Cornelio Fabro’s Revival of Thomistic Metaphysics in the 20th Century
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After some brief introductory remarks to locate the work of Cornelio Fabro in its historical and intellectual context, this paper will introduce his interpretation of St. Thomas’s metaphysics, especially as he employs it in the service of his critical dialogue with Kant and Heidegger. I will discuss Fabro’s reading of the history of philosophy through an appropriation of Heidegger’s “forgetfulness of being” (Vergessenheit des Seins), which Fabro sees as present in not only the predecessors and successors of St. Thomas, but in Kant.

Next, I will elucidate a key text—namely De Veritate, q. 1, a. 1—in order to follow the epistemological path to the notions of the real distinction and esse ut actus. On this basis, I shall examine more closely what is called Fabro’s “intensive interpretation” of Thomas—centered in an understanding of esse as intensive act—as it pertains to participation, causality, and analogy. I will explain how Fabro employs his “intensive” reading of Aquinas to present it as superior to key alternatives, namely those of Kant and Heidegger. In particular, I will explain how the understandings of esse as intensive act, the metaphysics of participation, and the subsequent understanding of causality and analogy that follow from these to overcome modern philosophy’s “problem of being” that is created out of the cogito ergo sum of Descartes.