

THOMAS AQUINAS ON ESTABLISHING THE IDENTITY
OF ARISTOTLE'S *CATEGORIES* — no italics

Paul Symington

Providing a philosophical justification for the specific number and identity of Aristotle's categories is a task that dates back at least to Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* (ca. 6th century A.D.).¹ Scholastics from the thirteenth century onward addressed this issue, which they called *sufficientia praedicamentorum*, mostly in commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*.² Two related questions were pertinent. The first asked whether Aristotle provided an adequate list of categories and the second asked whether a philosophical justification could be given for the specific items on the list.³ Although the latter task predates Albertus Magnus (ca. 1208–80), he is credited as being the first scholastic to attempt it.⁴ Albertus established a method of arriving at a list of the

¹ For a recent translation of Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, see *Simplicius: On Aristotle's Categories 1–4*, trans. Michael Chase (Ithaca, 2003). See esp. pp. 74–91.

² Robert Andrews identifies other texts that offered opportunity for medieval commentators to address the topic of the *sufficientia*, such as Aristotle's *Metaphysics* V, *Physics* III, and *Topics* I, in "Question Commentaries on the *Categories* in the Thirteenth Century," *Medioevo* 26 (2001), 292. Although Aquinas may be the first scholastic to refer to Simplicius, he does not seem to be familiar with Simplicius's justification of the number and identity of the categories. However, Radulphus Brito shows familiarity with Simplicius's treatment. See William E. McMahon, "Radulphus Brito on the Sufficiency of the *Categories*," *Cahiers de l'institut du moyen-âge grec et latin* 39 (1981), 86. For a topical discussion of the various philosophical questions generated around Aristotle's *Categories*, see Jorge J. E. Gracia and Lloyd Newton, "Medieval Theories of *Categories*," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 14 April 2006, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/medieval-Categories>> (8 August 2006).

³ See Giorgio Pini, "Scotus on Deducing Aristotle's Categories," *La tradition médiévale des Catégories (XII^e–XIV^e siècles): XIII^e Symposium européen de logique et de sémantique médiévales*, eds. Joël Biard and Irène Rosier-Catach (Louvain, 2003), p. 24.

⁴ Albertus Magnus, *Liber de Praedicamentis* 7.1, *Alberti Magni Opera omnia*, 1, ed. A. Borgnet (Paris, 1890), pp. 270–72. For a discussion of Albertus Magnus on the categories, see William E. McMahon, "Albert the Great on the Semantics of the Categories of Substance, Quantity, and Quality," *Historiographia Linguistica* 7, 1/2 (1980), 145–57 and E. P. Bos and A. C. van der Helm, "The Division of Being over the Categories According to Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus," in *John Duns Scotus: Renewal of Philosophy: Acts of the Third Symposium Organized by the Dutch Society for Medieval Philosophy Medium Aevum (May 23 and 24, 1996)*, ed. E. P. Bos, (ELEMENTA: Schriften zur Philosophie und ihrer Problemgeschichte) 72 (Amsterdam, 1998), pp. 183–96.

categories from the modes of predication. Thomas Aquinas followed Albertus's lead and tried to establish an exhaustive categorial division of being by showing that there are only so many ways in which predicates are said of subjects.⁵ Although Aquinas never wrote a commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, he provided two closely related justifications for the list of categories (*praedicamenta*) in his commentaries on the *Metaphysics* (Book V, lect. 9) and the *Physics* (Book III, lect. 3).⁶ Moreover, Aquinas's account was historically more influential than Albert's, even though Aquinas's discussions of the topic are relatively brief.

Although the division of the categories is metaphysically fundamental and interesting, as well as hotly debated among scholastics, the secondary literature on Aquinas's contribution to the problem of *sufficientia praedicamentorum* is scant. In fact, not only is the literature devoted specifically to it meager, but the discussion is often altogether ignored in broad discussions of Aquinas's metaphysics.⁷ This is not surprising given Aquinas's brief and elliptical treatment of it. The issue, however, has not escaped the attention of a few scholars, including John Wippel, who has provided the most detailed treatment of Aquinas's view to date.

The purpose of this article is to offer an alternative interpretation of Aquinas's view. The key passage is his statement that "those things that are said to be *secundum se* ^{that} which signify in every manner the figures of predication [i.e., the modes of predication]."⁸ I argue that this passage is crucial to a proper understanding of Aquinas's derivation

⁵ In "Categories in Aristotle," Michael Frede interprets the Aristotelian categories as kinds of predications rather than kinds of predicates. In *Studies in Aristotle*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara (Washington, D.C., 1981), pp. 1–24. He also claims that in Aristotle's works there is not "any sign of a systematical derivation of the categories, e.g., in terms of a set of formal features" (p. 22). In contrast, Aquinas holds 1) that the categories (*praedicamenta*) are substance and nine accidents, and 2) the list of categories can be established according to formal features of propositions (namely, the modes of predication or *figuras praedicationis*).

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, eds. M. R. Cathala and R. M. Spiazzi (Turin, 1950); hereafter cited as '*In Met.*' Through the chapter, I either provide my own translations of the text or modifications of John P. Rowan's translation, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics: St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, 1995). Thomas Aquinas, *In octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis expositio*, ed. P. M. Maggiolo (Turin, 1954); hereafter cited as '*In Phys.*'

⁷ See, for example, Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas (The Arguments of the Philosophers)*, (New York, 2005) and Robert Pasnau and Christopher Shields, *The Philosophy of Aquinas* (Boulder, 2004). Etienne Gilson also does not mention it in *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto, 1952), p. 55.

⁸ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 889: "quod illa dicuntur esse *secundum se*, quaecumque significant figuras praedicationis." For the passage of Aristotle to which Aquinas refers, see *Metaphysics* 5.7.

no italics

of the categories and that Wippel's account does not adequately take it into consideration. This passage indicates a key feature of Aquinas's approach: that the categories are identified and distinguished from each other based on essential propositions, i.e., *secundum se* or *per se* propositions, which have predicates that are essentially related to their subjects. Consequently, in the first section of this chapter, I present Wippel's interpretation of what Aquinas means by *secundum se* as it relates to the modes of predication and I point out some difficulties with it.⁹ To be more precise, problems arise with Wippel's interpretation because he does not take into account Aquinas's focus on *per se* modes of predication. In the second section of this chapter, I offer an interpretation of what Aquinas means by *secundum se* when he describes the modes of predication from which the categories are established. Specifically, I interpret *secundum se* to refer to three of the four *per se* modes of predication as they are discussed in the *Posterior Analytics*: *primo modo*, *secundo modo*, and *quarto modo per se* predication.¹⁰ My claim is that Aquinas determines the number of categories by reflecting on the ways in which the predicates of *per se* propositions are related to the subjects of other such *per se* propositions. Finally, in the third section I show how Aquinas establishes the categories from the modes of *per se* predication. For the sake of brevity, I focus mainly on substance, quantity, and quality and provide only a sketch of how Aquinas deals with the remaining categories.

⁹ John F. Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas's Derivation of the Aristotelian Categories (Predicaments)," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25 (1987), 13-34 and *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C., 2000), pp. 208-28. Other scholars with similar interpretations of Aquinas's view are Giorgio Pini, "Scotus on Deducing Aristotle's Categories," and E. P. Bos and A. C. van der Helm, "The Division of Being over the Categories According to Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus."

¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio Libri Posteriorum, Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia*, Leonine edition (Rome, 1989), 1.2; hereafter cited as '*Post. An.*' The fact that the commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* is believed to have been written roughly at the same time as the commentary on the *Metaphysics* (between 1269-72) makes it pertinent for our discussion. See *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (New York, 1993), p. 283. In addition, both texts discuss modes of predication. Also, although these three modes of predication are awkwardly named (I refer to three modes of predication but there is no *tertio modo*), I follow the convention in the secondary literature of naming each specific mode according to the Latin ordinal used in the text. See William M. Walton, "The Second Mode of Necessary or *Per Se* Propositions According to St. Thomas Aquinas," *The Modern Schoolman* 29 (1951-52), 293-306. Aquinas identifies *tertio modo* in *Post. An.* 1.10 as not a mode of predication but rather one way to understand the term '*per.*'

For a similar interpretation of *secundum se*, see Ralph McInerny, "Being and Predication," in Being and Predication: Thomistic Interpretations his (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), pp. 173-228.

I. *John Wippel's Interpretation*

In this section I focus exclusively on Wippel's interpretation of Aquinas's derivation as it is presented in his commentary on the *Metaphysics* V, 9, focusing specifically on Wippel's understanding of Aquinas's statement that "those things are said to be *secundum se* that signify in every manner the modes of predication."¹¹ I also criticize Wippel's interpretation insofar as it is neither sufficient for establishing the number and identity of the categories from modes of predication, as Aquinas claims, nor compatible with the general context of Aquinas's discussion. To be fair to Wippel, however, it should be noted that he offers an accurate overview of the text in which Aquinas establishes the list of categories. He notes that Aquinas identifies three ways in which a predicate can be related to its subject in a proposition. In the first way, (1) "the predicate is really identical with that which serves as the subject,"¹² and these propositions signify substance. The example that Wippel provides to illustrate this is "Socrates is an animal." In a second way, (2) "a predicate may be taken from something which is in the subject."¹³ If the predicate is absolutely in the subject and follows from the matter (2a), then the category of quantity results, but if it follows from the form (2b) of the subject, then the category of quality results. Wippel does not give examples of, nor discuss how, a predicate is understood to be in a subject either according to the matter of the subject or according to its form. It is possible that he would say that "Socrates is five-feet tall" and "Socrates is bald" are examples in which the predicate is said to be in the subject because the former signifies how much the subject is and the latter how the subject is. If, however, the predicate is taken not absolutely but in relation to something other than the subject (2c), then relation is expressed. Although Wippel does not provide an example, he might say that "Socrates is the teacher of Plato" is an example of this.

In a third way, (3) "a predicate may be derived from something which is realized outside the subject."¹⁴ Again, Wippel provides no examples to illustrate this, nor does he discuss how a predicate is understood to be realized outside the subject. Rather, he simply claims that the various

¹¹ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 889.

¹² Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 213.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

no italics

ways in which the predicate is denominated by that which is realized outside the subject yield the remaining categories. For example, if the predicate in any way measures the subject (3a–c), in combination with other conditions, then the categories of place (e.g., “Socrates is in the marketplace”), time (e.g., “The play is at dusk”) and position (e.g., “Socrates is sitting”) result. If the predicate does not measure the subject (3d), then habit (e.g., “Socrates is shod”) results. The last two categories, action (e.g., “Socrates is cutting”) and passion (e.g., “The paper is being cut”) are signified by those predicates that are only “partly present in the subject (3e–f).”¹⁵

Wippel cites an earlier passage in which Aquinas states that “those things are said to be *secundum se* that signify in every manner the modes of predication.”¹⁶ He notes that “Thomas begins [the derivation] with the observation that according to Aristotle those things are said to be in the proper sense (*secundum se* rather than only *per accidens*) which signify different figures of predication [i.e., modes of predication].”¹⁷ However, Wippel does not expand any further on this passage, leaving us with three questions. First, what does he take ‘figures of predication’ to mean? Second, what is the antecedent to ‘those things,’ i.e., to what do ‘those things’ refer? Do they refer to “predicates,” “subjects,” “the various significations of the copula,” “propositions,” or something else? Third, what does it mean for something to be said to be *secundum se* (‘in a proper sense’) and how is this different from that which is said to be *per accidens*? I will address each question in turn.

Figures of Predication

In discussing the meaning of ‘figures of predication,’ Wippel refers to both ‘modes of predicating’ (*modus praedicandi*) and ‘modes of predication’ (*modus praedicationis*). Wippel does not distinguish between these two terms and seems to use them interchangeably.¹⁸ He simply says that the categories are distinguished according to different modes or ways of predicating.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 215.

¹⁶ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 889.

¹⁷ Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, p. 212.

¹⁸ In keeping with Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s general theory of psychology, I take it that a ‘proposition’ is the object of the second act of the intellect, and that ‘predicating’ is the activity itself. Thus, ‘predication’ would be the abstract form of ‘predicating’.

Of those names which are predicated, continues Thomas, some signify what something is, that is to say, substance. Some signify how it is (quality), and others how much there is (quantity), and so on. Therefore, in accord with each of these supreme modes of predicating, *esse* must signify the same thing, i.e., what something is, or what kind it is, or how much there is, etc. For instance when we say that man is an animal, the term 'is' signifies substance. When we say a man is white, the verb 'is' signifies quality.¹⁹

In this passage, Wippel identifies “modes of predicating” as the basic ways in which a predicate says something of its subject and he points out that each category is distinguished according to a different mode of predicating. A predicate that expresses what the subject is signifies substance, one that expresses how the subject is expresses quality, etc. For example, since both “Socrates is an animal” and “Bucephalus is a horse” have predicates that say what the subject is, the *esse* of each proposition must signify substance. Likewise, “Socrates is white” and “Socrates is bald” signify quality because they have predicates that show how the subject is. To put it another way, “white” and “bald” are answers to the question “How is Socrates?” Thus, two propositions that have predicates that relate to their subjects in the same way (e.g., both propositions have predicates that signify what the subject is) signify the same category. When Wippel refers to the signification of *esse*, he means the copula ‘is’ in a proposition. In a simple subject-predicate proposition the copula functions to unify the subject and predicate together in a single signification, so that a proposition as a whole can signify a substance or accident according to the sense of the predicate. For example, the proposition “Socrates is an animal” signifies substance, and “Socrates is white” signifies an accident (viz., quality).

The Antecedent of ‘those things’

This understanding of what Wippel means by ‘modes of predication’ or ‘modes of predicating’ helps us to understand the second question posed above concerning how Wippel understands ‘those things’ in Aquinas’s statement that “those things are said to be *secundum se* that signify in every manner the modes of predication.”²⁰ Although Wippel does not identify the antecedent of ‘those things’, his brief treatment

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 889.

no italics

of the issue seems to suggest that the modes of predication are the various ways in which predicates are related to subjects. Therefore, it would seem that Wippel understands 'those things' (*illa*) to mean the modes of predication that he identifies, such as "what the subject is," "how the subject is," "how much the subject is," etc. However, if this were the case, Aquinas's passage would have the following interpretation: the specific modes of predication are said to be *secundum se* that signify in every manner the modes of predication (and the categories are established from them). That is, the modes of predication that Wippel identifies 1) are the modes of predication that are said to be in a proper sense and 2) are the modes of predication from which the categories are derived.

no italics
okay

"Secundum se"

This interpretation in turn provides us with an answer to the question concerning what it means for modes of predication to be said '*secundum se*.' Wippel points out that *secundum se* is opposed to *per accidens* and translates the former as "in a proper sense." Thus, it would be reasonable to infer from this that *per accidens* in this context may be translated as "in an improper sense." Consequently, in the passage in question, "in a proper sense" qualifies "modes of predication" in that only propositions that have predicates that are related to their subjects according to one of the ten supreme modes of predication are '*secundum se*.' For example, a proposition that is *secundum se* is one in which the predicate says what the subject is or is one in which the predicate says how the subject is, etc. Also, those propositions that have predicates that are not related to their subjects according to one of these ways are *secundum accidens*. This indicates how, for Wippel, categories are distinguished according to modes of predication. "Socrates is a man," "Bucephalus is a horse," and "A man is rational," signify substance because they have predicates that show what their subjects are and "Socrates is white" signifies quality because the predicate says how the subject is.

Now let me turn to some problems with Wippel's understanding of Aquinas's view. First, Wippel seems to present two independent ways of "distinguishing" or "deriving" the categories.²¹ This could be called 'the

²¹ It may be controversial to interpret Wippel as equating the terms 'deriving' and 'distinguishing.' However, there are several reasons why I believe he does so. 1) He

problem of two derivations.’ On one hand, he says that the categories “are distinguished according to the different modes or ways of predicating,”²² and then identifies the mode of predication specific to each category. For example, propositions with predicates that express what the subject is signify substance (e.g., “man is an animal”) and propositions that express how the subject is signify quality (e.g., “Socrates is bald.”). On the other hand, he presents the “derivation” of the categories from propositions that express a relationship between the subject and predicate according to three ways: “In one way, the predicate is really identical with that which serves as the subject;”²³ “in a second way, a predicate may be taken from something which is in the subject;”²⁴ and “in a third major way, a predicate may be derived from something which is realized outside the subject.”²⁵ Thus, it appears that he has a problem of two derivations. That is, he seems to have two accounts for how the list of categories is established. This problem arises because there is no discernable relation between the so-called ten supreme modes of predication and the three ways in which a predicate is related to its subject. This is problematic because Aquinas only presents one way of establishing the categories in the text. Wipfel does not discuss how the modes of predicating that show how the subject is or how much the subject is are related to that in which the predicate is taken from something in the subject. That is, if “Socrates is white” distinguishes the category of quality because it shows how the subject is, what is the significance of Aquinas saying that “white” as understood in the

the semicolon should be outside of the quotations?

never defines ‘derivation’ but he does use both terms in very similar contexts: “Thomas would have us appeal . . . to diversity in modes of predication in order to render explicit the distinction between substance and accident in general, and also to derive the nine supreme classes of accidents” (p. 211). It would make sense to say that just as substance is distinguished from accident, so to the nine categories are distinguished from each other as well. 2) Aquinas never uses a term that corresponds to Wipfel’s term ‘derivation.’ Rather, Aquinas uses terms such as *distinguuntur* and *dividitur* to discuss the so-called derivation of the categories. Thus, when Wipfel uses the term ‘distinguish’ in the context of the categories it is reasonable to hold that he uses it interchangeably with the term ‘derive.’ 3) He states that the categories “are distinguished according to different modes or ways of predicating” (p. 212) and immediately after identifying these modes of predicating through which the categories are distinguished he proceeds directly to discuss the derivation of the categories. It is difficult to understand how the categories are distinguished and derived from the modes of predication if ‘distinguished’ and ‘derived’ do not have the same meaning.

(to) should be 'too' →

²² Ibid., p. 212.

²³ Ibid., 213.

²⁴ Ibid., 214.

²⁵ Ibid.

no italics

subject "Socrates" according to the form of the subject is a way of distinguishing the category of quality from other categories? Indeed, it appears that the first account presented by Wippel obviates the need for the second one.

A second problem with Wippel's interpretation specifically pertains to the way that Aquinas establishes the category of substance. Wippel suggests that substance is "derived" when a predicate is "really identified" with the subject.²⁶ But it seems that this is the same as the mode of predication in which the predicate says what the subject is. For example, in "Socrates is an animal," "Socrates" is really identified with "animal" and "animal" says what the subject "Socrates" is. Given these factors, according to Wippel, the proposition signifies substance. This is in contrast to "Socrates is white," which does not signify substance because the predicate is neither identified with the subject nor does it show what the subject is.

However, not only is the condition in which the predicate is really identified with the subject not mentioned by Aquinas, but it is also insufficient for establishing the category of substance. For it cannot be used to distinguish propositions signifying substance from propositions that do not. This is because there are propositions that have predicates that are identified with their subject and yet do not signify substance. Consider the following examples: "White is a color," "A surface is a continuous quantity," or "This patch of color is red." In these propositions the predicate is identified with the subject and shows what the subject is. "White" is really identified with "color" in the sense that white really is a color. Also, a particular patch of color that is red is such that "red" is identified with that patch of color. But none of these propositions directly signifies substance. Thus Wippel's suggestion is not sufficient for establishing the category of substance. This is a problem because Aquinas's procedure aims to distinguish propositions from each other that signify different categories from a consideration of the way in which predicates are related to subjects.²⁷ The fact that Wippel's interpretation does not take this into account leads one to infer that he has misinterpreted Aquinas's position.

'signifies'
should
be 'signify'

²⁶ Ibid., p. 213. All Aquinas says is that in one way a "predicate states what the subject is, as when I say Socrates is an animal." *In Met.* 5.9, n. 891.

²⁷ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 890: "Et propter hoc ea in quae dividitur ens primo, dicuntur esse praedicamenta, quia distinguuntur secundum diversum modum praedicandi."

Third, Wippel does not offer an interpretation of how Aquinas establishes the categories that is consistent with the overall meaning of the text. As a consequence, Wippel's interpretation fails to show how all ten categories are said to be *entia secundum se*, which is a fundamental claim of Aquinas in the text. In lect. 9, Aquinas is commenting on Aristotle's text in which he discusses the various ways that being is said.²⁸ The text is divided into the following distinct sections. 1) In n. 885, Aquinas provides an overarching division in which being is said (*ens dicitur*) either *secundum se* or *secundum accidens*.²⁹ Furthermore, it is important to note that in this section Aquinas says that these two ways that being is said are not the same as the division of being into substance and accident.³⁰ Rather, he says that the division of being *secundum se* and *secundum accidens* "is understood according to whether something is predicated of something else either essentially [*per se*] or accidentally [*per accidens*]."³¹ 2) Next, in nn. 886–88, Aquinas subdivides the latter division and discusses the nature of being that is said accidentally (*secundum accidens*); namely, that which is predicated accidentally. "A man is musical" and "Socrates is white" are beings that are said *secundum accidens* because they predicate accidents of substances and their predicates are not essentially predicated of their subjects.³² 3) Finally, in nn. 889–94, Thomas turns to the former division and discusses that which is said to be *secundum se*. It is in this context that he states that "those things that are said to be *secundum se* in every manner signify the modes of predication"³³ and it is in this context that he establishes the list of categories (n. 892).

An understanding of how the text is divided and how the so-called derivation text fits into it reveals some significant problems with Wippel's interpretation. On the one hand, Wippel states that the mode of predication that reveals the category of quality is that in which the predicate shows how the subject is. Therefore, since "Socrates is white" and "Socrates is musical" are propositions that have predicates that show how the subject is, they must signify the category of quality. On

²⁸ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 885: "Hic Philosophus distinguit quot modis dicitur ens."

²⁹ *Ibid.*: "ens dicitur quoddam secundum se, et quoddam secundum accidens."

³⁰ *Ibid.*: "Sciendum tamen est quod illa divisio entis non est eadem cum illa divisione qua dividitur ens in substantiam et accidens."

³¹ *Ibid.*: "Unde patet quod divisio entis secundum se et secundum accidens, attenditur secundum quod aliquid praedicatur de aliquo per se vel per accidens."

³² *Ibid.*, n. 886: "Ostendit quot modis dicitur ens per accidens... cum accidens praedicatur de subiecto, ut cum dicitur, homo est musicus."

³³ *Ibid.*, n. 889.

no italics

the other hand, Aquinas states that being "*secundum se* is divided into the ten categories, of which nine are accidental kinds"³⁴ and being *secundum se* refers to essential predication. However, both "Socrates is white" and "Socrates is musical" are said *secundum accidens*. Therefore, since propositions that have predicates that say how the subject is have predicates that are predicated accidentally (*secundum accidens*), this cannot be the mode of predication from which quality is established. Rather, the mode of predication from which all the categories are derived must be related to essential predication.³⁵

Finally, I question Wippel's overall understanding of Aquinas's approach to establishing the categories. I disagree with Wippel's suggestion that Aquinas's text provides a way to discover the categories, if by 'discover' Wippel means that the technique for distinguishing the categories is in itself a way of determining the meaning of each of the categories. That is, since the term 'discover' has the connotation of "being made known," the suggestion that through the technique presented by Aquinas one discovers definitions or characteristics of specific categories is misguided. Rather than discovering the categories, Aquinas's technique merely distinguishes or divides propositions that signify different categories according to the logical properties of propositions. Wippel seems to hold that for Aquinas "Socrates is human" is a way of understanding the meaning of substance signified by the proposition because the predicate says what the subject is. In contrast, I

³⁴ Ibid., n. 885: "Quod ex hoc patet, quia ipse postmodum, ens secundum se dividit in decem praedicamenta, quorum novem sunt de genere accidentis."

³⁵ Pini follows Wippel in his interpretation in "Scotus on Deducing Aristotle's Categories," p. 26: in "the predication 'man is white', 'is' signifies a quality, and so on. Since there are ten kinds of predicate—something Aquinas demonstrated too... there are ten different meanings of the verb 'to be'.... Hence, since predicates are classified into ten genera according to what they signify, he could conclude that there are ten genera of being." Earlier in the text Pini states that "Since a predicate can be attributed to its subject in ten different ways, he could conclude that there were ten different modes of being" (pp. 25, 26). The same criticism applies to Pini's interpretation: although Aquinas holds that the 'is' in the proposition "Socrates is white" expresses a metaphysical accident, such a proposition cannot be used to deduce the category of quality. This is similar to the interpretation given by Bos and van der Helm in "The Division of Being over the Categories," pp. 187–89. Two other treatments of Aquinas's on the *sufficientia praedicamentorum* are of note. They follow a similar line of interpretation as Wippel: M. Marina Scheu in *The Categories of Being in Aristotle and St. Thomas* (Washington D.C., 1944), pp. 60–6; and Stanislas Breton, "La déduction thomiste des catégories," *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 60 (1962), 5–32. Scheu stresses Aquinas's logical approach in deriving the modes of being (p. 63). However, Scheu treatment is brief and does not expand on the various modes of predication.

hold that Aquinas identifies “Socrates is human” as signifying substance in the following way: 1) every proposition that has a given logical form signifies substance (what this logical form specifically is will be discussed in the third section); 2) “Socrates is human” has that given logical form; 3) therefore, “Socrates is human” signifies substance. Aquinas does not provide a way of discovering what propositions signifying categories mean (e.g., that “Socrates is human” signifies substance, which means “what the subject is”) but rather a way of distinguishing propositions from each other in a way that parallels the categorial division of being. In support of this, Aquinas states that “that into which being is first divided (*dividitur*) are called categories because they are distinguished (*distinguuntur*) according to different modes of predicating.”³⁶ In addition to this, I contend that Aquinas emphatically does not establish the division of being into the categories by identifying the ten supreme modes of predicating (“what the subject is,” “how the subject is,” etc.) but rather establishes the categories through the three ways that predicates may be related to their subjects.

~~italics~~ ~~not italics ok~~

II. Per se Predication and the Identity of the Categories

The starting point for my interpretation of the way that Aquinas establishes the categories is based on the passage in which he says that being said *secundum se* and *secundum accidens* “is understood according to whether something is predicated of something else either essentially [*per se*] or accidentally [*per accidens*].”³⁷ I claim that the categories are established through the modes of *per se* (i.e., essential) predication.³⁸ In this section I develop some points crucial to understanding Aquinas’s procedure for establishing the categories from *per se* modes of predication; namely, that a successful way to establish the categories is by identifying differences in the predicational structure of *per se* propositions.³⁹ Next, I

³⁶ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 890. My emphasis.

³⁷ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 885. Later in his commentary (n. 1054), Aquinas specifically identifies the various meanings of ‘*secundum se*’ with the various meanings of ‘*per se*’ predication as it is found in the *Posterior Analytics*.

³⁸ For a discussion of the various senses of *modus* in Aquinas, especially as it plays a role in his metaphysics, see John Tomarchio, “Aquinas’s Division of Being According to Modes of Existing,” *Review of Metaphysics* 54, 3 (2001), 585–613.

³⁹ For the difference between *per se* propositions and *per se* predication, see fn. 18 above.

introduce the various *per se* modes of predication—namely, *primo modo*, *secundo modo* and *quarto modo per se*—and distinguish them from the *per accidens* modes. Each mode of predication indicates how a predicate is related to its subject. Furthermore, I show that each *per se* mode of predication satisfies the two criteria of *per se* predication; viz.: 1) the predicate is predicated universally of the subject and 2) the subject, or something possessed by the subject, is the cause of the predicate. This provides a foundation for the third section of this chapter (III) in which I discuss how Aquinas establishes the various categories from *per se* modes of predication.⁴⁰

As previously mentioned, Aquinas's derivation of the categories that I am focusing on is found in the fifth chapter of his commentary on the *Metaphysics*. In order to understand Aquinas properly, however, one must consider the larger context of the passage. The general issue that Aquinas addresses in this section of his commentary concerns the various significations of 'being'; that is, the basic senses of the term.⁴¹ He begins by noting that for Aristotle the term *ens* signifies either *ens per se* or *ens per accidens*.⁴² This is the division of being into substance (*per se*) and accidents (*per accidens*). However, Aquinas makes another distinction of *ens* into being that is said *secundum se* and *secundum accidens*.⁴³ This latter division of being refers to the various senses of the copula ('is') in a proposition. Because the copula of a proposition is a kind of being ('is' is a cognate of 'being'), being that is said *secundum se* refers to propositions in which the predicate is essentially or *per se* predicated of its subject.

There are two important features of the copula. First, it signifies what the predicate and subject taken together signify.⁴³ For example, the copula of "Socrates is an animal" signifies Socrates-the-animal (the specific unified extramental being). Second, the copula is classified or characterized according to the way in which the predicate of a proposition

⁴⁰ The textual basis for my interpretation is mainly the *Commentary on the Metaphysics* V, 9. Due to its similarity with the passage in *Physics* III, 5, I use the latter parallel text only for purposes of amplification.

⁴¹ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 885.

⁴² Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.7 (1017a8).

⁴³ See: Gyula Klima, "Aquinas' Theory of the Copula," *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy* 5 (2002) and "The Semantic Principles Underlying Saint Thomas Aquinas's of Being," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5 (1996), 87–141; Pini, "Scotus on Assertion and the Copula: A Comparison with Aquinas," in *Medieval Theories on Assertive and Non-Assertive Language. Acts of the 14th European Symposium on Medieval Logic and Semantics, Rome, June 11–15, 2002*, eds. A. Maierù and L. Valente (Firenze, 2004), 307–31.

no italics

that which is said

is related to its subject. For example, the copula in “Socrates is an animal” is an *ens secundum se* because the proposition has a predicate that is essentially related to its subject. The reason why the copula can be characterized in this way is because it has the specific function of relating the predicate to the subject in a proposition. The ways in which the copula relates the predicate to the subject can be characterized in different ways. An understanding of the two features of the copula helps us to interpret Aquinas’s statement that Aristotle “divides being *secundum se* into the ten categories, of which nine are accidents.”⁴⁴ By this, Aquinas means that even though the nine accidents of being are *per accidens*, they are *entia secundum se* in the sense that they can be signified by propositions that have *secundum se* copulas; ~~copulas are *secundum se* when they express an essential relation between subject and predicate.~~

That is, all ten categories can be signified by being that is said *secundum se* because any proposition in which an essential predication occurs has a copula that signifies any one of the ten categories, including any of the nine accidental categories. For example, “White is a color” has a copula that is both *secundum se* and signifies the category of quality (which is an *ens per accidens*), whereas “Socrates is white” is a proposition that has a copula that signifies a *per accidens* being and is itself *secundum accidens*. Similarly, “Socrates is an animal” has a copula that is *secundum se* and signifies a *per se* being (substance). Although a substance is an *ens per se* and accidents are *ens per accidens*, both substance and accidents can be signified by propositions with copulas that are *entia secundum se*. To simplify matters, instead of referring to a proposition’s copula, I will use the phrase ‘a *per se* predication’ or ‘a *per se* proposition’ to refer to a proposition in which the predicate is essentially related to its subject.⁴⁵

When Aquinas states that those things that are said *secundum se* signify the figures of predication [i.e., modes of predication], he means that *per se* propositions or predications provide an understanding from which the categories are established. When this interpretation of *secundum se* (meaning “*per se* predication”) is coupled with Aquinas’s statement that “being must be narrowed down (*contrahitur*) to diverse kinds (viz., categories) according to a different mode of predication [from that of genus and species] because being is said in as many ways as the ways

⁴⁴ *In Met.* 5.9, n. 885.

⁴⁵ Following Wippel, I will use these two terms interchangeably.