes metaphysicae*, in *Opera omnia*, vols. 25-26. Paris: Vivès.
- UPh* = Hurtado de Mendoza, P. (1624) *Universa Philosophia*. Lyons: Louis Prost, héritiers Rouillé.

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