THE INTERPRETATION OF THE TWO THOMISTIC DEFINITIONS OF CERTITUDE

A DISSERTATION

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by

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PROPOSITIONES

I. Materia est appetitus ad formam.

II. In accidentibus individui non est quaerenda causa finalis sed solus causa materialis.

III. Artes quae imitantur actiones et passiones humanae dependent a synderesi et scientia morali quoad veritatem ipsius artificii.

IV. Inductio requiritur ad cognitionem primorum principiorum.

V. Ratio potentiae cognoscitivae distinguitur omnino a ratione potentiae appetitivae.

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INTRODUCTION

This essay intends nothing more than the presentation of a rough and rapid outline of a few very limited aspects of the Thomistic doctrine on certitude and it develops immediately from the fact that St. Thomas gives two definitions of certitude which have struck Mercier as being radically different. In view of its rudimentary character, it might better have been called "Notes Toward An Interpretation of the Thomistic Definition of Certitude", had not that style already been preempted by the modesty which originates in profound knowledge and practically become its trademark. The diffidence with which this essay is proferred issues from an entirely different source, so that the use of such a title would have indicated no small degree of presumption.

The choice of the subject itself may seem to give the lie to this disclaimer and so need some explanation. One might think that a matter as elemental as the Thomistic definitions had long since been so carefully and competently covered by the modern Scholastics that any further discussion of them would be at least superfluous. The mere projection of another essay purporting to expose any part of St. Thomas' teaching at this late date would appear so utterly preposterous as to convict anyone who would persist in it seriously of crass stupidity. Furthermore, it is hardly likely that a position which has been so heavily attacked as has Mercier's needs further attention.

Granted that the antecedent probability is all in favor of this double

assumption, it may be possible to note briefly a few things which may render it somewhat less plausible.

If one goes back to the very beginning of the modern Scholastic period with Balmes (1) and turns to the first page of his Philosophie fondamentale (2), he will find that the book starts with this sentence:

> "J'ai dû commencer ces études philosophiques par l'examen des questions relatives à la certitude; avant d'élever un édifice, il faut songer aux fondements."

If, now, he takes up what is perhaps the latest manual in the same field, Van Steenberghen's Epistémologie, he will soon come upon the following statement, which occurs in connection with the author's criticism of Mercier's Critériologie générale:

> "En premier lieu, l'accent est mis sur la certitude; or celle-ci n'est qu'un état psychologique, dérivant d'un certain état, d'une certaine perfection de l'acte de connaître lui-même; l'objet principal de l'épistémologie, conçue comme science et, dès lors, comme recherche désintéressée, doit être de déterminer la nature de la connaissance, ses conditions, sa valeur; la question de la certitude ne peut être qu'un corollaire....." (3)

This juxtaposition of texts is the clearest way of underlining the change which has taken place in the attitude of some modern Scholastics toward certitide, even though of itself it does not prove it. It is quite possible that both Balmes and Van Steeberghen represent extreme views, neither of which was ever held by anyone else. A glance at a few more texts will go far towards dissipating this difficulty.

Tongiori is counted the first Italian disciple of Balmes (4) and it might be well to find out whether or not he supports his master's

insistence on the importance of certitude. In the second part of his Institutiones Logicae (5), which part is devoted to the question of truth and which he calls "Critica" (6), he has this to say:

> "Quicunque ratione pollet, spontaneo facultatum suarum exercitio certitudinem de factis, de principiis, de conclusionibus omnino plurimis firmissimam acquirit. Ante omne enim philosophorum disputationem, certitudinem, humanae vitae adeo necessariam, in tuto collocavit natura, quum et media suppeditavit illius acquirendae, ut usum mediorum per se ipsa docuit, ac tantopere mentem nostram veritati astrinxit, ut dubitare de pluribus rebus, etiamsi conemur, nequeamus. Non est igitur philosopho laborandum, ut certitudinem assequatur, vel ut genus humanum doceat, utrum possit ad illam, aut quomodo pertingere. Sed in illud unice animum intedere debet, ut naturalis certitudinis fundamenta expendat, explicet, tueatur; erroresque qui in usu mediorum, quibus certitudo comparatur, irrepere possunt, notet doceatque quomodo hi vitari possint. Atque hoc agunt philosophi, qui dogmatici vocantur, et per hoc certitudinem quam dicunt philosophicam, obtineri posse tuentur. Est enim certitudo philosophica certitudo reflexa, orta ex distincta cognitione motivorum quae naturalem certitudinem gignunt, ac ratione consentaneam faciunt." (7)

Aside from the fact that he does not, for reasons of order, place his treatment of certitude at the very beginning of his philosophy, Tongiori could hardly have made his agreement with Balmes' conception of the primacy of certitude more explicit. Lest it be thought that he has added anything to Balmes by the distinction he makes between natural and philosophical certitude, or by his emphasis on the incontestability of the existence of the former and his mention of the necessity of reflection for the latter, it sould be recalled that Balmes had already made these same points. (8)

Because of the importance which the question of the possibility of assuming the critical position takes on a little later, it is also interesting

to remark the almost contemptuous tone with which Tongiori treats Descartes. He postpones any mention of him until he has first made a general criticism of Scepticism -- introduced by the paragraph quoted just above -- and until he has proposed the now-famous theory of the three primitive truths, another borrowing from Balmes (9). Only then, and as if it were an unnecessary appendix which might just as well have been omitted, does he examine the methodic doubt. His slight opinion of Descartes shines through the opening words of this article:

> "Vix jam esset cur in his quaestionibus de Cartesio multis loqueremur, nisi recentiores ejus sive adversarii sive laudatores omnia Cartesii nomine replessent, jure ne an injuria, ipsi viderint. Quoniam igitur omnes de Cartesio disserunt, breviter innuemus quid sit sentiendum de ea philosophandi methodo, quam ipse sibi adoptandam putavit; ut exaggerationes erroresque contrarii, qui sub Cartesii tum laudibus, tum accusationibus delitescere solent, vitari possint." (10)

Damnation with faint praise is the final tribute he pays, when, a little further on, he sifts from the excesses of both Rationalists and Traditionalists what he estimates as Descartes' most significant contribution to philosophy:

> "Sepositis igitur iis omnibus, quae in utriusque scholae declamationibus sive falsa sunt, sive exaggerata, non negaverim aliquam laudem esse Cartesio tribuendam, eo quod viderit, quantum in quaestionibus de certitudine et gravitatis sit et difficultatis, quantumque psychologica reflexio ad has et similes quaestiones solvendas, utilitatis afferat; quae quidem laus ejus priva ac singularis non est...." (11)

Exactly ten years after the appearance of the third edition of Tongiori's Institutiones Philosophicae in 1864, Palmieri published a series bearing the same title (12), the first volume of which is devoted to logic

and ontology. He follows the division of logic which Tongiori had stated and, if anything, attaches this division to certitude even more plainly:

> "Itaque Logicam universam in duas partes diribemus quarum prior leges tradit, quibus regi oporet operationes mentis in inquisitione veritatis, ut rectae sint; altera certitudinis indolem et fundamenta scrutatur, fontes aperiens ex quibus certae notitiae veritatum hauriri possunt et debent, ac criteria suppeditans quibus verum a falso discernamus. Sic enim fiet ut non solum operationes mentis sint rectae, sed et cognitiones eiusdem verae sint." (13)

While Tongiori had been content with the general assertion that the ancients treated the problems of material logic only occasionally and in passing and had attributed its rise as an independent branch of logic to more recent writers, Palmieri attaches it directly to the Posterior Analytics. At the same time, the latter evinces a somewhat more sympathetic feeling for the relatively recent trends:

> "Persuasum enim erat veteribus Logica munus esse non solum docere quomodo operationes mentis rectae sint, sed etiam quomodo verae esse possint; hoc alterum liquet ex Posterioribus analyticis Aristotelis, quibus tanquam textu usa est semper Schola. Huc autem spectat haec altera, quae modo traditur, pars Logicae. Discrimen est tamen quod ea amplificata fuerit quodammodo, et aucta quibusdam quaestionibus, quas veteres, aliis in locis philosophiae tractabant. Cuius amplificationis causa fuit orta recentiore aetate disputatio, et instituta inquisitio de fundamentis ipsis et indole certitudinis, eiusque fontibus, ex quibus nempe notitias certae haberi possint, atque motivis: qua quaestione semel excitata ac diversis in ea productis opinionibus integrum non est amplius Philosopho eam praeterire, vel leviter solum attingere. Ipsa vero proprie ad logicam spectat, cuius est ad certas notitias assequendas viam menti munire. Hinc est quod hac nostra quoque aetate qui peripatetici sunt, aut certe videri volunt, in ea toti sint, eamque accurate pertractent." (14)

It is not to be forgotten, however, that, in this section of his Preface, Palmieri is not attacking Tongiori, who certainly realised the im-

portance and the necessity of this branch of philosophical inquiry (as is manifest from his extensive treatment of it in his own work), but is rather opposing the Traditionalists in their strong objection to the use of anything like a thorough-going critical method.

Advertence to this fact may appear to disqualify the statement just quoted as a witness to any substantial difference in the attitudes of Tongiori and Palmieri toward the new insistence that absolutely no certitude be exempt from scrutiny.

Actually, of course, the main interest of the statement is the fine indication it gives of the way in which Palmieri -- continuing as also clarifying the thought of Tongiori -- conceives material logic wholly in function of certitude, at the same time that it evidences both his carefulness to found that relationship in Aristotle and his perfect willingness to grant the necessity of the appropriation by material logic of whatever is good in the more modern method. Whether or not there is detectable in it beyond that a greater readiness than Tongiori evinces to recognize the profit which can accrue to philosophy from the proper utilization of the newly emphasized old technique is incidental to this central point.

To say, however, that their differences are in matters of accessory detail is not to say that their differences count for nothing. When later writers pose the problem of the limit to which a Thomist can legitimately go in instituting his epistemological critique and when they examine the extent to which he can rightly accede to the demands of his adversaries without sacrifice of his own essential positions, one sometimes gets the

impression that the question had never before occured to anyone as worthy of serious consideration. It is at least helpful to know that the older generation of writers had indeed thought the thing over pretty thoroughly and that, though they have ranged themselves solidly in support of what would appear to be the only alternative to either Rationalism or Traditionalism which is ever truly available to the Thomist, their stands are not perfectly solidary. Longiori prefers to maintain an air of aloof disdain as his way of underscoring his conviction that, if that choice of alternative is dictated, its imposition is not in any sense due to any compulsion the moderns can bring to bear, but is rather implicit as an essential element of the ancient tradition, to which, further, the moderns can add nothing of value. Palmieri exhibits somewhat better grace when he declares that it is now impossible for any honest adherent of Peripateticism to refuse to become involved in the questions raised by the followers of Descartes, or even to pass them over in silence.

But if their differences, which at first glance seem scarcely significant, thus loom large in the light of later discussion as setting them off one from (not, against) the other, so that it is possible both to see that their thought is not simply stationary or repetitious and to make out the direction in which it is moving, one should not lose sight of the fact that, once seen in this light, these same differences have, in their turn and because of their being based in the essential agreement of which they are but the various expressions, an illuminative value of their own, insofar as they facilitate the measurement of the distance by which some of

the later writers venture outside what these men consider a safe defensive perimeter.

Thus, if Palmieri does not refuse to parley with the enemy on the very boundaries of his position -- and even allows him to infiltrate his lines in the hope of thus reducing him to submission all the more quickly -- he is adamant in his determination not to be lured across those boundaries by an excess of sympathy for the sorry plight of his adversaries. If he departs from Tongiori's dim view of Descartes, his pity is not at all the dewey-eyed sort which obscures clarity of vision:

> "Reiciendum quidem est dubium reale de omnibus, quod et scepticum dicitur, neque ex eo profecto potest initium ducere philosophia; at alter est dubium quod methodicum dici solet, quo non excluditur quidem certitudo, si qua habetur, sed praecisione ab ea facta, veritas et veritatis demonstratio inquiritur ac si res adhuc esset incerta nobis. Ab hoc dubio omnis demonstratio initium ducit, quae non supponit certum quod est probandum; atque ab hac dubitatione omnes scholastici disputationes suas auspicabantur quaerentes ex. gr. utrum Deus sit, et ita porro. Quid ergo prohibet eadem methodo uti in instituenda analysis certitudinis, eiusque investigandis fundamentis et motivis? Non enim ita ipsa amittitur aut perimitur, sed e contrario, penitiore eius notitia accepta, firmior evadit ipsa et securior...." (15)

When one remarks the concern about certitude which permeates this whole preface, he is little surprised when he notices further that Palmieri makes certitude an element of his general definition of logic (16), though Tongiori does not, and that, while Tongiori does not take up the consideration of certitude until after he has treated truth and its acquisition, Palmieri barely mentions truth in the short introduction to his "Philosophia Critica", or material logic (17), but begins that section immediately with a chapter entitled "De Certitudine" (18).

It would be possible to point out a further difference between Tongiori and Palmieri in the matter of the commonly accepted divisions of certitude (19). But those already reported are enough to prove that the divergency of their views on certain points effects no change whatsoever in their common agreement on the importance of certitude. Neither is there any advantage to be gained from stringing out a series of quotations from other manuals to show that they, too, carry on the tradition of insistence on certitude thus early established. The process of doing so would be incredibly boring and each one can verify this continuity for himself by consulting the manuals at his disposal.

If, then, there is no break in this tradition, the question naturally arises whether Van Steenberghen is the representative of an entirely new line of thought. To answer that question it will be necessary to follow at least cursorily the chain of events which have led to his denigration of certitude.

It would appear to begin with the publication exactly fifty years ago, in 1899 (20), of Mercier's Critériologie Générale, the book which Van Steenberghen criticizes so severely.

Paradoxically enough, Mercier's manual is no less careful to underline the importance of certitude than were its predecessors. But there is an all-important difference. Whereas the earlier writers, as has been pointed out, considered certitude in connection with truth and its acquisition -- even Palmieri did not entirely pass over this point -- Mercier seems to attribute its primacy to the fact that it is the area of agreement which Scholasticism has with the sceptics. That is, however much the latter may

question the validity of the certitudes we have, there is no possibility of casting doubt upon the fact that we do have certitudes at least as subjective states:

> "Or, le scepticisme digne de discussion ne va pas jusqu'à tout contester. Pour le sceptique comme pour nous, la nature est en possession d'assentiments certains; pour lui, comme pour nous, il y a des états de conscience dont l'existence, au moins phénoménale, est absolument indubitable; ce sont les données du problème sur lequel lui et nous sommes appelés à nous prononcer." (21)

He repeats the same idea in connection with his criticism of the theory of the three primitive truths as totally useless against scepticism:

> "Mais le sceptique n'a aucun intérêt à contester ces faits de conscience. La vraie question entre lui et nous n'est pas de savoir si nous éprouvons des assentiments spontanément irrésistibles, psychologiquement indéniables, c'est chose accordée, ce sont les données même du problème; il s'agit de connaître la cause de ces assentiments, de savoir si la nécessité indéniable d'affirmer telle proposition spontanément certaine résulte adéquatement de la constitution du sujet pensant, ou si elle est déterminée par l'influence d'une cause objective." (22)

This does not at all mean that Mercier detaches the notion of certitude from that of truth. Such a separation would, in fact, be impossible for any Scholastic:

> "Le problème critériologique peut donc s'énoncer provisoirement en ces termes: L'intelligence humaine possède-t-elle un critère de vérité, à l'effet de discerner entre un assentiment légitimement certain, parce que vrai, et un assentiment dont la fermeté a pour seul appui une disposition affective ou une tendance du sujet pensant?" (23)

But it does mean that, apart from and wholly anterior to any attachment to truth which it may later turn out to have, certitude is already invested with a dignity of its own and with an undeniable primacy, because it is the

admission of the existence of certitude as a psychological state which is the starting point of every critical system and so it must be the point of departure for the Scholastic critique, too:

> "Le problème surgit tout juste au moment où, réfléchissant sur nos états de conscience, nous nous demandons si la réflexion confirme nos adhésions spontanées; en d'autre termes, si elle peut, oui ou non, trouver justifiable et justifié l'assentiment naturel de l'âme que nous appelons certitude." (24)

If universal doubt is the initial attitude of the sincere sceptic, scientific honesty obliges the Scholastic to begin his investigation in the same way and in the same frame of mind:

> "On n'a pas le droit de déclarer ni de supposer artificiellement par avance que la raison humaine n'est pas apte à nous mener à la connaissance certaine de la vérité.
> "On n'a pas non plus le droit de juger par avance que la raison humaine est apte à nous mener à la connaissance certaine de la vérité.
> "Au seuil de l'épistémologie, le critique doit s'abstenir de préjuger soit l'inaptitude soit l'aptitude de nos facultés cognitives; il doit se maintenir à cet égard dans une ignorance voulue. Cet état d'esprit est un doute négatif universel. C'est même davantage. Qui dit doute négatif, dit impuissance à se prononcer, faute de motifs objectifs; c'est un état que le sujet se sent condamné à subir. Or, l'ignorance initiale sur la valeur de nos facultés, que nous réclamons du critique, n'est pas une simple impuissance, c'est une loi justifiée qu'il est tenu de s'imposer pour ne point tomber dans l'arbitraire." (25)

If, in the eyes of the inheritors of the old attitude toward the sceptical position, who thought that Palmieri had gone far enough when he was willing to grant that there might be something in the methodic doubt which might be worth the trouble of salvaging, this entirely new and wholehearted welcome extended to the Sceptics and its concomitant and unreserved rejection of the old Dogmatism seems clearly to open the way to Scepticism once more and even to admit its irrefutability, there is nothing to fear:

"..... en d'autre mots, si le doute universel pouvait se trouver, ne fut-ce qu'un instant, fondé en raison, c'en serait fait de la certitude....
"Mais l'effort pour douter de tout échouera, comme nous le ferons voir dans les Livres suivants.
"Il y a, en effet, nous le verrons, des propositions dont les termes sont tels que leur mise en présence révèle nécessairement leur convenance ou leur répugnance avec une netteté qui ne laisse place à aucun doute; l'instant où l'intelligence conçoit les deux termes est aussi celui où leur rapport se fait jour, et emporte invinciblement l'adhésion éclairée et inébranlable de l'esprit.
"L'état initial de l'esprit, dans le domaine de la réflexion, c'est donc la certitude. Telle sera la conclusion motivée des Livres suivants." (26)

It is extremely important, however, to understand that the certitude which is thus wholly restored to its ancient and honorable primacy is not at all the certitude of which the older writers spoke. What they had in mind was a natural and spontaneous certitude, which had its own value and which needed no justification. The task of philosophical reflection with reference to it was simply to examine the conditions necessary for it and the causes which engendered it.

In Mercier's theory, on the other hand, this spontaneous certitude is, before it is submitted to a process of scientific justification through reflection, a purely subjective state. That means that one cannot be sure whether it is anything more than that, though he is quick to add that this is not the equivalent of denying that it is more than that. Thus conceived, the only importance which it can claim is that it offers a kind of scaffolding from which it will be possible both to demolish Scepticism and to build up the Thomistic theory of knowledge. At the risk of some repetition, it is worth making this clear by another quotation:

> "... la question est de savoir si, oui ou non, l'intelligence peut justifier, dans le domaine de la réflexion, la certitude de ses adhésions spontanées. Dans l'affirmative, le dogmatisme a raison et la certitude, qui n'était que spontanée jusqu'alors, revet le caractère d'une certitude réfléchie, scientifique; dans la négative, il y a désaccord entre l'activité spontanée et l'activité réfléchie de l'esprit, et il n'y a qu'une conclusion désespérante à tirer de là, c'est que la machine humaine est mal faite.
> "C'est donc dans le domaine de la réflexion que se posent les questions d'épistémologie, et non dans celui de la spontanéité. Dans ce dernier, en effet, il est évident et admis par tous que l'homme est en possession de certitudes nombreuses et de plus d'un genre." (27)

Surely, it was too much to expect that this slashing attack on the most firmly held and dearly cherished tenets of the Old Dogmatists would go without counterattack. Perhaps there were earlier ripostes, but the reply which seems to be recognized (28) as the most devastating -- and it has all the marks of a long and carefully thought-out preparation -- dit not appear until 1911. It was a relatively short article in the Revue Néo-Scholastique and was called quite simply, "Le Néo-Dogmatisme" (29). Its author was L. Du Roussaux.

He divides the article into four main sections which treat what he considers to be the four main headings to which the disagreement between New and Old Dogmatists can be reduced. These are, in his order: the nature of spontaneous judgment; the notion of truth; the prejudicial question (that is, in what state is the intellect before it asks itself whether there is any criterion of truth?); and the problem of the criterion or motive of spontaneous certitude (30).

The first section is, in turn, divided into three parts, insofar as it considers the spontaneous judgment in its objective, its psychological, and its critical aspects. Though a complete acquaintance with the criticisms which he makes in each of these three parts -- and, indeed, in the whole paper -- would be necessary for any real understanding of the differences between the New and the Old Dogmatism as Du Houssaux conceives them, it will be enough for the purposes of this essay to take notice briefly only of what he has to say in connection with the third aspect of the spontaneous judgment. Among the other remarks, then, which he makes here are the following:

> "Cette adéquation que tout jugement établit entre la synthèse mentale et la chose extrinsèque, n'est reconnue de façon explicite que par une réflexion subséquente. Elle fait l'objet du jugement réflexif, non du jugement direct. Ce n'est pas à dire cependant que celui-ci soit aveugle ou inconscient; l'intelligence spontanée voit clair sur son objet formal, mais cet objet, c'est l'être même de la chose, non le vrai, lequel n'est intelligible qu'en tant qu'il est lui-même un être, un être de relation. Durant son processus direct, l'intelligence connaît et reconnaît l'objet appréhendé, son attention y est tout entière; mais cela n'empêche pas qu'elle ait conscience de saisir l'être en soi, de le tenir, de l'exprimer dans son jugement. Le jugement spontané n'est donc pas tout à fait dépourvu de critique, il s'accompagne d'un sentiment (reditus incompletus) de sa rectitude. Fruit naturel et authentique de l'intelligence, la synthèse directe porte le sceau de l'unité réelle et produit dans la conscience la certitude spontanée.
> "Par conséquent, spontané n'est pas synonyme d'irréfléchi, d'inconscient, d'aveugle; toute connaissance non encore contrôlée ne doit donc pas s'appeler spontanée. C'est ce que paraissent oublier les néo-dogmatistes.....
> "Bien plus. Ils semblent entièrement méconnaître cette critique naturelle qui est l'essence même de la pensée, ce discernement concomitant sans lequel il n'y a qu'évagation et fantaisie. Du moins, n'en tiennent-ils pas compte. Tout en admettant la certitude spontanée comme fait initial, ils ne reconnaissent aux synthèses directes aucune valeur propre; ils ne les acceptent que sous bénéfice d'inventaire..... Telle est si bien leur conviction qu'ils vont jusqu'à donner pour but à la Philosophie critique de contrôler la certitude directe et de l'ériger en certitude réflexive." (31)

It is in the third section of the essay, when he is considering the state of ignorance in which the New Dogmatists say the intellect finds itself when it first asks whether there is a criterion for truth, that he attacks the possibility of holding a universal, negative doubt. He says that this is going farther than Descartes did and he further appeals to the authority of St. Thomas:

> "L'esprit ne saurait, dit saint Thomas, douter son être, car par cela même qu'il pense n'importe quoi, il aperçoit qu'il est." (32)

And in this same section he defends the theory of the three primitive truths as proposed by Pongiori against the charge that they are "des dogmes sacro-saints, des synthèses a priori auxquelles il exigeait, à peine de scepticisme, un acte de foi" (33).

In the fourth and final section he examines in somewhat greater detail the ambiguities which result from the fact that the New Dogmatists give entirely new meanings to the old, familiar words, a thing to which he had called attention in the introduction to his article:

> "..... Quel est le critère, le motif de la certitude spontanée? Sur quoi repose la certitude directe? Les dogmatistes répondent unanimement: sur l'évidence. Alors c'est la paix, pensez-vous. Vous n'y êtes pas. Il y a dissentiment sur toute la ligne.
> "La divergence initiale reparaît ici. La certitude spontanée mise en cause, pour eux, c'est uniquement la certitude abstraite; pour nous, c'est à titre égal toute certitute concrète ou abstraite. Même au sujet de la certitude abstraite, seul objet commun, nous différons totalement -- et pour le sens de la question -- et pour la manière de la résoudre -- et pour la solution obtenue." (34)

If this article does anything, it leaves no doubt about Du Rousseaux' conviction that the opposition between the New and the Old Dogmatism is so clear-cut that there can be no hope of reconciliation between them. One or the other must fall. They cannot exist side by side as equally valid representatives of the Scholastic doctrine. Neither is there anything new in this attitude, for Mercier's own rejection of the position which he had stigmatized as "Exaggerated Dogmatism" in favor of his own "Rational Dogmatism" was equally unequivocal.

One of the important consequences of this debate was that the attention of those who engaged in it shifted from a consideration of certitude, as the Old Dogmatists understood it, to the problem of the necessity of reflection and to an examination of the content of consciousness. The interposition of reflection between spontaneous and scientific certitude which Mercier had deliberately effected, and which he had further demanded as the foundation of a truly scientific epistemology, thus appears as the transposition of the Cartesian doubt -- and, according to Du Rousseaux, of a more serious doubt than Descartes' -- into the very center of the Scholastic theory. Up till now, that doubt was something which could be examined from the outside as it were, as something which, whether one found it worth the trouble of thinking about seriously or not, in any case had no repercussions on the Scholastic position itself. As a result of Mercier's work, the enemy was no longer pounding on the gates. He had broken them down and was raising havoc within the fortress itself.

Perhaps the best proof of the fact that the New Dogmatists thus understood and accepted the challenge of the Old Dogmatists is an article by Noel which appeared immediately after the first World War in the Revue de philosophie and which bears the significant title, "Le Thomisme et le point de vue critique" (35).

It does not take him long to get to the statement of his business:

> "..... Je voudrais seulement répondre, en termes très généreux, à cette question: peut-on, en s'inspirant de l'esprit thomiste, poser le problème critique? peut-on, pour le poser, se placer au point de vue où se place la philosophie moderne?" (36)

To answer this question, he introduces three quotations, one from Descartes, another from Kant, and the third from De Veritate, q.1, art. 9. (37). Before quoting the text from De Veritate, he makes this remark:

> "On a trouvé, dans le De Veritate, un texte qui se laisse placer en regard de ceux que nous venons de citer. A première vue, l'analogie est frappante et l'on ne peut se soustraire à l'impression que les trois textes se rencontrent, au moins par quelque côté....."

This would be acceptable enough, that is, the mere statement that the three texts are in some sense comparable. But, immediately after giving the text from De Veritate, he makes this astounding remark, which, despite its appearance thus early in the article, is nothing less than his conclusion:

> "Comment donc se peut-il que les disciples de saint Thomas considèrent le point de vue kantienne comme une monstruosité intellectuelle et le comble de l'absurdité?" (38)

He is quick, however, to make some important qualifications which can be summarized by saying that, though the whole of the Cartesian position cannot rightly be defended by the Thomist, there is nothing to prevent his

adopting its central point. Before quoting the three texts which he finds so strikingly similar, he had already briefly analyzed the Cogito and reduced it to three essential phases. He sees it as (1) an attempt to get to a position which is anterior to all doubt; (2) where there is no distance between certitude and its object; (3) and which is attained by reflection, which he defines as the intellect's seizure of itself as its object in the very act of doubting (39)

He makes it very clear on the basis of some texts from St. Thomas that there is no possibility of the Thomist's claiming to be able to know the intellect and its possibilities before it has known anything at all, that is, when it is in a state of pure potentiality (40). While he is at it, he also eliminates some other errors, namely, the attempt to demonstrate first principles; the theory that there is a single first principle from which all knowledge can be derived and which could serve as the touchstone of all our certitude; and the idea that there is a universal criterion of truth which would offer a means of appreciating and evaluating what is particular in each idea (41).

Having thus cleared the ground of any possible objections and after referring to the text (42) in which St. Thomas, following Aristotle, mentions universal doubt, he returns to the passage which he has already quoted from the De Veritate and says:

> "Nous revenons ainsi au texte du De Veritate d'où nous sommes partis. Il s'agit, pour l'intelligence, de savoir si elle est dans la vérité. Il s'agit, en même temps, de définir la vérité, car en cette question primordiale rien ne peut être présupposé. Et il s'agit de faire tout cela par une réflexion où l'esprit, revenant sur lui-même, se prend lui-même pour objet: 'reflectitur super actum suum' " (43)

Because of the fact that the intelligence, as already noted, cannot lay hold on itself in a state of pure potentiality, this reflective process presupposes that the intellect is already enriched with ordinary knowledge and even with the knowledge of the sciences and philosophy. Thus, as has already been remarked, too, there is a radical difference between the reflection which can be called "Thomistic" and that of Descartes.

Further than that, since both the Cartesian and Kantian idealisms confine themselves in the first place to the intelligence, they cannot legitimately make any affirmation of the existence of things. There is nothing in the way of external reality contained in the data from which they start out.

Thus it would seem that to affirm the existence of an extra-mental reality and our power of attaining it the only way open is Dogmatism. There are, it is true, certain texts of St. Thomas which, read in a wrong sense, seem to support this position. But it is wholly untenable in fact and is in no sense conformable to the authentic thought of St. Thomas. The basis of the Dogmatist position is its insistence on the incontestable Thomistic thesis that truth attaches properly to the judgment. One might even say that, if this theory were true, Thomism would be even more rigorous a critique than either that of Descartes or Kant, because it would resolve the problem of truth entirely within the limits of the intelligence itself. The fact is, however, that this does not truly represent the thought of St. Thomas.

> "Mais la difficulté reparaît. La vérité du jugement n'est pas toute la vérité. Il y a plus, bien que la vérité soit principalement dans le jugement, elle n'y est qu'appuyée sur les choses, laissée à elle-même elle ne serait plus rien. Et si nous poursuivons avec quelque attention l'analyse des textes que nous venons de citer, nous découvrons aussitôt que, bien loin de s'accommoder d'une vérité 'immanente', ils impliquent au contraire l'hypothèse que la pensée saisit et définit exactement les choses." (44)

Thus, the way out of the difficulty is furnished by the statement of St. Thomas (45) that, in simple apprehension, the intellect apprehends the quiddity of the thing and at the same time makes a comparison, because it apprehends the quiddity as the quiddity of this thing. Though at first sight it might appear that there is lacking in simple apprehension the two terms which are necessary for the comparison which truth demands, nonetheless this implicit comparison of simple apprehension

> "...se termine par la tranquille assurance que l'intelligence, lorsqu'elle forme les définitions, est toujours adéquate aux choses: 'Intellectus apprehendens quod quid est dicitur quidam per se semper esse verus.' " (46)

The important thing, Noel continues, is that there is only one term in simple apprehension, because there is no distinction between intellect and object in that act. More than that, and St. Thomas again bears this out, there is so little distinction between the intellect and what it knows by an act of simple apprehension that the intellect really has nothing which is peculiarly its own or proper to it, something which cannot be said for the judgment.

The rest of the article explains this Thomistic doctrine in somewhat greater detail to show how this identity of subject and object in the act of simple apprehension is the real basis of a Thomistic critique:

> "..... Dans la mesure où l'intelligence devient l'autre, 'fit aliud', la réflexion qui revient sur l'acte et l'enveloppe dans sa lumière peut le suivre, avec lui pénétrer l'autre, et saisir, sur le fait, cette pénétration, cette communion, cette identité.
> "Là est le point de vue critique, la source de toute critique ultérieure, le moment qui se place au-dessus de tout doute et de toute critique....
> "Que devient, cependant, la critique? Du point de vue où nous sommes, elle est devenue possible. Il s'agit encore de l'amorcer et de la conduire à bonne fin.
> "D'après les textes cités, elle devra revenir sur nos jugements, afin de les comparer à la saisie initiale qu'ils expriment et dont ils sont en quelque sorte la monnaie discursive. La saisie initiale n'est ni vraie ni fausse. Elle est tout simplement. C'est une perspective qui s'ouvre dans le réel et où nous pénétrons. Mais les jugements qui suivent peuvent la défigurer, en outrer ou en diminuer la portée. Il s'agit de les ramener à l'exacte mesure du réel que nous possédons. Pour cela, il est nécessaire de fixer au préalable la valeur de ce réel.
> "Cette oeuvre n'est ici pas même entamée. Il y aurait lieu d'y revenir. Mais ce que nous avons dit suffit à laisser voir que le réalisme thomiste n'est nullement destiné à se confondre avec un réalisme 'naif'. " (47)

It is a deft demonstration, to say the very least. Of the three constituents of the Cartesian Cogito, two are left intact in the philosophy of St. Thomas: the identity between the intellect and its object, and reflection. Granted the impossibility of fulfilling the other condition -- the intellect's reflective seizure of itself before it actually knows anything -- these two are by themselves enough to warrant calling Thomism critical and to fend off the charge that it is nothing but a naive realism.

The implication of this procedure is, of course, that there is no incompatibility between the recognition of the fact that the intellect and the object known are intentionally one and the essential basis of the Cartesian or Kantian position. This, in turn, means that the critical philosophy stands

for nothing more serious than that the intellect has the power of reflection. It would appear quite as questionable that either Descartes or Kant would recognize this statement of their conception of what they set out to do as that Du Roussaux or any of the Old Dogmatists would agree that Noel had not misstated and seriously mutilated their doctrine.

However that may be, it becomes perfectly clear from the article of Noel that both Mercier and Du Roussaux were wrong, but that the latter was more wrong than the former. They are both in error when they agree in devoting their attention to the judgment. The thing that really counts, according to Noel, is not the judgment at all, but simple apprehension. And all that it is needed to develop a critical philosophy is the admission that object and intellect are perfectly united in this act of simple apprehension. Once this is allowed, the critical philosophy will consist in exploring the content of our knowledge by means of reflection to see what it contains. To the extent, then, that he put the stress on reflection as the instrument of the critical philosophy, which is now thoroughly Thomistic, Mercier was right.

Any one who wishes to do so may follow the later stages of this controversy in Maritain's Degrees of Knowledge (48). But the pattern of Van Steenberghen's Epistémologie seems to emerge clearly enough from Noel's article. All its elements are here, because they are few indeed: identity of intellect and object, and reflection. It would be possible to point out some striking parallels between the two. But it will be enough to cite the final paragraph of the section which Van Steenberghen devotes at the beginning of his book to the relations between epistemology and a systematic philosophy:

> "En résumé, personne n'a jamais opposé de raison sérieuse à l'idée d'une épistémologie entendu comme l'étude primordiale de la connaissance telle qu'elle est donnée au point de départ de la systématisation scientifique. La science étant, par définition, un système de connaissances, le point de départ de ce système ne peut se trouver que dans les <u>données immédiates de la conscience</u>: seule une analyse attentive et une critique réfléchie de ces données immédiates est capable de révéler la possibilité éventuelle et les conditions primordiales du savoir et de la construction scientifique. La première enquête de l'esprit au seuil de la philosophie aura donc pour objet la connaissance elle-même, telle qu'elle se présente d'emblée à la conscience, et les conditions générales de la science, dans la mesure où elles peuvent être déterminées à ce moment. Cette enquête primordiale portera à bon droit le nom <u>épistémologie</u>, c'est-à-dire théorie de la science (au sense le plus général du mot), science de la science. (<u>Wissenschaftslehre</u>." (49)

It would appear, then, that this demand for an epistemology at the beginning of philosophy is only another way of stating Mercier's original demand for a suspension of assent to one's spontaneous certitudes until they had been justified and verified by a process of critical reflection. There is an important change, however. While Mercier had talked a great deal about certitude, Van Steenberghen mentions it only to relegate it to a secondary position. Whether this change of emphasis is to be attributed to the attacks to which Mercier's theory was submitted and to its inability to whether those attacks, as has here been suggested, is a problem which would take a good deal more space than would be profitable to devote to it here. And though it would appear possible to show that the tack which Van Steenberghen takes is the only one which can result from the constant whittling down of Mercier's position -- provided, of course, that one is not willing to abandon that position altogether -- it is only just to let him speak from himself on his conception of the method which such a presentation of a scientific epistemology as he offers must follow. The statement is, in fact, the second part of his criticism of Mercier,

the first part of which was quoted earlier:

> "...En second lieu, toute la Critériologie est conçue en dépendance étroite de la problématique moderne, du cartésianisme ou positivisme; or, s'il est indispensable de tenir compte de cette problématique et si la discussion directe des solutions modernes est à la fois très opportune et très féconde, il faut éviter de se laisser emprisonner par une certaine manière d'envisager les problèmes et par les préjugés qu'elle comporte; avant d'être une réfutation des erreurs éventuelles de la philosophie moderne, l'épistémologie doit poser ses propres thèses, affirmer ses principes et établir ses conclusions positives. Cette dernière observation suggère une question plus délicate: dans quelle mesure se justifient la distinction des deux problèmes fondamentaux (objectivité des propositions d'ordre idéal et réalité des termes) et la priorité donnée au problème de l'objectivité?..." (50)

It is difficult to refrain from going all the way back to Balmes again and quoting, in connection with this last remark of Van Steenberghen, a few sentences which state an idea which he goes to great pains to prove:

> "...Toutefois, puisque les sceptiques admettent la conscience, il est juste qu'ils la défendent. Or, nier l'objectivité des idées, c'est anéantir en même temps et la science et la conscience. On ne peut, selon les besoins de la cause, admettre ou rejeter cette objectivité. La ruine de l'objectivité entraîne la ruine de la conscience..."

This is an idea to which Van Steenberghen apparently has never adverted. To a "délicate question" Balmes returns a blunt answer. For him, the distinction between the objectivity of propositions of the ideal order and the reality of the terms of such propositions is meaningless. Whether one or the other is questioned, the inevitable result is the destruction of consciousness itself and his careful argument is reducible to a confrontation of Scepticism with the necessity of either admitting both consciousness and its objective valid-

ity or of denying both. It is impossible, in his eyes, to separate the two in such a way that one could accept consciousness and refuse to recognize the reality underlying its content.

Van Steenberghen, on the other hand, does not grant this impossibility. His whole argument proceeds, as does Mercier's, from the supposition that consciousness is at first not necessarily more than a subjective state. Then he proceeds to analyze its content to find out what it implies. He concludes to the necessity of affirming an external reality solely on the basis of what a critical examination of consciousness contains. His questioning Mercier's distinction of the objectivity of propositions of the ideal order and the reality of their terms is, equally with Mercier's statement of the distinction, an admission that the objective bearing of ideas must first be doubted and the doubt then resolved in favor of their objectivity. His difficulty with the distinction is one of order only. Whereas Mercier thought it necessary to first establish the objective validity of ideal propositions in order to show that the principle of causality could be applied to terms and ideas as the explanation of the fact that these latter can have no other cause than a really existent external world, Van Steenberghen begins in just the opposite way. His scrutiny of consciousness is essentially an examination of the implications of ideas and he believes that this kind of critique is the truly effective one. But both he and Mercier are fundamentally in agreement in admitting that the validity of the representations of consciousness

is open to most serious doubt. From this point of view, Van Steenberghen's critique of Mercier for his insistence on certitude and for the order which he follows looks very much like a quibbling about details. Such questions become important only within the framework of their original admission.

Even this superficial survey of the development of the concept of certitude among the modern Scholastic writers is enough to show, then, that Mercier's theory of certitude is the point at which the critical philosophy of Descartes and Kant enter into the Scholastic philosophy itself. Up until the presentation of his theory, that attitude was something which did not affect Scholasticism itself. It was a problem to be considered, true enough (though the early writers differed in their estimation of its importance), but it was in no sense anything which had any serious consequences for the Scholastic position.

With Mercier, and particularly because of his reference to the two Thomistic definitions of certitude as the basis (or at least the justification) of his theory of the distinction between spontaneous and reflex certitude, all that is changed. Cartesianism and Kantianism represent attitudes which are fundamentally Thomistic.

From then on, the central problem is whether this interpretation of the Thomistic philosophy can be accepted or not. It is not so much a question of the exposition of the Thomistic doctrine on certitude any more as it is the problem of whether certitude exists and, if it does, how is its existence to be legitimized and to which of the intellectual operations does it attach.

While the writers before Mercier did not at all accept this statement of the problem and might, therefore, have been expected to have developed

the Thomistic doctrine satisfactorily, their references to St. Thomas are comparatively meagre, so that one is never quite sure how much of what they say is to be attributed to St. Thomas and how much of it is their own. This is rather obviously a serious objection against them, if one is interested in finding out the Thomistic doctrine.

The more recent defenders of what may be loosely called, following Du Roussaux's terminaology, the Old Dogmatist position are much more careful on this score. They are generally conscientious about indicating the basis of their assertions in St. Thomas so that complaint on that ground is impossible. Further than that, they seem to have shown quite adequately that Mercier's distinction between spontaneous and reflex certitude, as well as the different representations of the theory of the universal doubt, are wholly untenable and completely non-Thomistic in the sense which Mercier and his followers give to those concepts.

Since all this is true, then, there appears to be little sense in going over the same ground once more and that there is, therefore, no reason for this essay. At the same time, it does not appear to have been sufficiently appreciated that Mercier seems to base his theory of certitude, not so much on the text in which St. Thomas speaks of the universal doubt, as upon the distinction which he claims to find in the two Thomistic definitions of certitude. It is possible, of course, to argue to the distinction of spontaneous and reflex certitude from either direction, if the universal doubt is presented as a real doubt. But is is exactly this that Mercier seems especially anxious to avoid, whatever may be said about Jeannière or others

of his followers. In addition to that, the order of Mercier's work seems to indicate clearly enough that it is upon the two definitions that he bases his theory primarily. The doubt seems, in his statement of it, to be a secondary issue. Further than that, it would not appear to be without significance that he seems to be the only one of the modern writers who attempts to give any meaning to the fact that St. Thomas defines certitude in two ways which at first sight seem to differ so widely.

Because of the serious consequences which his interpretation of the two definitions has for the Thomistic theory of certitude, it is impossible to ignore it. And because it is possible to come to the same conclusions about those definitions as Mercier does if one starts with the universal doubt -- though even then there are serious difficulties involved in the wording of the definitions -- it is likewise necessary to examine the question whether St. Thomas taught a universal doubt as the starting point of philosophy. These considerations make up the first chapter of this essay.

Once the difficulties presented by Mercier's interpretation have been resolved, it is then possible to see how the whole Thomistic doctrine on certitude is implied in these definitions. It is clearly impossible to exhaust so rich and deep a concept in the limits of this brief essay. The only thing which is intended here is to indicate in very summary fashion the lines along which an adequate development might be made. It main preoccupation is to determine the subject of certitude in the proper sense and to show the necessity of that certitude. When these points are understood it will be easy enough for the reader to grasp how marvellously comprehensive St. Thomas' definitions are

and to see at least something of the wealth of doctrine which they contain. Thus, this essay is, in its own small way, another tribute to the genius of St. Thomas and a further evidence of the justice with which he is called the Angelic Doctor.

CHAPTER ONE

Mercier's Interpretation of the Two Thomistic Definitions of Certitude

I. Introduction: The Nominal Definition of Certitude.

a) Etymology of "certitude":

Whether one thinks of it as a tribute to their practical common sense, or looks at it as just another evidence of their pedestrian mentality, the Romans were so little troubled about the notion of certitude that they did not even have a word to express it. It does not occur in classical Latin (1) and, for a philosophical term, had the strange experience of being in a sense consecrated by legal ecclesiastical usage in its various embryonic stages before it finally appeared full-fledged around the seventh century (2).

As might be expected, however, the Greeks had a word for it, which, if it does not, according to some commentators, correspond in every detail the meaning which "certitude" did finally carry, nonetheless is close enough in most respects so that one is interchangeable with the other. Thus, there are two avenues open by which it is possible to determine the meaning which the abstract term "certitudo" had when it at last became good usage in low Latin.

Obviously, the first of these approaches is through its etymology. Ernoust and Millet (2) are able to find in the western Indo-European languages a root which would seem to be *krei-, and which would have the sense of "to separate". This derivation is through the verb "cerno", by way of the

adjective "certus", the juridical "certioro" and "certioratus", and the Church Latin "certifico". (3)

The metathesis which makes it at once obvious that the Greek κρίνω bears a close relationship to the Latin "cerno" is a development which is quite common in the history of languages. There is, then, no cause for astonishment when one finds it verified (4) that the Greek word stems from the same base, *krei-, as does "cerno" and that its meaning, "to examine" or "to judge" (5), is so very near to that of "cerno" as to be practically identical with it. Several other examples of the connection between these words come to mind immediately, such, for example, as "discriminating" and "discerning" as applied to critical taste or judgment. The mutual dependency of these words has now been so lost sight of that they have to be reinforced by tautologies which are no longer appreciated.

More interesting is the fact that, just as the abstract "certitudo" evolved, however slowly, from "cerno", so the verb κρίνω begot the corresponding abstract ἀκρίβεια.

Of course the true test of meaning is not etymology but usage and, though the process outlined above is wholly unobjectionable, the best method of finding out the sense which "certitudo" had for those who availed themselves of it when it eventually appeared is to unearth, if it can be done, the signification which it had in their employment of it.

This leads immediately to the second technique which is accessible to the modern student of the problem, and which is most interesting to the Thomist, since it depends on the translations of William of Moerbeke and, further, confirms the etymological analysis.

b) Meaning of "certitudo" in Moerbeke:

If one takes the time to consult Bonitz' Index Aristotelicus, he will find there listed under the word ἀκρίβεια 112 cases in which Aristotle made use of one or another form of it (6). With this list as a basis, it is then possible to check through Moerbeke's translations of Aristotle (7) to discover what Latin word he used as its equivalent. Approximately half of its occurrences are not translated at all, because Moerbeke did not translate the books in which they occur. But in those books which he did translate, it is rather astounding to observe the regularity with which he used the word "certitudo", or an adjectival or adverbial form of it, to express the meaning which Aristotle intended by ἀκρίβεια and its relatives. If, further, one keeps in mind the way in which St. Thomas equates "diligens", "certa", and "acribologia" in the Metaphysics (8), there are only five or six times in the whole number of possibilities which presented themselves in the Aristotelian text that Moerbeke uses another word (9).

Since the meaning of ἀκρίβεια is known, both independently of Aristotle's usage of it and in whatever particular shades of meaning he gave to it in his writings, this technique is an excellent instrument for obtaining a knowledge of what St. Thomas meant by "certitudo". It is not, to be sure, the only means of gaining an insight into what he understood by the word, because he explained its meaning in other places in his works than in his commentaries on Aristotle. In fact, it is not even the most

important means. But it is extremely valuable as giving at least a first approximation to its meaning for him -- to say nothing of the evidence it offers for the meaning that it had in ordinary usage in his time. Neither should it be allowed to pass without remark that the Oxford translations of Aristotle have been equally consistent with Moerbeke, but in the opposite direction. In only one case have they used the word "certain" for ἀκριβές. This does not in any sense mean that their translation is deficient. Their avoidance of it is most likely due to the connotations which in recent times have gradually become attached to the word in English and which they presumably and with a good deal of justification, wish to eliminate as not rightly rendering the Aristotelian sense. But it should constanly be borne in mind that the notion of certitude underlies a large number of their usages of such terms as "precise", "accurate", and "exact". The full range of their equivalents for ἀκρίβεια can be gathered from the Appendix (10). The same tendency is apparent in the French translation of Tricot, though it has not been thought necessary here to examine that in detail.

Since it is no part of the intention of this essay to make a study of the sense which ἀκρίβεια has in Aristotle, and because it has been introduced here only to enable the reader to get some idea of the concept of certitude which St. Thomas derived from Aristotle and so to offer something by way of a nominal definition of "certitudo" -- the explanation of the Aristotelian concept is here only incidental, however important, to the exposition of the Thomistic notion -- perhaps the best way of summarizing the Aristotelian understanding of the word is to quote the definition with which Regis concludes his presentation of it:

"La certitude ou ἀκρίβεια aristotélicienne est donc essentiellement la détermination intrinsèque d'un être, détermination causée par la simplicité de sa forme actuelle que la définition exprime, et dont l'effet propre est la nécessité" (11)

II. Mercier's Interpretation of the Definitions.

a) St. Thomas' Statement of the Definitions:

Though the English language boasts a tremendous number of words of both Greek and Latin origin, it has in many cases so lost contact with the primitive significations of its borrowings that, as already instanced, it often multiplies them and piles them one on the other in what would be nothing less than crude and ridiculous redundancies, violations alike of the rules of logic and of taste, had their earlier content been retained and preserved intact. If this degeneration, which is a phenomenon quite familiar to professional students of language (and which presumably is some sort of sign of the weakness of the human intellect and, therefore, not especially peculiar to or characteristic of the English language) is considered only from the viewpoint of its effects on style, it does no serious harm beyond the loss of a precious simplicity, because practically nobody is aware of it and so nearly everybody is on the same footing of ignorance.

But if one thinks of the whole vast body of treasures of thought which are irrevocably closed off from the majority of modern thinkers because they are the inheritors of an estate which has been so badly maintained that the key words have been allowed to become rusty and useless, the damage which

this deterioration has done is truly incalculable. And no better example of the deleterious effects of this process of disintegration could be desired than the one which is immediately to hand in St. Thomas' seemingly strange introduction of the notion of determination into his definition of intellectual certitude.

The English "determination" has now become so far removed from anything intellectual that it often implies the idea of irrational obstinacy and nearly always summons up the image of a man gritting his teeth as he renews a previously taken resolve to push on to his goal, whatever the obstacles in his path. Yet, St. Thomas' first definition of certitude states very clearly, plainly, and unequivocally that "certitude is nothing else than...." Thus:

> "....dicendum quod certitudo nihil aliud est quam determinatio intellectus ad unum." (12)

Even though his second definition:

> "dicendum quod certitudo proprie dicitur firmitas adhaesionis virtutis cognitivae in suum cognoscibile." (13)

seems to represent the ordinary notion of certitude in English, the first still presents a serious problem arising from the occurrence of "determination" in it. The resolution of the apparent antimony involved in it is, indeed, one of the chief aims of this paper. It will take a little time to accomplish that aim, so it is enough for the present that the difficulty has been noted.

Another question which occurs at once is the matter of the relationship between the two definitions. Are they really two different definitions and

do they in any way contradict one another? Since it is not likely that St. Thomas would contradict himself, why does he give two definitions? What is the difference between them, or are they just two ways of saying the same thing?

b) Mercier's Explanation of the Definitions:

Almost (14) alone among the modern writers, Mercier has at least made an attempt to answer these questions. It is worth listening to his explanation to see what it has to offer:

> "La certitude, envisagée en elle-même, comme réalité psychologique, indépendamment des causes qui l'engendrent, est la fixation de l'intelligence en un seul objet, 'certitudo nihil aliud est quam determinatio intellectus ad unum'. Envisagée en rapport avec la cause qui l'engendre, la certitude est l'adhésion ferme de l'intelligence à un objet qui lui est connu, 'firmitas adhaesionis intellectus ad suum cognoscibile'; plus explicitement, c'est le repos de l'intelligence dans la possession consciente de la vérité." (15)

A good deal earlier, Mercier has also made the following remark:

> ".... La fixité de l'esprit dans son adhésion a un terme unique, c'est la certitude. Lorsque saint Thomas considère celle-ci au point de vue psychologique, il la définit: 'Determinatio intellectus ad unum. Certitudo nihil aliud est quam determinatio intellectus adunum." (16)

Though he nowhere refers these quotations to the Commentary on the Sentences, it is quite obvious that it is to the statements there made by St. Thomas that Mercier has in mind. More important, however, is the fact that, though he never says so quite explicitly, he is trying to use the fact that St. Thomas gives two definitions as an argument in favor of the distinction which he himself makes between spontaneous and reflex certitude, as already

noted (17). If he can establish the fact that this is, indeed, what St. Thomas intends, he has an excellent basis for his theory.

For Mercier, then, the distinction between St. Thomas' two definitions is reducible to this, that the first considers certitude envisaged in itself as a psychological state (18) or psychological reality and independently of the causes which engender it, while the second considers certitude in relation to its cause. What is the value of this commentary of Mercier?

c) Preliminary refutation of Mercier's interpretation:

From a consideration of the definitions themselves, entirely apart from their context, it does not seem possible to agree with Mercier's interpretation. It cannot be maintained that St. Thomas makes explicit mention of the cause in either definition. Mercier would likely agree that, if the intellect operates at all, it must have as the object of its act something which is in the line of intelligibility, that is, an intelligible object. The "unum" of the first definition and the "cognoscibile" of the second are presumably the objects of the act of the intellect which St. Thomas is defining. To the degree, then, that the object of its act is the cause of its determination, it must be admitted that the cause is mentioned in both definitions, and not only in the second.

This argument alone would seem to be sufficient to eliminate any possibility of basing on these definitions Mercier's distinction of spontaneous and reflex certitude, in the sense that the former is not a legitimate certitude and has to be justified by the second. But because its very brusqueness may

occasion suspicion of it, it is necessary to examine his theory more closely.

d) Refutation of Mercier's theory of reflex certitude:

It will be recalled that Mercier himself makes a great deal of the impossibility of denying the fact that we are possessed of a good many certitudes in the sense of propositions to which we give complete assent and that he makes this necessary admission the starting point of his criticism of Scepticism (19). He insists, however, that until reflection confirms these spontaneous certitudes they cannot be considered scientific and that there is imposed on the philosopher at the outset a doubt with regard to them (20).

It seems safe to say that the result of Mercier's procedure is the denial of the possibility of recognising the existence of legitimate certitude until after the process of their examination by scientific reflection has been completed. Thus the question arises whether any valid certitude exists prior to and independent of the reflective examination.

De Tonquedec has perhaps made more explicit than any of the modern writers that Mercier's position is here wholly untenable and that the truth is, not that spontaneous certitude depends on reflex, but that reflex certitude depends on spontaneous in such a way that, unless spontaneous certitude is valid in its own right, reflection can never make it so:

> "Non, l'évidence immédiate nous donne l'objet; si elle ne le nous donnait pas, aucune réflexion sur elle -- c'est trop évident -- ne le découvrirait parmi ses acquisitions. Les états de certitude qu'elle engendre ne sont pas des états opaques, ténébreux, que la réflexion rendrait transparents; ils sont lumineux et lucides par eux-mêmes. La critique qui s'y applique n'est pas la valorisation postérieure d'actes

> primitivement vides et nuls; elle ne fait que recevoir ce que lui apportent des actes pleins par eux-mêmes et valides dès le début...." (21)

Though St. Thomas speaks of reflection in several places (22), it would appear that he never touches on this precise point in his consideration of it. In John of St. Thomas' Cursus Theologicus, however, there is a paragraph which would seem to be directly applicable to this discussion. In it he is criticizing Vasquez' idea that theology is more certain than the other sciences, not because the faith on which it is based is more certain than science, but only in virtue of a reflex act by which we judge that theological knowledge cannot be false. The answer which John of St. Thomas gives to this difficulty is the following:

> "Quod vero attinet ad sententiam Patris Vasquez, manifestum est quod si certitudinem theologiae ponit in actu reflexo, quo quis judicat se non falli in illo judicio: vel tale judicium reflexum est verum: vel falsum. Si falsum: ergo theologia non est certa, siquidem falsum est judicium quo judicat de ipsa, quod sit certa et infallibilis. Si est verum: ergo antecedenter ad actum reflexum habet istam certitudinem, nam per actum reflexum illam non acquirit, sed supponit: siquidem actus reflexus extrinsece se habet ad directum, nec potest illum constituere. -- Nec potest dici, quod actus directus est certus objective, reflexus vero formaliter. Contra enim est: nam ille actus directus vere et proprie est actus intellectus; ergo est capax certitudinis formalis, non minus quam actus aliarum scientiarum, nec minus quam ipse actus reflexus in quo non est aliquod principium unde sit magis infallibilis quam ipse actus directus: nam vel habet certitudinem fidei, vel evidentiam supernaturalem, vel scientiae et discursus theologici. Si hoc tertium: non est magis certus quam ipse assensus directus theologicus, et ita frustra ex illo actu reflexo sumitur haec major certitudo. Primum et secundum dici non potest: quia nec habemus revelationem specialem de illo actu reflexo, cum nullibi hoc proponat Ecclesia; et multo minus de hoc habemus evidentiam claram supernaturalem, cum nullus illam experiatur." (23)

This passage makes it very clear that John of St. Thomas recognizes no special value attaching to the act of reflection in the line of certitude or infallibility and that he, too, holds that whatever certitude it has is already implicit in the direct act of judgment.

The essential weakness, then, in Mercier's attempt to relegate spontaneous certitudes to the status of a kind of pariah caste among certitudes -- something not worthy of the philosopher's second glance and quite apt, in fact, to contaminate him unless and until it has first been put through the reflective process, from which it emerges all washed and bright and shining and, therefore, somewhat more presentable, though never entirely free from the stigma attaching to its lowly origin -- is simply that nothing can be brought forward in its favor. There is just no reason adducible for the establishment of reflex certitude in a position of special privilege. From the point of view of validity, it makes no difference whether a judgment is spontaneous or reflex. Should the question of prerogative arise, spontaneous certitude must be given precedence, because it is by nature prior to reflex certitude in such a way that the latter can add absolutely nothing to it with respect to its validity.

It should be in no degree surprising, therefore, that Mercier can find no support for his theory in St. Thomas, though he seems to think he can. If he alleges St. Thomas' two definitions of certitude and fancies that he sees in the fact that they are two a proof of his contentions, it is not because he is reading St. Thomas, but because he is reading into him something which simply is not there.

Once it has thus been shown that it is impossible to sustain the distinction between reflex and spontaneous certitude in the sense in which Mercier understands it, the witness of internal experience and the facts of consciousness to which he has recourse (24) in order to verify the existence of spontaneous certitude would seem to be equally competent to testify to the existence of spontaneous certitude as legitimate in its own right.

Clearly, then, his inability to justify the complete and unqualified confidence which he reposes in reflection leads Mercier into the dilemma either of having to admit that spontaneous certitudes are no less certain than reflex certitudes, or of being forced to deny certitude to both of them. It does not seem, however, to have been fully appreciated generally (25) that the mere fact of his granting to the power of reflection a specially privileged position, entirely apart from and anterior to any question of the possibility of substantiating its claim to this preeminence, involves him in a flat self-contradiction in connection with his theory of the universal, negative doubt.

In the course of his analysis of Descartes' doubt, he charges him with an error of method, which consists in the fact that Descartes questioned the value of our <u>facultiés</u> before having examined the value of the <u>acts</u> of those faculties:

> "Nous ne saisissons point en elles-mêmes nos <u>facultés</u>; seuls les actes, c'est-à-dire les <u>facultés agissantes</u>, tombent directement sous la conscience. C'est donc par l'étude des <u>actes cognitifs</u> que doit débuter l'épistémologie. "Suivre le procédé inverse, c'est vouloir aller de l'inconnu au connu.... un pareil procédé est contraire à la nature des choses et aux exigences de la méthode scientifique." (26)

He makes the same complaint against Tongiorgi for having, in company with all the Exaggerated Dogmatists, held the aptitude of the mind to know the truth as one of the three "primitive truths":

> "... je puis connaître le vrai et avoir conscience que je le connais, avant d'avoir ouvert une enquête sur la valeur de la faculté intellectuelle aux prises avec la connaissance des choses.... J'aurai alors le droit d'affirmer, pour l'avoir vue à l'oeuvre, pour l'avoir reconnue dans un fait, dans un acte, l'aptitude de mon intelligence à connaître la vérité." (27)

To avoid any confusion about the necessity of adhering to this distinction between faculties and acts, Mercier reaffirms these accusations of faulty procedure:

> "Nous avons vu les sceptiques, Descartes, puis les dogmatistes outrés, se prononcer les uns contre les autres pour la validité de nos puissances cognitives avant de passer à l'examen réfléchi de nos connaissances certaines. Nous avons refusé, comme antinaturelle et antiscientifique, cette manière de procéder. Au premier moment du travail de réflexion qu'entreprend le philosophe, à l'effet d'apprécier la nature de la connaissance certaine, il n'a pas le droit de nier ou de déclarer sujette à caution, pas plus qu'il n'a le droit d'affirmer l'aptitude des facultés cognitives à la connaissance certaine de la vérité. Avant d'avoir réfléchi sur ces actes et d'en avoir scruté la nature, la raison humaine ne sait pas, elle ne peut savoir, si l'emploi de ses facultés la mènera ou ne la mènera pas à la vérité.
> "Par conséquent, l'état initial de la raison réfléchissante, en ce qui concerne le pouvoir de nos facultés cognitives, doit être l'ignorance voulue, l'abstention." (28)

Yet, amazingly enough, it would seem that Mercier has himself fallen victim to the same mistake of method which in his eyes is the essential flaw of the theories of both Sceptics and Exaggerated Dogmatists. No less than they, he himself appears to have proceeded blandly on an unwarranted assumption, that the faculty of reflection needs no critical examination before its com-

petence can be conceded. This is hardly reconcilable with his own fundamental position. Nor is his blundering into this error made any the more excusable by his resting so much of his case against the Sceptics and Exaggerated Dogmatists on the precise point of their having taken for granted what, according to him, must be doubted until it is justified. (29)

Sullivan seems to be the only one of Mercier's critics who puts his finger on this exact spot:

> "... although the epistemological problem is concerned with the examination of the objective motives and validity of our spontaneous assents, this cannot be done without the power of reflection, as Barron confesses explicitly and Mercier implicitly. Now the reflection of the intellect upon its spontaneous assents and its examination of their objective validity involve activity of the cognitive faculties. If reflection or examination is to provide results of any kind, these results will have to be in the form of judgments: 'These spontaneous assents are objectively valid' or 'They are not objectively valid'. Any such judgments, or any judgments on evidence from which they may be derived, presuppose that at least the reflective activity of the intellect is valid: that it has the aptitude to attain the truth at least in the field of reflection. In fact, before any judgment is made, the mere attempt to verify spontaneous assents by reflection implies that confidence is had at least in the power of reflection...." (30)

This exposition of the contradiction involved in Mercier's presuming without proof that reflection is valid, taken together with the argument already given (31) against the legitimacy of recognizing in reflection any ability beyond that of direct judgment to deliver certitude, would seem to make his basic position wholly untenable. It will be recalled (32) that reflection is, in his theory, at once the means of saving the philosopher from the necessity of having to admit that there is no such thing as a certain judgment and the instrument which is to reconcile the modern sceptic

and show him that we have the truth. Further, it is the only and the sole link in the chain which binds us to reality. In more than one place (33), Mercier expresses his conviction that the ancient Scepticism, which was certain that it could know nothing with certainty, is dead and that the technique of reducing the sceptic to contradicting himself is both utterly useless against the modern Scepticism, which simply doubts that it can know anything with certainty, and is apt to complicate the discussion -- the last, presumably, because this method of going about a refutation not only misses the point of modern Scepticism but is also apt to engender antagonisms which would obviate the possibility of any good results. Thus:

> "Nous avouons que, écrivant en l'an de grâce 1895, nous avons songé à Kant plutôt qu'à Pyrrhon. Désireux de traiter, non pas une question d'histoire ancienne, mais un problème vital, et trouvant que, dans le débat actuel avec le scepticisme, la théorie des trois vérités primitives est plus encombrante qu'utile, nous avions formulé ce jugement: La question fondamentale engagée entre le dogmatisme et le scepticisme n'est pas de savoir si, en affirmant le doute universel, le sceptique absolu se contredit forcément une, deux, ou trois fois: c'est la chose accessoire et cela ne peut qu'embarrasser la discussion." (34)

In view of these considerations, then, Mercier deliberately abjures any intention of availing himself of any kind of elenctic argument and has recourse to reflection and to nothing else. He is willing to go as far in the direction of doubt as he thinks any sceptic legitimately can in order to win him back to the truth, and this always with the calm confidence that reflection will be his sure support.

It is easy to imagine the high hopes with which Mercier presented this theory and, indeed, to sympathize with them. But, just as he was

apparently unaware that reflection was bound to betray its trust and so to force upon him the choice of either abandoning his doubt altogether or of involving himself ever more deeply in a doubt from which, consistently with the position he had taken, there was no escape, so his diagnosis that the ancient sceptics were all dead would seem to have been hasty and his confidence that the modern sceptics would no more question the validity of the reflective process than he himself had would seem to have been entirely misplaced. The fact is that his naïvete here is astounding.

One does not have to look back to any earlier date than the publication of Bertrand Russell's latest book (35) in 1948 for evidence that what Mercier called the ancient Scepticism is not only alive and breathing but extremely voluble. It concludes, for example, with this resounding contradiction:

> "In this sense, it must be admitted, empiricism as a theory of knowledge has proved inadequate, though less so than any other previous theory of knowledge. Indeed, such inadequacies as we have seemed to find in empiricism have been discovered by strict adherence to a doctrine by which empiricist philosophy has been inspired: that <u>all human knowledge is uncertain, inexact, and partial</u>. <u>To this doctrine we have not found any limitation whatever</u>." (36)

A study of the senses in which reflection is used by modern non-Scholastics and of their conception of its value would be of the greatest interest and would, at the same time, serve to underline the significance of a good many passages in St. Thomas and his commentators which might otherwise pass unnoticed. It is so obvious as scarcely to require statement that the embarkation upon such an enterprise is entirely foreign to the purposes of this essay. But it will do no harm to cite a few examples of writers who

provide excellent evidence of the fact that Mercier had little reason for expecting that the value of reflection would be allowed to go unchallenged.

Meyerson is not at all hesitant about rejecting reflection as a means of finding out the process of correct thought (37) and his erection of a generalized theory of knowledge on the basis of the procedure of the experimental sciences seems to be closely related to Dewey's parallel conception of logic as

> "... a generalization of the means-consequence relation characteristic of mathematical and physical inquiry." (38)

And, despite the fact that Dewey retains the word "reflection", with the consequence that certain passages he writes might, taken entirely out of their context, seem to be capable of interpretation in a perfectly legitimate sense (a source of confusion and error which is by no means peculiar to him), his "express identification of reflective thought with objective inquiry" (39) is equally effective a denial of the validity of reflection in the traditional meaning of that concept as is Meyerson's, even if he did not say explicitly:

> "We do not know what meaning is to be assigned to 'reflective thought' except in terms of what is discovered by inquiry into inquiry; at least we do not know what it means for the purposes of logic. Personally, I doubt whether there exists anything that may be called <u>thought</u> as a strictly psychical existence...." (40)

Neither is it necessary to await the appearance of these later writers. Contemporary with Mercier himself were Bergson, Le Roy, Wilbois, and others, in whose writings can be found the basic ideas of both Meyerson

and Dewey (41). For these men, as de Tonquedec points out, the philosophic intuition which goes back over the work of scientific invention to complete it does so by way of reflection and is a return to the pure intuition which precedes conceptual disassociation (42).

These hurried and scattered references are enough to give at least some slight indication of the ineffectiveness of Mercier's line of argument against modern Scepticism. It would also be possible to pursue the analysis of Mercier's position further and to show how the doubt upon which he insists so strongly is gradually watered down to the degree that, when he comes to the consideration of immediately evident propositions, what he defends is, not a doubt of them, but only an attempt to doubt them (43). It seems that one could even develop an argument that at this point the much-vaunted doubt, from which one had been led to expect such great things, because its prowess and intrepidity and valor had been so loudly boasted (44), has lost all its daring and speedily decamped in the face of this crucial test; and, that, consciously or not, but in any case under the compulsion of the truth (45), Mercier has here actually come around to the plain, unadorned traditional doctrine, even though his expression of it is still somewhat obscured by the tattered remnants of the embroidery of his personal jargon (46).

Neither would it be unrewarding to take a close look at Jeannière's attempt at rallying his thus thoroughly broken forces and to explore all the aspects of the fact that, though he is one of Mercier's disciples, he seems to have so far recoiled from the implications of his master's reasoning on the matter of immediately evident judgments that he breaks completely through all the carefully phrased limitations with which Mercier constantly

hedges in all his statements on the doubt, and commits himself explicitly to the propositions that the mere attempt to doubt in no wise satisfies the demands of scientific method and that the doubt imposed on the philosopher at the outset of his inquiry is a real doubt (47) -- which latter Mercier quite as expressly and categorically denies (48).

e) Refutation of Mercier's theory of initial doubt:

To enter upon a serious and extended discussion of all these problems at this point would, however, be both a digression and a distraction from the all-important issue which -- following Mercier's own order -- next comes up for consideration, and the proper resolution of which is so indispensable to the correct understanding of the Thomistic doctrine on certitude, that is, Mercier's reference to Aristotle and St. Thomas for the support of his position on the methodic doubt, and his attributing to them the opinion which he himself holds concerning it. At any rate, it will be necessary, in connection with the examination of these assertions, to say something further, and that at once, about the gradations of doubt which Mercier marks with respect to the different objects in regard of which it is exercised. As for the other suggestions made above, sufficient attention has already (49) been paid them, so that they need not impede the immediate pursuit of the subject of Mercier's interpretation of the texts he quotes in his attempt to substantiate his claim that his is the authentic Aristotelian and Thomistic teaching.

Before he introduces his quotations from Aristotle and St. Thomas to verify his stand on this matter of the methodic doubt, Mercier first recalls,

in the terms quoted above (50), the distinction he has previously (51) made between spontaneous and reflex certitude and repeats (52) that it is the area of reflection, and not of spontaneity, that the questions of epistemology arise (53). He then goes on to ask what, in the domain of reflection, should be the primordial state of the intelligence. (54)

His answer to this question is divided into three parts, according to whether it has reference to the initial state of the intelligence with respect to our cognitive faculties (55); or to mediate judgments (56), or to immediate judgments (57).

It is in response to the first section of this question, the part which is concerned with the faculties, that he says, as reported above (58), the human reason neither knows nor can know whether or not its faculties will bring it to the truth, until it has first scrutinized those faculties, which it does by reflecting on the acts of the faculties. In this same place, he makes what is in his theory a capital distinction between negative and positive doubt. He holds that Descartes' doubt was a positive doubt, that is, he judged positively that the trustworthiness of the cognitive faculties was doubtful, and that this positive judgment was illegitimate because Descartes had no right to judge the faculties before examining their acts.

He represents his own doubt, on the other hand, as an entirely negative doubt, a simple ignorance which implies no judgment in any direction, which arises from the fact that there simply are no reasons either in favor of or against a judgment which would pronounce that the cognitive faculties

can attain the truth, and which is resolutely maintained by a systematic refusal to judge whether or not they can do so until after their nature and capabilites are known by reflection.

By means of this distinction of positive and negative doubt he further believes that he completely avoids the contradiction which he has previously shown to exist in the Cartesian methodical doubt, which contradiction arises from the fact that, while a simply methodical doubt allows for the retention of habitual certitudes, a truly universal doubt eliminates all certitude, habitual as well as actual (59).

He then concludes this section on the initial state of the intelligence with respect to our cognitive faculties by saying that it is, for the reasons given, necessary to begin by questioning the acts of the intelligence in order to discover the nature of the principle which suits them.

Then he takes up the consideration of the initial state of the intelligence in the presence of mediate judgments.

The first thing which he notes here is that the cognitive acts which are capable of engendering certitude are judgments. Then:

> "Lorsque l'intelligence passe à l'examen réfléchi de ses jugements, elle en remarque certains dont la vérité ne se manifeste pas immédiatement. Elle est, par la même, incitée à les analyser afin de mettre en lumière la nature du rapport dont ils contiennent indistinctement la formule. Chercher à décomposer la complexité des termes d'un jugement afin de dégager par leur analyse le rapport d'identité ou de non-identité qu'ils contiennent virtuellement et réduire ainsi des jugements médiats à des jugements immédiats, c'est démontrer.
> "Toute démonstration supposant le doute, soit réel, soit méthodique, sur la conclusion à démontrer, la raison réfléchissante commence par le <u>doute</u> sur tous les jugements <u>médiats</u>.
> "Le doute ainsi entendu est la loi fondamentale de la recherche scientifique.

> "Aristote le recommande expressément au début du Livre III de sa Métaphysique: 'Avant d'aborder la solution d'un problème, dit-il, il faut commencer par bien douter et par s'enquérir de toutes les difficultés dont le problème est entouré. Ainsi, il fait précéder son enquête sur le réel, d'une tentative de solution du pour et du contre (ἀπορίαι). Il réduit les conflits apparents d'idées à leurs termes les plus simples, dissipe ainsi les confusions, prévient les équivoques et rend plus aisée une vue compréhensive du sujet....
> "Les lignes suivantes du Stagirite sont un plaidoyer en faveur du doute scientifique:...." (60)

Then he quotes several paragraphs from the Metaphysics. These passages will be reproduced below along with the passages from St. Thomas' Commentary on them, which Mercier also quotes. But the thing which it seems especially important to notice at the moment -- and this is the reason why such care has been taken to show exactly how he presents the texts -- is that his direct and immediate use of the authority of Aristotle and St. Thomas is here severely limited to the sole purpose of justifying a doubt about mediate judgments and nothing else. Whether or not it is true that every demonstration presupposes doubt about the conclusion to be demonstrated; whether or not he thinks that he has made it clear in what sense doubt is here to be understood; whether or not he has correctly understood the meaning of Aristotle's terminology and St. Thomas' interpretation of it; it is not possible to let pass unremarked that, when he calls Aristotle as witness that doubt is the fundamental law of scientific research, he desires his testimony on the precise point of doubt which affects only mediate judgments, and this quite consistently with the notion of science. It would appear, in fact, that he here implies something like a definition of scientific doubt. Thus, he remarks just after he quotes the Aristotelian text:

> "Si tel est, pour le fondateur du Lycée, le rôle du doute méthodique dans la science, est-il étonnant, que dans la plupart de ses ouvrages, avant d'aborder l'examen ou la position d'un problème nouveau, il commence par l'exposé des doutes que le problème fait surgir?" (61)

Nor is this impression that he intends to place a deliberate restriction on the methodic doubt, in accordance with what he believes to be imposed by the commentary of St. Thomas, in any degree lessened, when he renders St. Thomas' "prosequitur universalem dubitationem" by "essaie de soumettre la vérité au doute universel...":

> "Au surplus, Aristote ne se contente pas d'élever des doutes particuliers sur les vérités particulières qu'il cherche à dégager ou à démontrer, en les motivant d'ailleurs le plus solidement possible; lorsqu'il arrive, dans sa Métaphysique, à l'étude de la vérité en général, il accumule toutes les raisons de douter. 'Aux vérités particulières répondent naturellement, dit saint Thomas, les doutes partiels; mais une science qui a pour objet la vérité en général, appelle tous les doutes possibles sur la vérité, et voilà pourquoi Aristote essaie de soumettre la vérité au doute universel: et ideo non particulariter, sed simul universalem dubitationem prosequitur.'
> "Avec les maîtres dont nous venons de reproduire le sentiment, nous croyons donc, en premier lieu, que l'état primordial de l'intelligence, en présence de vérités particulières sujettes à démonstration, c'est le doute, doute réel ou artificiel, mais toujours, doute motivé, positif; en second lieu, nous croyons que, en face de la vérité en général, de toute vérité, il est naturel et légitime de tenter un doute universel." (62)

I will not escape observation that he here states his belief that the state of the intelligence when it is first confronted with particular demonstrable truths differs from its state with respect to the truth-rendering competence of the faculties, in that in the former situation its doubt is

positive; while in the latter it is negative, and that he does nothing to justify the distinction.

The next phase of his answer to the tripartite question, which is concerned with the initial state of the intelligence in the presence of immediate judgments, adds little to what he has already said in reply to the second part. He begins by eliminating the possibility that all the judgments which are submitted to the control of reflection are susceptible of demonstration. He does so by remarking that, if every proposition were demonstrable, there would be an infinity of middle terms between the extremes of any proposition whatsoever. This, in turn, would mean that the extremes of every proposition were an inexhaustible source of middle terms and this, because the terms would be of an infinite complexity. (53)

From this he concludes that the analysis of mediate judgment leads necessarily to the admission that there are immediate judgments, since demonstration is impossible without indemonstrable premises.

But, even though indemonstrable propositions admittedly <u>can</u> not be demonstrated, he adds, one may still ask whether they <u>should</u> not be, and whether they are certain without demonstration.

His reply to the first of these two questions is exactly what might have been expected from what he has just said, in the statement quoted immediately above, about the primordial state of the intelligence in the face of general truth. He holds that it is both legitimate and conformed to the exigencies of a rigorous critique to <u>try</u> to doubt indemonstrable propositions, and to <u>try</u> to doubt all of them, as did Aristotle and St. Thomas:

> "Il est légitime, il est conforme aux exigences d'une critique rigoureuse d'essayer de les mettre en doute. -- Ainsi Aristote et saint Thomas recommandent-ils de faire effort pour en douter, pour douter universellement." (64)

By way of response to the second question, whether indemonstrable propositions are certain without demonstration, he outlines what he considers will be the results of the aforementioned attempt at doubting them, and concludes that every such attempt is bound to fail, that it cannot but be wholly unsuccessful, and that the initial state of the intelligence in the domain of reflection is certitude (65).

Fortunately, the only business which this essay has with Mercier's theory is to find out what it has to offer of illumination as a commentary on St. Thomas' doctrine of certitude. It can afford, therefore, to leave altogether aside any detailed criticism of that theory and content itself with noting only those points in it which appear to coincide with its interest.

To get on with its work, then, it needs only to remark first, that Mercier here distinguishes three stages in the frame of mind with which the philosopher must begin his critical inquiry: with respect to the ability of the cognitive faculties to deliver the truth, he must entertain a negative doubt; with respect to the truth of mediate propositions, the attitude he must assume is one of positive doubt; while with respect to immediate propositions, about which he cannot doubt at all, he adequately discharges his obligations if he attempts to doubt; and that, in the second place, his appeal to the authority of Aristotle and St. Thomas to bolster his contention of the necessity of an initial doubt is made only with reference to

mediate propositions. When he has recourse to them on the matter of immediate propositions, he asks them to declare themselves in favor, not of a doubt, but merely of an attempt to doubt.

These nuances are not nearly so nicely made by Mercier as to have merited their being so generally neglected as they appear to have been by all his critics. There is little excuse for not paying strict attention to exactly what Mercier says here, not only because he seems rather anxious that his position be appreciated at what he considers to be its true worth, but also because it does in fact appear sufficiently significant as he here expresses it that it should not be permitted to slip by unchallenged.

The fact that Mercier does not undertake to justify his stand on the necessity of negative doubt about the cognitive faculties by quoting Aristotle and St. Thomas as favoring it in the sense in which he intends it seems to be, first of all, an implicit admission that they do not. Further than that, it seems to be a backhanded way of making clear the complete originality of his total position in the matter, and his perfect willingness to accept the responsibility of going it alone.

In the second place, it does not seem that the point on which he does avail himself of what he believes is their support of an initial doubt is anything so especially extraordinary. It is scarcely conceivable that anyone who has any slightest notion of what an mediate proposition is would hold that such a proposition is certain before it is demonstrated. That mediate propositions need to be demonstrated does not seem so doubtful as

to require such an overwhelming marshalling of authority. A brief explanation of what "mediate" means, perhaps with a reference or a short quotation, would seem to suffice for so evident a point -- and this is exactly his procedure when he shows (66) that mediate propositions necessitate the existence of immediate propositions.

So far, then, as the advancement of anything he explicitly Says here is concerned, it would appear that the only value which his quoting Aristotle and St. Thomas at such length can have is as a verification of his claim that, before mediate propositions are demonstrated, they are positively doubtful. If the distinction between negative doubt (of the faculties) and positive doubt (of mediate propositions) which he is so careful to make clear is to have any sense at all, it can mean, according to his terminology (67), only that there is no possibility of simple ignorance, or of suspicion, or opinion about a still-undemonstrated mediate proposition. The sole attitude one can have with regard to such a proposition is one of positive doubt, which for him means that one has already compiled equally forceful arguments both for and against it. If this is the assertion he is asking these texts to confirm, it is certainly such a strange and singular opinion, so directly contrary to experience, that it requires all the support it can get. But it hardly seems to be borne out by these texts.

Nor does he ever make it clear, when he speaks of metaphysics' accumulating all the reasons for doubting, why this could not be understood simply with reference to the conclusions which metaphysics demonstrates, the mediate propositions to which it concludes and which, prior to this

demonstration, would be in his view subject to positive doubt.

Yet, it would seem that this distinction is implied necessarily in what he says about trying to doubt indemonstrable principles. Even if it were granted that Aristotle and St. Thomas were here talking about doubt, it is well worth noting that Mercier does not make bold enough to avail himself of their authority in support of a doubt about such principles. He is content to translate St. Thomas' "prosequitur" by "essaie" and, since an attempt to doubt is poles removed from a doubt, this appears to be capable of being understood as an explicit admission that the texts which he here quotes offer him no succor at the point of his gravest difficulty.

If he is not going to doubt indemonstrable propositions, the only point of contact he would appear to have with any serious scepticism is on the question of the negative doubt about the faculties. And as for the procedural question on which he bases this doubt (68), and entirely apart from the sense which he gives to the word "doubt", it would appear that he has little reason here for congratulating himself on any originality. Aristotle had long before him made the same criticism of Plato that he makes of Descartes and the "Exaggerated Dogmatists":

> "Et quod male fecerit ostendit. In natura enim animae hoc est, ut judicium de aliqua potentia animae sumatur ex actu seu operatione ipsius potentiae, judicium vero operationis ex objecto: potentiae enim cognoscuntur per actus, actus vero per objecta: et inde est, quod in definitione potentiae ponitur ejus actus, et in definitione actus ponitur objectum...." (69)

But it is worth calling attention to the fact that Aristotle and St. Thomas here manifest no doubt about the fact that the determination of the act comes from its object. For them, it is just as certain that the act must be judged in the light of the object as it is that the potency must be judged in the light of its act. Obviously, if Mercier had even once made reference to any such text, the game would have been up, because his readers could then easily have sifted out the dross of his original contribution and seen at a glance that it was not worth a more precise assay.

There will be occasion a little later to advert once more to the degree to which his position is compatible with a truly sceptical one. For the present, it is enough to have remarked how seriously the initial doubt is reduced by what he finds in the texts from the Metaphysics and St. Thomas' Commentary on it and by his express comments on them. What the doubt itself comes to is nothing more than a doubt about mediate propositions. This seems to be a far cry from the universal doubt which is generally associated with his name.

The conclusion of this rather close examination of Mercier's own presentation of his doctrine seems to indicate that that association is not well-founded and that, as a consequence, the criticisms of Mercier on this ground are rather carelessly made and so lose their force. What it contests is the general assumption, made even by some of his own folowers who are not so careful as he, that Mercier himself is satisfied that he has found in these texts alone adequate foundation for the universal doubt. In

other words, what is at issue here is the question of the interpretation of these texts which is to be attributed to him, not the implications of his position on reflexion. The most he attempts to draw from them is a confirmation of an attempt to doubt immediate propositions. But, since such an interpretation is utterly meaningless unless one first understands the distinction he has long since made between spontaneous and reflex certitude and his denial of a legitimate existence to spontaneous certitude until it has been justified by reflex certitude, it appears that his position on the doubt is ultimately radicated in that more fundamental doctrine on certitude.

Thus, his whole development of the doctrine of the doubt takes on the appearance of a long commentary on St. Thomas' two definitions. In the last analysis, it is to his conception of the meaning of the fact that St. Thomas gives two definitions that he must resort in order to shore up his own doctrine of the doubt. In his mind, the latter is completely dependent upon the former and it is in this sense that he would have the Thomistic texts understood. After his doubling back on the two definitions has thus been pointed out, nothing more need be said by way of underlining the consequences of mistaking St. Thomas' intentions. Contrariwise, since, as has already been shown and will be manifested further, his reading of these two definitions cannot be sustained, his whole doctrine on the doubt must fall and with it must go his interpretation of the text from the Metaphysics as justifying an attempt at universal doubt.

It may be objected against this interpretation of Mercier's doctrine that he does not make explicit reference in this section to the distinction of

spontaneous and reflex certitude. Since so much has been made here of what he says expressly, this may seem to be a serious inconsistency.

The answer is simply that, unless, as has already been said, he means to base his attempt to doubt immediate propositions on this notion of the distinction between spontaneous and reflex certitude, it is simply impossible to justify even so poor a thing as an attempt to doubt. Further than that, he does make clear reference to the domain of reflection:

> "L'état initial de l'esprit, dans le domaine de la réflexion, c'est donc la certitude...." (70)

This should be enough to resolve any doubts about it. But, should it not be, it is also possible to produce Coffey, who of all the disciples of Mercier seems to stick most closely to his master's own presentation, as a witness that this is what Mercier means. Thus:

> "....First, then, ought we, or is it necessary for us, to conceive a methodic doubt about all our spontaneous convictions without exception? Well it seems that we ought at least to try to do so. And the reason is that ex hypothesi we are embarking on the task of critically re-examining all our spontaneous beliefs and convictions, all our supposed knowledge, in order to see whether or how far it will stand the test of critical reflection and emerge into reflex or philosophical certitude. And hence we must try to adopt the questioning attitude towards all our assents without exception." (71)

and again:

> "Now when we say that it is impossible and superfluous to doubt methodically about self-evident judgments, what we mean is that it is impossible and superfluous to doubt methodically that they are mental facts which we spontaneously consider as putting us into possession of real truth. That and no more....

> "We see then that it is indeed possible to extend our methodic or simulated doubt, even to self-evident judgments. But in regard to these latter what we may hold as questionable is not their existence as mental events of the cognitive order....What we may and must doubt methodically is <u>their significance</u> in relation to reality, or in other words the validity of our spontaneous conviction that they do give us a genuine insight into reality. And finally it must be borne in mind that this doubt is only a methodic or simulated doubt, not a real doubt." (72)

Coffey's introduction here of the distinction between real and simulated or methodic doubt in no way changes the conclusion here maintained about the relationship between the distinction between spontaneous and reflex certitude and the attempt to doubt universally of the truth of immediate propositions.

f) Refutation of the theory of the universal doubt:

It seems more pertinent at the present, however, to summarize the arguments which are used by Mercier's opponents against any attempt to use the text from the Metaphysics in which St. Thomas mentions "universalis dubitatio" as confirming by itself the initial universal doubt. It is necessary to do so, not only for the reason that some of his followers seem to place no such restrictions as Mercier's on its use and so raise the question of the interpretation of this text, but also because their reading of it may be another way of arriving at the interpretation which Mercier gives of the two Thomistic definitions of certitude. Thus Noel, for example, takes this text to mean that universal doubt of all truth

spontaneous and reflex certitude. Since so much has been made here of what he says expressly, this may seem to be a serious inconsistency.

The answer is simply that, unless, as has already been said, he means to base his attempt to doubt immediate propositions on this notion of the distinction between spontaneous and reflex certitude, it is simply impossible to justify even so poor a thing as an attempt to doubt. Further than that, he does make clear reference to the domain of reflection:

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Greek is actually not what the word "doubt" (or "doubt") ordinarily means, that is to say, a suspension of assent because of the lack of any compelling reasons which would necessitate a certain assent. The second argument consists in showing that, from the way in which they proceed, neither Aristotle nor St. Thomas ever entertained any slightest doubt either of the capacity of the intellect to know the truth, or of the fact that indemonstrable principles could not be doubted. The third depends on showing from the context in which the passage which the proponents of the universal doubt use occurs that there can be no credence given to their interpretation.

The Greek word which is at the heart of the discussion can perhaps be best translated in English by "difficulty", and this is the sense which is retained in the various verbal forms which it assumes in the passage in question. Even further back, as de Tonquedec points out very aptly, its derives form the word for a passage-way, a track, a ford, and so on, which is " πόρος ". Whether this word is compounded with an " ἀ " privative or with the adverbial form " εὖ ", it retains this basic signification of "passage". With the " ἀ " privative, it indicates obstacles in the way of the passage and, therefore, the noun " ἀπορία " means "difficulty", not "doubt". With the adverbial prefix " εὖ ", however, it means just the opposite of " ἀπορία ", so that it then indicates a smooth and easy passage-way, one without obstacles or difficulties, not "doubts". The translations which he gives is worth quoting, because he incorporates the Greek words into it and makes interpolations of his own which are good explanations:

"... Lisons d'abord Aristote. Nous sommes au seuil de la métaphysique, science de l'être en général. Conformément à sa méthode habituelle, le Stagirite commence par rapporter les opinions des philosophes qui l'ont précédé, et encore les objections auxquelles ils auraient pu ne pas penser, afin de corser au maximum la difficulté à résoudre. C'est la période de l'ἀπορία, c'est-à-dire de l'embarras; l'esprit ne peut avancer, son chemin est encombré d'objections, littéralement, le passage est obstrué (α privatif, et πόρος passage). Cet état laborieux doit se résoudre dans l'εὐπορία; un passage facile (εὐ et πόρος) sera ouvert à l'intelligence, par où elle accèdera à la solution. Aristote trouve là l'occasion d'insister sur l'utilité de sa méthode. On ne saurait, dit-il, obtenir la réponse adéquate à une question qu'après l'avoir envisagée d'abord dans toute sa difficulté. 'Ceux qui veulent être intellectuellement à l'aise (εὐπορῆσαι : c'est-à-dire voir bien clair dans la question, en posséder une solution pleinement satisfaisante) doivent d'abord se mettre bien dans l'embarras (διαπορῆσαι καλῶς) c'est-à-dire considérer toutes les difficultés et en comprendre toute la force); car l'état d'aise (εὐπορία) qui succède (à l'embarras) consiste précisément en ceci: que ce qui d'abord fait difficulté est résolu. Or on ne peut pas dénouer un lien qu'on ne voit pas....' » (75).

His interpretation of the principal words in this passage is fully confirmed by the Oxford English translation, from which one would not even suspect the existence of a problem here had it not been previously pointed out:

> "....We must, with a view to the science which we are seeking, first recount the subjects that should be first discussed. These include both the other opinions that some have held on the first principles, and any point besides these that happens to have been overlooked. For those who wish to get clear of difficulties it is advantageous to discuss the difficulties well; for the subsequent free play of thought implies the solution of the previous difficulties, and it is not possible to untie a knot of which one does not know. But the difficulty of our thinking points to a 'knot' in the subject; for

> in so far as our thought is in difficulties, it is in like case with those who are bound; for in either case it is impossible to go forward. Hence one should have surveyed all the difficulties beforehand, both for the purposes we have stated and because people who inquire without first stating the difficulties are like those who do not know where they have to go; besides, a man does not otherwise know even whether he has at any given time found what he is looking for or not; for the end is not clear to such a man, while to him who has first discussed the difficulties it is clear. Further, he who has heard all the contending arguments, as if they were the parties to a case, must be in a better position for judging." (76)

Mercier quotes the whole of the text next given below from St. Thomas' Commentary on the Metaphysics, and it is the place to which all those who hold the initial universal doubt refer, though Noel, for example, quotes only the latter half of it:

> "Est autem attendendum, quod propter has rationes commentator Aristotelis fuit ferre in ceteris libris solo, ut inquisitioni veritatis vel determinationi praetermitteret dubitationes emergentes. Sed in aliis libris singillatim ad singulas determinationes praemittit dubitationes: hic vero simul praemittit omnes dubitationes, et postea secundum ordinem dubitum determinat veritatem. — Cujus ratio est, quia aliae scientiae considerant particulariter de veritate: unde et particulariter ad eas pertinet circa singulas veritates dubitare: sed ista scientia sicut habet universalem considerationem de veritate, ita etiam ad eam pertinet universalis dubitatio de veritate; et ideo non particulariter, sed simul universalem dubitationem prosequitur." (77)

When de Tonquedec turns his attention to the Commentary of St. Thomas, after having first, as shown above, established the true sense of the Aristotelian text, he remarks that Aristotle's meaning determines the sense which St. Thomas gives to the text, because he makes no qualifications or distinctions or reservations about it when he reproduces it

with his commentary. His use of "dubitatio" is easily explained by the fact that that was the word which he found, as the equivalent of ἀπορία, in the Latin translation of Moerbeke. But St. Thomas development is exactly the same as Aristotle's. Then he goes to make the extremely worthwhile remark that, rather than doubting the value of the intelligence, this supposes it in the most explicit fashion:

> "... La valeur de l'intelligence n'est pas, si peu que ce soit, mise en doute; au contraire, elle est supposée de la façon la plus explicite. La prétente de ne fuir aucune difficulté, mais de les embrasser toutes, de les rechercher, de les appeler, de les citer au tribunal de la raison, ne saurait passer, j'imagine, pour l'expression d'une défiance quelconque à l'égard du pouvoir judicatif de celle-ci." (73)

The contradiction in which Aristotle and St. Thomas would be involved because of their thus summoning all those difficulties before the tribunal of reason for examination and trial would, indeed, prove them guilty of the purest pretense and of the sincerest mockery of justice, if the court were not competent to pass judgment. If one were convinced that this absurdity is exactly what should be charged against them, it would be quite proper to seize on these texts and to cite them as clear evidence of their guilt. To do so would, of course, automatically eliminate any hope of availing oneself of their authority in support of a universal doubt. When, then, a proponent of the universal doubt uses these texts as if they favored it, he convicts himself of either crotinous imperceptivity or of gross intellectual perversion. Perhaps it would be better to adopt de Tonquedec's remark here, that those who believe they see in the words "universalis dubitatio de veritate" the proper expression of the Cartesian universal doubt are more sensible to the material consonances of the words than to their soul.

The second principal argument against the interpretation of these texts as favoring a universal negative doubt is that, if Aristotle and St. Thomas here intended such a doubt, their thought would naturally have continued to develop in the direction of an attempt to resolve that doubt. But they do no such thing. Without giving any slightest sign of being bothered about any incapacity of the intellect to know the truth, they immediately enter upon the solution of the difficulties they propose, once they have stated them. And, when they encounter the sophist, who denies the principle of contradiction, they dispose of him with summary dispatch:

> "...Sans s'occuper désormais le moins du monde d'une prétendue incapacité de l'intelligence, ils se mettent d'emblée à l'appliquer aux difficultés générales qu'ils ont signalées et qui portent sur l'être, sur la substance, etc. C'est cela qui constitue leur réponse: elle consiste dans la solution de ces difficultés. Ainsi apparaît la continuité de leur pensée, qui autrement serait incohérente; le sens de leur solution montre avec évidence celui que le problème avait dans leur esprit. Et si, par la suite, ils rencontrent sur le chemin le sophiste qui prétend négliger le principe de contradiction, nous savons de quelle façon sommaire ils l'exécutent. Eux ne doutent pas; ils n'ont jamais douté. Sans égards pour le sophiste, ils le traitent comme les têtes saines ont le droit de traiter les fous." (79)

De Tonquedec concludes this section of what he calls "exegesis" with what, properly interpreted, seems to be a very apposite observation. He comments that, while Aristotle and St. Thomas intend the presentation of difficulties to be a means of showing a way to the proper solution of the whole problem of which they are the particular manifestation, the partisans of the universal doubt can claim no such illuminative value for the doubt.

This appears to be true in the sense that doubt as such can throw light on nothing.

The third line of argumentation against those who pretent to find in the statement of St. Thomas alone the basis of the universal doubt is from, many points of view, the most interesting and effective of the three and it has hardly been exploited at all by the critics of the universal doubt. But, before discussing it, perhaps it would be best to give at least an indication of how it goes. Sullivan is perhaps the one who states it most explicitly:

> "....In advocating his method of universal negative methodic doubt, Mercier appeals to a text from the Commentary on the Metaphysics in which St. Thomas seems to assert that philosophy must use universal doubt. This, however, does not mean that the philosopher himself must doubt universally, even in a methodical manner, but simply that he must listen to all the reasons as if adduced by doubting adversaries; this St. Thomas tells us verbatim, only a few lines above the passage just quoted." (80)

The passage to which he refers as just quoted is the one which is here being discussed. He quotes in a footnote (81) the few to which he refers:

> "Ita necesse est eum qui debet audire philosophiam, melius se habere in judicando si audierit omnes rationes quasi adversariorum dubitantium." (82)

Enough has already been said about the way in which Mercier uses this text, so that it is possible to pass over the first sentence of the statement here quoted from Sullivan without further remark about the misunderstanding of Mercier's position which it implies. The essential

point is his denial, on the basis of what St. Thomas says, that the philosopher himself must doubt universally even in a methodical way. It would not be quite correct to say that the philosopher's own attitude does not enter into the discussion at all in this interpretation, because it affirms that he has no universal doubt. If this is understood, however, it appears to be Sullivan's understanding of the text of St. Thomas to which he calls attention and which he says explains the text from which the original difficulty arises that there is no question of the attitude of the philosopher himself involved when St. Thomas speaks of the "universalis dubitatio de veritate", except for the fact that he must be a good listener.

It is not without interest to remember that Zigliara had used the same kind of explanation for the doubt with which St. Thomas seems to begin so many of discussions, notably the questions with which he prefaces the articles of the Summa and many of his other works:

> "....Deinde S. Thomas dubia movet in quolibet articulo, non quia ipse vel hypothetice dubitet de veritate concludenda, sed quia de illa dubitant adversarii, quorum in antecessum exponit rationes, ut postea, declarata et demonstrata veritate, illas et clarius et efficacius excutiat. Unde inter Scholasticos et Cartesium hoc interest discrimen, quod Cartesius ex se dubitat, Scholastici vero aliorum dubitationes primo referunt, non approbando, sed ad eas confutandas." (83)

Sullivan does not make any reference to this explanation of Zigliara and his failure to do so is easily excusable because the latter is not discussing universal doubt in the passage just quoted, nor does he make any reference to St. Thomas' Commentary on the Metaphysics.

Zigliara's procedure is first to eliminate the possibility of the universal doubt with the argument that, if the whole edifice of knowledge is overthrown, as it would be by the universal doubt such as he conceives it, then there is just no way of reconstituting it (84). Still, the difficulty remains to be explained, that St. Thomas prefaces so many of his articles with a question and objections. It cannot be, because of the argument already advanced, that St. Thomas does so because he himself doubts universally, even in an hypothetical way. The true explanation, then, according to Zigliara, is simply that St. Thomas is acting as if he were listening to the arguments of doubting adversaries.

Sullivan, on the other hand, understands St. Thomas to mean, in the passage which he quotes from his Commentary on the Metaphysics, that Aristotle's reason for starting his inquiry by reproducing the arguments against his position is simply that he is playing the part of a listener. For Sullivan, this is a direct argument against the possibility of the universal doubt, because it represents the philosopher's own attitude as that of a man who has himself no doubt about the points under discussion. The implication seems to be that, if he had any such doubts, they are already resolved.

If this interpretation of Sullivan could be substantiated, it certainly would be an effective argument and would close the matter. The difficulty with it, however, seems to be precisely that it cannot be justified.

In the first place, St. Thomas does not seem here to be talking about the philosopher himself at all. What he says is:

> "Quartam rationem ponit, quae sumitur ex parte auditorio. Auditorem enim oportet judicare de auditis. Sicut autem in judiciis nullus potest judicare nisi audiat rationes utriusque partis, ita necesse est eum, qui debet audire philosophiam, melius se habere in judicando si audierit omnes rationes quasi adversariorum dubitantium." (35)

De Tonquedec, as already evidenced (36), also seems to take it that both Aristotle and St. Thomas here have in mind the philosopher himself. It would seem possible that Aristotle, at least, could be understood in this sense, when he says:

> "Further, he who has heard all the contending arguments, as if they were the parties to a case, must be in a better position for judging." (37)

The difficulty with this interpretation, however, is that St. Thomas apparently does not understand Aristotle to be talking about the philosopher here, but about his pupils. It is hardly possible to describe a philosopher who is pursuing his own independent investigations as "listening to philosophy" ("audire philosophiam").

Further than that, the term "auditor" seems to have almost a consecrated sense in St. Thomas, and his regular use of it is with reference to students of philosophy, rather than to their teacher. Thus, in his Commentary on the Physics, for example, he explains the title "de Naturali Auditu", which is sometimes given to the Physics, in terms of the fact that it was passed on to his pupils by Aristotle:

> "Hic autem est liber Physicorum, qui etiam dicitur de Physico sive Naturali Auditu, quia per modum doctrinae ad audientes traditus fuit...." (38)

Even more explicit, because of his use of the word "juvenis" in direct connection with it, is the passage in his Commentary on the Ethics in which he explains why a young man is not a suitable student of political and moral science:

> "Concludit propositum, scilicet quod juvenis non est conveniens auditor politicae et totius moralis scientiae...quia...nullus potest bene judicare nisi ea quae novit. Omnis enim auditor oportet quod bene judicet de his quae audit, ut scilicet bene dicta recipiat, non autem ea quae male dicuntur. Ergo oportet quod nullus sit auditor conveniens nisi habeat aliquam notitiam eorum quae debet audire. Sed juvenis non habet notitiam eorum quae pertinent ad scientiam moralem, quae maxime cognoscuntur per experientiam. Juvenis enim est inexpertus operationum humanae vitae.... Unde manifestum est, quod juvenis non est conveniens auditor politicae....Et sic nihil differt quantum ad hoc, an auditor hujus scientiae sit juvenis aetate, vel juvenis moribus, idest passionum sectator..." (89)

It is notable that in this passage from the Commentary on the Ethics St. Thomas also speaks of the judgment which the listener must make, that one cannot judge unless he knows something of the matter which he has to judge, and so on. Thus, it appears almost as a commentary on the passage from the Commentary on the Metaphysics which is being discussed at the moment.

In view of these parallel texts, then, it does not seem at all likely that St. Thomas is talking about the philosopher himself and his own attitude in the text which Sullivan uses as an argument against the universal doubt. Rather, what he has in mind is the pupils who are studying philosophy and it is as an aid to their comprehension of the science of metaphysics and as a help to them in the forming of their judgments

about it that he says Aristotle first explains to them the problems arising in connection with it.

This implies, of course, that the pupils who are listening to the philosopher are sure at least that the philosopher is there to be heard and that they are listening to him, nor is there any slightest indication given in the text that the pupils entertain any such thing as a universal doubt. However, because the point could be raised that the text is talking chiefly about the philosopher's pupil's, it seems better not to depend upon it for a refutation of the universal doubt.

A second criticism which might be leveled against Sullivan's basing his opposition to the universal doubt upon this one text, even if what he says about it were true, is that it does not take into account the other three of the four reasons which St. Thomas clearly distinguishes. Though it is likely that Sullivan confines himself to this one argument because he thinks it sufficiently cogent by itself, the fact that he does not mention the rest of the reasons is conceivably ground for suspecting that his motive in doing so is the fear of their causing some difficulty for his position. If one were not familiar with the reasons which Sullivan omits but knew simply that there were such, he might wonder whether St. Thomas does not really first of all concede that the positing of an initial universal doubt by the philosopher in his own investigation is perfectly legitimate and even necessary, following which he would show how that doubt is to be resolved, and is now, in this fourth reason, explaining the advantages to be gained by the philosopher's students from his exposing

the reasons which caused his own doubt, before he shows them how those difficulties should be handled.

It is easy, however, to put such misgivings to rest without examining the other three reasons at all. Mercier has obviated this difficulty, because he gives (90) at least a paraphrase of the Aristotelian text in its entirety and quotes at least the essential portions of St. Thomas' commentary on it. He clearly finds nothing especially valuable for proving a universal doubt in the parts which Sullivan leaves out, nor does any one of his adherents take any more of the first three reasons than he does. In fact, none of them even makes any reference to them, to say nothing of quoting them. If, then, despite the fact that he is so thoroughly acquainted with the whole passage, Mercier finds that it warrants no more than an attempt to doubt, it does not seem that there is any necessity of submitting the other three reasons to analysis here.

A further objection can be made to the way in which Sullivan makes his reference to the context and it is the most serious of the three, though it affords little comfort for the supporters of the universal doubt. It is that, once started in the direction of the context, he should have gone a little further and examined the first paragraph of the lesson, the one which immediately precedes St. Thomas' listing of the four reasons and which introduces them. There appear to be riches in it which are just waiting for discovery nor does their extraction entail any great amount of work, for they are lying almost on the surface.*

Before leaving the consideration of the text itself, however, it may be worth while to make one or two parenthetical remarks.

The first is concerned with the fact that, in this text, Aristotle and St. Thomas are clearly talking about metaphysics. If, then, it were true that the universal doubt were really recommended here, it is a little surprising, to say the least, that people who presumably have read this text so carefully and who depend so completely upon it as a stay for their position totally ignore the fact that Aristotle and St. Thomas appear to reserve whatever there is to be of a general critique to metaphysics, and attempt to appropriate that scientific scrutiny of which they make so much to another part of philosophy.

Thus Mercier, for example, attaches his Critériologie to his Psychologie (91), which latter, in turn, is a part of Physique, which is the complement of what he calls the sciences of observation (92).

Van Steenberghen (93) notes, in his turn, that Mercier's thus presenting his theory of certitude as a detached branch of psychology (94), wholly independent of logic, raises the issue of the relationships between logic and epistemology, "since logic occupies a capital place in the Aristotelian epistemology". (95)

His own conception of epistemology is that it embraces a threefold division into analytical, critical, and logical epistemology (96). For practical reasons, however, he is willing to conform to the long-established usage which has erected logic as a separate science, and confines his attention to the first two parts (97). He is absolutely confident that history confirms

the fact that there is a theory of knowledge at the starting point of philosophy, and is puzzled that some modern scholastics, among whom he names and criticizes Maritain and Gilson, find some difficulty with this idea (98). This triply-sectioned epistemology, further, is the general epistemology which is situated at the beginning of the positive sciences and philosophy and which is something apart from them, and should not be confused with the special epistemology and special logic which each division of philosophy and of the positive sciences has as its own.....(99)

Perhaps a simple plea for a somewhat deeper regard for what Aristotle and St. Thomas have to say is utterly futile in the face of this type of rather precious scholasticism, but it will do no harm, nonetheless, to remark also that the reason which St. Thomas gives for Aristotle's gathering together all the difficulties which metaphysics must treat before he actually begins to resolve them is somewhat more extensive than most people seem to have believed. The reason which mentions the "universalis dubitatio de veritate" is actually only one of three reasons, all of which are certainly worth an adequate development.

Here, however, it is possible only to make a brief mention of the second. It surely should not be passed over altogether, because it says something which seems to have the most direct bearing on the matter of the universal doubt. Further, it makes its point in so simple and plain a way that neither its direct meaning, nor its larger significance, can be missed (100).

It should be clear by now that the first reason limits itself to a comparison of the Metaphysics with the other books of Aristotle which is

based on the universality of its consideration of the truth as against their relative narrowness. But it does not go outside the field of Aristotle's own writings.

The second reason, however, takes a broader view and contrasts Aristotle's general procedure with that of other philosophers. St. Thomas notes that, whereas Aristotle begins with sensible and manifest things, others had started in just the opposite way. They took intelligible and abstract things, and, therefore, things which are not manifest to us, as their starting point and then wanted to apply them to sensible things afterward. The absurdity of their method is evident to anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with the Aristotelian doctrine (101).

Still, at least some of the difficulties which Aristotle must treat here are derived from his predecessors (102), who used the wholly wrong approach. The problem with which he had to cope, then, was to devise a way of covering their difficulties adequately, without at the same time being encumbered by their errors of method in doing so. He gets around it very nicely by collecting all their difficulties, as well as others that they did not even think about, in one place, and thus leaves himself free to follow his own order in solving them.

There are two aspects of this second reason which have a particular pertinence for the controversy about the universal doubt and for the problem of certitude which is closely connected with it. One of them is directly related to the first paragraph of this lesson, and so the examination of it

will terminate these few incidental observations. The other, which can scarcely have escaped the reader -- though, if it has, he can comfort himself with the certain knowledge that his failure to detect it places him in a rather large company -- is the explicit statement of St. Thomas that, in contradistinction to other philosophers, Aristotle begins with what is sensible and manifest and proceeds from them to the consideration of separated substances:

> "....Iste enim incipit a sensibilibus et manifestis, et procedit ad separata...." (103)

That should be enough to settle the question. There is no longer any need of going into long, involved explanations of the meaning of the Greek word which is translated by "dubitatio", or of showing how the implications of the way Aristotle and St. Thomas proceed are evidence of their understanding of the problem, or of talking about explicit supposition. Such arguments are, indeed, irrefutable. But they are still just a little bit unsatisfying perhaps, at least for the dogged devotee of the universal doubt, because they are all matters of interpretation, and implication, and supposition.

No such objection can be raised against this statement. It is perfectly explicit and baldly direct. Aristotle "starts from what is sensible and manifest". It is offered to clarify the reasons for Aristotle's procedure here in the Metaphysics, as truly as the first reason is. It parallels and complements the first reason, and is quite as worthy of respect. In a certain sense, it might even be possible to take it as the more important of these two reasons, because, while the first depends on the universality

of Aristotle's Metaphysics, this derives from the universality of his mind.

At any rate, the accumulation of difficulties prior to their solution, far from being an evidence of an initial doubt, is the clearest possible proof that Aristotle is sure of at least one thing -- to say nothing more -- and that is that, if the difficulties of the metaphysics are ever to be resolved, the way to go about doing so is to start off with what is manifest. To say that he begins with a doubt, would imply, not only that he doesn't know how to solve the difficulties, but that he doesn't even know how to try to solve them. If there is to be an attempt of any kind, it is an attempt to settle the questions raised, not an attempt to doubt the very principles of their settlement. Even if one admitted, for the sake of argument, that he didn't know the answers, it is impossible to admit that he has not long since made up his mind how to find them. Of whatever else he may be doubtful, of this one thing he is sure, that certain things are manifest to us and it is with them the science of metaphysics must begin. Thus, Mercier's restriction of the universal doubt to mediate propositions is justified, though his attempt to doubt immediate principles is not.

Another aspect of this second reason, is that St. Thomas identifies the "dubitabilia" explicitly as being made up for the most part of matters upon which other philosophers held opinions which differed from Aristotle's. And this brings one back directly to the last two sentences of the introductory paragraph of this third lesson, in which St. Thomas expressly states

why they are "dubitabilia". What he says is perfectly plain:

> ".....Sunt autem hujusmodi dubitabilia propter duas rationes. Vel quia antiqui philosophi aliter susceperunt opinionem de eis quam veritas rei habeat, vel quia omnino praetermiserunt de his considerare." (104)

For the most part, the reason for the difficulty is that an erroneous opinion has already been proposed on one or the other point that is to come up for discussion. Basically, the cause of the fact that other opinions than Aristotle's are occasions for difficulty is the respect accorded the philosophers who held them. Where their thought differed from Aristotle's, the mere fact of their having expressed it might be taken as a prior indication of the truth. And, when they passed any matter over entirely, one was left without any sure guide by which to evaluate Aristotle's unsupported opinion.

However much objection can be made to this statement of the prominence which St. Thomas gives the opinions of other philosophers -- or the lack of them -- as causative of difficulties, it seems impossible to deny that he is here giving the reason why the difficulties are difficulties. If it were really his conception of the matter that they are difficulties because the philosopher is bound by the exigencies of scientific procedure to start with a doubt, it would be something of an anomaly, to say the least, did he omit that reason in the very place where he sets about enumerating them. Yet, there is not even a hint of any such thing here.

It seems, then, that this paragraph must serve as an interpretation of the famous one in which he mentions the "universalis dubitatio de veritate". What he is explaining in that place, it seems, is not why there is a

"dubitatio" antecedently to its solution. That has already been taken care of in the first paragraph. The only question at issue there is why the "dubitatio" is universal. Not the doubt, but its extension is his concern. And, as is well known, it is a difficulty which is as extensive as the science itself with which it is concerned. That is all, and it seems simple enough.

It would seem possible to outline the matter which St. Thomas treats in this lesson -- exclusive of the first part of the first paragraph, which will be examined in a moment -- in the following way:

It is divided into two principal parts, of which the second is by far the longer. In the first part, he states that it is Aristotle's intention to set forth the difficulties connected with the truth about things, before he proceeds to determine what that truth is. Incidentally to this statement of Aristotle's intention, he gives two reasons why the difficulties are difficulties.

In the second part, he explains why Aristotle begins with the difficulties, and thus he reports four reasons which Aristotle gives to show why anyone who wants to investigate the truth should start by exposing the difficulties connected with it. From this point to the end of the lesson, St. Thomas' is not just paraphrasing what Aristotle says, with some few additional remarks. He here starts his own commentary on this text.

Thus, after he has enumerated these four reasons, he says that this is why Aristotle, in almost all his works, customarily prefaces his determinations of the truth with the related difficulties. Then, he calls attention to the fact that, though he also adheres to this custom in the Metaphysics,

his method of detailing the difficulties here is nonetheless different from the practice which is habitual with him in his other treatises. While in the rest of the books he intercalcates the difficulties between the members of the series of determinations of the truth which makes up each book, and thus states the difficulties which are connected with each separate investigation of the truth before going on to the next proposition of difficulties and their resolution, he here gathers all the difficulties together at the outset. Then he gives three reasons why Aristotle follows this rather different order in the Metaphysics.

This summary of the lesson makes it easy to appreciate another extremely forceful argument against the interpretation of the "universalis dubitatio de veritate" in the sense of a universal doubt. If it is truly a universal doubt which St. Thomas intends by that phrase, he is clearly introducing an innovation for which he has no support in the Aristotelian text itself. It occurs in a section of the lesson in which he is not just reporting Aristotle's opinion, but proposing reasons of his own for Aristotle's procedure -- "his own" in the sense, of course, that they are not mentioned specifically here by Aristotle, not in the sense that they are not thoroughly Aristotelian. If this is the true interpretation of the Thomistic text, the startlingly novel idea which St. Thomas here introduces might have been at least credited to him less grudgingly. It would appear to be no small point, in view of all that has been made of it by and since Mercier. But is has gone entirely unobserved.

It is certainly no argument against this interpretation to say that is is not Aristotelian but peculiarly Thomistic. That is, it is no argument by itself. But, just as one might have expected the modern proponents of the universal to seize on this difference between Aristotle and St. Thomas and to exhibit it for all to see with the greatest delight, one can be pretty well confident that St. Thomas, in his own calmer and surer way, would have quietly indicated his divergence from Aristotle here and have been at great pains to justify it, did it exist. But he does not say a word about it.

Perhaps it is his modesty that akes him keep silent. It is possible that he might have had sufficient trust in the acuity of his followers that they could understand what he was about, would realize the revolution he was here setting off, without any necessity of his doing more than thus whispering the signal. At that one word, his faithful followers were waiting and ready to leap into the breach. But they were so long in coming that he overestimates them.

One had thought all along that St. Thomas represented Aristotelianism at its best and truest and that he was its most capable defender. But all the while he has really been quietly engaged in cutting the ground from under Aristotle's very feet, and at such a crucial point that old Aristotle must fall. St. Thomas' Aristotelianism is a canard, his profession of it hypocrisy, and his heart belongs to Descartes, or at least to the school of Mercier.

Thus, it is no simple thing that the proponents of the universal doubt

should have proved, could they have done so. But it is now too late even to try. Even had the opportunity for so glorious a victory ever really been there, they have let it slip through their fingers, pass unrecognized under their very noses, and so they have lost by default.

The true question is, of course, whether any semblance of truth could ever have been attached to such an absurdity. Perhaps the simplest way of answering it, and the one which is most directly pertinent for the issue of the universal doubt, is to take a look at the beginning of the first paragraph of this lesson.

It seems to have been generally forgotten in the midst of all this discussion that this is the first lesson of the third book of the Metaphysics. That means, quite obviously, that Aristotle and St. Thomas have said a great deal by the time they have gotten this far. And what have they said?

Well, St. Thomas, in accordance with his own custom, starts this third book by showing how it is related to what has gone before it and to what will come after it. It will be enough to notice what connection he establishes between it and what has preceded it.

In the first sentence of this first paragraph, St. Thomas links this third book with the second book by saying that, while in the former Aristotle shows the way in which truth is to be considered, he now proceeds to its consideration. In other words, the second book takes on the appearance of a kind of methodology of the Metaphysics, and that seems to be something which is exactly to the point of this whole discussion about the universal doubt.

If, now, following this lead, one turns to the beginning of the second book of St. Thomas' Commentary, he will find that St. Thomas expresses an idea which has already been encountered often enough in what has been seen here already. After he points out that the first book has been devoted by Aristotle to the rejection of the opinions of the ancient philosophers about the first principles of things, he points out that with this second book he begins to determine the truth about those first principles. He then immediately makes a distinction between the way in which first philosophy considers truth and the way in which the particular sciences do. The difference is, of course, that each particular science considers a certain particular truth, which has to do with a determined class of beings. But first philosophy considers the universal truth of beings.

All this is familiar enough already, so that there is no need of emphasizing it, except to say that there is nothing at all said here about any kind of doubt. What he says next, though, seems to be of sufficient importance:

> "....Et ideo ad hunc philosophum pertinet considerare, quomodo se habeat homo ad veritatem cognoscendam." (105)

It would appear that there are two important ideas here in this one sentence which should be underlined and brought out as clearly as possible.

The first depends on the "ideo". For the foregoing reason, that is, on account of the fact that metaphysics considers the truth of beings in all its extension, therefore it must investigate how man is situated with respect to his knowing the truth.

The second, which is really only another way of saying the same thing, is that this consideration of the chances that man has to know the truth, the way in which he is related to the truth which must be known, belongs to the metaphysician. It is reserved to "hunc philosophum", the philosopher who embraces the whole range of being in his science, and not to anyone else.

The significance of these remarks for the argument about the science to which the theory of knowledge, or criteriology, or epistemology, belongs need not be stressed further. The only thing which would be left after observing that St. Thomas does actually raise the question of the way in which the problems of metaphysics must be approached would be to see in detail how he develops that method. But even though this second topic is extremely short, to follow its whole development in detail would be unnecessary. Some parts of it will be referred to again later on in any case. But for now there is no need of doing anything more than reading one or two little texts which seem to give a direct answer to the difficulties which underlie the doctrine of the universal doubt.

At the end of the second paragraph of this lesson (106), St. Thomas says that Aristotle intends here to take up first the question of how truth is easy and how it is hard to know.

He says that Aristotle first shows in what sense it is easy to know the truth. He does so by the use of two signs and one example.

The first sign is stated by Aristotle himself in one brief clause:

> ".... but every one says something true about the nature of things.... (107).

St. Thomas takes this "saying something" as an evidence of interior consideration and then reasons that, if everyone says something that is true, then everyone must think something that is true, that everyone knows at least something of the truth, that no one is completely deprived of truth:

> ".... licet nullus homo veritatis perfectam cognitionem adipisci possit, tamen nullus homo est ita expers veritatis, quin aliquid de veritate cognoscat. Quod ex hoc apparet, quod unusquisque potest enuntiare de veritate et hat an rerum, quod est signum considerationis interioris. " (108)

It appears to be especially worth noting here that St. Thomas says not only that there is no one who does not know something true, but also that the truth which everyone knows in some way at least is a truth of the nature of things. It may, indeed, be open to question, from the viewpoint of this one text alone, how far it is necessary to examine that knowledge which everyone has of the truth, but it is undeniable that the knowledge which everyone has is a knowledge of things. This is nothing at all extraordinary, in view of the nature of knowledge itself, which is completely incomprehensible unless there is an object of knowledge. The way in which Noel excepts this doctrine from any kind of doubt has been noted above (109) and enough has been said about it by other writers (110) to make it pointless to go into the matter further here. But is should be remarked that St. Thomas speaks explicitly of the "truth and nature of things" as the object of this

knowledge, however minimal, which no one is without. It seems extremely difficult to reconcile this simple statement of St. Thomas, which is delivered in immediate connection with the problem of knowledge and which has the air of saying something so obvious that it almost need not have been said at all, with the notion that the object of knowledge and its reality is something of which no one can be perfectly sure only after a long reasoning, in which one first establishes the validity of immediate principles and then shows how, by the application of the principle of causality to one's ideas, he can legitimately and at last conclude to the existence of external reality -- which is Mercier's procedure (111) -- or with the idea that the object of knowledge is, indeed, something implicitly contained in the content of consciousness, but that one can be certain that it is there, truly representative of reality, only by deducing its presence through the application of an elaborate and refined analytic process (admittedly ingenious) -- the technique which Van Steenberghen adopts (112).

If, now, one passes by the second sign as without any particular interest for this discussion, he comes to the example of the house, which Aristotle uses to explain how knowledge is easy. There is here observable some difference between the way in which Aristotle uses this example, and the way in which St. Thomas adapts it. The difference may serve to cast a good deal of light on St. Thomas' own position on the universal doubt, and especially so in view of the possibility of alleging -- however foolishly -- that St. Thomas departs from the position of Aristotle when he speaks of the "universalis dubitatio de veritate". Just as he is there speaking for himself, because he is making his own commentary on the Aristotelian text, he may be said to be expressing

his own opinion here, too.

The only part of the house about which Aristotle speaks is the door and what he says about it in connection with truth seems to be a direct consequence of what he points out just a phrase or two before he introduces it, to the effect that at least something of what any one and every one says about the nature of things is true:

> "... Therefore, since the truth seems to be like the proverbial door, which no one can fail to hit, in this respect it must be easy, but the fact that we can have a whole truth and not the particular part we aim at shows the difficulty of it." (113)

St. Thomas extends and broadens the comparison somewhat by bringing in, logically enough, the interior of the house. Thus, he says that it is difficult to know the inside of the house and one can be easily deceived about it, though no one is deceived about the entry of the house, which is open to everyone and which is the first thing one comes upon.

Since he has, by this distinction of interior and entrance, somewhat heightened Aristotle's use of the figure, he is in a position to sharpen the comparison. Thus he finds that the relation between the first principles which are known per se and the other propositions which are known through them, is similar to the relation between the doorway of the house and the parts upon which it opens and into which one enters through it. Just as no one is deceived about the entry to the house, so no one is deceived about the first principles which are per se known. But, as with regard to the interior of the house one can easily be deceived, so error is a frequent occurrence with regard to the conclusions, which are reached through the doorway

of the naturally known first principles:

> "... non ea, per quae intratur in cognitionem aliorum, nota sunt omnibus, et nullum circa ea decipitur: hujusmodi autem sunt prima principia naturaliter nota, ut non esse simul affirmare et negare, et quod omne totum est majus sua parte, et similia. Circa conclusiones vero, ad quas per hujusmodi, quasi per januas, intratur, contingit multoties errare. Sic igitur cognitio veritatis est facilis, inquantum scilicet ad minus istud modicum, quod est principium, per se notum, per quod intratur ad veritatem, est omnibus per se notum" (214)

There certainly is here no kind of evidence that St. Thomas in any degree supports an initial universal doubt. There is no slightest hesitancy, no justification for an attempt to doubt. These first principles are so clear to everyone that at least they are to be counted among the truths, mentioned in the explanation of the first sign, of which no one is deprived. The reference of this example to that sign is clearly made by Aristotle himself, and if St. Thomas makes the example somewhat plainer, it is only to show its full force by making it more precise, and not to contradict anything Aristotle says or intends.

Briefly, then, it is easy for everyone to know the truth, at least in the sense that everyone knows the first naturally known principles, which have a direct bearing on really existent things. And everyone knows these truths without any necessity of putting them through a long and grueling examination in a reflective process which will certify the knowledge of them as true and legitimately certain knowledge.

Surely, if reflection were the open road to security, if it were that which made the possession of truth easy, this was the place for

St. Thomas and Aristotle to say so. As is always the case when their testimony is sought in support of such an idea, it is simply not available. More than that, they are testifying for the other side, openly and unequivocally.

This, then, is the essence of the theory of knowledge, the statement of the basic principles of the Aristotelian and Thomistic epistemology, if you will — but not its whole essence, nor its complete statement. So far, the only thing which has been considered is the way in which knowing the truth is easy. Though there have been references in each of these three paragraphs to the difficulty of knowing the truth, that aspect has not yet been treated formally, nor it is not until this point has been reached that it is.

It will be worth taking a quick look to what St. Thomas says about this difficulty now, because it is just barely possible that there may be in it some reference at which the defenders of the universal doubt can grasp in a last, desperate effort to salvage their badly battered theory. Even if they come upon anything which looks hopeful for their position, they will, of course, first have to reconcile it with all that has already been said against it, before they can put it to any use. And, if they could discover any such thing, it would be a fair test of their ingenuity.

It is to the explanation of why it is difficult to attain the truth that the major portion of the remainder of this first lesson is, in fact, given over and so it is too long even to summarize here. However, it can

be pointed out that St. Thomas shows here how Aristotle immediately reduces the possible causes of the difficulty of knowing the truth to two: us and things. Further, the principle cause of the difficulty is in us.

This last statement looks as if it might hold out something hopeful for the universal doubt. It sounds a little bit subjective, perhaps. St. Thomas even goes so far as to say explicitly that the principal difficulty in the knowledge of truth is the weakness of our intellect:

> "...Unde manifestum est, quod difficultas accidit in cognitione veritatis, maxime propter defectum intellectus nostri...." (115)

He comes to this conclusion because, if the difficulty had its principal cause in things, we would know best those things which are in themselves most knowable and know least the things which are in themselves least knowable. Thus, we would know immaterial and immobile things better than we know sensible and material things, which is obviously false, and which, as has been pointed out previously (116), St. Thomas expressly denies.

What, then, is the basic cause of the difficulty of knowing the truth? Is it that we cannot be certain of the legitimacy of our spontaneous judgments, that we must submit all our assents to the scrutiny of reflection, that we must begin our scientific investigation with a universal doubt and at least attempt to doubt even immediate propositions? For St. Thomas, as he here expresses himself, it is no such thing as any one or all of these. If ever he had the occasion to throw his weight in favor of these ideas it was here at this precise place, in which he is considering the difficulty of knowing the truth, and when he has already conceded that the chief cause of that difficulty lies in ourselves.

His explanation, however, is of an entirely different kind. It takes for granted that there are things, all kinds of things from material to purely immaterial beings, and that these things really exist, and that we can know them. What, then, is the explanation of the difficulty? It is quite simply that our intellects are the weakest of intellects, because our human souls come in the last place in the hierarchy of intellectual substances, with the consequence that there is lacking the proportion between our intellects and separated substances which is required of a being for whom those separated substances would be most and best known. Thus, despite the fact that separated substances are in themselves the most knowable of created beings, because they are the most perfectly in act (117), so long as the human soul is united to the body it cannot know the essences of those separated substances, because there is not between it and them that proportion which knowledge of that sort requires. The natural aptitude of the human intellect lies in just the opposite direction, so that what is most knowable for it, is the truth of corporeal and sensible things:

> "Sic igitur, cum anima humana sit ultima in ordine substantiarum intellectivarum, minime participat de virtute intellectiva ... ita habet naturalem aptitudinem ad cognoscendum corporalium et sensibilium veritatem, quae sunt minus cognoscibilia secundum suam naturam propter eorum materialitatem .... nullo modo potest elevari ad cognoscendum quidditates immaterialium substantiarum, quae sunt improportionatae istis substantiis sensibilibus. Unde impossibile est quod anima humana hujusmodi corpori unita, apprehendat substantias separatas cognoscendo de eis quod quid est." (118)

In order that there will be no confusion about the fact that the lack of proportion between the human intellect and these immaterial objects is the basic cause of the intellect's incapacity to know them in the way in which it knows objects which are proportioned to it, so that it will be perfectly clear that is is this lack of proportion which makes it extremely difficult for the intellect of man to know those objects, St. Thomas has, in the paragraph immediately preceding the one from which the quotation just above is taken, compared intellectual knowledge with sense knowledge. He has pointed out that, though the impediments which can arise to interfere with sense knowledge are two-fold, the essential impediment to intellectual knowledge is solely the lack of proportion between it and its object. The sense can be deficient either because it is such that the sense organ is capable of being corrupted by the excellence of its object, or because there is no proportion between the sensitive power itself and the object which moves it. In the case of the intellect, however, the first of these two causes is ruled out, because the intellect, as a spiritual faculty, is incapable of corruption. The lack of proportion is, then, the only explanation left (119).

Once one has read St. Thomas' commentary here, he can appreciate both that commentary and the two brief sentences in which Aristotle so masterfully sums up the whole discussion:

> "Perhaps, too, as difficulties are of two kinds, the cause of the present difficulty is not in the facts but in us. For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all." (120)

This brief analysis of these few texts, which makes no pretense at having exhausted their richness, is enough of a basis upon which to be able to evaluate the claim that St. Thomas' remark that a "universalis habitatio de veritate" pertains to metaphysics is actually an apology for an initial universal doubt. The text itself has been examined, as has its relationship to both the immediate and remote context in which it is found. What has been said here should certainly be enough to make it clear that this phrase simply cannot be used to justify the position of the advocates of the universal doubt. As far as the text of the Metaphysics is concerned, then, the matter seems to be closed.

It would be a shame, however, to fail to call to the attention of the reader another text from St. Thomas which seems to be very apt here. Perhaps, indeed, it is the aptest text of all. It occurs in the Compendium of Theology, in a chapter which is devoted the refutation of the theory that the possible intellect is numerically one for all men. In the course of disproving that theory, St. Thomas comes to the point that he wishes to use an argument which will make it clearly evident that it is untenable. In order to do that, he says, it is necessary to proceed as one does against those who deny first principles, that is, by laying down a principle which simply cannot be denied, because its very denial implies its admission. For the defender of the universal doubt,

who thinks he represents St. Thomas' position, the example which St. Thomas chooses as an instance of a truth which is just incapable of being denied must be utterly incomprehensible. The undeniable principle he selects is that no matter what particular man one picks out, that man knows or understands. The evidence he offers for that proposition is nothing more complicated than the statement of the obvious truth that whoever denies it proves it true of himself, at least, since the only condition on which one could deny it is that he understands it ought to be denied --if he is to make any defense of his position at all. Thus, an act of knowledge is presupposed to his own denial. Further than that, (121) both affirmation and negation are acts of an intelligent being. Because of the formality of its terms, no more perfectly explicit statement against the universal doubt could be asked of St. Thomas:

> "... Hoc autem quod impossibile sit, evidenter apparet. Ad quod ostendendum procedendum est sicut proceditur contra negantes principia, ut ponamus aliquid quod omnino negari non possit. Ponamus igitur quod hic homo, puta, Socrates, vel Plato, intelligat, quod negare non posset respondendo, nisi intelligeret esse negandum. Negando igitur ponit, nam affirmare et negare intelligentis est...." (122)

However much Mercier may object to the use of the tactic of reducing the sceptic to contradicting himself, St. Thomas has no scruple about it. He does so constantly and, in a sense, he may even be called brutal, because he not only forces him into the absurdity of contradicting himself, but goes beyond that to the blunt statement that, however much a man may deny first principles, he can not really believe his verbal

denial (123), because he can not lie in his own mind about them (124).

The reason for this directness is not at all any lack of delicacy on St. Thomas' part. The first principles are too important a matter to trifle with, and honesty is true charity with regard to them.

Mercier makes a serious mistake, if he thinks that his distinction between ancient and modern scepticism (125), justifies his more 'sympathetic' approach. It is no good to say that, simply because a man does not deny immediate propositions outright, but restricts himself severely to the position that he just does not know whether they are true or not, he escapes St. Thomas' criticism.

St. Thomas makes it very clear, in the first place, that the first condition of the most certain principle is that no one can be in error about it. Then, in his short explanation of this condition, he says that men are deceived only with respect to that about which they are ignorant. It seems legitimate to turn that proposition around and say that, if a man is ignorant about something, and professes that ignorance as a principle, it implies that he also holds that he can be deceived about it. This seems to be a fair statement of the doctrine of the modern sceptics, as Mercier understands it. The mere fact that they neither affirm nor deny the principles which are fundamental to all knowledge and all philosophy is equivalently a denial of them. If it is truly possible to be ignorant of what is most known in fact, then nothing can be known, because there is no way of escaping that ignorance. To give any kind of encouragement

to that attitude is bad enough, but to pretend that it is the doctrine of St. Thomas looks very much like a type of alexia.

Perhaps, however, it would be well for the reader to have before him the text in which these implications are found, so that he can see for himself how much of it is St. Thomas' directly expressed doctrine and how little interpretation his explicit statement needs to derive from it the conclusions just stated:

> ".....Penit ergo primo tres conditiones firmissimi principii. Prima est, quod circa hoc non possit aliquid mentiri, sive errare. Et hoc patet, quia cum homines non decipiuntur nisi circa ea quae ignorant: ideo circa quod non potest aliquis decipi, oportet esse notissimum." (126)

Not only is it true that the principle of contradiction is so well known that there can be absolutely no hesitancy whatsoever about assenting to it, no halting half-way, no attempt at doubt, but the very statement that one is ignorant about its validity until it is legitimized by reflection implies it. If one pretends to express any kind of knowledge at all by such a statement -- and, if it does not at least pretend to describe a real state of mind, then it is completely without meaning -- he confesses that he also knows the principle of contradiction. That one cannot know anything at all without knowing that first principle is a proposition to which, adapting the phrasing of Russell, St. Thomas attaches no limitation whatsoever:

> ".... qui ex quo ipsum est necessarium ad intelligendum quodcumque, oportet quod quilibet qui alia est cognoscens, ipsum cognoscat." (127)

Thus, while Mercier is very right when he points out that the principle of contradiction is not, in Aristotle's and St. Thomas' conception of it, a principle from which every other truth can be derived by a process of pure deduction, he does not seem to have understood at all the full meaning of what he also says in the same place (128), that the principle of contradiction rules every reasoning. He appears to think of it almost as something extrinsic to the process of thought, a kind of automatic regulator which works from the outside, without really having anything to do with knowledge itself. He does not seem to have grasped the concept that in the Thomistic doctrine the governance of the principle of contradiction is one of right, and not just of fact; that it is so completely intrinsic to any and every knowledge that there simply is no such thing as knowledge of anything else, unless it, too, is known; that, if anyone claims to know anything, he necessarily admits the validity of the principle.

The consequence of Mercier's justifying an attempt to doubt immediate principles is, further, not merely that he is in direct opposition to St. Thomas -- at least for what he has to say about principles which are naturally known by everyone -- but more than that it is a serious error of method.

To understand this, it is necessary to recall that, as has been said previously (129), when Mercier makes his distinction between spontaneous and reflex certitude, he is denying a legitimate existence

to spontaneous certitude. It is no answer to say that he and his followers admit the existence of spontaneous certitude as a psychological state. The effect of this admission, and the effect which they intend by it, is to reduce spontaneous certitude to an infra-scientific level, so that it is wholly unavailable as such for any scientific use. It simply can not be taken as a certitude and used scientifically as one, until it is controlled and justified by reflection. This is a matter of principle with them, and it admits of no exception. Thus, because it is illegitimate, it cannot be applied for any scientific purpose and, immediately that it is legitimized by reflection, it is no longer available for use, because it is then become reflex certitude.

The result of this distinction is, of course, an entirely new concept of certitude. Further, it has serious consequences for the notion of knowledge itself and for the definition of truth. Thus, the explanation and defense of these new definitions alone occupies the first two of the four books of Mercier's Critériologie. Until he has first resolved the problems which his novel definitions occasion, it is impossible for him to take up the problem of the objectivity of knowledge. Even the statement of that problem is completely dependent upon the conclusions to which he comes in the first two books.

At the same time, he is setting up criteriology in independence of metaphysics. Thus, it is a particular science, a branch of psychology, the subject of which is certitude (130).

That the definition and even the very existence of the subject of a particular science should thus be called into question is a proce-

dure which is in direct opposition to St. Thomas' explicit teaching that each particular science has to suppose both the existence and the definition of its subject. He expresses this idea in several places in his commentaries. Thus, for example, he says in his Commentary on the Metaphysics:

> ".....Et sicut nulla scientia particularis determinat quod quid est, ita etiam nulla earum dicit de genere subjecto, quod versatur, est aut non est. Et hoc rationabiliter accidit: quia ejusdem scientiae est determinare quaestionem an est, et manifestare quid est. Oportet enim quod quid est accipere ut medium ad ostendendum an est. Et utraque est consideratio Philosophi, qui considerat ens inquantum ens. Et ideo quaelibet scientia particularis supponit de subjecto suo, quia est, et quid est, ut dicitur in libro Posteriorum...." (131)

Since Mercier and his followers are unalterably intent upon maintaining that criteriology or epistemology is not a metaphysical study but a separate science, the only way in which they can pretend to circumvent this objection against their procedure is to insist resolutely that they do no more than appropriate the integral Thomistic doctrine.

This reply is a patent absurdity for those whose sole use of St. Thomas is an attempt to torture his mention of the "universalis dubitatio de veritate" into a justification of their universal doubt. Since, in connection with their initial definition of certitude as a state of mind, they find it impossible to give any space to what St. Thomas has to say about it — though there seems to be no lack of room for the opinions of dozens of other writers (132) — one just has