Metaphysical Disputation I on Potency

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Theses

As I am about to dispute with the Good God concerning potency in the following exercises, I have judged it worthwhile to set forth, by way of a certain preface, something about the possible and the potential being. No small amount of light for the material to follow will come from that inquiry. Let there therefore be On the Possible.

Thesis I. The possible, if you consider the word either in Latin or in Greek, denotes that which can come to be or can be. Just as visible means what can be seen, and sensible, what can be sensed. As for the Hebrew אפשר (efshar) — whence it is derived no longer much concerns me; and I am equally unconcerned about it.

Thesis II. The Philosopher (Aristotle), *Metaphysics* IX.3, defines it: ἔστι δυνατὸν ὄν, ᾧ, ἐὰν ὑπάρχῃ ἡ ἐνέργεια ὃ λέγεται ἔχειν τὴν δύναμιν, οὐδὲν ἔστιν ἀδύνατον, that is: "A thing is possible for which, if the act belongs to it of which it is said to have the potency (or: when that act is posited toward which it has the potency), nothing impossible results." Thus: man, whose animality united to rationality introduces no concept composed of mutually destructive or repugnant elements.

Thesis III. But it is noteworthy that Aristotle says ἐὰν ὑπάρχῃ ἡ ἐνέργεια ("if the act exists"), in order to suggest that possibility must be explained through existence — as R. ab Arria says, *Metaphysics* II.1.4, no. 22 (fol. 839a): "Possibility," he says, "is not to be explained by the mere negation of contradictories independently of existence, but by that negation supposing existence, as its condition."

Thesis IV. Hence you readily observe that it is not sufficient for something to be possible that it in no way include two contradictories in act; rather, what is required is that it not include them and that this non-inclusion be dependent on existence, which condition Aristotle did not express in vain. For a being of reason *de facto* also does not include two contradictories — because it does not exist. Yet for that reason it is not a possible being, since its non-inclusion does not depend on a presupposed existence.

Thesis V. You will say: "This proposition is true: a being of reason, if it existed, would not imply a contradiction. Therefore a being of reason is possible." The antecedent can be proved because if a being of reason existed, it would be a true and real being, and no real being implies contradiction. For it has its own essential reality; and no essence can imply contradiction, since it is an essence insofar as it has traits that do not destroy the primary concept of it. Reply: That condition "if it exists" is of two kinds, depending on the subjects to which it is applied. 1) It can be fulfillable in itself, and convertible into an absolute proposition that can be true. 2) Or it can be not fulfillable, and not at all convertible into an absolute proposition that could be verified even for a single instant. Thus in these two propositions: "Man, if he exists, does not imply a contradiction," "A being of reason, if it exists, does not imply a contradiction"—the condition is not of the same sort. In the first it is fulfillable and convertible into the categorical "Man exists," which, since it could be true, is evidence that man can exist. In the second it is not fulfillable — much less convertible into "A being of reason exists," which is false.

Thesis VI. Here those must also be briefly refuted who describe the possible thus: "That which, if it were produced, would cause no absurdity." By that reasoning God would be excluded from the number of possibles, since I cannot say, "If God were produced, nothing absurd would follow." Rather, the statement must be inverted: If God were produced, the most absurd thing would result, since the thing produced would at once be God and not-God — as is clear from the terms themselves. By that same blow the other definition of the possible also falls, namely: "The possible is what, if God wills, will exist." For no one will admit this proposition: "If God wills, God will exist," to say nothing of the divine will itself.

Thesis VII. From these things it is gathered that possibility consists in the non-repugnance of existing — an existence which, although it is presupposed in the mode of a condition, nevertheless does not hinder our concept in such a way that, when we speak generally about possibility, we may not abstract from whether the possible thing actually exists or not.

Thesis VIII. The possible is not the same as: 1) the true, as Aristotle shows in *De Caelo* I.12. For when Peter is not standing, it is surely possible for him to stand; yet at that moment it is not true. So also, conversely, the impossible and the false are not equivalent, as the Philosopher teaches in the same place. "Likewise," he says, "of one who strikes the lyre but does not sing, to say that he sings is false, yet not impossible." 2) the contingent, even though the Philosopher describes it in *Prior Analytics* I.12 almost in the same manner as the possible: τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον λέγω, ὃ μὴ ὄντος ἀναγκαίου, τεθέντος δ' ὑπάρχειν, οὐδὲν ἔσται δι' αὐτὸ ἀδύνατον, that is: I call that contingent which, though it is not necessary, if nonetheless it is posited as being, nothing impossible follows from it. For God, who is certainly possible, will by no means be called contingent. And although Ammonius, at the beginning of Part IV on the *Peri Hermeneias*, said that "possible" differs from "contingent" merely in name, yet he finally admits that the absolutely possible extends more widely than what is properly called contingent. 3) a being in potency, because: (1) The possible abstracts from existing either in act or in potency, as was said in the preceding thesis, whereas a being in potency always presupposes actual existence, as will be clear shortly in Thesis XIII. (2) It cannot be denied that God is contained in the number of possibles (since the inference "It is necessary that He exist → it is possible that He exist" holds, according to Philoponus on *Peri Hermeneias* c. 13). But who will call God a "being in potency," that is, proximate matter? For I will show in the cited thesis that only proximate matter is, for Aristotle, a being in potency.

Thesis IX. You should know, following Dominic of Flanders (*In Metaph.* IX, q. 3, a. 2), that the possible is twofold: 1) In opposition only to the impossible, in which sense it even includes what is simply necessary. 2) In opposition to both the impossible and the necessary at once, in which sense it excludes the necessary. When God is said to be possible, the term possible is taken in the first sense; and this is what the Scholastics call "high possibility" **(***possibile altum***)**. In the second sense, it is the same as the contingent, as when we say "for a man to sit." Further, the possible is said to be either absolute (*simpliciter*) or relative to another (alteri). The absolutely possible (also called fundamental possibility) is that which is said indeterminately with respect to some potency, on account of mere non-repugnance—that is, on

account of the relation of the terms constituting the essence of a thing, such that no contradiction is imported by them. Thus flying is simply and in itself possible, without determining the potency to which it is possible. The possible relative to another (by some called formal or respectively possible) is that which is said determinately with respect to some potency capable of attaining it. Thus flying is possible only for what is winged, not for a human being. Concerning the logical, obediential, and natural possible, I will treat more conveniently in the doctrine on potency; therefore I here pass over them with a quick step.

Thesis X. The opposite of the possible is the impossible, which can be better explained by division than by definition. The impossible is said in two ways: 1) Impossible in itself (*per se*): that whose contrary is necessarily true, or that which is impossible in every event—such as "man is irrational" or "God is finite." 2) Impossible from a hypothesis and by accident: that which in itself is indeed possible, yet in a certain hypothesis is impossible. Thus Adam's not dying is not impossible in itself according to the nature of the thing; but once sin is posited, it is impossible for him not to die. Likewise, that a man not be made wet is not impossible in itself; yet if he is standing out in the rain, it is impossible that he not be wet. To this class belong the merely possible things (*merè talia possibilia*), which in the composite sense—i.e., insofar as they are merely possible—are impossible, for example insofar as they are subject to a divine decree which refers to them as things never to occur; yet they are not absolutely and in themselves impossible, since, considered in themselves, they would be doable. Hence it is rightly said elsewhere that the omnipotence of God extends to more things than His will. It is of this kind of impossible that the Philosopher speaks in *Metaphysics* IX.4. Related to this is the distinction between the impossible absolutely and the impossible to another. The former is the same as the impossible in itself; the latter nearly the same as the impossible from a hypothesis, except that in place of a hypothesis or event one puts the subject or potency for which the thing is said to be impossible. Thus to fly is impossible for a human being. And so much briefly about the possible; now about being in potency.

Thesis XI. In the doctrine concerning being in potency, the following must be premised: that there is a very noteworthy difference between these two expressions: to be in potency (*esse potentia*) and to be a potency (*esse potentiam*). This is clear from these propositions: "The potency of seeing is an act in man." "The act of seeing is a potency in a man who is asleep." To be an act or a potency does not divide being adequately, since there is a middle of participation between the two—namely, the natural composite, which is partly act and partly potency. But to be in act or in potency does adequately divide being, so that you may say: "Every being is either in act or in potency." To be a potency excludes being an act, yet not being in act. For matter is a potency even though it is in act; but it is not act.

Thesis XII. What it is to be a potency (*esse potentiam*) I reserve for later discussion; for the present, I will explain the phrase "to be in potency" (*esse potentia*), or "a being in potency" (*ens potentia*), which Robert Baron, Professor at Oxford, in *Philosophia Theologica Ancilla*, Exerc. 1, a. 3, n. 1, p. 6, defines as: that which does not exist in act, but can exist. Such a being for him and his followers is the rose in winter, or an angel before his creation. And this they call

a real being, even though it does not exist. Concerning this I will have to inquire at the proper time, once he has first established what an *ens potentia* is for Aristotle.

Thesis XIII. Aristotle therefore writes in *Metaphysics* IX.7, undertaking expressly to explain when something may be said to be in potency and when not: πότε δυνάμει ἐστὶν ἕκαστον καὶ πότε οὔ, i.e., when each thing is said to be in potency and when not. He says ὃ ἐστὶν, ὃ ὑπὸ διανοίας ἐντελεχείᾳ γενομένης, ἐκ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος, ὅταν βουληθέντος γίγνηται, μηδενὸς κωλύοντος τῶν ἐκτός. That is: The determination of that which is a being in potency—when, upon the arrival of actuality (i.e., through the advent of form), it becomes actual—is this: that, whenever one wishes, the thing comes to be, with nothing external hindering it. Then, after a few words, clarifying the same thought, he says: τοιοῦτον σπέρμα οὔπω ἐστίν ("This seed is not yet such a thing.") Why? He adds the reason: ὃ δὲ ἐν ἄλλῳ [εἶναι] καὶ μεταβάλλειν· ὅταν δὲ ἤδη διὰ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀρχῆς ᾖ ποιητικόν, ἤδη τοῦτο δυνάμει· ἐκεῖνο δὲ ἑτέρας ἀρχῆς δεῖται. That is: "For it must be in another thing and undergo transmutation; but when, by its own proper principle, it has become such that it can produce [the effect], that is what is in potency. But the other thing requires a different principle."

Thesis XIV. Whence the mind of the Philosopher is this: that a being in potency is indeed a true and real being, yet not according to absolute being (as Baronius wishes, as though it were something that does not yet exist in the order of things), but only in a certain respect: 1) it does exist actually in the order of things; 2) it is not yet such-and-such a being. As is plain from his examples, for he names the seed, the embryo, and earth, adding: καὶ ὅτι τῶν ἄλλων ὁσαύτως, ὧν ἐξωθεν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς γενέσεως κτλ ("And likewise for all the other things whose principle of generation is external"). All these are beings in act—not things which do not yet exist at all, though they can exist. This is set forth most clearly when he asks: ἢ γῆ ἄρα δυναμεὶ ἄνθρωπος ἢ οὔ; ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον, ὅταν ἤδη γένηται σπέρμα, καὶ τοῦτο ἴσως ("Is earth, then, a man in potency or not? No, but rather when it has already become seed—although perhaps not even then.") From these things, and from the whole chapter, it appears that for Aristotle a being in potency is nothing other than proximate matter. He says in the same place: ἡ γῆ οὔπω ἀνδριάς δυνάμει· μεταβαλλοῦσα γὰρ ἔσται χαλκός ("Earth is not yet a statue in potency; for when it is transmuted it will become bronze"). Where it is perfectly clear that earth is not yet a being in potency (not, to be sure, with respect to existing simply, but with respect to existing as a statue), because a statue does not come immediately from earth, for bronze immediately comes from earth; or, to put it another way: because earth is not the proximate potency for a statue, but merely the remote one.

Thesis XV. From these things I argue: Whatever is not the proximate matter of something is not an Aristotelian being in potency. But the rose in winter and the grape in spring are not the proximate matter of the rose and grape; nor are the shrub or vine themselves the proximate matter of the rose or grape. Therefore the rose in winter and grape in spring are not Aristotelian beings in potency. Yet you must take the greatest care to note that to be the proximate matter is one thing, and to be in the proximate matter is another. Likewise, that the proximate matter is the being in potency, and that what is in the proximate matter is the being in potency are not the

same. For example, wood that is no longer in the forest, but is already prepared so that from it a house can be made immediately, is a house in potency—an *ens potentia*. But the house itself, which can be made from that wood, is not an *ens potentia*. Thus Aristotle does not say that the man who can be made from the seed is an *ens potentia*, but the seed itself; nor even the seed, but the embryo he calls a being in potency—not with respect to existing simply (for the embryo exists), but with respect to being such, namely being a man. You see, therefore, what odor those roses in winter give off in Aristotelian hands—that they ought not to be called beings in potency, because they are in the shrub; but the shrub itself ought rather to be called by you "a rose in potency," and this not in winter, when it is the remote matter of the rose, but in spring itself, when the roses begin to sprout. Thus it is now clear—as I lift myself up with good hope—that Aristotle's being-in-potency is nothing but the proximate matter, and not that Baronian non-being, to which the Philosopher, in *Metaphysics* IX.3 at the end, says: τῶν μὴ ὄντων ἔνια δυνάμει ἐστίν· οὐκ ἔστι δὲ, ὅτι οὐκ ἐντελεχείᾳ ἐστίν. "Of the things that are not, some are in potency. But they are not because they are not in act."—in which he altogether removes any reality from such things. And this I also prove by the following reasons:

Thesis XVI. (1.) If, for example, an angel prior to its own creation possessed a true and real being, then that being was either dependent or independent. If it was dependent, then it was certainly created; and consequently the angel, prior to its own creation, was created, which is absurd. For the essence of the angel being created when the angel itself is not yet created entails that the essence of the angel can be separated from the angel while the essence still remains—an impossibility. If it was independent, then it was God—which is likewise unheard of.

Thesis XVII. (2.) If the angel, prior to its own creation, possessed true and real being, then it was neither created nor could be created. For whatever real being underlies any production is not created. But if an angel, prior to its creation, had an essence as a real being, then that real being was the substratum of its production. Therefore it was not created. The consequence follows from the definition of creation, which is a production from pure and absolute nothing, which that essence—if indeed it were a real being—cannot be, as the very terms themselves show. Further: that essence of the angel stands in relation to the producible angel either as a *terminus a quo* or as a *terminus ad quem*. If as a *terminus a quo*, then either negatively or privatively. Not negatively, because a negative *terminus a quo* is negative nothing, which in the view of the opponents that essence can in no way be. Not privatively, because the things produced from privative nothing are (1) material, and (2) are not properly created, but are produced from pre-existing matter. But the essence of the angel, by everyone's reckoning, cannot be in subjective potency, but only in objective potency. For it is (1) immaterial, and (2) if it were created, it would not be created—which is contradictory. It would be created, indeed, on that supposition; it would not be created, because it would come to be from a pre-existing subject. By this fact it is shown that such an essence cannot stand toward the production of the angel on the part of the *terminus a quo*. But neither can it be the *terminus ad quem*; and I prove it thus: That essence of the angel would not only coexist with every instant (*omne momentum*) of the angelic production; it would also exist before the production. Therefore it cannot be the *terminus ad*

quem of the angel's production. For a *terminus ad quem* of a production cannot be had except at the completion of the production; and it is absurd that a *terminus ad quem* should coexist with every instant of some production. Otherwise the composite, as the *terminus ad quem* of generation, would already exist even in the first instant of the generation; and the union of matter and form would precede the prior dispositions of the matter—which is absurd in physics.

Thesis XVIII. (3.) I argue from the mind of Scotus, *I Sent.*, dist. 36, q. 1: If an angel (or a stone) before being created were already a being and had being, then at the moment when it were actually created, it would not be produced according to being simply, but only according to something qualified.

Thesis XIX. (4.) That essence which, according to Baronius, is a real being is necessarily a dependent being, since otherwise it would be God, as I have already proved in Thesis XVI. Therefore it will depend for its being upon God as its cause—which is nothing other than to be created. For of every product, the *terminus a quo* is negative nothing, and the *terminus ad quem* is real being; its production is therefore properly called creation. But the production of such an essence would be of this sort; therefore that production would be creation.

Thesis XX. If, however, you wish to know in what intermediate condition the essence of the angel existed prior to its creation, the answer is that it existed in the potency of God the Creator. I marvel at men. For what else is this saying than that the essence of the angel could be created by God before it was created? But what sort of consequence is this: if it could be created, therefore it was a real being? I rather invert the argument: if it could at least be created, therefore it was not yet created, and consequently it was not yet a true and real being, since only through creation does it become a real being. Or why do they not argue thus? Even existence, prior to creation, was in the potency of God the Creator; therefore, according to them, existence prior to creation was a real being. Which is indeed contrary to the opponents; yet it follows from their own argument: if from it follows that the essence was in objective potency, therefore it was a true being, it will follow in the same way that existence was in objective potency, therefore it was a true being. But the inference from being able to being is invalid. Just as Arria says: "That I can be chosen king does not make me king, or that I can be made cold does not make me cold."

Thesis XXI. Then, if that essence was, by way of a real being, in the potency of God the Creator, it was either really identical with that potency or really distinct from it. If the former, it was God Himself, since the creative potency is identified with the divine essence. If the latter, it was either substance, and (1) produced or (2) unproduced: If unproduced, again it would be God; If produced, then it was no longer in the potency of God the Creator, but emerged from the potentiality of causes and became existent. Or finally, it was an accident, and then a real accident would be given in God; and consequently a receptive potency would belong to God, which is absurd.

Thesis XXII. Nor does it help them to say that the rose in winter is therefore not nothing, but a true and real being, because the virtue of the rose, in which it is latent, is in act. For what do I care for that reality of a cause, which is extrinsic to the thing caused, namely the rose? But the extrinsic can never be the essence of any being. And by the same argument it would follow that

the virtue of creation in God is the reality and essence of the creature, which is absurd. Then I ask, why not rather conclude: the virtue of the rose is in act in winter; therefore the rose itself is in act in winter? Finally, concerning the very existence of the rose, I can argue just as easily: the virtue of the rose is in act in winter; therefore even the existence of the rose, which is latent in that virtue, is in act; and consequently the rose in winter will possess not only essence, but also existence.

Thesis XXIII. And these things pertain to my opinion, namely, that a being which does not yet exist is not a true and real being—an opinion against which many authors vigorously contend, and which some attribute to Scotus (*In III*, dist. 6, q. 1), to Henry of Ghent (*Quodl.* I, q. 9), to Soto (*II Phys.*, q. 2, and *In IV*, dist. 10, q. 2). But Vasquez (vol. I *in III partem Thomæ*, disp. 72, c. 1) says that these authors are cited unfaithfully, and therefore boldly asserts that none of the authors cited taught that existence is so distinguished from essence that it can be separated from it and remain without it. And indeed Henry, *Quodl.* I, q. 9, and even Scotus himself—at the place cited above in Thesis XVIII—taught the contrary. I therefore marvel that these authors are made, at others' pleasure, to say the opposite of what they intended—just as they do also with Thomas Aquinas. For since both sides appeal to him for their own opinion, one of them must necessarily be wrong.

Thesis XIV. But because this opinion of the opponents rests upon the foundation that essence and existence differ really from one another, their most difficult arguments flow from that distinction. Thus they object: The essences of things from eternity—before existence supervened—were beings, since they were known by God from eternity. But the knowledge of God is not terminated upon nothing, but upon a true being; otherwise the divine cognition, on account of so weak an object, would be greatly imperfect. But here their art fails. For God also foreknew existence itself, which nevertheless, not even for the opponents, is a being from eternity, as Durandus notes well (In I, dist. 8, q. 2, n. 13). Furthermore, it is utterly false that the cognition of God is directed only to a real object. Did not God foreknow sin?—which no sane man would call a true and real being. Did He not foreknow all the future acts of human intellects? Therefore He also knew their objects; and since among them are contained not a few beings of reason, it would be strange indeed if those beings of reason foreseen in our intellects were passed over in the comprehension of the infinite and incomprehensible divine intellect. And Suarez (*disp.* 14, sect. 2, n. 23), Arriaga (*DM* VI, sect. 4, n. 39), and Hurtado (*Disp. Met.* XIX, sect. 2) prove this most probably against Vasquez, taking a middle position between Gillius and Vasquez. As for the weakness of the object: that does not immediately indicate weakness of the power, but rather a weak comprehension of a weak object. Yet a perfect comprehension even of the most trivial object manifests the excellence of the cognitive power—just as a lynx, by perceiving the tiniest things, proves the excellence of its eyesight. Since therefore God most perfectly knows even the smallest things in our intellections, this indicates His highest perfection. Whereas if those beings of reason were to escape divine knowledge, this would posit an imperfection, to the detriment of omniscience. For this difficult controversy—whether God can know beings of reason in Himself and independently of our acts, or only dependently upon

them—consult the authors mentioned above. As for that "diminished being," as they call it, which creatures are said to have in the divine intellect according to the Scholastic doctors, I shall consider what it is in the following disputations, when I shall treat of Scotus's objective potency.

Thesis XXV. Nor does the recent argument of a certain new theologian harm me (see Mendoza, *Disp.* VIII *Metaph.*, sect. IV, subsec. IV, §55), which is taken from Bonaventure. It is this: The essence of Peter seems to differ from his existence, because Peter's existence yesterday is not his existence today, whereas the same essence of Peter is yesterday and today. But this argument concludes more than the opponents want, namely, that the existence here and that in Geneva would also be different—since existing in Leipzig is not existing in Geneva. Therefore, two existences would be posited merely from my being in Leipzig or Geneva—which is absurd. What is more, the argument could equally prove that there are different essences in Peter, because yesterday's essence could be separated from today's, if God were to annihilate Peter—just as yesterday's existence is separable from today's; and just as existing yesterday is not existing today, so also being yesterday is not being today. I answer, therefore, that the argument is faulty because it infers an intrinsic diversity of existence from extrinsic denominations, such as place and time; whereas one and the same existence merely receives different connotations. This I prove by an example: My co-existing with Peter is not my co-existing with Paul, because if Peter were removed, my co-existence with Paul would still remain. But does it follow that the absolute existence is diversified along with the relative existence with Peter and Paul? For when we say that I co-exist with Peter and Paul, two things are included: (1) the existence itself, and (2) the connotation of Peter's and Paul's existence. The connotation is extrinsic; but on the intrinsic side (as Mendoza says), by the same existence I co-exist with each. Thus my existing yesterday and today differ on the part of "yesterday" and "today," but not on the part of existence itself.

Thesis XXVI. Yet another difficulty arises from the propositions of eternal truth, which indeed make us say that the essences of things are eternal, even though the essence is only contingent. But there is still something to reply here. If by "eternity" you understand duration, it is utterly false that essences are eternal. For: 1) On that basis many beings (if those essences were real beings, as is supposed) would be distinct from God prior to creation. 2) God would not have created creatures according to their principal being, that is, their essence, but only according to some accident, namely existence; and consequently I could not ascribe my essence to God as received from Him. 3) God could not annihilate any creature; for even after a man is destroyed, this proposition concerning the essence of man would always remain true: "Man is a rational animal." From which it would follow that God could not destroy man with respect to his essence, but only with respect to his existence (that is, according to some accident)—all of which is contrary to the faith. Therefore we must know, with Vasquez (Vol. I, on III part of Thomas, Disp. 72, chap. 2), that the essences of things are eternal not because they actually are, but because from eternity they involve no contradiction in being. Or, as others say: essences are eternal by reason of connection, because the essence always has a necessary connection with that of which it is the essence. The reason, as Hurtado beautifully says (*Metaphysics* VIII, sect. VIII),

is that God, wanting to produce a man, for example, cannot give him the being of a stone, for then He would not produce a man but a stone. From this it is easily understood in what sense propositions about essence are called eternal truths: namely, because they are always true, not because they are eternal in duration, as though the essences always endured. That many truths about essences can be truly predicated from eternity is not sufficient for us to say that they actually were something from eternity. For in such propositions the copula does not denote any act of existing, but merely the agreement of the extremes with one another, as Vasquez says. Hence the Nominalists also say: the terms in definitions do not denote an act, but only a certain aptitude. And this is put very sharply in the usual way by the excellent and honorable Daniel Stahl (Tit. I, Reg. IV, n. 6): "

> To be (τὸ εἶναι), or is (εἶναι) in such propositions does not signify existence, but coherence and unity (τὸ συγκεῖσθαι καὶ ἓν εἶναι), just as on the contrary 'not being' is 'not-cohering but being several' (μὴ συγκεῖσθαι ἀλλὰ πλεί ω εἶναι), as Aristotle teaches (*Metaphysics* IX, text 21)."

From this note by the way that those are very mistaken who say that the copula in propositions is "effective," as though it causes union; for it is merely "significative," signifying union. From which you may also infer that it does not precisely denote the existence of the terms. Thus it is clear that propositions of eternal truth are so called because they signify the same thing on the part of the object—for example man and rational animal. And indeed, if you conceive man as existing, then also rational animal is conceived as existing; if you conceive man as possible, then rational animal likewise is only possible, in this way: "If man exists, then necessarily rational animal also exists. If man is possible, then necessarily rational animal is likewise possible." And for this reason they differ from propositions such as "Man is white or black." For that proposition is not to be expounded thus: "If man exists, he must necessarily exist white or black." Nor is it enough to say: "If man is possible, then the being-white or being-black will also be possible." For in the pure state of possibility there is only a contingent relation, indifferent to being or non-being; such a connection does not suffice. A connection in the actual state is also required, and one that is necessary; which in accidental propositions—precisely because they are accidental—does not obtain. What is more, Arriaza says that if we wished to observe strict rigor, it would be just as false to say "Man is an animal" from eternity as "Man is white." His reason is: because from eternity, since neither exists, "animality" is no more identified with "rationality" than man is united with whiteness or blackness.

Thesis XXVII. As for what Blasius of Conception claims (Disp. VI, Metaph., q. 1, n. 2): that every creature must have a limited being, and that this limitation can consist in nothing other than that existence is received into essence—so that, for that reason, essence must necessarily differ from existence—this is false. Limitation does not consist in the reception of existence into essence, but in this: that the creature receives its being from God. For although the Son in the Trinity also receives His being from the Father, yet He has an unlimited essence. But that does

not hinder anything; for that dependence is altogether different, ineffable, and not even causal. The dependence of creatures, however, is causal—as Blasius himself admits when he says that the dependence of the Word and of creatures is not the same. If, then, you wish to say that this limitation is extrinsic, since it is from the efficient cause, I grant that: so far forth it is extrinsic; but so far as it is from itself it is intrinsic. For the creature (as Arriaza says) is limited by its causes efficiently, but by itself formally. If you say: "A creature is not its own being; only God is His own being; therefore essence can be separated from existence," I reply: the same must be said of existence, which also is not its own being; yet in that case essence is not distinguished from existence. Further, God is said to be His own being because in God there is nothing that is not God Himself; in creatures, however—e.g., in man—there are many things that are not the man himself. Yet from this it does not follow that there is in them a real distinction between existence and essence.

Thesis XXVIII. Adhering to this opinion also are Johannes de Rada, Part III, Controversy VII, article 3, p. 210 a, who says that before things are brought to the being of real existence, they have no proper being—not even of essence—but only a being in objective potency, as the same Scotist doctor states Part III, Controversy II, article 2, p. 53 a, and as Scotus himself says in the same place. See Gabriel Vasquez, Vol. II, Part 1, Th. D. 179, n. 6; and Vol. I, Part III, Disputation 72, chaps. 1–3. Also Gabriel Biel, In III Sent., Dist. VI, q. 2, a. 1, notes 2–3; Hervaeus, *Quodlibet* VII, q. 8; Durandus, Book I, Dist. III, q. 2; Valentia, Book I, Disputation 1, q. 3, p. 4; Ruvius, Book I, Physics, chap. 1, q. 3, n. 21; Hurtado, *Metaphysics*, Disputation VIII, section IV, in four subsections; Fr. Bonaventure of Speranza, *Metaphysics*, t. dub. 1, n. 3; Suarez, Disputation 31, section 2, who reports the same opinion from all the Nominalists, Henriquez, and others. Arriaga, Metaphysics, Disputation II, section III, n. 52, says that this is the most common view among the more recent members of his own order. The *Complutenses*, Physics, Disputation III, q. V, §1, likewise say that almost all writers of the Jesuits maintain that prime matter has an existence of its own, the foundation of which opinion is the inseparability of essence from existence. See Murcia, *On the Existence of Prime Matter*, Book I of Physics, Disputation V, q. IV, and others. And let these things suffice as a sort of Preface.