

Chapter Title: John Buridan on the Eucharist

Abstract: It may come as a surprise to readers familiar with the life and work of the Arts Master that he discusses the Eucharist at all. As he likes to remind us, theological topics are generally out of his wheelhouse. Even so, in his *Questions on the “Metaphysics” of Aristotle (QM) 4.6*, Buridan takes the sacrament of the Eucharist as a key data point in his discussion of Aristotle’s categories. In the Eucharist, the accidents of the bread and wine—their color, texture, and so on—remain intact, but the underlying substance is transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. Accordingly, God can preserve accidents independent of their underlying substance. Therefore, for our part we can use accidental terms, like *whiteness*, without connoting any substances, like communion bread. Moreover, it follows that, contrary to Aristotle, substance and the accidental categories are not the most general genera. Instead, being (*ens*) is, as Buridan concludes. Here, I trace Buridan’s thought on the metaphysical and semantic matters of substance in light of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is for him not only a theological truth, but a metaphysical and semantic *datum* as well. I conclude by asking why Buridan did not take any and all questions about the Eucharist to be out of his ken. What does this tell us about his attitude toward theology? This paper also includes, as an appendix, the first ever English translation of the question under discussion (QM 4.6): “Does the term *being [ens]* signify substances and accidents by one single concept or notion?”

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Picture a white wall. Now suppose we painted it blue. Even once the original whiteness is gone, the wall continues to exist. But can that whiteness exist without the wall? Or, to put it in more technical terms, can an accident (whiteness) exist in the absence of its underlying substance (the wall)? Aristotle’s answer is a firm *No*: accidents depend on their underlying substances in

order to exist. But medieval Aristotelians had to contend with new theological data of which Aristotle was not aware, including in particular the sacrament of the Eucharist. In this sacrament, the substance of the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ. Yet the external appearance of the bread and of the wine—including accidents like color, flavor, and so on—remain the same. In other words, it is not possible to determine whether transubstantiation has taken place in communion wine or wafers by subjecting them to inspection, however minute.

Further still, the accidents we identify with the wafer are not accidents of the body and blood of Christ, and do not depend on Christ's body for their existence. That is, it would be wrong to suppose that Christ's body has all the qualities the wafer has: that it is crunchy and flat, has so many calories, and so on. Thus, in some contexts, accidents can be preserved without relying on an underlying substance. Aristotle's rejection of this possibility is, therefore, not universally correct.

"Lack one lacks both," as Whitman says (1855): if we drop this key aspect of Aristotle's thought, other changes will surely follow. Here, I present Buridan's discussion of this preservation of accidents in the absence of substance, and the implications he identifies: metaphysical ones for the categories, and semantic ones for terms. First, however, I want to give a brief overview of Buridan's life and career, to make clear why it is so remarkable that he discusses the Eucharist at all.

1. Buridan and the Arts

Around 1300, in or near Béthune, Picardy, Buridan was born. We know little about his life, but a good deal of what we do know can be established through records of employment and financial support. He was educated at the Collège Lemoine in Paris, where he received a stipend for needy students. From there, he went to the University of Paris, where he received his masters and license to teach in the 1320s. He was rector of the University of Paris twice (once in 1328, and again in 1340), and he seems to have been quite adept at attracting benefices. In 1361, one of his benefices was transferred to someone else. Buridan, by that point, was dead.

In his own day, and well after his death, Buridan was famous. His life is also the subject of a good deal of legend: he is said to have been ejected from the University of Paris for his radical anti-realism, and to have gone on to found the University of Vienna. He was, we're told, responsible for the remarkable power of memory for which Pope Clement VI was famous—a power he gave him by hitting him over the head with a shoe, apparently in a showdown over a shoemaker's wife. He is also reported to have been tied up in a sack and thrown in the Seine by King Charles VII—an act of revenge for Buridan's seduction of the Queen, Marie of Anjou. His students, the story relates, dutifully fished him out.

Fun stuff, but (sadly) untrue: these fables have been carefully cataloged and soundly debunked by Edmond Faral (1950). Even so, there may be an element of truth in the conclusion of the final story: from Buridan's brisk and occasionally humorous language, one can readily imagine him being well-liked by his students.¹ And while he likely didn't hit Clement VI with a shoe,² Buridan's *Tractatus de Consequentibus* apparently makes a rather elaborate point of

¹ For a discussion of Buridan's humor in its Aristotelian context, see my (2022).

² Whether or not this event took place, we can still ask whether the rumor was current in Buridan's own time. Given some of his rather specific references to shoemakers in *QDA* (1.1, 1.3), and even to controversies involving shoemakers being adjudicated by the Pope (!) (*QDA* 1.3, para. 10), it may well have been.

insulting Clement’s papal predecessor—and Buridan’s own fellow Parisian alumnus— Benedict XII (Jacques Fournier).³ Not the stuff of legend, but not entirely humdrum, either.

Two unusual facts stand out about Buridan’s academic career. First, he remained a secular cleric to the end of his life. Though the Franciscans and Dominicans were dominant at the University of Paris, Buridan joined neither order. For this reason, as Zupko (2003) points out, he was free to work independently of the traditions built respectively on the thought of prominent Dominicans (Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Robert Holcot, and Meister Eckhardt) and Franciscans (Roger Bacon, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham—even though he does follow Ockham on a number of important points).

The second unusual thing is that Buridan spent his entire career in the Faculty of Arts. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of arts masters (including Buridan’s own students Marsilius of Inghen and Albert of Saxony) went on to the higher Faculty of Theology. As Courtenay (2001) points out, in Buridan’s income would therefore have been slight, in comparison with the masters of that and other higher faculties. But the fact that Buridan’s career did not advance in the usual way cannot be due to any lack of academic ability or recognition. Rather, it must have been a conscious choice on Buridan’s part. Why he made this choice cannot be ascertained with certainty. Admittedly, it was probably wise for someone who anyway had more secular interests to steer clear of the more prestigious but also much more hazardous study of theology: the University of Paris was, in Buridan’s day, a dangerous place for theologians.

Whatever his reason for forgoing theological studies, as an arts master Buridan was not permitted to teach theology. And in general, he seems happy to leave theological disputes well enough alone. For instance, in a (2001) discussion of the properties of terms in his *Sophismata* (ch. 5, 2nd sophism), Buridan touches briefly upon the following syllogism about the Trinity:⁴

- 1) Every God is the Son
- Every Father of God is God
- ∴ Every Father of God is the Son

What looks like a valid syllogism in the mood Barbara has, in this instance, true premises and a false conclusion. Buridan’s solution is syntactic: to the premises we should add a ‘that is’ (*quod est*) locution, to get the following:

- 1) Everything that is God is the Son
- Everything that is the Father of God is God
- ∴ Everything that is the Father of God is the Son

Apparently, the addition of the ‘that is’ locution falsifies one or the other (or both) of the premises, thereby rendering the syllogism valid. But Buridan does not tell us which. Instead, he briefly reports that there was a current debate about which of the involved propositions was false. He then hastens to add, “I do not assert anything concerning this issue, but leave it entirely to the

³ The insult is presented in a series of inferences: “if we say, ‘A white cardinal has been elected Pope,’ we infer ‘So a master of theology has been elected Pope,’ and if I say ‘I see him,’ you will infer ‘therefore you certainly see a deceitful man.’” (*Treatise on Consequence* 1.4 (2015)). For a discussion of the white cardinal, and its use in dating this text, see Hubert Hubien’s (1976) introduction to the Latin edition, and the overview in Read’s (2015) introduction. Note also that there seems to be some disagreement in the secondary literature on who this white cardinal was: Hans Thijssen, in his (2021) on Nicholas of Autrecourt, holds that it was Cardinal William Curti.

⁴ With the exception of the (2001) *Summulae*, translated by Gyula Klima, all translations here are mine.

masters or doctors of sacred theology”. This remark concludes his discussion of the sophism. This example is broadly representative of Buridan’s approach to contemporary theological disputes: he notes them, and quickly moves on, telling us that he will leave them to the theologians.⁵

Nevertheless, Buridan’s approach to theological questions in general, as opposed to the theological disputes of his day, is more complex than general avoidance. Many of the questions Buridan examines in his *QM*, deal with theological topics: for example, “Whether God-being-Socrates’-cause is God, supposing that God is the cause which creates and preserves Socrates” (*utrum deum esse causam sortis sit deus, supposito quod deus est causa creans et conservans sortem*; *QM* 5.7), and “Whether God is pleasure and life” (*utrum deus sit delectatio et vita*; *QM* 12.8). Hence Buridan does not shy away from all theological discussions as a rule. Why not? And why does he dive into these discussions, and not others like the Trinitarian syllogism?

At least the two examples just given, and most of his theological discussions in the *QM* and elsewhere, are on topics of natural theology. That is, they do not deal with divinely revealed truths, but instead consider only those things which are discoverable through natural reason alone. To distinguish these, we may rely on the authority of Saints Thomas and Paul; as Thomas (1950-3) tells us (*ST* I, q.2, a.2, ad 1):

The fact that God exists, and other facts of this sort which can be known about God through natural reason (as it says in Romans 1:20), are not articles of faith. Rather, they are prefatory to these articles. For in this way, faith presupposes natural cognition, the way grace presupposes nature, and perfection the perfectible.

Hence the conclusions of natural theology need not be reached nor held by faith, but can be established through reason and observation.

The passage in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, which Thomas here cites, reveals a good deal: there, Paul tells us that unbelievers, even before Christ, are without excuse (*inexcusabiles* [Vulgate]) for their corruption. For, although they did not know the divine truths which have been subsequently revealed, nevertheless they could have obtained some knowledge of God by observing the world around them. Such knowledge would include not only the fact of God’s existence, but also certain of His traits. Which traits? At least those set out by Aristotle (1984c) in *Metaphysics* Λ (12), 7 (1073a2-11): God is eternal, immovable, without parts or magnitude, indivisible, and separate from sensible things. We do not need divine revelation to obtain such knowledge. These, then, are the fruits of natural theology.

Divine theology, in contrast, deals with what has been revealed to us by God, which would otherwise exceed our rational capacities. As Thomas (1950-3) characterizes it (*ST* I, q.1, a. 6, ad 2):

The cognition proper to this science is that which occurs through revelation, and not that which comes from natural reason.

That is, the science of divine theology operates with data that can only be known through revelation. Such data include, *inter alia*, God’s existence as a Trinity, Christ’s incarnation, the coming Judgement, and of course, the Eucharist.

⁵ Buridan elsewhere makes the same point about this syllogism, which he “leaves to the theologians” in *TC* 3.4, concl. 1 (1985, 2015). Similarly, in *QAPr* 1.19, co., he tells his students to “ask the theologians” whether the following consequence holds: “every omnipotent being is created; everything creating is omnipotent; therefore, everything creating is created”.

Many of the theological questions Buridan considers pertain to natural theology. And indeed, the Trinitarian example Buridan gives and sets aside in the *Sophismata* deals with a divinely revealed truth, namely that of the Trinity. Accordingly, we might be inclined to characterize Buridan's attitude toward theology in the following way: anything in natural theology is fair game for philosophical consideration. After all, many conclusions of natural theology are reached and discussed in precisely the Aristotelian texts Buridan would have taught as an arts master, especially the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. But the articles of revealed theology, in this characterization, would be off-limits for Buridan.

This solution is elegant, but unworkable: the Eucharist belongs to revealed theology, and yet receives more than passing mention in Buridan. He does not merely set it aside, the way he does with the foregoing dispute about the Trinity. Hence his theological interests are not limited to natural theology, and neither are his discussions.

What, then, is the principle at play here: why does Buridan discuss any truths of revealed theology at all? And when he does discuss revealed theology, why does he discuss some points and not others? And how is he, as an arts master, able to do so without landing in hot water? These are the questions we will answer in this paper, chiefly in the concluding section (§4). Along the way, we will examine Buridan's own discussion of the Eucharist (§3), and how he sees the problems it raises in relation to the semantic and metaphysical interests he is free to investigate as an arts master. To set these problems up, we have to examine what he tells us about the metaphysics and semantics of Aristotle's *Categories*, to which we turn now.

2. Substance and Signification

In traditional Aristotelian metaphysics, there are ten categories. These are substance and quality, as well as quantity, relation, place, time, position, having, acting, and being-acted-upon (1b25–2a4).⁶ These categories are completely general—a fact reflected in the ubiquitous description of them among Latin commentators as 'most-general genera' (*genera generalissima*).

For example, consider Socrates. He is a human and, more generally, an animal. More generally than that, he is a living being—a trait he shares in common with plants as well as other animals. Most generally of all, Socrates is a substance. We cannot speak more generally about Socrates than this. Accordingly, substance is a most general genus. Similarly, consider the whiteness of a wall. More generally it is a colour, and most generally an accidental quality. In this way, we keep climbing to higher planes of generality, until we get to the highest level of generality possible. Such are the categories.

To merit their name, the categories must be jointly exhaustive, and mutually exclusive. If they were not jointly exhaustive, it would be possible to find things that belonged to no category, which would suggest a serious shortcoming of our list of ten. If they were not mutually exclusive, then the categories themselves would be ambiguous: one item could belong to more than one most general genus, which would also be unacceptable. Hence there must be no overlap among the categories, and nothing that doesn't fall into one or other of them.

What, in general, are the categories? Aristotle's term for them is *ta legomena* (τὰ λεγόμενα). This term is usually translated into Latin as *praedicamenta*—in both cases, literally

⁶ Here and in what follows, I will cite the relevant texts in Aristotle, as well as of his medieval interpreters. But since we are chiefly concerned with the latter, I cannot promise that the presentation of Aristotle will precisely align with modern interpretations of him. *Caveat lector*.

‘things that are spoken of’ or ‘things that are stated’.⁷ Both the Latin and Greek terms are thus ambiguous: the categories could be understood primarily to be things, or primarily to be terms for things. This ambiguity has long been recognised, and continues to be a locus of debate.⁸ Here, I will follow Studtman (2021) in calling the latter view the *linguistic* view. Most important for our understanding of the Eucharist is Buridan’s treatment, along these lines, of the categories of quality and substance.

In the *Summulae de Categoriis* (3.2.1), Buridan identifies the ambiguity just noted, and resolutely sides with the linguistic reading of Aristotle’s *Categories*: the categories are terms for things. Accordingly, in his discussion of substance, Buridan (2001) tells us that:

[in general] in connection with the whole chapter, we should take good notice of the fact that ‘substance’ is taken in two ways. In one way it supposit for real substances that subsist on their own, and for their parts [...] taking the terms significatively, we say that animals are substances, and so are stones, plants, and the heavens; but this is not the way in which ‘substance’ is taken here. In the second way, ‘substance’ is taken to supposit for terms in the category of substance, i.e., for terms that signify substances in the first sense without extraneous connotation, as do the terms ‘animal’, ‘man’, ‘Socrates’.

Hence we may recognise both substances—things in the world which, so to speak, stand on their own—and substantial terms, which are fit to signify or supposit for substances.⁹ As Buridan insists, in his treatment of the categories he is chiefly concerned with substantial terms, rather than the substances themselves. Buridan’s preference for this linguistic reading comes as no surprise: he is, after all, a committed anti-realist.

Similarly, we can distinguish qualities from the terms which stand for them. As Buridan (2001) adds later on in the *Summulae de Categoriis* (3.5.1):

we should note, analogously to what was said about substance, that the name ‘quality’ is sometimes taken for abstract terms in the category of quality, and in this way the terms ‘whiteness’, ‘heat’, ‘knowledge’, [etc.] would be said to be qualities; but in another way [‘quality’] is taken for the things for which these terms supposit, in the way the heat inherent in fire or the whiteness that I see in the wall are qualities.

Hence we have two aspects of the distinction between substance and accident to examine: one metaphysical, the other semantic. The former is sidelined in Buridan’s *Summulae*, but comes up in the *QM* passages we’ll consider.

For our purposes, the most important metaphysical distinction between substance and accident is in terms of independent existence. In the natural course of things, substances can exist on their own (that is, they can *subsist*), whereas accidents can only exist by inhering in a subject. To return to our opening example: a wall is a substance, and therefore can exist on its own. But the whiteness (or any other color) of the wall cannot exist in this way. Instead, whiteness can only exist in the wall, on whose subsistence it depends. And, at least in ordinary circumstances, this makes good horse sense: there is an asymmetry between an object and any of its accidental properties. This is why any given color of the wall can be eliminated in a way that leaves the

⁷ Note however that *praedicamenta*, though it is used to translate *ta legomena*, seems to be a calque of αἱ κατηγορίαι (*hai kategoriai*)

⁸ For a brief general overview, see Studtmann (2021), especially § 2.1.

⁹ For a clear overview of the relative roles of signification and supposition in Buridan’s semantics, see Klima’s (2009), especially ch. 8.

wall intact—for example, by painting the wall another color; but the whiteness cannot exist in the absence of the wall or its parts *qua* substrate. For this reason, Aristotle (1984a) concludes in *Categories* 5 (2a35-b7) that if substances did not exist, it would be impossible for anything in the other nine accidental categories to exist, either.

This asymmetry between substance and accident will be reflected by the signification of their terms, as well. To see why, consider first the distinction Buridan makes in the (2001) *Summulae de Propositionibus* (1.1.4), between significative and non-significative utterances:

Some utterances are significative; others are nonsignificative. A significative utterance is one that represents something to the hearing, as ‘man’ represents man, or the moans of the sick represent pain, or the barking of dogs represents anger or joy. A nonsignificative utterance is one that represents nothing to the hearing, as for example, ‘buba’.

The nonsense sound ‘buba’ does not bring anything at all to mind. Therefore, unlike the words of human language or many of the sounds animals make, it is not significative.

This notion of ‘bringing to mind’ through signification is key: a term brings to mind whatever it signifies directly, as *Socrates* brings to mind the Greek philosopher, and *Titanic* the ship.¹⁰ These terms need not bring anything else to mind apart from the substances they signify. But other terms also co-signify: they bring something else to mind beyond their immediate signification. A classic example is *father*, which signifies a parent, but as a relational term also co-signifies a child. Similarly, a term like *sweetness* signifies a flavor, but also co-signifies sweet things.

In the natural course of things, this semantic distinction—between merely significative terms and terms which also co-signify—aligns with the metaphysical one—between substance and accident. An accidental term cannot signify an accident without also co-signifying a subject in which the accident inheres. Hence a term like *white* or even *whiteness* will signify the accident of being white, but will also co-signify a substance—*i.e.* the thing which is white, or in which whiteness inheres. In contrast, a substantial term like *wall*, *animal*, or *Socrates* can signify these subjects without any reference to their accidents. But in the context of the Eucharist, things are not so simple.

3. The Eucharist and the Categories

The two categories of substance and quality, which we have been considering so far, and indeed the full ten categories themselves, are presented with little by way of defense in *Categories* 4 (1b25-a4). That is, Aristotle does not tell us much to motivate or defend his selection of the categories he presents. This leaves us to wonder: why ten categories? And if it must be ten, why exactly *these* ten, and no others?

Buridan is aware of these questions. In the (2001) *Summulae de Categoriis* (3.1.8), he remarks that the choice of these ten categories is apparently arbitrary and, therefore, tentative:

Aristotle never provided an argument to show that there are no other categories besides these ten, nor would it be unacceptable to posit also others if other

¹⁰ Granted, these words have a whole host of associations, independent of *philosopher* and *ship*. *Titanic* brings to mind things like *iceberg*, *disaster*, *drowning*, and perhaps also *20th century hubris*. But these are not inseparable from the term *Titanic*. Witness: if they were, nobody would have bought a ticket for that voyage.

predicables were found that have different modes of predication, which are neither reducible to nor contained under the ones from which these ten categories are derived.

Note that Buridan here presupposes the linguistic view of the categories. And as we're about to see, there is in fact a term which is apt to be predicated more broadly than any of the ten categorical terms, and which is nevertheless univocal.

Now whereas it is quite difficult to make the general positive case for all and only these ten, it is a good deal easier to make a specific negative case against a given particular proposal for inclusion in the categories. One way to do this is to show that the proposed, generally applicable term is, in fact, equivocal. This is a common objection against the term 'being' (*ens*). Traditionally, this term is taken to be too broadly applicable: it covers items in the category of substance, as well as the remaining nine accidental categories. Yet, for reasons just given, substance and accident are categorically different: normally, the latter depends on the former in order to exist, whereas the former does not depend on the latter at all. Therefore, the term 'being' is equivocal, and unsuitable as a category or category term.

But 'being' would not be equivocal if things in categories apart from that of substance *could* subsist on their own—a possibility which, as we have seen, Aristotle denies. Yet, as Buridan ([1588 \[1518\]](#)) observes (*QM* 5.8, fol. 27ra-b), God can make it so, as He consistently does in the sacrament of the Eucharist:

We hold by faith that accidents can be separated from substances by the power of God, and preserved independently, without any substance as a subject. Wherefore, we say that in this way, that they subsist in the sacrament of the altar, without a subject. If, therefore, we posit that a whiteness subsisted in this way without any subject in which it inhered, then it is clear that that whiteness is obviously a being (*ens*).

The whiteness of the communion wafer is thus divinely preserved, and does not depend on the underlying substance. It is, therefore, a being (*ens*) in its own right.

Buridan is clear that what is severed in the Eucharist is the dependency between accident and substance. Even so, the whiteness occupies the very same place as it did when it depended on the wafer—that is, before transubstantiation occurred. Hence when God removes the dependency relation between accident and substance, there is no local-motion or removal of the accident from where it was before. As he tells us later on (*QM* 5.8, fol. 32vb):

The whiteness indeed exists simultaneously with a certain body, and yet not inhering in it. For the whiteness which is seen by us in the sacrament of the altar exists simultaneously with the body of Christ, and at no distance from it. Yet it does not give its form to Christ, nor is Christ's body white by that whiteness.

Thus when God severs the relation of dependence between substance and accident, as He does in the Eucharist, He does not do so by removing one from the other in any spatial or temporal sense. The whiteness of the wafer does not hover slightly above it, or anything like that. From this fact, Buridan concludes in *QM* 5.8 that, contrary to Aristotle, there is some third thing apart from the substance and the accident that inheres in it. It is, he says, a disposition (*dispositio*) for the one to receive the other.

This undermines the arguments advanced by Aristotle ([1984c](#)) and later Porphyry ([1994](#)) against treating being (*ens*) as a category. As Porphyry summarily remarks in the *Isagoge* (29-30):

[B]eing, as Aristotle says [*Metaphysics* III.3, 998b22] is not one common genus of all things; neither are all things ‘homogeneous’ in accordance with one highest genus [...] If then one calls all things ‘beings,’ he will do so equivocally, Aristotle says, but not univocally. For if being were one genus common to all, all things would be called ‘beings’ univocally.

Since ‘being’ is equivocal, it is not apt to serve as a category. The reasoning, in brief, is as follows: if ‘being’ were a category, then it could be predicated univocally. But in fact it is equivocal. Therefore (by *modus tollens*) it is not a category. Yet as we have seen, the case of the Eucharist undermines the minor premise: ‘being’ can indeed be predicated univocally both of substances, and of the subsisting accidents in the Eucharist.

Now Buridan makes an important move here (*QM* 4.6, fol. 17rb), from metaphysical facts about the power of the Almighty to semantic facts about the capacities of ordinary language:

Furthermore, it is clear from this that the concept from which we take the term ‘whiteness’ is just as simple and without any connotation as God or some substantial term is. Thus if we were to predicate a term like ‘being’ or ‘something’ of the term ‘whiteness’, then it would not have to be predicated by some attribution to a substance as a subject, or to some substantial term. For that subject, i.e. ‘whiteness’, is a being, and it is something, and it is no less a thing or something when it inheres in something than when it is removed from any subject.

From the metaphysical fact that accidents can exist without substances, important categorico-semantic results follow. Whereas, before, accidental terms co-signified substances, in the context of the Eucharist these terms can signify accidents without any co-signification of substance whatsoever. In sum: from the fact that God can preserve accidents without dependence on any substance, it follows that we can refer to accidents without co-signifying a substance, as well. In this way, the entire edifice of the ten categories is, if not undermined, at least revealed not to be foundational in the way Aristotle and Porphyry suppose.

In the *Summulae*, as we saw in the preceding section, Buridan expresses uncertainty about whether the ten categories are jointly exhaustive, or whether on the other hand further categories might be discovered. Given what we’ve just seen, we might expect him to dispense with the whole system, both here and in his logical works. But, remarkably, he does not. Near the end of the question, he raises and responds to the following doubt (fol. 17va):

If accidents can subsist on their own in this way, then how can we establish the difference between accidents and substances? [...] I say that Aristotle said that whiteness is indeed a substance if it can subsist on its own like this, and it will be this thing, for if it is asked what this thing is, no response can rightly be given except to say that this thing is whiteness. But otherwise we can say that everything is a substance which naturally subsists on its own, so that it does not inhere in something else. [...] And thus whiteness, although it may subsist on its own, should not be called a substance, because it does not subsist in this way naturally, but only miraculously.

Here, then, Buridan’s lofty considerations return to the natural order of things. Granted, God can separate any accident from its underlying substance—and indeed does, in church, on any given Sunday. Yet in the natural order of things, accidents depend on their substances, and so when we refer to them, we co-signify these substances as well.

This secular focus of Buridan's philosophy has been well studied and summarized by De Rijk, in his (1997) study of Buridan's battle against the thinkers whom he calls theologizers (*theologizantes*). These thinkers deny the possibility of scientific knowledge of any sort. They appear to have reasoned in the following way: even apparent necessities are subject to divine whim and therefore contingent. God could, to take an example Buridan raises in his *Questions on the "Posterior Analytics"*, annihilate all magnitudes, and thereby falsify geometry (bk. 1, q.25, arg. 3). But, following Aristotle's (1984b) definition in the *Posterior Analytics*, scientific knowledge is only of truths that are necessarily and unqualifiedly true (71b10-15).

In contrast, Buridan resolutely unwilling to radically alter his view of nature on these grounds. He is, as De Rijk tells us, generally uninterested in the topic of a deceptive God ("*la thême du Dieu trompeur*"). Even so, as De Rijk remarks, Buridan is willing to treat theology as fruitful inspiration for philosophical thinking ("*inspiration féconde de la pensée philosophique*"). Hence Buridan treats the Eucharist, and the puzzles it presents for the categories, as genuine; but he is happy to retain the categories all the same, since they seem to work just fine in ordinary, non-miraculous contexts.

We are now in a position to remark more generally on Buridan's attitude toward theology, and to address the questions raised at the outset of this paper—to wit: why does Buridan discuss the Eucharist, and not other truths of revealed theology? What is the principle at play here? And why doesn't Buridan get into trouble for teaching and writing about these theological matters?

4. Buridan and Theology

Three facts shed light on these questions. The first is fairly obvious from what we've seen so far, but worth stating all the same: Buridan does not discuss revealed theology in its own right, but he brings facts drawn from it to bear on philosophical questions. In other words, he uses revealed theology to illuminate philosophical theorizing, rather than vice-versa.

The second fact is a less obvious corollary of the first: Buridan's discussions deal with theological matters in terms of *what (quia) the datum is*, rather than in terms of the reasons *why (propter quid)*. Buridan treats the transubstantiation of the Eucharist as a settled fact, which can be brought to bear on more mundane philosophical questions. Revealed theology for Buridan is like a car: he lets it take him places, but doesn't tinker under the hood.¹¹

In contrast, Thomas Aquinas (1950-3), discusses the Eucharist both in terms of *quia*, and of the mechanics of *propter quid*. To give a few representative examples from Aquinas: the Eucharist, unlike other sacraments, involves a common prayer for the salvation of all the faithful and the deceased, because it is the sacrament of the unity of the whole Church (*ST III*, q.83, a.4, ad 3). The Eucharist is taken repeatedly, unlike Baptism which is only done once, in part because Baptism is spiritual (re)birth, whereas the Eucharist is the daily bread of spiritual refreshment (*ST III*, q.80, a.10, co.). In the Eucharist, Christ's body is really present, because the New Law requires that the sacrifice be real, rather than merely symbolic (*ST III*, q.75, a.1, co.). Many further examples could be listed, but you get the point. What separates Aquinas's discussions from Buridan's is that they feature a *because* clause, explaining *why* the Eucharist is the way it is.

¹¹ For a reconstruction of what Buridan's positive views about the Eucharist *might* have been, see De Rijk (1994), cited by Bakker (2001).

Third, none of Buridan's examples involve anything but settled theological doctrine: Transubstantiation was, by the fourteenth century and at the University of Paris, an established theological fact. The facts of the Eucharist would not have been the subject of dispute in Buridan's Paris. Compare, in contrast, how Buridan shies away from taking the Trinitarian syllogism problem head-on, noting that it *was* a subject of contemporary debate. We may characterize Buridan not as uninterested in or reluctant to draw upon theology, natural or divine. Rather, what he apparently dodges is the unsettled disputes of his day.

The foregoing account of Buridan's attitude toward theology is well-suited to his discussion of the Eucharist. But what evidence is there that it applies more broadly? Put differently, what guarantee do we have that the account I have been developing here is not *ad hoc*? As I see it, the way to address this concern is to find another discussion of revealed theology, and show how Buridan's attitude as sketched above can accommodate it.

Fortunately, there is another example in Buridan's logic, which draws upon a *datum* of revealed theology, namely, the timelessness of Heaven. To give some background to Buridan's discussion: the term *is* in predications like "Socrates is running" does not directly signify anything outside the mind. But it *does* co-signify time since, as a verb, it is tensed. How large a slice of time is co-signified by *is* depends heavily on how broad we take the present to be; and, Buridan is clear, we can take as much time for the present as we like.¹² We can take a fraction of a second, as in Arthur Prior's (1968) horserace example, "Eclipse is just past the winning post". Or we can take all time as our present, as we do in general scientific pronouncements like "every triangle has three angles equal to two right angles".¹³ But even if our propositions are omnitemporal, the verb *is* co-signifies a time.

We might therefore wonder: *must* the copula *is* signify time, or is there a possible scenario in which it does not signify any time whatsoever? That is, in addition to the omnitemporal propositions of scientific pronouncements, can we formulate properly *atemporal* ones as well? It turns out such atemporal propositions are possible, albeit divinely, as Buridan tells us in the (2001) *Summulae de Suppositionibus* (4.3.4):

In fact, perhaps we can show from our faith that we are able to form such mental propositions. For God could preserve all things in rest, without motion (I mean all things other than motion). So let us suppose that God does so. Then nothing would be time, if every time is motion, as Aristotle shows (*Physics* 4 [218b21-219a2]). Nevertheless, the souls of the blessed would know and understand by mental propositions that God is good and that they are present to God; and by the copulas of those mental propositions they would not co-understand [*cointelligerent*] time, for they would also know that there is no time, and so they would know that neither they themselves nor God did exist in the present time, and that they did not coexist with the present time either.

In the timeless state of Beatitude, it remains possible to formulate propositions. Since there is no time to be signified by these propositions, they are properly tenseless. Hence it is possible for such propositions to exist. And indeed they do exist, at least for the Blessed.

There are many parallels between this discussion, and Buridan's discussion of the Eucharist: first, God can intervene in the natural course of things; accordingly, we can signify or

¹² For a discussion of omnitemporal propositions in Buridan, see Read (2019), Biard (2019) and Ciola (*forthcoming*).

¹³ This is so-called *natural supposition*, in which the terms stand for all the things they signify, be they past, present or future. See the (2001) *Summulae de Suppositionibus* 4.3.4.

understand things (accidents in the Eucharist, propositions in Heaven) without co-signifying or co-understanding others (substance, time). In this way, the present example of Heaven has all the aspects of the Eucharist example: first, it is not discussed in its own right, but only in connection with Buridan's metaphysics and—especially—his semantics. Second, it is not discussed in terms of *how* or *why*: Buridan is here only concerned with *what* the state of the Blessed in Heaven is like. Third, Buridan's example comes from settled doctrine: all his example requires is that there be at least some people in Heaven, that those people can think, and that there is no change or alteration in the Father's House. Such claims were not controversial in his day.

The two examples from revealed theology that Buridan discusses, and which we have been looking at here, are parallel in these three ways. For Buridan, theology thus provides—in Sylla's (2001) beautifully alliterative phrase—"a treasure trove of truths". Thus Buridan is eager to incorporate theological data, either from natural theology or from undisputed aspects of revealed theology, into his theological project. And, given his cautious approach, he is free to do so. Our Arts Master therefore has a subtler approach to the relationship between philosophy and theology than meets the eye.

Appendix: *QM* 4.6¹⁴

Does the Term 'Being' (ens) Signify Substances and Accidents By a Single Notion or Concept?

[1] An argument that it does: for one can acquire a single concept or notion from one common mode of being. In this way we can acquire one subject which is common to all subjects from that which exists *per se*. But there is a common mode of being which applies both to accidents and to substances; therefore, etc. And the minor is stated for the reason that the mode of being, namely, of formally existing, applies *per se* both to a substance and to its accidents, and without attribution of one to the other. For although an accident has its existence due to the substance which is its subject, nevertheless it is said to exist formally not through the substance, but through itself.

[2] Furthermore, from the mode of existing *per se*, we acquire a single concept which is common to all things which subsist *per se*. But accidents can also subsist *per se*—that is, separate from substances, albeit by divine power. Therefore, it is possible that a single concept is appropriate both to those accidents [which are independently preserved by divine power], and to substances. And that concept seems to be none other than the one to which we apply the term *being*.

[3] Furthermore, if there does not exist one single common concept which applies both to accidents and substances, then we have to ask what prevents one from doing so. But nothing seems to prevent it from applying to both, except the substance's inherence in or dependence on the substance. But neither inherence in nor dependence on a substance prevents the concept from applying to accidents as well as to substances. Proof: substantial form inheres in matter, and yet there is a concept which is indeed common to form and to matter, according to which concept both of these are called *subjects*. Therefore, the fact of inherence does not prevent it. Neither does dependence, since all substances apart from God Himself depend more on Him than any accident depends on the substance in which it inheres. But even so, there is one concept common to God

¹⁴ The text runs from fol. 16va to 17vb. I have marked breaks within the text.

and to the substances apart from Him, for which we have the term *substance*. Indeed, even the fact that substances are prior to accidents does not prevent there being a concept common to both. For God is naturally prior to all substances, and more so than the substances are to the accidents inhering in them, even though (as has been said) there is a concept which is common to God and all the other substances apart from Him. Therefore, there seems to be nothing to prevent the existence of a single concept which is common to substances and accidents.

[4] Furthermore, a single cognitive power should have a primary object which is one in terms of existence or in terms of reason. But the first and appropriate object of the intellectual power is held to be being in the most common sense. Therefore it is necessary that it be one by reason in the most common sense.

[5] Furthermore if the term *being* did not have one single concept as concerns both substances and accidents, then it would follow that the First Principle would be ambiguous and in need of disambiguation.¹⁵ It would then follow that the First Principle was not most certain and best known, which is the opposite of what it says in *Metaphysics* 4.¹⁶ And the main inference is clear from the fact that the First Principle depends on the term *being* (or *to be*), and yet the term *being* would be in need of disambiguation. From this, it would follow that the First Principle would not be said of the things it is said of in terms of one concept only.

[6] Furthermore, the being of substance is prior to that of accident, as is clear in *Metaphysics* 7.¹⁷ Accordingly, I ask: by what concept of being is this claim verified? If it is verified in terms of the concept of substance, then the sense will be that substance is prior to substance rather than accident, and this is false, since one and the same thing cannot be prior to itself, or else the comparison would be inappropriate. But on the other hand if you say that *being* is here being taken in terms of the concept of accident, then the sense will also be that substance is an accident prior to accident, which is clearly false. Therefore, it is necessary that, in the aforementioned statement, *being* is understood in terms of a concept which is common both to substance and to accident.

[7] Similarly, the following proposition is true: “a man and whiteness are two beings”. Yet here the term *beings* cannot be understood in terms of the concept of substance alone. Nor can it be understood in terms of the concept of accident alone, for in either case the proposition would be false. For a man and whiteness are not two accidents, nor are they two substances. Therefore [fol. 16vb] in the assertion we are considering, we have to understand these two [namely, man as a substance and whiteness as an accident] in terms of a single common concept.

[8] A further argument is that the following would be simply false: “every being is a substance”. Yet it should not be considered false, unless being had a common concept. Instead, either it should be disambiguated, and it would be true in one sense and false in another, or it should be considered simply true, since it would be true in the principal sense.

¹⁵ That is, the metaphysical Principle of Noncontradiction: “the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect”. *Metaphysics* Γ(4).3, 1005b19-21.

¹⁶ *Metaphysics* Γ(4).3, 1005b5-34.

¹⁷ *Metaphysics* Z(7).1, 1028a32-b1.

But Porphyry holds the opposite, and says that anyone who speaks of all beings applies the term equivocally.¹⁸ Accordingly, Porphyry thinks the term *being* is predicated of substances and accidents only equivocally, and not univocally.

Now it says in the *Categories* that there is no common concept which corresponds to an equivocal term.¹⁹ Rather, terms are predicated of the things they are predicated of by different concepts. And this argument also appears in *Physics* 1.²⁰ And in *Metaphysics* 4, Aristotle regards the term *being* as not univocal but predicated in many ways.²¹ Hence he says that beings are not so called by one thing, but they are predicated with respect to one thing—that is, they are not predicated univocally and by one concept, but they are predicated by many concepts, one of which is first, namely concept of substance. The others are attributed to that first concept. And he speaks similarly of *being* as he does of the adjective *healthy*. This term is predicated of animals, food, and urine, not by one concept, but rather by a good many. For this animal is said to be healthy on account of the fact that its physical disposition is suitable for it to function well. Urine is not, however, called healthy in this way, but rather because it signifies such a physical disposition in the animal. Accordingly, *being* does not correspond to one single concept, and likewise neither does *healthy*.

Furthermore, if *being* were predicated both of substances and of accidents by one single concept, it would follow that accidents should be simply called beings, which Aristotle denies. And this inference is clear, because neither the inherence of one thing in another, nor dependence, nor priority or posteriority prevents simple predication from an inferior to a superior thing. For both *matter* and *form*, *donkey* and *God* are predicated simply of a substance.

Furthermore, it would follow that being would be a true univocal genus in addition to the ten univocal categories. For a genus is called univocal when it has a common term and when its concept of substance is the same. Now the term *being* would be common to substances and accidents, and by the same concept. Therefore, it would be a true univocal genus, because (as has already been said) inherence does not prevent it from being so, and neither does priority nor posteriority nor dependence nor anything else. Now, briefly, *being* would be thus predicated of accidents and likewise of substances. And its predication of accidents would in no way be by attribution to substance, because if it were then it would already not be predicated according to one and the same concept, but instead it would be predicated of a substance simply and of an accident only in a certain respect (*secundum quid*) or by an attributive concept. But since being is not listed among the ten categories, it follows that it is not predicated of substances and accidents according to one single concept.

In my assessment, this question is a rather difficult one, on account of the fact that I think Aristotle in fact held a different opinion about accidents than that which our faith postulates. Indeed, I believe that Aristotle was of the opinion that if a man is white, that this involves a coming together of nothing but whiteness and a man.

But beyond this, although the white thing and the man are the same, Aristotle believed that being white is not the man himself. For he says in *Metaphysics* 7 that, in speaking in terms of accidents, the thing and the thing's being are not the same; neither are being white and

¹⁸ *Isagoge* 29-31.

¹⁹ *Categories* 1, 1a1-5.

²⁰ *Physics* 1.2, 185a21-b5.

²¹ *Metaphysics* Γ(4).2, 1003b4-10.

whiteness the same.²² And therefore, since being white is not the man himself, Aristotle thought that being white is the same as whiteness, and being large is the same as largeness, and being shaped is the same as shape, and so on for everything else. Accordingly, Aristotle held that accidents cannot be separated from their subjects by any causal power whatsoever, because it seems to imply a contradiction for there to be a white thing unless something is white. And so, by a parallel line of reasoning, since being a white thing is the same as whiteness, it seems to imply a contradiction that there should be a whiteness, unless there existed something which was white.

Next, Aristotle held that to be a man or a stone is to be something, or rather to be a certain kind, and thus to be three cubits long is not to be something but to be certain amount, and neither is being in a house to be something, but rather to be somewhere, and so on for the other categories. Therefore, just as to be white is not said simply in terms of some common concept [fol.17ra]—that is, one which is without connotation—so too Aristotle held that the term *whiteness* is not said in terms of a concept without connotation, but rather of a connotative concept.

And finally, Aristotle held that to be white simple speaking is not to be something, but to be something in a certain respect (*secundum quid*), that is with something added on. For to be white is for something to be white, and to be black is for something to be black, and so forth for the rest. So in the end it follows that whiteness is not, simply speaking, a thing, but whiteness is, with addition, for something to be white.

We can, then, respond to Aristotle's opinion about substances and accidents and the concept of being, taking the term *being* nominally, so that the terms *being* (*ens*) and *something* (*aliquid*) are synonymous. And then Aristotle would say that the term *being* and the term *something* are not predicated of substantial terms and accidental terms by one and the same concept. For we speak about substantial terms by means of a simple concept without any extraneous connotation: a man, simply speaking, is a thing, and so too is a donkey. But whiteness or blackness are not things, as we've said, so that the term *being* or *something* is not predicated of whiteness or blackness by means of a simple concept, but by means of a connotative one. And the terms which belong to the different categories are spoken of with different additions and connotations: whiteness is for something to be in a certain way, and size is not like this, but rather is for something to be of a certain quantity.

Therefore, it is clear that accidents are not simply speaking called beings. They are, rather, beings only in a certain respect—that is, with addition and by attribution to substance. For the concept of an accident is explained through a concept of a substance in addition. For the concept from which we take the term *something* is a concept of a substance.

Hence, lastly, as concerns our present discussion, we should take note of the fact that Aristotle certainly held that the term *something* or *what* (*quid*) is a first predicate and a most general genus, more than the term *substance* is.²³ And therefore, frequently when Aristotle enumerates the categories in the *Metaphysics*, he always adds the [interrogative pronouns] *what* and *what sort* (*quale*) and *how much* (*quantum*), and so on, all signify different things.

This, then, is how Aristotle would respond to the question, and how he would address the objections that have been raised here. For when it is said that there is one mode of existing—that is, to exist formally—I say that the term *is*, if it is taken as a predicative verb (*tertium adiacens*) and not existentially (*secundum adiacens*), is not the term from which a predicate is taken from

²² *Metaphysics* 7(Z).4, 1029b16-22.

²³ *Metaphysics* 7(Z).1, 1028a10-31.

another predicate. It is, rather, only a copula, which predicates a predicate of a subject. If however the term *is* is taken existentially, then *is* should be reduced to *is a being*.

[1a] And then, just as Aristotle would not grant that whiteness is a thing, so too he would not grant that whiteness exists simply speaking, but only in a certain respect, for whiteness is just for a thing to be white.

[2a] And Furthermore, Aristotle would say that whiteness cannot exist without a substance.

[3a] Furthermore, when it is asked what prevents [a single common concept from applying both to accidents and substances], I say that it cannot be that whiteness is not a being or that it is not something.

[4a] Furthermore, as concerns cognitive power, I say that it does not obtain its unity from the unity of the subject, but rather it would be one even though there were no subject, and therefore there is nothing to the matter at hand concerning that subject.

[5a] It should further be said that the term *being*, simply speaking, is not equivocal, for simply speaking it is not predicated of anything but substantial terms. But if it were predicated of accidental terms, this would be equivocal. And therefore if the term *being* or *to be* is taken simply (i.e. in the first way) in the First Principle, then the First Principle would not on that account be ambiguous. And therefore, the term *being* is used in the First Principle, but rather the *is* of the First Principle is a predicative verb (*tertium adiacens*). And I think that the terms *the same things* (*eadem*) and *the same thing* (*idem*) are, simply speaking, not equivocal—something which will be discussed later on.

[6a] Furthermore, I say that Aristotle does not say ‘substance is a being prior to accident’, but rather he says ‘substance is prior to accident’. Hence Aristotle would not grant simply speaking that an accident is a being, though he would say that with an addition an accident is a being, that is to be a quality or a quantity.

[7a] Furthermore, Aristotle would in no way grant that a man and a whiteness are two beings.

[8a] To the last, Aristotle would allow that every being is a substance.

Now it remains to see how we should respond to the question at hand, taking into account the things which are adopted by faith. Accordingly, I say that we hold by faith [fol. 17rb] that accidents can be separated from substances by the power of God, and preserved independently, without any substance as a subject. Wherefore, we say that in this way, that it subsists in the sacrament of the altar, without a subject. If therefore we posit that a whiteness subsisted in this way without any subject in which it inhered, then it is clear that that whiteness is obviously a being, and it truly is something.

And further, it is clear from this that the concept from which we take the term *whiteness* is just as simple and without any connotation as God or some substantial term is. Thus if we were to predicate a term like *being* or *something* of the term *whiteness*, then it would not have to

be predicated by some attribution to a substance as a subject, or to some substantial term. For that subject, i.e. *whiteness*, is a being, and it is something, and it is no less a thing or something when it inheres in something than when it is removed from any subject. Therefore, the term *being* or the term *something* is just as simply taken in terms of a concept, and just as simply predicated of whiteness, as it is of a stone or a donkey.

Next, it follows that whiteness is not the same as being white, because in the case we're considering in which whiteness is separated from any substance, it is true to say that this is a whiteness, and yet this is not being a white thing, for there is no being a white thing unless something is white, and yet nothing is a white thing by this whiteness.

Then there remains the difficulty of what it is to be a white thing. And some people, wishing to dispense with this difficulty quickly and easily, say that to be a white thing, or for a man to be white, is nothing but a phrase (*oratio*).²⁴ In this way, the phrase 'a man's being white' stands for nothing but 'a man is white'. But this is not well put, although it would be the way these people describe it if we were talking in terms of material supposition. Nevertheless, in terms of significative or personal supposition, the phrases 'to be a white thing' or 'a man's being white' do not stand for a proposition. Instead, they stand for the things or the dispositions of things existing beyond the mind (*ad extra*). And this is clear from the fact that Aristotle says—and rightly so—that to cut is to act, or to burn is to act; or that to be cut or to be burned is to be acted upon. And yet when he says this in *Metaphysics* 7,²⁵ it is also clear that to cut is the same as to be cutting, and to walk is to be walking, and so on for the rest. Therefore, to be cutting is to be acting.

Similarly, we should say that to be white and to be coloured is to be a certain way (*aliquale*). Indeed, there are also quidditative predications and also expressions like 'for a man to be white' and 'for a man to be coloured'. And yet all these would be false if the aforementioned expressions stood for such propositions, because it is clearly false to say that 'a man is white' is the proposition 'a coloured man is coloured' or even that the proposition 'a man is cutting' is the same as the proposition 'a man is acting'. And therefore, there remains the worry about what it is to be white, since being white is not the white thing itself, and neither is it the whiteness itself. But we will deal with this in detail in Book 7.²⁶

And from what's been said, it seems that we will have to grant that the term *being* or the term *something* is predicated univocally [sc. of whiteness], by a common concept, which is completely apart from connotation of terms signifying substances and from terms signifying such accidents. Nor does inherence or dependence pose any obstacle; nor does priority or posteriority in being, since without any such connotation, whiteness is said to be a being, and is understood to be something. Accordingly, the term *being* or *something* is a true univocal genus, with two species: one of these is a term standing without connotation for all substances indifferently, and the other is a term standing for all such accidents without any connotation of a subject. And so straightaway we have to deny what has been said about the equivocity of *being* by Aristotle and Porphyry—which comes as no surprise, since what we are saying now runs contrary [fol. 17va] to Aristotle's opinion, as has been argued. And so it must be granted that the term *substance* is not the most general genus. Rather, the most general genus is that of *what* or *something*.

But then there remain two doubts: first, if accidents can subsist on their own in this way,

²⁴ The *complexe significabilia* of Adam Wodeham, Gregory of Rimini, *et alii*.

²⁵ *Metaphysics* Z(7).1, 1028a19-24.

²⁶ *QM* 7.6.

then how can we establish the difference between accidents and substances? Second, there is a doubt whether there is one most general genus, or whether the ten categories will be most general.

To the first of these doubts, I say that Aristotle said that whiteness is indeed a substance if it can subsist on its own like this, and it will be this thing, for if it is asked what this thing is, no response can rightly be given except to say that this thing is whiteness. But otherwise we can say that everything is a substance which *naturally* subsists on its own, so that it does not inhere in something else. And every thing is a substance which is part of such a nature which subsists on its own. And everything is an accident which does not subsist on its own naturally, and is not a part of subsistence per se, even though it could subsist on its own by divine intervention. And thus whiteness, although it may subsist on its own, should not be called a substance, because it does not subsist in this way naturally, but only miraculously.

To the second doubt, I say that the ten categories or the ten most general genera should still be posited, since concrete accidental terms are connotative. And therefore, these terms are predicated of the term *something* denominatively, as an accident (*passio*) of a subject. And indeed, if the term *something* is predicated of these terms, e.g. ‘a white thing is something’ or ‘a quality or a quantity is something’, these predications are still denominative and indirect, akin to ‘a thing-capable-of-laughter is a human’ or ‘a thing-capable-of-laughter is an animal’. And such predication is not a predication of a genus of a species, but a predication of a property (*passio*) of a subject, or vice versa. Therefore, the terms *quantity* and *quality* do not have a genus higher than them, but are most general.

Note also that, according to Aristotle (and as accords with the truth of the matter), the categories should be distinguished from each other by the many ways of predication of first substances, or of singular terms contained under the genus *what* or *something*. If it is predicated of these in what only pertains to the first category, and if it is predicated of these in respect to what quality (*quale*) they pertain to the first category (if for example we were to ask ‘what quality (*quale*) is this?’), the response will be that it is white, or sweet, or coloured. Therefore, these terms belong to the category of Quality.

And if they are predicated in terms of quantity, then they belong to another category; and if they are predicated in terms of location, they belong to another category as well, and so on for the other modes of predication. But in this manner of speaking, it is clear that abstract terms and their concrete counterparts are not always reduced to one and the same category. Rather, terms like *whiteness* and *sweetness* belong to the genus of *what* or of *something*, and the terms *white* and *sweet* belong to the category of Quality. And because this is not a customary way of speaking—even if there’s nothing wrong with it—you can otherwise distinguish categories, namely concerning concrete terms and different modes of predicating these of first substances.

And again, this is how the ten categories are related—namely *what*, *what quality*, *what quantity*, etc.—by reducing abstract terms to concrete categories or genera. In this way, we state that the terms *white* and *whiteness* pertain to the same genus or to the same category. For this is how we commonly speak.

Nevertheless, Aristotle certainly speaks differently in *Topics* 4, where he multiplies the most general genera significantly.²⁷ For just as to cut is to act, so too one cutting is one action, and something cut is something acted [i.e. something done], and cutting and acting are predications of the genera of species. But the term *cutting* is the genus of the term *cutting* or *cut*. Indeed the term *action* is the genus of the term *cutting*, and *one who is acting* is the genus of the

²⁷ *Topics* 4.2, 121b24-122a31.

term *one who is cutting*, and likewise *something acted* [i.e. done] is the genus of *something cut*. Thus *action*, *one who is acting*, and *something done* are different most general genera. And in this way, *quality*, *what quality* and *qualitative* are different general genera. But in spite of all this, there are only ten categories in the list, because such derivations [fol.17vb] are reduced to the principle from which they derive.

[1-8] Following these things which have been said, I grant all the objections which were raised at the outset of the question, and deny the authoritative arguments in favor of the contrary.

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