# The Theory of Predication in Aquinas: Inherence or Identity?

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*Abstract*: The paper deals with Thomas Aquinas's (1225–1274) theory of predication. Aquinas's numerous works contain passages devoted to the issue of how predication works, usually in various theological or philosophical contexts. Assuming Aquinas's account of predication was sufficiently uniform in relation to essential and accidental predications, there are several distinct interpretative models of predication possible in relation to the texts. They differ in ascribing different semantic roles to the copula. The first model sees the copula as expressing inherence of a form expressed by the predicate term in the entity denoted by the subject term. The second model interprets the copula as designating identity. The third model incorporates inherence with the fact that Aquinas combines predicative and existential functions of the copula. I argue that the identity model is closest to what Aquinas has in mind when speaking about predication as opposed to extensional truth conditions.

*Keywords*: Copula; identity; predication; Thomas Aquinas; inherence.

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The thought of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), a well-known medieval philosopher and theologian, is still taught and discussed today in analytic philosophy of religion in relation to the solution to the problem of the language concerning the divine, proofs of God's existence, as well as divine attributes such as simplicity and aseity. The corresponding semantic and metaphysical theories presuppose a peculiar understanding of predication without which Aquinas's responses to these issues are not fully comprehensible. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to reconstruct a theory of singular predication found in the work of Aquinas.

This task is by no means new. It has been tried repeatedly, with varying degrees of success.[1] The problem one soon encounters in attempting to carry this task out consists in the realization that there seem to be different models of predication in Aquinas, each of which is supported by textual evidence. The model closest to contemporary logical and semantic sensibilities interprets predication as inherence of a form or nature within some supposit, i.e., in a particular thing. Another model is that of identity: the subject and predicate terms both denote the supposit, though each employs a distinct sense, so that the predication as such is a statement of numerical identity. These two models differ in several ways but particularly in that the job achieved by predication in the inherence model is, in the identity model, compressed into the semantics of terms, i.e., it is part of the semantic role of the predicate.

There are two observations one can make concerning these models. First, they can be combined, as is the case in the reconstruction of Aquinas's predication in J. Brower's recent book (Brower 2014). Second, both models are extensional in the sense that the subject and predicate denote entities in the real world. In contrast, the theory that the Thomists derive from Thomas Aquinas is hybrid, in that real and intentional entities are denoted by the terms: While the subject denotes a supposit, a real entity in the world, the predicate denotes a concept, or, more precisely, a part of a concept which is the conceptual content. The associated model of predication is that of a statement of a part-whole relationship, more precisely, a partial

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[1]    For a general comparison of Aristotelian and modern theories of predication see Angelelli (2004). For specific reconstructions of Aquinas's theory, see papers in the references below.

identification of the conceptual content with the supposit. Third, there is the fact that, aside from the relationship of inherence, numerical identity, or the part-whole relationship, the copula also expresses existence, according to Aquinas. This gives rise to some interesting theoretical models of predication, as in the model in G. Klima's work. In the following, we shall go through these models, concentrating on inherence and identity first, then taking up the other three models (though we will, admittedly, discuss Klima's theory only in passing), gathering textual support for each of them.

We shall focus only on singular predication of the type Fa, as expressed in predicate logic, e.g., "Socrates is white" and "Socrates is human." Theory of predication, or, one should say, the semantic theory of predication, or, semantics of predication, in short, in the realist framework concentrates on stating ontological truth conditions of singular statements. In general, there are two kinds of ontologies: constituent and relational. Constituent ontologies can be divided into substratum theories and bundle theories. The former take an individual to consist of properties plus some substratum of these, whereas the latter understand an individual as consisting of properties only, or a bundle thereof, so to speak. A typical representative of a substratum theory in contemporary analytic metaphysics is bare particularism. The substratum is a bare particular grounding numerical identity of the individual which is thus non-qualitative and trivial. In this context, 'individual' can be understood in two distinct ways. As a bare particular by itself, i.e., considered without its properties, it grounds individuality and can be taken as a "thin" individual itself. In contrast, the so-called "thick" individual is the particular plus the properties. Thin particularism differs from thick particularism in what it regards as candidates for the role of individuals in the respective ontology.

Thin and thick particularism consequently differ in what they take the subject term 'a' to denote—either thin or thick individuals. The predicate denotes a property, F-ness, which is taken to be instantiated by the thin individual but is a constitutive part of the thick individual. Thus, for obvious reasons, thin particularism presupposes an inherence theory of predication, while thick particularism favors a constitutional account of predication. Let us first outline the general statement of truth conditions and then

analyze the statements "Socrates is white" and "Socrates is human" as specimens of the general statement in turn:

**a instantiates a property F-ness** (inherence)
Socrates instantiates the property of whiteness.
Socrates instantiates the property of humanity.

**a has F-ness as a constituent part** (constitution)
Socrates has whiteness as a constituent part.
Socrates has humanity as a constituent part.

Both thin and thick particularism offer a unified account of predication, and each has its drawbacks. Thin particularism renders all properties contingent, as no property constitutes the individual. In contrast, according to thick particularism, all properties become necessary, for the individual is composed of all of them. An account which would distinguish, in accordance with common sense, contingent and necessary properties of individuals would trade one theoretical virtue for another, as it would lose the unified treatment of predication (the one-account-fits-all quality) exhibited by thin and thick particularism.

Aristotelian hylomorphism, the ontological framework of medieval scholastic semantics, can be taken to be a special kind of substratum theory. The substratum is the so-called prime matter, that which persists despite the substantial changes of corruption and generation, whereby individuals are destroyed and new ones emerge.[2] In this system, properties are the unique substantial as well as the many accidental forms.[3] However, there are two obvious differences, when compared to bare particularism. First,

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[2]  One can picture prime matter on analogy with energy, which is the most fundamental constituent of things, and which undergoes transformations from one thing to another or from one thing to other things.

[3]  A substantial form is a metaphysical constituent (complex in itself) in virtue of which an individual is an instance of a definite species. Other features of a thing are accidental forms. Some necessarily obtain, given the substantial form (for instance, x is a nettle, and it can sting). Some depend on the environment (the state of the plant, given such environmental factors as persistent heat). Aquinas is known to adhere to the uniqueness of substantial form doctrine. This is by no means the rule in medieval Aristotelian scholasticism.

the prime matter grounds numerical distinction but not individuality; these are two different things. Thus, the "thin" individual cannot be the prime matter as such but only its combination with a substantial form. Second, as already mentioned, there are two types of forms: the substantial and the accidental. While the substantial form is compounded with prime matter, thus forming a substance, an accidental form inheres only in such a compound. So, the "thick" individual is this aggregate of substance, i.e., a compound of prime matter and substantial form, plus the accidents. This two-tier ontic structure of hylomorphism complicates matters in that it appears next to impossible to provide a unified model of both essential (substantial) and accidental predication that accounts for all semantic aspects. What this means will become clearer below.

Let us now survey Aquinas's thought on predication. When Aquinas discusses the semantics of predication, it is usually in a context where the target is the solution of some theological problem or other, in which semantic exposition amounts to a preliminary or preparatory stage only. For Aquinas, the development of a coherent semantic doctrine matters much less than the subsequent theological application, as the following text from the Summa Theologica (STh, for short) I, q. 13, a. 12 c, illustrates:[4]

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[4]    STh I, q. 13, a. 12 c: Ad cuius evidentiam, sciendum est quod in qualibet propositione affirmativa vera, oportet quod praedicatum et subiectum significent idem secundum rem aliquo modo, et diversum secundum rationem. Et hoc patet tam in propositionibus quae sunt de praedicato accidentali, quam in illis quae sunt de praedicato substantiali. Manifestum est enim quod homo et albus sunt idem subiecto, et differunt ratione, alia enim est ratio hominis, et alia ratio albi. Et similiter cum dico homo est animal, illud enim ipsum quod est homo, vere animal est; in eodem enim supposito est et natura sensibilis, a qua dicitur animal, et rationalis, a qua dicitur homo. Unde hic etiam praedicatum et subiectum sunt idem supposito, sed diversa ratione.

Sed et in propositionibus in quibus idem praedicatur de seipso, hoc aliquo modo invenitur; inquantum intellectus id quod ponit ex parte subiecti, trahit ad partem suppositi, quod vero ponit ex parte praedicati, trahit ad naturam formae in supposito existentis, secundum quod dicitur quod praedicata tenentur formaliter, et subiecta materialiter. Huic vero diversitati quae est secundum rationem, respondet pluralitas praedicati et subiecti, identitatem vero rei significat intellectus per ipsam compositionem.

> To prove this, we must know that in every true affirmative proposition the predicate and the subject signify in some way the same thing in reality, and different things in idea. And this appears to be the case both in propositions which have an accidental predicate, and in those which have an essential predicate. For it is manifest that "man" and "white" are the same in subject, and different in idea; for the idea of man is one thing, and that of whiteness is another. The same applies when I say, "man is an animal"; since the same thing which is man is truly animal; for in the same "suppositum" there is sensible nature by reason of which he is called animal, and the rational nature by reason of which he is called man; hence here again predicate and subject are the same as to "suppositum," but different as to idea.
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> But in propositions where one same thing is predicated of itself, the same rule in some way applies, inasmuch as the intellect draws to the "suppositum" what it places in the subject; and what it places in the predicate it draws to the nature of the form existing in the "suppositum"; according to the saying that "predicates are to be taken formally, and subjects materially." To this diversity in idea corresponds the plurality of predicate and subject, while the intellect signifies the identity of the thing by the composition itself.

For some, this text clearly presupposes the inherence model. They draw on the fact that "inasmuch as the intellect draws to the 'suppositum' what it places in the subject; and what it places in the predicate it draws to the nature of the form existing in the 'suppositum'; according to the saying that 'predicates are to be taken formally, and subjects materially.'" They interpret the contrastive phrases, "it draws to supposit/to the nature of form," and, "to be taken materially/formally," on a par with the Fregean semantic categories of denotation and sense. The subject denotes the supposit, e.g., Socrates, or this particular man; the predicate expresses the form of whiteness or animality. When Aquinas says, "the predicate and the subject signify in some way the same thing in reality, and different things in idea," he must mean that there is just one thing in reality, i.e., a particular composition, either a thin or a thick individual having a form. There is a diversity of concepts, i.e., senses, at the intensional level.

What does "having a form" mean? There are three possibilities. One is to take "inherence" strictly, as above: The form is attached to something numerically distinct. The form of whiteness is attached to a particular man, a composite of the substantial form of humanity and prime matter. The form of humanity is attached to a numerically distinct lump of prime matter. What we get is a uniform analysis of the copula expressing the same type of relationship of strict inherence in both types of statements, essential as well as accidental predications (e.g., "Socrates is human," "Socrates is white"), yet the subject term denotes a different type of a numerically distinct object in each case. I do not say, "different individuals," because the distinct lump of prime matter is not even an individual. This interpretative option forces us to introduce a third category of individuals, a super-thin individual of a numerically distinct lump of matter. It is clearly wrong. Not only does it stretch the meaning of 'supposit', but what seems truly counterintuitive is the fact that the same subject term, e.g., 'Socrates' or 'the man' in the quotation, used in both types of statements, denotes something different in each case, either the thin or the super-thin individual.

Making the subject term refer to the same category of object, ontologically speaking, sacrifices the semantic uniformity of the copula. One can interpret 'inherence' in the looser sense, covering both inherence in the strict sense (form attachment) and the part-whole constitutive relationship. The subject most likely refers to the thin individual, i.e., the compound of prime matter and substantial form, the substance. Provided this is the case, then, depending on whether the predication is accidental or essential, the copula might express inherence proper, attachment, e.g., that of whiteness to the particular human substance, or it might express constitution, e.g., that the form of animality (or humanity, for that matter) is had as a constituent part by the very same substance.

The third option is symmetric to the first. Both subjects denote the thin and thick individuals, respectively, and both kinds of predication are interpreted as constitution. The essential predication takes the thin individual to be constituted by the form; the accidental predication understands the thick individual as having the accidental form as its constituent part. For this reason, it is not worth considering this option any further.

In view of the fact that the two-tier Aristotelian ontology is the price of non-collapsing necessary and contingent modal statements, it seems that only the second option above suits Aquinas, and that the dual analysis of the copula serves an important purpose. All essential predicative statements are interpreted as expressing constitution and are thus necessary. All accidental predications are taken as expressing inherence proper. These might be contingent, even though some are taken to be necessary, as their accidental predicates are implied (ontologically speaking – in other words, formally caused) by the essential ones.

There are other texts of Aquinas which reinforce the model of predication as inherence (in a broad sense which also covers the relationship of constitution), such as *STh* I, q. 16, a. 2 c, where predication is clearly defined as the application or removal of a form. The signification of the subject must be interpreted as denotation, and that of the predicate as sense expressed by the term:[5]

> But the intellect can know its own conformity with the intelligible thing; yet it does not apprehend it by knowing of a thing "what a thing is." When, however, it judges that a thing corresponds to the form which it apprehends about that thing, then first it knows and expresses truth. This it does by composing and dividing: for in every proposition it either applies to, or removes from the thing signified by the subject, some form signified by the predicate.

Consider also *STh* III, q. 16, a. 7, ad 4:[6]

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[5]     STh I, q. 16, a. 2 c: Intellectus autem conformitatem sui ad rem intelligibilem cognoscere potest, sed tamen non apprehendit eam secundum quod cognoscit de aliquo quod quid est; sed quando iudicat rem ita se habere sicut est forma quam de re apprehendit, tunc primo cognoscit et dicit verum. Et hoc facit componendo et dividendo, nam in omni propositione aliquam formam significatam per praedicatum, vel applicat alicui rei significatae per subiectum, vel removet ab ea.

[6]     STh III, q. 16, a. 7, ad 4: Ad quartum dicendum quod terminus in subiecto positus tenetur materialiter, idest pro supposito, positus vero in praedicato, tenetur formaliter, idest pro natura significata. Et ideo cum dicitur, homo factus est Deus, ipsum fieri non attribuitur humanae naturae, sed supposito humanae naturae, quod est ab aeterno Deus, et ideo non convenit ei fieri Deum. Cum autem dicitur, Deus factus est homo, factio intelligitur terminari ad ipsam humanam naturam. Et ideo,

> A term placed in the subject is taken materially, i.e., for the suppositum; placed in the predicate it is taken formally, i.e., for the nature signified.

In his *Commentary to Metaphysics*, 9, lect. II, no. 1898, Aquinas says:

> When I say, "Socrates is human," the truth of this statement is explained by the composition of the form of humanity with the individual matter by which Socrates is this human. Likewise, when I say, "Socrates is white," the explanation of its truth is the composition of whiteness with a subject. And similarly in other such cases.

Notice that Aquinas here speaks about the thin and super-thin individuals and inherence proper, i.e., attachment of a form (we have rejected that this would, by itself, be a correct model of predication, as it makes the subject term 'Socrates' equivocal). Now Aquinas states that the composition, here the inherence proper, explains the truth of the propositions. This might not be intended as an explanation of how predication functions semantically, because it states the real or factual correlate of a statement but does not say how the intellect appropriates it, as it were. Even Peter Geach, a well-known proponent of the inherence model of predication in Aquinas, is aware of the other passages (in the texts quoted, as well as in other texts) in which Aquinas draws a distinction between that which exists *in re* and the way it is appropriated at the level of the intellect within predication (the intensional level). Take note of the following once again, from *STh* I, q. 13, a. 12 c:[7]

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proprie loquendo, haec est vera, Deus factus est homo, sed haec est falsa, homo factus est Deus. Sicut, si Socrates, cum prius fuerit homo, postea factus est albus, demonstrato Socrate, haec est vera, hic homo hodie factus est albus; haec tamen est falsa, hoc album hodie factum est homo. Si tamen ex parte subiecti poneretur aliquod nomen significans naturam humanam in abstracto, posset hoc modo significari ut subiectum factionis, puta si dicatur quod natura humana facta est filii Dei.

[7]    STh I, q. 13, a. 12 c: Huic vero diversitati quae est secundum rationem, respondet pluralitas praedicati et subiecti, identitatem vero rei significat intellectus per ipsam compositionem.

> To this diversity in idea corresponds the plurality of predicate
> and subject, while the intellect signifies the identity of the thing
> by the composition itself.

Granting that there are two levels—the (real) facts and the concepts combined in predication—what seems surprising or puzzling is that, according to Aquinas, there is identity on the factual level, but diversity obtains only on the conceptual level. How does this square with the fact that, for Aquinas, there is a composition of form and that to which the form belongs in things? If Aquinas were on board with the inherence model of predication, he would have said something along the following lines:

> To this diversity in idea corresponds the plurality of predicate
> and subject, and the intellect signifies the composition in the
> thing by the composition of the concepts itself.

However, St. Thomas does not say that. What he seems to say is that one and the same thing is signified by two different concepts. Here, 'signifies' must be interpreted as 'denotes'. It is this real numerical identity (or identity in reality) which the copula, the sign of predication, is supposed to express in predicating the predicate of the subject.

    Notice four things regarding the semantic roles of the subject and predicate terms. First, unlike what we find in the inherence model, it is not only the subject, but also the predicate term which has a referential (denotational) role to the supposit. Second, what is denoted by both terms is the supposit, so the predicate does not merely denote the form had by the supposit. There is no mention of the real composition of the supposit. That comes only when the plurality of the concepts is explained. The composition, i.e., the fact that one can distinguish various forms inhering in the suppositum or constituting it (namely, the constituting forms of humanity and animality, as well as the inhering form of whiteness) explains that there could be different ways of conceptualizing what is in reality one and the same supposit. Third, since both subject and predicate function as terms denoting the supposit on the basis of ascribing a form to it, their status is that of names of the general form: *thing having F-ness*.[8] They are concrete

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[8]    Assuming that the subject term is not a proper name, e.g., 'Socrates', but a description (such as 'this man').

(F, e.g., man) and not abstract (F-ness, e.g., humanity). Unlike abstract terms, concrete terms denote the supposit, not merely the form. They do not abstract from the supposit completely. So, fourth, the real composition involving the supposit does not enter the semantics of predication directly (the copula does not express this composition) but indirectly, via the semantics of terms as an explanation of their difference. Of course, it is the difference in concepts which enables predication to function semantically as well as pragmatically. For a statement to convey a new piece of information (to be informative), the presupposition is that the hearer knows that one concept applies to the supposit (subject). This enables them to identify the supposit and learn that the second concept applies to it as well (predicate). In terms of Aristotelian philosophical psychology, the recognition of the real composition is something which is part of the first operation of the intellect, called simple apprehension. It has nothing to do with predication, which is the job of the second operation of the intellect (composing and dividing concepts). The analysis is as follows:

Homo est animal.
*Habens humanitatem est habens animalitatem.*[9]

Homo est albus.
*Habens humanitatem est habens albedinem.*[10]

The identity model is corroborated by other textual evidence, including *STh* I, q. 85, a. 5, ad 3:[11]

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[9]    The man is an animal. The thing having humanity is a thing having animality.

[10]   The man is white. The thing having humanity is a thing having whiteness.

[11]   STh I, q. 85, a. 5, ad 3: Invenitur autem duplex compositio in re materiali. Prima quidem, formae ad materiam, et huic respondet compositio intellectus qua totum universale de sua parte praedicatur; nam genus sumitur a materia communi, differentia vero completiva speciei a forma, particulare vero a materia individuali. Secunda vero compositio est accidentis ad subiectum, et huic reali compositioni respondet compositio intellectus secundum quam praedicatur accidens de subiecto, ut cum dicitur, homo est albus. Tamen differt compositio intellectus a compositione rei, nam ea quae componuntur in re, sunt diversa; compositio autem intellectus est signum identitatis eorum quae componuntur. Non enim intellectus sic componit, ut dicat quod homo est albedo; sed dicit quod homo est albus, idest habens albedinem, idem

> First, there is the composition of form with matter; and to this corresponds that composition of the intellect whereby the universal whole is predicated of its part: for the genus is derived from common matter, while the difference that completes the species is derived from the form, and the particular from individual matter. The second comparison is of accident with subject; and to this real composition corresponds that composition of the intellect, whereby accident is predicated of subject, as when we say, "the man is white." Nevertheless, composition of the intellect differs from composition of things; for in the latter the things are diverse, whereas composition of the intellect is a sign of the identity of the components. For the above composition of the intellect does not imply that "man" and "whiteness" are identical, but the assertion, "the man is white," means that "the man is something having whiteness," and the subject, which is a man, is identified with a subject having whiteness. It is the same with the composition of form and matter, for animal signifies that which has a sensitive nature; rational, that which has an intellectual nature; man, that which has both; and Socrates that which has all these things together with individual matter; and according to this kind of identity our intellect predicates the composition of one thing with another.

Notice that Aquinas says explicitly that if predication were the expression of real composition, the predicate would have to be an abstract term ('humanity', 'whiteness'), but it clearly is not, as the statement, "the man is whiteness," does not make sense.

Now how does the inherentist Geach explain away such an unambiguous support of the identity model? Commenting on *STh* I, q. 13, a. 12 c, quoted above, he writes (Geach 1950, 478):

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autem est subiecto quod est homo, et quod est habens albedinem. Et simile est de compositione formae et materiae, nam animal significat id quod habet naturam sensitivam, rationale vero quod habet naturam intellectivam, homo vero quod habet utrumque, Socrates vero quod habet omnia haec cum materia individuali; et secundum hanc identitatis rationem, intellectus noster unum componit alteri praedicando.

As regards the truth-conditions of an affirmative predication (compositio), [Aquinas] rejects the view that subject and predicate stand for two different objects, which we assert to be somehow combined; on the contrary, the truth of the predication requires a certain identity of reference. Thus, if the predicate "white" is to be truly attached to the subject "man" or "Socrates," there must be an identity of reference holding between "man" or "Socrates" and "thing that has whiteness" ("*quod est habens albedinem*"); the two names must be *idem subiecto*. Notice that what is here in question is the reference of a descriptive name, not of a predicate; Aquinas does not hold, indeed he expressly denies, that predicates like "white" stand for objects (*supponunt*). His theory is that if the predicate "white" is truly attached to a subject, then the corresponding descriptive name "thing that has whiteness" must somehow agree in reference with the subject.

According to Geach, then, the aforementioned identity model has to do with the expression of truth-conditions but is not a model of predication. Yet, we have just seen in the quotation from the *Commentary to Metaphysics* that just the opposite is the case: The truth conditions are the real composition in things, for Aquinas, not the expression of real identity of that which is conceptually diverse. That belongs to the intellect's appropriation of the real composition, the intellect's way of introducing this composition via predication. Our analysis of *STh* I, q. 13, a. 12 c, is also put forth by Henry B. Veatch, who is very critical of P. Geach's approach (Veatch 1974, 406–407):

...the white man that one might be said to be talking about or to be referring to in the predicate of the proposition "the man is white," can only be the same identical man as the one referred to in the subject of the proposition. In other words, so far as one is concerned to know what the subject and predicate terms in the proposition refer to or are about, they are about the very same thing, viz. in this instance a particular human being who happens to be white.

Perhaps we might avail ourselves of a kind of metaphor here and say that this difference secundum rationem really means no

more than that the same thing is being viewed or considered under a new or different guise or aspect.

...in each case it is one and the same thing in fact (*secundum rem*) that is nevertheless considered somewhat differently – i.e. it is considered under a different guise or aspect (*secundum rationem*).

Geach's objection to the identity approach is that the analysis of predication presupposes predication hidden at least in the predicate term, the descriptive name. What else is "a thing having whiteness" than "a thing which is white"? There are really two predications in the identity statement with descriptive names. As explained above, one answer is that descriptive names are not predications, but instances of a kind of compound name, results of the first operation of the intellect, not of the second one. In a recent book, Jeffrey E. Brower analyzes the second 'is' in terms of constitution (Brower 2014).

The following are general forms of predication, essential and accidental, according to Brower (2014, 142):

Predication in general: Ordinary (intrinsic) predications of the form '*a* is *F*' are more perspicuously represented as of the form '*a* is numerically the same as something, *b*, having the property *F*-ness as a constituent'.

Essential predication: Ordinary essential predications of the form '*a* is *F*' are more perspicuously represented as of the form '*a* is identical to something, *b*, having the property *F*-ness as a constituent'.

Accidental predication: Ordinary accidental predications of the form '*a* is *F*' are more perspicuously represented as of the form '*a* is numerically the same as (but not identical) to something, *b*, having the property *F*-ness as a constituent'.

Applying the above to our example of essential and accidental predications, we get:

Socrates *is* that which *is* human.
Socrates *is* that which *is* white.

The first 'is' in the essential predication of being human is that of identity. In accidental predication it is that of pure numerical sameness, but not identity.[12] The second 'is' is treated uniformly as expressing the relationship of constitution: The predicated feature (humanity, whiteness) is a constituent of the referent of 'that'. The difference in meaning of the first copula in essential and accidental predications allows Brower to treat 'Socrates' as unambiguous, denoting the thin individual, Socrates, rather than being systematically ambiguous between two referents, the thin and thick individuals. The reason why the first 'is' in accidental predication expresses numerical sameness but not numerical identity, is that the indefinitely referential 'a white thing' picks out a thick individual.[13] In identifying Socrates with a white thing, we do not need to state their numerical identity, their being precisely the same entity with the same constituents. Rather, it suffices to state their non-distinctness: We are not saying that that particular thing and that particular bearer of whiteness among its accidents are the very same entity. In that case 'a white thing' would pick out a thin individual, and the second 'is' could not be analyzed as that of constitution, as whiteness is a constituent not of a thin individual but of a thick one. We are instead saying that the particular thing (thin individual) and the white thing (i.e., the thick individual having whiteness among its constituents) are not two distinct things.

Now there is another proposal on how predication works in Aquinas, once again based on the part-whole relationship. This time, however, predication is not understood as expressing the relationship of constitution *in re*, but rather identifies some conceptual content with a supposit. This identification is neither numerical identity nor numerical sameness, because we do not identify an individual or quasi-individual (denoted by the predicate) with an individual (picked out by the subject). Nor do we identify an individual with a concept; that would be a category mistake. What we are doing in predication is saying that an individual has a certain formal content, which is intellectually apprehended and realized in the individual. The job

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[12]    Identity implies numerical sameness, but not vice versa.

[13]    In Brower's analysis, the ambiguity in the first "is" is related to what the demonstrative pronoun "that" refers to. It refers to the thin individual in essential predication and the thick individual in accidental predication.

of the copula is identification rather than the expression of identity. One could also say that it expresses a part-whole relationship.

Aquinas takes up the Avicennian teaching on the common nature (*natura communis*; Galluzzo 2004). A nature exists in three different states.[14] By way of an example, let us take human nature. Human nature in Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle is multiple and always particular, i.e., the natures of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle differ in their particularity. However, generally speaking, they are the same one human nature. As such, human nature exists as a concept in the mind. As a product of abstraction, it is one and universal, i.e., capable of being predicated of a multitude of individual humans (we speak about what has later come to be known as the objective concept which is one as opposed to many formal concepts, i.e., entities in individual minds). Now one can consider human nature without its features, acquired as it exists particularized in things, or as abstracted in the form of a concept. This consideration is a kind of second-order abstraction. What we get is the so-called nature, absolutely considered. It is the same semantic core common to the nature as existing in reality and as existing intentionally as a concept. Here, Aquinas distinguishes nature absolutely considered from characteristics it has as a concept in the intellect. According to Aquinas, predication is identification of the nature absolutely considered with the same nature (semantic content) in a particular thing:[15]

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[14]   In the Aristotelian tradition, "nature" has the same referent as "essence", but not the same sense. The sense of the former term is "essence as the foundation or source of that which the thing with the essence does or undergoes". Essence is that metaphysical component of a thing which is responsible for its belonging to a certain kind.

[15]   *De ente et essentia*, c. 2, 63: Et quia naturae humanae secundum suam absolutam considerationem convenit quod praedicetur de Socrate, et ratio speciei non convenit sibi secundum suam absolutam considerationem, sed est de accidentibus, quae consequuntur eam secundum esse, quod habet in intellectu, ideo nomen speciei non praedicatur de Socrate, ut dicatur: Socrates est species, quod de necessitate accideret, si ratio speciei conveniret homini secundum esse, quod habet in Socrate vel secundum suam considerationem absolutam, scilicet in quantum est homo. Quicquid enim convenit homini in quantum est homo praedicatur de Socrate.

> Further, because it belongs to human nature absolutely consid-
> ered to be predicated of Socrates, and because the notion of the
> species does not belong to it absolutely considered but is among
> the accidents which follow upon it according to the existence it
> has in the intellect, one can see why the word 'species' is not
> predicated of Socrates, i.e., why it is not said that "Socrates is a
> species." This would of necessity be said if the notion of the spe-
> cies belonged to man according to the existence which man has
> in Socrates; or, if the notion of the species belonged to man ab-
> solutely considered, i.e., to man as man, for whatever belongs to
> man as man is predicated of Socrates.

This interpretation of predication in Aquinas has recently been formally
developed by S. Sousedík (2014).[16] His theory draws on the scholastic Tho-
mist understanding of predication.

Finally, there is the interpretation by G. Klima, who interprets St.
Thomas's notion of predication in inherentist terms (Klima 1996, 2002).[17]
However, he notices a peculiar functional feature of the copula in predica-
tion in Aquinas: The 'is' of existence and the 'is' of predication are not
clearly distinct in function. In his Commentary to On Interpretation, Aqui-
nas writes:[18]

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[16]   It has been commented on here: https://maverickphilosopher.typepad.com/mav-
erick_philosopher/2012/11/stanislav-sousediks-towards-a-thomistic-theory-of-pred-
ication.html

[17]   Several of Klima's texts are available here: https://faculty.fordham.edu/klima/

[18]   In Perihermeneias 1.5, n.22: Ideo autem dicit quod hoc verbum est consignificat
compositionem, quia non eam principaliter significat, sed ex consequenti; significat
enim primo illud quod cadit in intellectu per modum actualitatis absolute: nam est,
simpliciter dictum, significat in actu esse; et ideo significat per modum verbi. Quia
vero actualitas, quam principaliter significat hoc verbum est, est communiter actu-
alitas omnis formae, vel actus substantialis vel accidentalis, inde est quod cum volu-
mus significare quamcumque formam vel actum actualiter inesse alicui subiecto, sig-
nificamus illud per hoc verbum est, vel simpliciter vel secundum quid: simpliciter
quidem secundum praesens tempus; secundum quid autem secundum alia tempora.
Et ideo ex consequenti hoc verbum est significat compositionem.

> The reason why [Aristotle] says that the verb 'is' consignifies composition is that it does not principally signify composition, but secondarily; for it primarily signifies what occurs to the mind in the way of actuality absolutely: for 'is', uttered absolutely, signifies being in act, and hence it signifies as a verb. But since actuality, which the verb 'is' principally signifies, is in general the actuality of every form, whether it is a substantial or an accidental actuality; this is why when we want to signify any form or act to actually inhere [*inesse*] in a subject, we signify this by means of the verb 'is', either absolutely, or with some qualification: absolutely, in the present tense, and with qualification in the other tenses. And thus the verb 'is' secondarily signifies composition.

Klima comments on the passage thus:

> In general, on this basis we can claim that any ordinary predication of a common term is but a qualified predication of being, in which the significate of the common term in the suppositum of the subject specifies the sense in which that significate can be said to exist… So, it seems that according to Aquinas's view, the copula is not just a merely syncategorematic particle with the sole function of joining the predicate to the subject, but it retains the primary signification of the verb "is", which predicated in itself signifies the actual existence of the thing of which it is predicated. Indeed, according to the previous passage from the On Interpretation-commentary, this is precisely the reason why we use the verb "is", rather than any other verb, also in the function of the copula, to assert in general the actuality of the suppositum of the subject in respect of what is signified in it by the predicate. But then, when it has the function of joining another predicate to the subject, the act of existence the verb "is" signifies is not the absolute existence of the suppositum of the subject, but the qualified existence of the form signified by the predicate, namely, the inherence of this form in the suppositum of the subject, which renders the suppositum actual in respect of this form. And so, since the forms signified by the predicate may be of various sorts, namely, substantial or accidental, or even not really existing

> forms but beings of reason, such as privations, the existence thus
> signified will be existence in various senses demanded by the na-
> ture of the forms signified. (Klima 2002, 165)

Klima's own reconstruction of Thomas's theory of predication in line with
these thoughts is roughly as follows.[19] Below, the predicate 'exists' has dif-
ferent meanings depending on the nature of the object denoted by the sub-
ject term:

> "Socrates is human" is to be analyzed as "Socrates's humanity exists".
> "Socrates is white" is to be analyzed as "Socrates's whiteness exists".

Thus, we encounter yet a third model of predication in Aquinas. The first
model treated predication as *sui generis*, as distinct from identity and exis-
tential claims. The second equated it with identity; the third, with existen-
tial statements.

I maintain Klima's theory errs precisely where the Geachean inherentist
theory erred, i.e., in equating truth conditions with the semantics of predi-
cation. These seem to be two distinct things for Aquinas. Both the real
inherence of a form in a supposit as well as the real (or other) existence of
the particularized form are types of facts on the level of things, *in re*. In
contrast, the semantics of predication deals with intellectual appropriation
of these facts.[20] Hence, the only model true to Aquinas's texts is that of
identity. In this, H. Veatch is right. In contrast to J. Brower, I presume
there are not two *copulae*. The denotation by the predicate term and the

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[19]  I leave technical and formal details of Klima's presentation aside – the reader
may find them in the paper cited. For an interpretation of Aquinas along similar
lines (though critical of Klima) see Polsky (2019). Polsky's reading is based on In V
Metaphysicorum, l. 9, 889–893.

[20]  I think the two types of facts are not equivalent. Klima is right in pointing out
that for Aquinas the copula signifies existence. Klima's existential fact (about the
existence of a particularized form) presupposes that the form inheres in an individual
or quasi-individual subject, but states something over and above this, namely, the
kind (mode) of existence it has. So, Klima's existential fact is not only a necessary
truth condition but also a sufficient one, unlike the Geachean fact about the form's
inherence which is only a necessary truth condition. However, neither of the facts
explains what goes on, semantically speaking, in predication.

corresponding conceptual appropriation of the particular supposit picked out by the subject is the act of simple apprehension (the 1st operation of the intellect), not predication (the 2nd operation of the intellect), which modern readers may liken to the act of naming rather than predicating. This naming or conceptualization is no doubt capable of being cast out in terms of predication, but this is secondary *ex post* explication. The same can be said in regard to the Thomist part-whole theory, which presents predication as the identification of a specific conceptual content with the supposit. Again, this seems to be part of conceptualization proper, *not* predication (whose corresponding mental act is composition or division). It too can be rendered in predicative terms, but it is no more than explication of the act of conceptualization, not predication. Thus, the question whether inherence or identity is *the* theory of predication in Aquinas must be answered in favor of identity, unless one is prepared to deny there is any one true theory of predication in St. Thomas. But for this denial we find no ground.

## Acknowledgement

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