Knowledge of *Ens as Primum Cognitum* and the Discovery of *Ens qua Ens* according to Cornelio Fabro and Jan A. Aertsen

Jason A. Mitchell, LC
Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum

In his early works, Cornelio Fabro (1911-1995) proposes that we come to know *ens* as *primum cognitum* by means of formal abstraction. Fabro’s later works tend to characterize our initial knowledge of *ens* as a synthetic apprehension of a plexus of act (implicit knowledge of *esse*) and content (essence). Other aspects of Fabro’s later work on the *primum cognitum* include the temporal and constitutive priority of *ens*, the transcendental-foundational nature of *ens*, a confrontation between Thomistic *ens-esse* and Hegelian *Sein*, and the manner in which there is a reference to the Absolute in the *primum cognitum*. The first part of the paper traces this development in Fabro’s work and takes into account various assessments of Fabro’s theory, including those of Jan A. Aertsen, Luis Romera and Antonio Millán-Puelles. The second part of the paper is dedicated to Fabro’s theory which holds that we discover *ens qua ens* by means of a passage from the problem of physical contrariety and movement to that of metaphysical contrariety and being. The paper shows the affinity between Fabro’s theory and Aertsen’s recent work, in which he proposes a type of *resolutio* and analysis as an alternative to the theory of *separatio* developed by Louis-Bertrand Geiger and his followers.