The explanation is, of course, that St. Thomas does not pretend that further impositions cancel out earlier ones. Having secured a new meaning, he does not hesitate to employ the same word in other ways, depending upon the context. Thus he spoke of "ens divinum, quod abstrahitur a materia et motu." [5] Does the De Trinitate render this abstractio obsolete?

In light of this, the crucial import that Father Geiger attributes to the autograph text remains somewhat questionable as far as the present subject is concerned. This is not to depreciate the worth of the manuscript in itself--we are indeed fortunate to have it--nor its contribution to our knowledge of how St. Thomas worked. Notwithstanding the importance of the first redactions, our concern is with the one that St. Thomas finally settled on, and more precisely, with the doctrine contained therein. To see the several discarded attempts at composition as indicating a genuine uncertainty on the part of St. Thomas regarding the mental process needed to justify the objectivity of each of the sciences is an assumption that squares badly with the metaphysical or sapiential

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"...Abstrahere contingit dupliciter. Uno modo, per modum compositionis et divisionis; sicut cum intelligimus aliquid non esse in alio, vel esse separatum ab eo. Alio modo, per modum simplicis et absolutae considerationis, sicut cum intelligimus unum, nihil considerando de alio." Ia, q. 85, a. 1, ad 1.

5. In II Sent., dist. II, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4.

character of the whole question. It is difficult to explain why St. Thomas would have undertaken the question at all if he were in doubt as to the validity of the science of metaphysics or the manner in which it attains its object. Deliberation as to the most efficacious means of manifesting how the sciences attain their objects is something quite different and not in any way out of line with respect to the general scope of the work.

All of which leads us to conclude that the prominence imputed to separation is actually a misplaced emphasis, ostensibly influenced by a prior contention: that article three represents a doctrinal development wherein St. Thomas comes to discover, in terms of subjective operations, a way to guarantee the objective validity of the sciences divided in article one according to the mind of Aristotle.[6]

B. L. M. Régis

The ability to discern, within the question, the adoption by St. Thomas of his own point of view, as distinguished from that of Aristotle, is also claimed by Father Régis, but in a more explicit manner.

> A l'article premier de la question V, St. Thomas hiérarchise les sciences selon le point de vue strictement aristotélicienne et c'est l'aspect de

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6. Régis, op. cit., pp. 17-22. It is to be noted that in order to substantiate his position Father Régis is obliged to surrender some certain tenets of St. Thomas. Cont'd...

> non-séparation ou de séparation de la matière sensible qui est le critère de distinction. Dans les articles II-IV de la même question, il élabore son point de vue; et alors que le mot abstraction n'était même pas prononcé dans l'article 1er, ici, au contraire, il est le centre même de l'élaboration. 7

It is not surprising that St. Thomas should in this place assume an approach other than that of Aristotle, according to Father Régis, since this is characteristic of their divergent points of view. Allowing that St. Thomas uses elements borrowed from Aristotle, and that he integrates the latter's thought apropos of the systematization of human knowing, all of this is accomplished, in the words of Father Régis, "dans une position de problème presque à l'opposé de celle du Stagyrite; car tandis que ce dernier ne s'applique qu'à manifester l'objectivité réaliste de cette hiérarchie de notre savoir, l'Angélique concentre tout son effort à faire valoir le comment de cette objectivité par une analyse des opérations de l'esprit." 8

Apart from questioning Father Régis's interpretation of the order of this question, what makes us most wary is the fact that St. Thomas himself gives no indication that he is aware of this suggested opposition. If this were the nagging concern that Father Régis alleges it to be, what better opportunity than the present to bring to light his own point of

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7. Régis, "La philosophie de la nature", p. 132, note 2.
8. Ibid. p. 182. Cf. n. 185. (?)

view, as he does when we expect him to. But what do we find? A difference between St. Thomas commenting on Boethius and St. Thomas commenting on Aristotle? By no means. What St. Thomas says here in the De Trinitate is what he says when commenting on Aristotle and the way that he says it is the same, solicitous on every occasion that Aristotle be correctly understood. To read any of the commentaries is to have evidence of this fidelity. It would obviously be impossible at this stage to attempt, point by point, a correlation of the matter treated in the De Trinitate with the commentaries on Aristotle. More than occasional use has already been made of these commentaries in the preceding investigation. Nevertheless, an examination of certain relevant passages may help to obviate the purported antithesis between a strictly Aristotelian objectivity and an authentic Thomistic subjectivity which supposedly underlies the structure of the question.

In Bk. VI of the Metaphysics[9] Aristotle gives a division of the sciences which, taken by itself, would appear to lend credence to the idea of a hierarchy based on the things known: physics is about things that are inseparable from matter [10] and that are mobile; mathematics considers things

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9. Aristotle, Metaph., VI, c. 1, 1026a 6-15.

10. For a discussion and an evaluation of the variant translations of this phrase, see Emmanuel Trépanier, "La philosophie de la nature porte-t-elle sur des séparés ou des non-séparés?" Laval théologique et philosophique

that are mobile and inseparable from matter according to being but immobile and separable according to understanding; metaphysics studies things that are immobile and separable in either respect. However, this division is not isolated. It cannot be divorced from the passage immediately preceding it in which Aristotle insists on the necessity of knowing the mode of defining in a science. He is most emphatic in saying that to attempt to distinguish the sciences without knowing "the mode of being of the essence and of its definition" is an idle attempt.[11] St. Thomas's commentary on this has been quoted previously, but it is worth repeating, at least in part, to show exactly how he interprets Aristotle in this place.

> Primo ostendit modum proprium definiendi naturalis philosophiae; dicens, quod ad cognoscendum differentiam scientiarum speculativarum adinvicem, oportet non latere quidditatem rei, et 'rationem' idest definitionem significantem ipsam, quomodo est assignanda in unaquaque scientia. Quaerere enim differentiam praedictam 'sine hoc', idest sine cognitione modi definiendi, nihil facere est. 12

Whence the necessity of knowing "the mode of being of the essence and of its definition"? As the examples that Aristotle gives clearly indicate, it derives from the exigencies of a knowing subject whose approaches to various kinds of intelligibility are all conditioned by their common origin in sense experience. Aristotle expresses this in a more general way in his treatise on the soul where he says:

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11. Aristotle, Metaph., VI, c. 1, 1023b 28.?
12. St. Thomas In VI Metaph. lect. 1. n. 1154.

"To sum up, in so far as the realities it knows are capable of being separated from their matter, so it is with the powers of the mind."[13] That his concern here is to point out that different intelligible objects are attainable only by radically different intellectual processes St. Thomas assures us, not only when he comments on this passage in its proper place,[14] but also when he cites it again in his preface to the De Sensu et Sensato where he directly relates it to the doctrine of the Metaphysics mentioned above.

> Sicut Philosophus dicit in tertio de Anima, sicut separabiles sunt res a materia, sic et quae circa intellectum sunt. Unumquodque enim intantum est intelligibile, inquantum est a materia separabile. Unde ea quae sunt secundum naturam a materia separata, sunt secundum seipsa intelligibilia actu: quae vero a nobis a materialibus conditionibus sunt abstracta, fiunt intelligibilia actu per lumen nostri intellectus agentis. Et, quia habitus alicuius potentiae distinguuntur specie secundum differentiam eius quod est per se obiectum potentiae, necesse est quod habitus scientiarum, quibus intellectus perficitur, etiam distinguantur secundum differentiam separationis a materia; et ideo Philosophus in sexto Metaphysicorum distinguit genera scientiarum secundum diversum modum separationis a materia. Nam ea, quae sunt separata a materia secundum esse et rationem, pertinent ad metaphysicum; quae autem sunt separata secundum rationem et non secundum esse, pertinent ad mathematicum; quae autem in sui ratione concernunt materiam sensibilem, pertinent ad naturalem. 15

The determination of the particular intellectual processes to which Aristotle refers in the passages cited belongs

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13. Aristotle, On the Soul, III, c. 4, 427b 22.
14. St. Thomas, In III De Anima, lect. 8, n. 716.
15. St. Thomas, De Sensu et Sensato, i, lect. 1, n. 1.

to the introductory part of the respective sciences. Thus in Bk. II of the Physics[16] the abstraction of the natural scientist is distinguished from that of the mathematician. St. Thomas's commentary here is a capsulized version of what he says in the De Trinitate, with the exception of any reference to separation since at this point in the Physics the existence of a third manner of defining is yet to be determined.

With allowances made for such explanation and even amplification as are expected of a commentator, and in this case happily provided, it is difficult to discover in these few but important places anything to suggest that St. Thomas departs either from the teaching or the basic preoccupation of Aristotle. Which is but added reason why we are disinclined to believe that such divergent points of view are to be found in the De Trinitate. It is moreover difficult to see what Father Régis means by a formal abstraction which, disengaging an essence from individuals under the form of an abstract concept, leads to a metaphysical definition of material realities.[17] The notion or concept of material things, qua material, even though abstract is still the notion of a whole, i.e., it includes form and common sensible matter. And such a definable notion, first attained by an abstractio totius, is proper to natural science, not metaphysics.

16. Aristotle, Physics, II, c. 2, 193b 23-- 194a 10.
17. See Régis pp. 186-87.

C. A. G. van Melsen

This willingness to ascribe to the teaching of St. Thomas something not found in Aristotle is much more pronounced in the explanation which Dr. van Melsen gives to the De Trinitate.

> Thomas Aquinas especially, while following the trend of thought of Aristotle, gives us in a treatise on the different degrees of abstraction a surprisingly clear description of what we today call science, and also of its difference from philosophy. Naturally, the fact that in the Aristotelian system science and philosophy were de facto not kept clearly apart caused confusion in the use of St. Thomas' terminology. In particular, the position of the philosophy of nature is not entirely clear on account of the fact that in the Aristotelian system no difference is made between science and the philosophy of nature. Yet, a careful study of the whole treatise of St. Thomas does not leave us in doubt as to the difference between science and the philosophy of nature insofar as their different levels of abstraction are concerned. As a matter of fact, we think St. Thomas' expositions so clear that they serve as a guide through the following analysis of the degrees of abstraction. 18

It should, of course, be pointed out that the context in which Dr. van Melsen refers to this work is somewhat different from that of either Father Geiger or Father Régis. He is not involved in a study of St. Thomas as such. As he himself implies, the appeal to this work of St. Thomas is to confirm a position that he has already taken. These circumstances notwithstanding, what he has to say is of interest as illustrating the questionable accuracy with which St. Thomas

18. van Melsen, The Philosophy of Nature p. 91.

can be represented in the confrontation with modern science.

As stated in our introduction, the relation between philosophy and science is beyond the limits envisioned by this dissertation. There can be no doubt that today the word 'science' has acquired a meaning somewhat removed from what Aristotle understood by epistèmè and St. Thomas by scientia. And this new meaning is not without grounds. Nor can it be denied that the aim of what is thus called science can be speculative or theoretical as well as practical. But in exposing what Dr. van Melsen holds to be the connection between ancient and modern science the reason was not to discuss or to dispute his position. Rather the intention was to show, from our investigation, that the doctrine of the De Trinitate will not permit the interpretation given to it by Dr. van Melsen when enlisting it in support of his position.

Basic to the distinction that he makes between science and the philosophy of nature is a difference in the level or degree of abstraction at which each conducts its proper investigation. And it is this difference that he would ascribe to St. Thomas. We have seen the reason he gives. Assuming Q. 5, a. 1 and Q. 6, a. 2 to be different approaches to an exposition of three degrees of abstraction, he sets about resolving a problem that is of his own making, namely, to de-

termine to what degree of abstraction the philosophy of nature belongs. The first exposition suggests to him that natural philosophy belongs to the first degree. But in the exposition of Q. 6, a. 2 he finds the description of the first degree to correspond perfectly with features of modern science. Since, however, science and natural philosophy cannot belong to the same degree of abstraction, there is no choice but to locate the latter together with metaphysics in the third degree.

> The clear distinction which St. Thomas makes between the three degrees of abstraction according to the differences in the respective terminus of cognition leaves us no choice with respect to the position of the philosophy of nature. It belongs to the third degree of abstraction. The terminus of cognition is the intellect alone.
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> It has already been pointed out how perfectly the second exposition of St. Thomas describes both the character of modern natural science and of modern philosophy. Therefore, regardless of what the interpretation of the first exposition should be with respect to the position of the philosophy of nature, in the light of the development of science and the philosophy of nature there can be hardly any doubt that the second approach of St. Thomas is correct. There is no way of stating more clearly the difference between science, mathematics, and philosophy than the way St. Thomas did when he drew attention to the differences in the terminus of cognition. 19

One is justified in asking on what Dr. van Melsen bases his assumption that Q. 5, a. 1 and Q. 6, a. 2 are two separate expositions of the degrees of abstraction, and this far

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19. van Melsen, pp. 96-97.

several reasons. First of all, St. Thomas has made clear his intention in each of the two questions. "In prima enim distinguit scientias secundum res, de quibus determinant. In secunda ostendit modos singulis earum congruos...."[20] The mode of a science depends upon its subject matter and can only be determined when it has been established what the subject is. Now, after the thorough analysis of abstraction that was involved in establishing the subjects of each of the sciences, what reason would there be to take this up again when discussing their respective modes?

A second and more serious doubt as to the validity of Dr. van Melsen's assumption concerns his understanding of abstraction itself as explained by St. Thomas. From the explanation of St. Thomas one thing should be quite clear: the expression "three degrees of abstraction" must be used with extreme caution against the likelihood of thinking of them as degrees of a progressive dematerialization wherein the intellect would simply manipulate some original sense data, rendering it, little by little, completely immaterial. It is true that the intellect, by different abstractions or distinctions, attains things that are actually intelligible in the measure that in themselves they are more and more removed from matter. But abstraction itself does not constitute an uninterrupted progression, like a stairway, in which each

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20. St. Thomas, In Boeth. de Trin., Expositio capituli secundi.

step upwards is simply a prolongation of the same process.

It is not easy to determine exactly what Dr. van Melsen means by degrees of abstraction since he provides no explicit criterion for distinguishing them one from another. Affirming that abstraction gives incomplete but true knowledge, he states that there are three levels or degrees at which this can be accomplished and points to the terminus of scientific, mathematical and philosophical knowledge as a kind of confirmation. Yet, in maintaining that science and the philosophy of nature each constitutes an autonomous approach to nature, that each provides essential knowledge of nature, the former specific, the latter generic, and that as a result, the philosophy of nature is to be considered properly as a special metaphysics considering matter and motion as being, there seems to be little doubt but that he views the three degrees of abstraction as degrees of generality. Now for St. Thomas, different levels of generality do not account for the formal distinction of the sciences discussed in the De Trinitate or anywhere else. The philosophy of nature extends from the most general consideration of ens mobile in communi to the most particular species of mobile being.[21] Within that science there are divisions. What is

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21. St. Thomas, In 1 Physic., lect. 1, n. 4. See De Sensu et Sensato, 1, lect. 1, n. 2; De Caelo et Mundo, Proemium, n. 2-3; De Generatione et Corruptione, Proemium.

known of mobile being in general is potential in comparison to its various species. Actual knowledge of these species involves different methods and is realized with varying amounts of success. Yet natural philosophy is formally one science. It has its fundamental oneness from its mode of defining. At whatever level of generality that it studies nature, this science, thanks to definition with common sensible matter, attains the same kind of actual intelligibility.

If St. Thomas is unequivocal as to the unity of natural science, he is insistent upon its distinction from metaphysics. There should be no need to add to what has already been said in this regard. One point, however, is worthy of mention. Dr. van Melsen's reason for considering natural philosophy as a special metaphysics is that for either one the term of knowledge is the intellect. To exemplify this he cites Aristotle's teaching on matter and form. The concepts of primary matter and substantial form, he tells us, are concepts which offer no possibility of confirmation by sense experience. Judgments about them can be proved true or false only by an intellectual analysis. "...According to St. Thomas, we have to consider hylomorphism a doctrine which belongs entirely to the third degree of abstraction, namely, that degree where the terminus of our knowledge lies in the intellect alone."[22] By the third degree of abstraction,

22. van Melsen, p. 94.

of course, he means that of metaphysics. As he says later on: "The philosophy of nature, however, studies material being with the same concepts as are used in metaphysics and, therefore, 'it can be said to be a phase of the science of metaphysics.' " [23]

The metaphysical character that Dr. van Melsen assigns to natural philosophy in view of what he calls the terminus of knowledge is bewildering. Could the term of any scientific judgment be elsewhere than in the intellect? St. Thomas is quite clear as to what he means in natural science by the "term of knowledge": "...ideo in scientia naturali terminari debet cognitio ad sensum, ut scilicet hoc modo iudicemus de rebus naturalibus, secundum quod sensus eas demonstrat...." [24] That which we know of sensible reality as such implies, of course, sensible matter. Curiously enough, it is this very passage that Dr. van Melsen cites as describing science in opposition to natural philosophy. That he omits the closing words of the paragraph is significant: "...Qui sensum negligit in naturalibus, incidit in errorem. Et haec sunt naturalia quae sunt concreta cum materia sensibili et motu et secundum esse et secundum considerationem." [25]

The example that Dr. van Melsen takes to make his

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23. Ibid., pp. 102-103.

24. St. Thomas, In Boeth. de Trin., q. 6, a. 2, c.

25. Ibid.

point is not well chosen. What he calls the "doctrine of hylomorphism" is not a part of the philosophy of nature in the sense that St. Thomas understood it. Aristotle treats of matter and form in the first book of the Physics. This first book, together with the second, forms an introduction to the science of nature, which actually begins only in book three with the definition of motion. The first book is given to a consideration of the subject of the science, that is to say, it considers those things about which scientific knowledge will subsequently be sought. The defense of the given subject of a particular science does not pertain to that science but to metaphysics and to logic as St. Thomas himself says in lesson two of his commentary on this book.

The doctrine concerning the complex subject of natural science is based, to begin with, on an induction: "that substances too, and anything else that can be said 'to be' without qualification, come to be from some substratum, will appear on examination. For we find in every case something that underlies from which proceeds that which comes to be; for instance, animals and plants from seed."[26] Aristotle then manifests the subject of that which comes to be absolutely by means of an analogy, that of bronze and statue; to show that in every coming to be there must be a subject, he had given as the analogy the permanence of the

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25. Aristotle, Physics, I, c. 7, 190b.

uncultured man who becomes cultured. In the two cases there is a resolution to the sensible although this resolution is not, properly speaking, scientific.

It does not pertain to a particular science to justify its subject, as we have said, nor is its first task to demonstrate. In this, natural science differs radically from the science of mathematics which demonstrates in an operational way the subjects that it will treat.

That matter, as understood in the Physics, is more perfectly explained in metaphysics, St. Thomas does not deny. But that it is formally and exclusively a metaphysical subject he nowhere maintains. In fact, he points out that this was the error of Parmenides. Matter and form are first encountered as principles of the changeable things of which we have sense experience. The recognition of a subject which underlies diverse modifications thus rendering them explicable is a condition of natural philosophy. But St. Thomas is careful to point out the characteristic fashion in which natural philosophy arrives at this subject. "Ostendit [Aristoteles] ...quod in omni factione naturali oporteat esse subiectum. Et hoc quidem per rationem probare pertinet ad metaphysicum, unde probatur in VII Metaphys.; sed hic probat tantum per inductionem."[27] Natural science,

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27. St. Thomas, In I Physic., lect. 12, n. 10.

since it knows things with dependence upon sense experience, uses such an induction as its appropriate instrument. Metaphysics, proceeding from the universal, is able to manifest this matter by providing the proper reason.[28] St. Thomas shows the same care not to confuse natural philosophy with metaphysics in regard to form.

> ... [Aristoteles] movet quaestionem hanc, scilicet usque ad quantum oporteat naturalem considerare de forma et quidditate rei (nam considerare formas et quiddidates rerum absolute videtur pertinere ad philosophum primum); ...naturalis in tantum considerat de forma in quantum habet esse in materia. 29

One last point which we cannot concede to Dr. van Melsen is that Aristotle confused philosophy of nature with experimental science. Actually, the question is whether Aristotle identified <u>science</u> of nature and <u>opinion.</u> He did not. On this problem one might read <u>On the Heavens</u>, Bk. III, c. 7.

Dr. van Melsen likewise implies that Aristotle's whole treatise on the soul is metaphysics, since the definition of the soul cannot be verified according to the so-called experimental method. That is to say, you cannot find the soul of an animal in the way that you might disclose its stomach, if it has one, by opening its abdomen.

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28. See St. Thomas, <u>In VII Metaph.</u>, lect. 1, n. 1388.
29. St. Thomas, <u>In II Physic.</u>, lect. 4, n. 10. This same caution is exhibited in the discussion of causes as related to natural science. St. Thomas points out that this is a restricted consideration. See lect. 5, n. 1.

D. Canon Van Steenberghen

Acknowledging as his source and inspiration the thought of St. Thomas, and this for doctrinal reasons, Canon Van Steenberghen disclaims any intention of 'servile' fidelity.[30] He keeps his promise. His approach to the division of the sciences is free of inhibition. Metaphysics is no longer to be acquired after the other sciences have been mastered at least as to their basic tenets. On the contrary, it is the fundamental philosophical discipline, to be undertaken first of all, placed immediately after epistemology and followed by a two-fold special metaphysics. It is unnecessary, he tells us, to approach metaphysics through natural philosophy since that which is studied by metaphysics is ens ut primum notum.[31] Epistemology is the necessary preliminary to this science and not a demonstration that would guarantee its proper intelligibility. Such proof would, in fact, be superfluous since in any experience whatsoever the knower is immediately related to being, with the result that the concept or idea of being is conceived spontaneously. It is effected by means of a simple abstraction that renders unnecessary the doctrine of abstraction exposed by St. Thomas, and which, incidentally, Monsignor Van Steenberghen believes to be encumbered by too much imagery.[32] In fine, he tells us:

30. F. Van Steenberghen, Epistemologie, p. 7.
31. Ontologie, p. 33.
32. Epistemologie, p. 240.

> ...L'objet formel de l'ontologie est la valeur d'être incluse dans tout objet d'expérience: elle étudie le donné d'expérience en tant qu'être, en tant que réel....
>
> Le concept d'être se révèle le plus clairement dans l'affirmation de l'être, c'est-à-dire dans les jugements d'existence que je formule spontanément à propos de n'importe quel donné d'expérience et par lesquels je restitue au donné le contenu de l'Idée, que j'en avais abstraite: "ceci est, cela existe, cela est réel". Le prédicat de ces jugements désigne, sous des formes grammaticales variées, la valeur commune que je décèle dans n'importe quel objet d'expérience et que je transpose dans ma conscience intellectuelle sous forme d'une idée: l'Idée d'être. 33

By this own admission, Canon Van Steenberghen has taken this position, and all that follows from it, in view of the confusion existing between positive and philosophical sciences. In so doing, he has undeniably provoked a good deal of healthy interest. Whether he has also contributed to dissipating this confusion is something else again and about this we are not qualified to judge. Yet simply on the basis of the discrepancy between a position that he contends to be inspired by the teaching of St. Thomas and what a careful examination of that teaching has shown it to be, there is reason for apprehension. Canon Van Steenberghen, it is true, makes no pretense of simply repeating St. Thomas. For this reason we should not be chagrined to discover that in treating certain problems he does not use the same words as St. Thomas, that he has recourse to his own distinctions

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33. Ontologie, p. 84.

and that occasionally he reaches conclusions foreign and even opposed to those of St. Thomas. Taken individually, none of these things is entirely incompatible with the sort of fidelity to St. Thomas that he professes. Taken together they form the syndrome of a more radical kind of disagreement.

As he presents it, the position of Monsignor Van Steenberghen is well worked out. Everything that he says follows with remarkable consistency; the reason perhaps why this presentation lends itself so easily to teaching. Consistency is indeed a quality to be recommended, but only on the condition that it is not maintained at the expense of prior and more important considerations. In this case, unfortunately, the cost has been high--the assimilation of the way that we know things to the way that things are in themselves. For St. Thomas, the clear distinction between the two is absolutely basic. A disagreement on this point is a matter, not of accidentals or of interpretation, but of principles. This distinction is not posed merely in view of discovering the hierarchy of intelligible values, as though once these values have been attained it could be put aside. Let it be recalled that St. Thomas, as few people before or since, was perfectly aware that what is most knowable in itself is not most knowable for us. And it is safe to assume that he possessed, in the degree that this is humanly possible,

metaphysical knowledge of the former. Yet he did not consider that this had somehow brought about an essential transformation of the human intellect so that henceforth that which is most knowable in itself would also be most knowable for us. Quite the contrary, the careful distinction between the two is the recurrent theme whenever and wherever he takes up the question of man's dogged pursuit of knowledge. He insists first, last, and always that the human intellect is defined in terms of its proper object which is the 'what it is' of things that are material and corporeal; that even in this it is dependent upon the senses and that all subsequent knowledge is had in reference to things thus known. "Intellectus autem humani, qui est coniunctus corpori, proprium objectum est quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens; et per huiusmodi naturas visibilium rerum etiam in invisibilium rerum aliqualem cognitionem ascendit."[34]

The suggestion that Monsignor Van Steenberghen has failed to strike this balance might appear severe. Yet there is much evidence to bear this out. Other than what we have just seen, his assertion that ens ut primum notum is the subject of metaphysics most quickly comes to mind. To appreciate the difference between being as first known and that which St. Thomas designates ens in quantum est ens

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34. Ia, q. 84, a. 7, c.

one should read Cajetan's commentary on the preface of the De Ente et Essentia.[35] In this place Cajetan shows that ens ut primum notum, like the absolutely first principles, is known quasi naturaliter. This being so, every man, woman and child would, from Monsignor Van Steenberghen's point of view, already be in possession of the proper subject of metaphysics, and not just in a remote fashion.

The apparently apologetic interest that has motivated the adoption of his position is indicative of Monsignor Van Steenberghen's esteem for and appreciation of St. Thomas. He is aware that order can be introduced into the welter of contemporary scientific knowledge by its incorporation with the principles of traditional philosophy. Laudable as his efforts in this direction have been, we would respectfully submit that in ignoring this fundamental distinction he has inaccurately interpreted St. Thomas and thus abandoned the sole means of realizing his aim.

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35. Thomas De Vio Cardinalis Caietanus, Commentaria in De Ente et Essentia D. Thomae Aquinatis, Prooemium, pp. 2-20 (ed. Laurent), 1934. By means of a detailed examination in which he explains what is meant by ens ut primum cognitum, Cajetan makes it quite clear that this is not ens as studied in metaphysics.

EPILOGUE

We have seen that St. Thomas sometimes uses the word 'abstraction' to signify abstraction of the whole, sometimes for the abstraction of form, sometimes for separation. Clearly, the term abstraction is analogical. On the other hand, when he distinguishes separation from abstraction the word 'abstraction' is still taken as analogical, but only with respect to abstraction of the whole and abstraction of form. There is no particular difficulty in this. It is something, proportionally, like the word 'animal which at times is used to designate the genus which is divided into rational and irrational, while at other times it signifies irrational animal as distinct from rational animal. Thus we speak of man and animals rather than saying man and the other animals. In like manner, the word casus is sometimes distinguished from fortune while at other times it signifies both chance in nature and chance in human affairs. Something similar already occurs in using the word 'genus', which, now signifies the predicable, now a natural genus, and then again, as in 'genus entis', something which is no more than analogous to the former meanings.

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