

Sacred Congregation of Studies

Decree of Approval
of some theses contained in
the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas
and proposed to the Teachers of Philosophy

July 27, 1914.

*in English and Latin, translated by [Hugh McDonald](#)
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POSTQUAM SANCTISSIMUS DOMINUS noster Pius Papa X Motu Proprio *Doctoris Angelici*, edito die xxix iunii MCMXIV, salubriter praescipit, ut in omnibus philosophiae scholis principia et maiora Thomae Aquinatis pronuntiata sancte teneantur, nonnulli diversorum Institutorum magistri huic sacrae Studiorum Congregationi theses aliquas proposuerunt examinandas, quas ipsi, tamquam ad praecipua sancti Praeceptoris principia in re praesertim metaphysica exactas, tradere et propugnare consueverunt.

Sacra haec Congregatio, supra dictis thesibus rite examinatis et sanctissimo Domino subiectis, de eiusdem Sanctitatis Suae mandato, respondet, eas plane continere sancti Doctoris principia et pronuntiata maiora.

Sunt autem hae:

Potentia et actus ita dividunt ens, ut quidquid est, vel sit actus purus, vel ex potentia et actu tamquam primis atque intrinsicis principiis necessario coalescat.

II. Actus, utpote perfectio, non limitatur nisi per potentiam, quae est capacitas perfectionis. Proinde in quo ordine actus est purus, in eodem nonnisi

AFTER OUR MOST HOLY LORD Pope Pius X by His Motu Proprio **Doctoris Angelici**, of June 29, 1914, salubriously prescribed that in all schools of philosophy the principles and major pronouncements [maiora pronuntiata] of Thomas Aquinas be held in a holy manner, not a few masters from diverse Institutions proposed some theses [theses] for this Sacred Congregation to examine, which they themselves had been accustomed to hand down and defend as required according to the chief principles of the saintly teacher, especially in the subject of metaphysics.

This Sacred Congregation, having duly examined the aforementioned theses and having presented them to our most holy lord, by the mandate of the same, His Holiness, replies that they plainly contain those principles and major pronouncements of the holy Doctor.

Moreover, these are:

I. Potency and act so divide being [ens], that whatever is, either is a pure act, and/or coalesces necessarily out of potency and act, as (its) first and intrinsic principles.

II. Act, as perfection, is not limited but by potency, which is a capacity for perfection. Hence in the order in which an act is pure, in that same (order) it exists

illimitatus et unicus existit; ubi vero est finitus ac multiplex, in veram incidit cum potentia compositionem.

III. Quapropter in absoluta ipsius esse ratione unus subsistit Deus, unus est simplicissimus, cetera cuncta quae ipsum esse participant, naturam habent quae esse coarctatur, ac tamquam distinctis realiter principiis, essentia et esse constant.

IV. Ens, quod denominatur ab esse, non univoce de Deo ac de creaturis dicitur, nec tamen prorsus aequivoce, sed analogice, analogia tum attributionis tum proportionalitatis.

V. Est praeterea in omni creatura realis compositio subiecti subsistentis cum formis secundario additis, sive accidentibus: ea vero, nisi *esse* realiter in essentia distincta reciperetur, intelligi non posset.

VI. Praeter absoluta accidentia est etiam relativum, sive *ad aliquid*. Quamvis enim *ad aliquid* non significet secundum propriam rationem aliquid alicui inhaerens, saepe tamen causam in rebus habet, et ideo realem entitatem distinctam a subiecto.

VII. Creatura spiritualis est in sua essentia omnino simplex. Sed remanet in ea compositio duplex: essentiae cum esse et substantiae cum accidentibus.

VIII. Creatura vero corporalis est quoad ipsam essentiam composita potentia et actu; quae potentia et actus ordinis essentiae, materiae et formae nominibus designantur.

IX. Earum partium neutra per se esse habet, nec per se producitur vel corrumpitur, nec ponitur in praedicamento nisi reductively ut principium

as naught but unique and unlimited; but where it is finite and multiple, it has fallen into a true composition with potency .

III. On which account, the one God, One and Most Simple, subsists in the absolute reckoning of ‘being’ [esse] itself, all other things which participate in ‘being’ itself, have a nature which restricts (their) ‘to be’ [esse], and (their) essence and ‘to be’ are established by really distinct principles.

IV. Being [ens], which is denominated from “to be”, is not said of God and creatures univocally, yet neither (is it said) entirely equivocally, but analogically, by an analogy both of attribution and of proportionality.

V. Moreover, in every creature there is a real composition of the subsisting subject with the forms, or accidents, (which have) been added secondarily: but if there were not really received in an distinct essence a ‘to be’, this (composition) could not be understood.

VI. Apart from absolute accidents, there is also the relative (accident), or (that which) *regards something* [ad aliquid]. For though “*regarding something*” does not signify according to its own reckoning anything inherent in anything, yet in things it often has a cause, and for that reason a real entity distinct from (its) subject.

VII. A spiritual creature is entirely simple in its essence. But there remains within it a composition of essence with a ‘to be’ and of substance with accidents.

VIII. On the other hand, a corporeal creature, is in regard to (its) very essence, composed of potency and act; which potency and act, in the order of essence, are designated by the names of “matter” and “form”.

IX. Neither of these parts has ‘being’ through itself, nor is produced and/or corrupted through itself, nor is it posited in a predicament, except reductively as a

substantiale.

X. Etsi corpoream naturam extensio in partes integrales consequitur, non tamen idem est corpori esse substantiam et esse quantum. Substantia quippe ratione sui indivisibilis est, non quidem ad modum puncti, sed ad modum eius quod est extra ordinem dimensionis. Quantitas vero, quae extensionem substantiae tribuit, a substantia realiter differt, et est veri nominis accidens.

XI. Quantitate signata materia principium est individuationis, id est, numericae distinctionis, quae in puris spiritibus esse non potest, unius individui ab alio in eadem natura specifica.

XII. Eadem efficitur quantitate ut corpus circumscriptive sit in loco, et in uno tantum loco de quacumque potentia per hunc modum esse possit.

XIII. Corpora dividuntur bifariam: quaedam enim sunt viventia, quaedam expertia vitae. In viventibus, ut in eodem subiecto pars movens et pars mota per se habeantur, forma substantialis, animae nomine designata, requirit organicam dispositionem, seu partes heterogeneas.

XIV. Vegetalis et sensilis ordinis animae nequaquam per se subsistunt, nec per se producuntur, sed sunt tantummodo ut principium quo vivens est et vivit, et cum a materia se totis dependeant, corrupto composito, eo ipso per accidens corrumpuntur.

XV. Contra, per se subsistit anima humana, quae, cum subiecto sufficienter disposito potest infundi, a Deo creatur, et sua natura incorruptibilis est atque immortalis.

XVI. Eadem anima rationalis ita unitur corpori, ut

substantial principle.

X. Even though extension into integral parts is consequent to corporeal nature, yet the same (thing) for a body to be a substance and to be a quantum. Indeed a substance is indivisible according to its reckoning, not indeed after the manner of a point, but after the manner of that which is outside the order of dimension. But the quantity, which grants extension to a substance, really differs from the substance, and is an “accident” of true name.

XI. The principle of individuation, that is, of numerical distinction — which cannot be in pure spirits — of one individual from another in the same specific nature, is matter marked by quantity.

XII. By the same quantity there is brought about, that the body is circumscriptively in a place, and (that) it can be, in this manner, in only one place under whatsoever potency.

XIII. Bodies are divided in a twofold manner: for certain ones are living, certain ones have no part of life. In living (things), that in the same subject there be had a moving part and a moved part, the substantial form, designated by the name of “soul”, requires an arrangement of organs, or heterogeneous parts.

XIV. Souls of the vegetable or sensible subsist through themselves not at all, nor are they produced through themselves, but are only as the principle by which the living (thing) is and lives, and since these depend upon matter according to their whole selves, with the composite corrupted, they are, by that very (fact), corrupted per accidens.

XV. Contrariwise, a human soul, which is created by God when it can be infused into a sufficiently disposed subject, and (which) according to its nature is incorruptible and immortal, subsists through itself.

XVI. The same rational soul is so united to (its)

sit eiusdem forma substantialis unica, et per ipsam habet homo ut sit homo et animal et vivens et corpus et substantia et ens. Tribuit igitur anima homini omnem gradum perfectionis essentialem; insuper communicat corpori actum essendi quo ipsa est.

XVII. Duplicis ordinis facultates, organicae et inorganicae, ex anima humana per naturalem resultantiam emanant: priores, ad quas sensus pertinent, in composito subiectantur, posteriores in anima sola. Est igitur intellectus facultas ab organo intrinsece independens.

XVIII. Immaterialitatem necessario sequitur intellectualitas, et ita quidem ut secundum gradus elongationis a materia, sint quoque gradus intellectualitatis. Adequatam intellectionis obiectum est communiter ipsum ens; proprium vero intellectus humani in praesenti statu unionis, quidditatibus abstractis a conditionibus materialibus continetur.

XIX. Cognitionem ergo accipimus a rebus sensibilibus. Cum autem sensibile non sit intelligibile in actu, praeter intellectum formaliter intelligentem, admittenda est in anima virtus activa, quae species intelligibiles a phantasmatis abstrahat.

XX. Per has species directe universalia cognoscimus; singularia sensu attingimus, tum etiam intellectu per conversionem ad phantasmata; ad cognitionem vero spiritualium per analogiam ascendimus.

XXI. Intellectum sequitur, non praecedit, voluntas, quae necessario appetit id quod sibi praesentatur tamquam bonum ex omni parte explens appetitum, sed inter plura bona, quae iudicio mutabili appetenda proponuntur, libere eligit. Sequitur proinde electio iudicium practicum ultimum; at quod sit ultimum, voluntas efficit

body, that it is the unique substantial form of the same, and through it a man has (the ability) to be man and animal and a living (creature) and a body and a substance and a being. The soul, therefore, gives man every essential grade of perfection; furthermore, it communicates to (its) body the act of being whereby it itself is.

XVII. From the human soul there emanate by natural result the faculties of this twofold order, organic and inorganic: the prior ones, to which the senses pertain, are subjected in the composite, the posterior ones (are such) in the soul alone. Therefore, the faculty of the intellect is intrinsically independent from an organ.

XVIII. Intellectuality necessarily follows immateriality, and thus, indeed, that that grades of intellectuality are also according to the grades of elongation from matter. The adequate object of intellection is commonly being itself [communiter ipsum ens]; but in the present state of union (of body/soul) the proper (object) of the human intellect is contained in the quiddities abstracted from material conditions.

XIX. We accept cognition from sensible things. But since a sensible (thing) is not intelligible in act, besides the intellect, formally understanding, there must be admitted an active power in the soul, which abstracts intelligible species from phantasms.

XX. Through these species we directly cognize universals; we attain to singulars by sense, as much as also by the intellect through a conversion towards the phantasms; but we ascend to a cognition of spiritual (things) through analogy.

XXI. The will follows, not precedes, the intellect, (and) it necessarily desires that which is presented to it as a good (which) fulfils (its) appetite on every side, but it chooses freely among the many goods, which are proposed (to it) as to be desired by the mutable judgment. Hence, choice follows the last practical judgment; but the will effects which is the last.

XXII. Deum esse neque immediata intuitione percipimus, neque a priori demonstramus, sed utique a posteriori, hoc est, per ea quae facta sunt, ducto argumento ab effectibus ad causam: videlicet, a rebus quae moventur ad sui motus principium et primum motorem immobilem; a processu rerum mundanarum e causis inter se subordinatis, ad primam causam incausatam; a corruptibilibus quae aequaliter se habent ad esse et non esse, ad ens absolute necessarium; ab iis quae secundum minoratas perfectiones essendi, vivendi, intelligendi, plus et minus sunt, vivunt, intelligunt, ad eum qui est maxime intelligens, maxime vivens, maxime ens; denique, ab ordine universi ad intellectum separatum qui res ordinavit, disposuit, et dirigit ad finem.

XXIII. Divina Essentia, per hoc quod exercitae actualitati ipsius *esse* identificatur, seu per hoc quod est ipsum Esse subsistens, in sua veluti metaphysica ratione bene nobis constituta proponitur, et per hoc idem rationem nobis exhibet suae infinitatis in perfectione.

XXIV. Ipsa igitur puritate sui esse, a finitis omnibus rebus secernitur Deus. Inde infertur primo, mundum non nisi per creationem a Deo procedere potuisse; deinde virtutem creativam, qua per se primo attingitur ens in quantum ens, nec miraculose ulli finitae naturae esse communicabilem; nullum denique creatum agens in esse cuiuscumque effectus influere, nisi motione accepta a prima causa.

Datum Romae, die 27 iulii 1914.

**B. Card Lorenzelli, Praefectus
Ascensus Dandini, a Secretis
L + S.**

XXII. We neither perceive God's 'Being' by an immediate intuition, nor do demonstrate it *a priori*, but (we do) *a posteriori*, that is, through those (things) which have been made, with an argument drawn from effects to (their) Cause; namely, from things which are moved to the principle of their movement and the First Immovable Mover; from the progression of mundane things from causes that are subordinate to one another [inter se], to the First Uncaused Cause; from the corruptibles which hold themselves equally to 'being' and 'not being', to the absolutely necessary Being; from those which are, live, (and) understand more and less according to the lesser perfections of being, living, (and) understanding, to Him who is most of all Intelligent, most of all Living, most of all a Being; finally, from the order of the universe to the separated Intellect which has ordered and arranged things and directs (them) to an end.

XXIII. The Divine Essence, through this that it is identified with the exercised actuality of its own 'To Be', or through this that It Itself is subsistent 'Being', is rightly proposed to us in Its own, as if metaphysical, reckoning, and through this It exhibits to us the same reckoning of Its own Infinity in perfection.

XXIV. God is distinguished from all finite things, by the very purity of His 'Being'. From this there is first inferred, that the world could not have proceeded from God but through (an act of) creation; next (there is likewise inferred), that the creative virtue, by which a per se being, inasmuch as (it is) a being, is first attained, is also not miraculously communicable to any finite nature; finally, that no created agent influences the 'to be' of any effect whatsoever, except by a motion accepted from the First Cause.

Given at Rome, July 27, 1914.

**B. Cardinal Lorenzelli, Prefect
Ascensus Dandini, a Secretis
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