Far from detracting from the study of the *Categories*, the introduction of the rest of Aristotle’s writings in the West provided new venues for studying what was, for many medievals, one of the first works in philosophy. Consequently, the literal commentaries that were common at the beginning of the 13th century quickly gave way to question commentaries, which allowed philosophers a greater opportunity to explore issues than was available with a literal commentary.\(^1\) Examples of those issues included the derivation of the categories; the relation between logic and metaphysics; whether being is univocal, or the extent to which there is a science of the categories. It is this last topic that I am interested in here: whether there is a science of the categories, and if so, what kind of science it is. By looking specifically at this question, I hope to show the ways in which philosophical debates typically progressed in medieval works and the originality of Scotus.

As Martin Pickavé previously points out in his article on Simon Faversham,\(^2\) it is typical for late medieval commentaries on the *Categories* to start with a question concerning the scientific nature of the categories. Although this particular question was not asked by late ancient philosophers, such as Simplicius, the question most likely developed out of their consideration of the *skopos* of the text. More obviously, the question is formed by topics discussed in the *Posterior Analytics* regarding the nature of science, and hence is subsequent to a thorough familiarity with this latter text. However, it is the science of metaphysics, more than any other science, that definitively frames what a science of the

\(^1\) The flexibility available in a question commentary can be seen in both the variety and nature of the questions raised (virtually none of the questions is designed to help a beginning student better understand Aristotle’s text, since a basic mastery of the text is taken for granted) and in the sheer size of the commentary (e.g., Scotus’s question commentary is over 250 pages in the critical edition, whereas Aristotle’s short text is less than 25 pages).

\(^2\) Cf. Pickavé’s article supra, fn. 2.
categories will look like. As we will see in the following sections, the science of the categories is often conceived after, and modeled upon, the science of metaphysics, especially insofar as both sciences resort to a unity of attribution when a generic unity is unavailable. Be that as it may for his contemporaries, Scotus will have none of it. Rather for him, the science of the categories will have a greater unity, a unity proper to a \textit{propter quid} science. It is this last claim, I think, that stands out as one of the most salient features (among many) that is philosophically important in Scotus’s commentary on the \textit{Categories}. And even though Scotus specifically denies that being is univocal in this early commentary—in contrast to his more (in)famous claim to the contrary—it is quite clear that he is already moving in that direction.

In order to understand and appreciate Scotus’s unique understanding of a science of the categories, I will proceed as follows. In the first section, I quickly cover the requirements for a science, the difference between a science and a syllogism, and the two main kinds of science. In the second section, I chart the development of the science of the categories through three of his contemporaries: Martin of Dacia, Peter of Auvergne, and Simon of Faversham. In the third section, I indicate what Scotus takes to be the subject of logic as a whole, and how the categories are understood to be parts of that generic science. In the fourth section, I show how Scotus adopts and tweaks the Avicennian doctrine of the threefold understanding of essence. Finally, in the last section I demonstrate how Scotus employs these various distinctions to advance his novel claim that the ten categories are the single subject of a \textit{propter quid} science.

\footnotetext[3]{It is perhaps unfortunate that the \textit{Posterior Analytics} and the \textit{Metaphysics} had such an influential role in the ways in which medieval philosophers conceived of the \textit{Categories} (to the near exclusion of any influence from the \textit{Physics}), especially concerning the derivation of the \textit{Categories}. For had the \textit{Physics} been more influential, it would, I suspect, have been easier to defend a more robust realist ontology, especially insofar as it would be nearly impossible to conflate or reduce quantity to substance.}

\footnotetext[4]{An English translation of Scotus’s commentary on the \textit{Categories}, as well as a discussion of many of the issues raised in this article, is available in: Lloyd A. Newton, \textit{Duns Scotus’s Questions on the Categories of Aristotle: A Translation of the Whole, Together with a Philosophical Analysis and Commentary on Questions 1–8}, Dissertation: University of Dallas, 2003.}

\footnotetext[5]{I apologize for the elementary nature of some of the material presented in this section. I have included it for two reasons: First, it is helpful to understand the subsequent sections, especially since our notion of science, which is drawn largely from the empirical disciplines, is radically different from the ancient / medieval view; and second, while some of it may be fairly common knowledge, I know of no other short article that summarizes the relation between science and demonstration.