

William of Ware
Teaching Philosophy and Theology in the 13th Century
between Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus.

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Insegnare filosofia e teologia nel XIII secolo
tra Tommaso d'Aquino e Duns Scoto.

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William of Ware on Relations. The Particular Case of the Dependence of Every Creature on God

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«Relations, so regarded, are neither fish, neither fowl, neither substances nor modes». With these words John Heil defines relations. The question is: what are relations? The world in which we live is structured by relations: paternity, filiation, friendship, being to the west, being taller, being equal to etc. What is the ontological status of these relations? This question still animates today's philosophical debates, but it has also characterized the medieval debates because a number of theological issues needed an answer by the theory of relations. On one hand, they seem to be mind independent, on the other hand it is difficult to attribute any kind of being.

This investigation originates from the desire to understand the relation of dependence of every creature on God in William of Ware. Indeed, the theory for which this relation coincides with the essence of creature is commonly quoted and attributed to William of Ware. But what has always amazed me is that: the dependence on God is an exception in Ware's doctrine because other relations among creatures are considered as things completely different by their foundations. So, the aim of my contribution is to analyse the theory of relations in Ware's *Commentary on Sentences* both in its general features and in the specific case of the dependence of every creature on God.

Before moving on, I would like to make a few remarks about relations and the historical context from which Ware's own doctrine originates. The relation is one of the ten Aristotelian categories, which has the peculiarity both to inhere in a subject and to be towards another thing. In the scholastic terminology, the relation has a double being: *esse in* and *esse ad*, because it expresses the order of one thing to another. To clarify the terminology in use: every relation always requires a foundation, a subject and a term. For example, the similarity between two white things is based on the quality of whiteness which, in turn, is inherent in a subject, such as a sheet of paper or a wall in my house. Instead, the term indicates what it refers to and is therefore the same property in another thing.

The distinction between being-in and being-towards is traditionally present in Thomas Aquinas's doctrine. In each of the nine accidental categories it is possible to distinguish the accidental being, common to all nine accidental categories, and the *ratio* of the particular category, that is whatever the intellect does understand by the concept signifying the reality. Now, inhering in a subject is typical of accidental categories because they exist in a substance. According to Thomas the being-in of a real relation is founded immediately on another accident and mediately on the substance and it is identical with the being in of its foundation. The *ratio* of a relation is its being towards another, because the *ratio* of relation does not imply that exist in a substance. This *ratio* is so an aspect or a function of foundation, namely it is by virtue of certain quality or quantity that the subject is ordered to another. For example, knowledge has a double aspect because it is an accident in the mind and, at the same time, it is also the aspect of being ordered towards the knowable.

Henry of Ghent arises out of the same tradition. He identifies in each Aristotelian category a *ratio* and a *res*, that is, the specific mode of existence and the thing which actually possesses that mode.

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According to Henry, therefore, the relation is a *modus* of being that does not have a reality of its own, distinct from its foundation. In other words, the being-towards is an intrinsic property of the subject, a mode of being of a thing, even though this mode does not have reality of its own. If indeed the relation were a real thing, it would be a different thing from its foundation and so there would be composition. But then when the relation is applied to God, the composition follows also here, but this would be against divine simplicity.

Differently, John Duns Scotus operates in a different philosophical context. First, Scotus distinguishes two types of relations: categorical and transcendental. The first are those that fall under the category of relation and they are common relations as similarity, equality or numerical and causal relations. These *esse ad aliud* are really distinct by their foundations. For example, the similarity between two white things is considered as a thing, a *res*, really distinct by the quality of whiteness. Conversely, the transcendental relation transcends categories and characterizes all beings. Scotus speaks about this type regarding the special relation of dependence of every creature on God, but I think that Scotus uses it also in the trinitarian relations. The feature of this relation is being really identical to its foundation but formally distinct by it. And so the dependence on God is identical to the essence but formally distinct by it, and the personal property is identical to the divine essence but formally distinct from it.

William of Ware's thought fits in between Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus and in particular it seems to prepare the way to Scotus's doctrine on relations. The ontological statute of relations is treated in several distinctions found both in the I and II book on *Sentences*. In my contribution I am going to consider in particular distinction 33 of book I, where the Doctor Fundatus deals with relation and its foundation, and questions 3 and 4 (according to the numeration of manuscripts) of the II second book, where he considers creation and the creature essence. All these questions are still unpublished, so I quote from Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteo 33 dext. 1 but I have compared also different manuscripts.

I would like to begin by ontological status of relations among creatures. The reference point is distinction 33 entitled *Whether relations among creatures add something upon its foundation*. First, Ware clarifies that this question deals with the relation as *res extra animam*, namely inasmuch as it is independent from any consideration of intellect. In this way the Doctor Fundatus wants to rule out the rational *esse ad aliud*. Secondly, the aim of this question is not if the relation adds something to the substance, that is the subject, but if it adds something to its immediate foundation, namely the accident from which the relation is grounded in, as the whiteness.

In the first part of the question William reports the opinion of who claims nothing real is added to the foundation. In support of this statement there are many traditional arguments, among these I would like to focus on three argumentations: the first is the argument of composition, the second is that of application of relation's theory to God; the third is that of mutation in the category of relation. Ware's replies to these argumentations allow us to understand his interesting doctrine better.

In his own solution, Ware claims that the relation in creatures is another essence upon and over the essence of foundation. But, what does 'another essence' mean? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to introduce a distinction. Like Henry of Ghent, also William of Ware distinguishes a *res* and a *ratio* of the category of relation. In the analyzed questions, he does not offer a definition, but I think that he means that the *ratio* is the mode of being of a particular category and, in this specific case, it is being towards another. The *res* indicates the nature or the

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essence that this mode has. Ware introduces this distinction to separate two areas of application, characterized by two opposite ways: there are relations both in creatures and in God. In this way, Ware solves the problem of application to God relieved by Henry of Ghent. Now, in God it is possible to discern the *ratio* of relation and that of its foundation, but the *res* of the relation is the same as its foundation. In other words, the paternity in the Father is a *ratio* distinct by the divine essence, but it is not another *res* from the essence. Conversely, in creatures not only the *ratio* is distinct from the foundation but also the *res*. It means that the similarity between two white things is a different thing added to the accident of whiteness. So, the whiteness and the similarity are two *res* and not only different *rationes*. Indeed, the distinction between the *ratio* of foundation and that of relation is commonly accepted because the *ratio* indicates the different function of every category. For example, the *ratio* of quantity is the measure of a substance, or the *ratio* of quality is the disposition of a substance and, in the case of relation, it is being towards another of an accident. So being towards another, as being taller than or being similar to etc., it is necessary different by measuring a substance. The issue of discussion concerns the *res* of a category because the relation can add itself to another accident like a thing or be a mode of this accident. According to Ware the relation is a thing added to the foundation. So, when he says that the relation in creatures has another essence from that of foundation, he wants to affirm that the relation is another thing, another nature from the accident on which it is based.

Recognizing reality to the relation does not mean that the addition of a relation to an absolute thing produces a composite: according to Ware, the similar white thing is not more composite than the white thing only. William prefers to speak about 'apposition' rather than 'composition' because in the similar white there are two essences, namely the absolute essence and the respective essence. In the composition there are two absolute essences, and so a substance and an inherent accident produce composition. Therefore, the relation has the ontological status of *res*, but it is only a relative *res* because the essence of relation is to be towards another and not to be with something. Ware sets against putting 'cum alio' with 'ad aliud': in the first case there is composition, in the second there is apposition. Thus, the relation expresses the order of a thing to another one. In this way William replies to an argumentation, arising from Giles of Rome, according to which relation is not a completely different thing from its foundation, otherwise the similar white thing would be more composite. This argument is widespread in the XIIIth and XIVth century: it is widely used, for example, by Duns Scotus and Francis of Marchia.

For this reason, it seems to me that the relation comes intrinsically by the nature of foundation, namely the cause of the *esse ad aliud* is the same substance or the accident, functioning as foundation. Sure enough, Ware says that posed two white things, the similarity necessary follows because it is impossible that there are two white things and they are not similar. Following an argument widespread in the XIIIth century, William claims that not even God can make two white things which are not similar to each other. So, when a white thing is generated for itself, similarity is generated in this thing by accident and in another pre-existent white thing.

Another important point is the mutation in the category of relation. Ware deals with this issue in the replies to the opposite argumentations. Traditionally, those who want to deny reality to relation assert that there is not change in *ad aliud*, often referring to Aristotle's words in the V book of *Physics*. The issue is: if the white wall in this room begins to be related to a white sheet of paper that I bring into this room, is the change only in the sheet of paper or also in the wall? According to Aristotle and his medieval interpretation, the change regards only the white paper

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that is moved from a room to another, and it begins to be similar. But, if the white wall does not change, then no new *res* is added to it. Thus, the relation of similarity does not differ from the whiteness of the wall. To this objection, William of Ware replies clarifying how the change is possible in the relatives. A subject can change in two ways. According to the first, the subject receives a new form only after a mutation, for example the dark hair of a man: the hair will turn white only after it has lost its colour. So, a halfway mutation is necessary. According to the second, there is an acquisition of a new form without a previous mutation, like when a son becomes equal in height to his father: in this case the father receives a new relation of equality without a previous change. This acquisition of a new relation is a mutation. Therefore, Ware can say that there is mutation in relatives because relation immediately reaches the foundation without an intermediate change. Philosophers deny mutation in the category of relation inasmuch as it is a *via media* between the subject and what is acquired through this change. Let me give an example that probably explains Ware's opinion better: when a man becomes a father, this man receives a new relation of paternity without a previous mutation, but he inevitably changes his life becoming a father. Even, Ware admits that the mutation, so understood, is applicable to God: supported by Ambrose who says: «Deus Pater non erat, Deus erat», Ware admits that first there is God, and then there is God the Father; thus, with the generation of the Son, God acquires a new relation and so He changes.

Before moving on, I would briefly analyse the relation in God. In distinction 33 William of Ware claims that relation in God has his own *ratio*, but it is not a different thing from the foundation. For example, in the Father the paternity is a *ratio* different from divine essence, but it does not add any reality. Nevertheless, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three persons distinct by real relations, namely arising from the nature of essence and distinct without any consideration of intellect. Why does not the relation in God have its own reality other than its foundation? In distinction 26, question 2, edited by Schamaus, Ware asserts that relations in God constitute the suppositum, namely the Father is constituted of essence and paternity, whereas in creatures relations presuppose different absolute foundations, namely the white in the wall and that of paper. So, I think that the answer is in the unity and simplicity of foundation: trinitarian relations are founded in the same and simple divine essence. Certainly, William has solved Henry of Ghent's problem about the composition, because he claims that in creatures a *res relativa* and an absolute thing produce apposition and not composition, while in God the same divine essence, in its uniqueness and simplicity, is the foundation of divine relations.

To summarize this part, I can say that William of Ware's doctrine of relation follows the typical dissertation of XIIIth century, like that Thomas Aquinas or Henry of Ghent, because he continues to distinguish in every category a *ratio* and a *res*. Nevertheless, he proposes an original theory inasmuch as Ware recognizes reality to the relation (that is a *res relativa*). In support of this statement, Ware offers a new consideration of mutation, compatible also with the relation.

The next issue I would like to focus on is the particular relation of dependence of every creature on God. Here the two relative terms are the creature and its Creator: the foundation is the essence of what is created (and not a quantity or quality as we have seen earlier). The dependence on God is generally considered as the third model of relations identified by Aristotle, that is, the measure-measured relations, characterized precisely by non-mutuality: what is created holds a real relation with God from which it draws its being, while the Creator has no real *respectus* towards it. William of Ware follows this tradition and recognizes a real relation from creature to

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God and only a rational relation from God to what is created, as he says in distinction 30 of his first book on *Sentences*.

The dependence on God is addressed in the II book of *Sentences*, namely, the classic place dedicated to the creation. Here, Ware asks if the passive creation is something absolute, really added to the creature essence. Traditionally, the creation is divided into active and passive creation: the first is the same divine act, the second is the being-created. Is this 'being-created' the same essence of creature or is it something more than that? This is the question. According to William of Ware the passive creation is the relation of dependence on God. As Gedeon Gàl noted, this position agrees with that of Bonaventure, for which the being created can be considered also as a middle between created substances and the Creator.

William admits that, even though relations in creatures are different *res* by their foundations, this particular relation is unique because it is the same substance of what is created. The essence of creature is totally dependent on the Creator so that creature is only a relative extreme term, thus there is no creature without relation to God. He clarifies that creature, considered in itself, is something absolute, but compared to God is only a *respectus*, namely it is almost nothing in relation to God (quasi nihil), quoting Anselm's *Monologion*. In other words, Ware wants to say that what is created is in any case an entity but, compared to God, its essence decreases to its dependence on the Creator. The dependence on God is not a real thing distinct by the creature nature, because the creature cannot be considered without this reference to what produced it. Thus, the dependence is the same substance and subsistence of creature, so that only God's will puts the creature into being without any early mutation and when he will, the creature ceases to exist. In other words, it is a *contradictio in terminis* that to be a creature and not to have this relation to Creator as well as, in the previous example, it is impossible that two white things exist without any similarity.

Therefore, in Ware's view the passive creation is really the same essence of creature, which in turn indicates the relation of dependence on God. Actually, William of Ware has a realistic doctrine of relation, but in the particular case of the relation to Creator, which joins all created beings, this reality cannot be claimed. The dependence is a necessary condition because it is inconceivable that there is a creature without reference to God.

In the reply to the argumentations William opens up to the possibility to consider this relation to God as an accident. Following a long tradition arising from Porphyry and Augustine, the accidens can be considered as separable and inseparable. The separable accident can be lost through change, for example the colour black of a man's hair: the hair, in fact, can change and become hoary, that is, through a change they can lose their colour. The inseparable accident can be lost only when the subject to which it inheres ceases to exist, like in the case of the colour black of the raven's plumage: feathers may lose their black colour, but not as long as they are feathers. To these two traditional ways to consider accident, Ware adds a third one. The accident can be taken for each mutable nature and so every created substance is an accident because it is changeable. Only in the last way creation can be considered as an accident.

This point is very interesting because a similar argumentation can be found in Duns Scotus's *Lectura* and *Ordinatio*. Here, in the response to those who consider the dependence on God as an accident, Scotus claims that the accident can be taken for anything changeable, and so any created substance is an accident, because it is changeable; or can be taken for what is changeable inasmuch as it is able to be lost. In this second way the relation to God is not an accident because

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the creature cannot be without its relation to Creator. Therefore, Scotus seems to read 'mutable' more as 'able to be lost' than as changeable. Indeed, in the *Lectura* Scotus explicitly denies that the transcendental relation of every creature to God can define 'accident' because there is not creature without this relation. The dependence on God pertains to all beings, it belongs to the essence of creatures and must be really identical to it. Nevertheless, through the formal distinction, Scotus seems to revalue the independent existence of every creature.

Let me conclude by saying that William of Ware's doctrine about relation is really interesting and it seems to me that it is important for the involving of Duns Scotus's opinion. According to William of Ware there are three different models or fields of applications of relations: the first is in creatures, the second is in God and the third is the particular relation of dependence of every being on God. In the first field we can distinguish both the *ratio* and the *res* of a particular relation, because we have a specific mode of being: to be towards another thing. So, in creature relations are essences or *res* really distinct from the foundation, so the paternity is a different *res* by man, or the similarity is distinct by white thing. Differently, in the Trinity we can distinguish the *ratio* of relation, yet, but not its *res* because here there is only one *res*. Thus, the filiation is not a different *res* by the divine essence, nevertheless it constitutes the person of Son. The dependence of what is created on God is a particular case of relation in creatures because we have seen that from Creator to creatures there is only a rational relation. So, we would expect that the dependence on God to have at least a real content. But Ware specifies that this relation is different because it is the same substance of what is created, inasmuch as the essence of creature is dependent.

William of Ware's doctrine follows the traditional view distinguishing two aspects of a real relation, like Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent. Unlike these two latter authors, he recognizes the ontological statute of *res relativa* to a real relation in creatures. But I think that his most important contribution concerns the distinction of fields of application. It seems to me that this distinction is simplified by Duns Scotus's theory of categorical and transcendental relations. The first is common, whereas the second is applicable to the particular case of the dependence on God and the Trinity.