Relations in Earlier Medieval Latin Philosophy: Against the Standard Account

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Abstract

Medieval philosophers before Ockham are usually said to have treated relations as real, monadic accidents. This "Standard Account" does not, however, fit in with most discussions of relations in the Latin tradition from Augustine to the end of the 12th century. Early medieval thinkers minimized or denied the ontological standing of relations, and some, such as John Scottus Eriugena, recognized them as polyadic. They were especially influenced by Boethius's discussion in his *De trinitate*, where relations are treated as prime examples of accidents that do not affect their substances. This paper examines non-standard accounts in the period up to c. 1100.

Keywords: relations; accidents; substance; Aristotle; Boethius

Resum. *Les relacions en la filosofia llatina medieval primerenca: contra el relat estàndard*

Es diu que els filòsofs medievals previs a Occam van tractar les relacions com a accidents reals i monàdics. Però aquest «Relat estàndard» no encaixa amb gran part de les discussions que van tenir lloc en la tradició llatina des d'Agustí fins al final del segle xii sobre les relacions. Els primers pensadors medievals van minimitzar o negar l'estatus ontològic de les relacions, i alguns, com Joan Escot Eriúgena, les van reconèixer com a poliàdiques. Aquests filòsofs van estar fonamentalment influïts per la discussió de Boeci en el seu *De trinitate*, on les relacions es tracten com a primers exemples d'accidents que no afecten les seves substàncies. Aquest treball examina els relats no-estàndards en el període que arriba fins a l'any 1100.

Paraules clau: relacions; accidents; substància; Aristòtil; Boeci

Summary

1. Introduction

There is a Standard Account of relations in medieval philosophy, which is the basis for most work on the area in the Anglophone tradition. It is presented in its clearest form in Jeffrey Brower's article on the topic in the authoritative *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Brower, 2015). Its main features are, however, already found in the earliest survey of the field by a historian of philosophy with analytic training, Julius Weinberg's 1965 essay on the history of relation (Weinberg, 1965). It informs Henninger's important monograph on *Relations. Medieval Theories 1250-1325* (Henninger, 1989), and it shapes even the writing of the occasional historians who search for exceptions (for example, Ebbesen, 1995; Hansen, 2013).

Although its proponents may take a brief look at Augustine, Boethius and even Eriugena, and a glance at Arabic writers, the Standard Account is firmly based on the work of university theologians, and the occasional Arts Master, in the period that Henninger identifies explicitly in his sub-title: the late 13th and the beginning of the 14th century. It makes two main claims.

The first claim rests on a contrast with the standard way of treating relations in contemporary analytic philosophy, where their logical form is taken to provide the key to their ontological structure. Whereas a non-relational property can be represented by a function with one place, such as "— is white", a relation, such as "— is the son of —" requires a function with two or more places, that is to say a polyadic function. Contemporary philosophers are fond of talking about relations themselves as 'polyadic' and, although this is really no more than a metaphor, it is at least clear that a relation does not belong to any one of the things related but to them all. According to the Standard Account, medieval thinkers, by contrast, held relations to be one-place or monadic properties belonging to a single substance (even if they recognized polyadic relational expressions).

To view relations as monadic properties can be, and usually is, described as 'Aristotelian'. This description is correct in the sense that the medieval writers derived it from their understanding of Aristotle, but the view does not clearly correspond to anything in Aristotle's texts on the subject (principally *Categories*, Chapter 7; 6a36-8b24; and also *Metaphysics* V, 15; 1021a27-b11; XIV,1; 1088a15-b1). Aristotle himself, who describes the category as *pros ti* (*ad aliquid*; 'towards something'), usually talks about relatives (the *relata*) rather than the relations themselves – about a slave and master rather than the relations of slavehood and mastership[1]. Moreover, some scholars question whether, on Aristotle's account, relations are in fact monadic (Hood, 2004).

The second claim the Standard Account makes is that, up to the time of Ockham, medieval philosophers in the Latin tradition were realists about

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1. It can be argued that, despite appearing not to do so, Aristotle is really talking about properties: Mignucci (1986). In *Metaphysics* V, 15, 1021b7, Aristotle does briefly mention "the properties by virtue of which the things that have them are called relative" (Aristotle, 1984: 1613), distinguishing them from, though treating them together with, relatives.

relations. As Brower puts it, with only slight qualification: "Prior to the four-teenth century […] it is difficult to identify any unambiguous representatives of anti-realism, at least in the Latin West". Brower puts it in this negative way perhaps because it is also generally accepted that this realism was, in many cases, tempered. Every relational accident was considered to be founded on a non-relational accident. Thus, for instance, the non-relational accident in the category of quantity of being six-foot tall founds my relational accident of being taller than you. For some 13th and early 14th-century thinkers, the dis-tinction between the relational accident and its foundation was not that between one thing and another. These theorists are still realists — relations are real features of the world, not just ways of perceiving or talking about it — but, as Brower puts it, reductive realists. It is, by contrast, not at all clear whether Aristotle himself was a realist about relations, especially since in the *Categories* he talks rather about relatives, which are real things, such as masters and slaves, that are members of *other* categories.

The explanation of why the Standard Account came to be widely adopted is not, then, that the medieval scholars simply read it in Aristotle. Rather, it is twofold. On the one hand, there is the question of why they started to discuss relations at all, rather than relatives, as a literal reading of Aristotle's text would suggest. An answer to this question, based on the different accounts of Aristote-lian relations that became available, is suggested below (2.6). There is, however, also the broader question of why, having started to discuss relations, medieval scholars then devised the Standard Account. The answer is that the Standard Account was constructed not from the chapter on relations in the *Categories,* but on the basis of the metaphysical framework set out in the work as a whole, although not explicitly brought to bear on relation by Aristotle himself. Rela-tion is listed in the *Categories* as one of the categories of accident. Aristotelian accidents, however, cannot belong to more than one subject — probably not at all, and certainly not at the same time. If relations are accidents they must, therefore, be monadic. If I am six-foot tall, and you are five-foot, then there is an accident of relation inhering in me, by which I am taller than you, and a separate accident of relation inhering in you, by which you are shorter than I. (For an excellent contemporary working of this line of Aristotelian reasoning, see Marmodoro, 2016: 3-5).

Historians of medieval philosophy are right in thinking that the Standard Account was widely held in the 13th century, and in the 14th (though Ockham and some others challenged it then)[2]. It was also (see below, 3) followed by logicians in the 12th century.

2. These remarks have been made with the Anglophone analytic tradition especially in mind. In actual fact, however, the Standard Account is also followed in its broad lines by most scholars working in other traditions (see, for example, Krempel, 1952; Mojsisch, 1992; Schönberger, 1994; Cesalli, 2002). They do not make the comparison with contemporary views of relations, nor use the terminology of monadic and polyadic properties, but there is the same consensus that, before Ockham, medieval philosophers were realists about relations, which were regarded as Aristotelian accidents, each belonging to a different subject.

The Standard Account does not, however, characterize how thinkers regarded relations over the whole course of the Middle Ages. Leaving aside the obvious point that its proponents take hardly any account of discussions in medieval Arabic, Hebrew and Greek texts, even with regard to the Latin tradition alone, the characterization is misleading, because it does not at all fit the whole period from the time of Augustine up to about 1100, and it is also partly misleading about the 12th century[3]. The following pages aim to correct part of this oversight. It quickly becomes apparent, when studying the early Latin tradition, that up to about 1100 all thinkers approached relations very differently from their 13th-century successors, and in the 12th century many of them continued to do so. They often thought in terms not of relations, but, like Aristotle himself, of relatives; of father and son, not fatherhood and sonship. When they did consider relations, they did sometimes recognize what contemporary philosophers call their polyadic nature. Also, rather than taking the reality of relations in God as a reason for thinking that there exist real relations in other things too, they used the extrinsic nature of relative predications as a way of explaining how the three divine persons, conceived as relations, are one God.

2. Relations in the Early Middle Ages and their Sources

2.1. Sources for Early Medieval Theories of Relations: Augustine, Boethius, pseudo-Augustine and Martianus Capella

The early medieval approach to thinking about relations was established by a text that filters Aristotle's theory of the *Categories* through a grid of concerns raised by the doctrine of the Trinity – Boethius's *De trinitate,* which forms the first of his *opuscula sacra.*

Boethius himself looked back to another work, which was also known and influential in the early Middle Ages. In Book 5 of *De trinitate*, Augustine considers how far, and how, Aristotle's ten categories can be predicated of God. Although he begins by making a sharp distinction between substance, which can be truly predicated of God, and the other nine categories of accidents (V.ii.3; cf. V.i.2), which cannot, he goes on to allow two ways in which some of these categories can be predicated of God literally, rather than through metaphor or simile. According to the first way, which seems from the examples he gives to apply to the categories of quality, quantity and time (when), if we say, for instance, that God is great or that he is eternal, we do not mean that he participates in greatness but that he is greatness or eternity itself. The second way concerns just relation. Augustine sees that it must be possible to make predications in this category about God, because God is triune, and the persons

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3. General discussions have typically paid only the most cursory attention to philosophy in Arabic – e.g. six pages (89-95) in Weinberg (1965), and only incidental remarks in Brower (2015) – and have ignored medieval writings in Greek and Hebrew. The present volume contains (pp. 91-106) an important general survey of relations in the Arabic tradition by Hans Daiber.

of the Trinity are relational: the Father begets the Son, and the Holy Spirit is breathed ("spirated") by the Father and the Son. These predications are not substantial, says Augustine (V.v.6), because the Father, for instance, is not said to be Father from himself, but in relation to another, because of the fact the he has a Son. But Augustine also denies that they are accidental, because they lack mutability. They are therefore relative, non-accidental predications.

Boethius claims that he took the seeds of his *De trinitate* from Augustine (Proem; Boethius, 2005: 167). He does indeed follow Augustine in considering one by one whether predications in any of the ten categories can be made of God, and in taking predications of quality and quantity about him as being substantial (Chapter 4; Boethius, 2005, 174-75 and 177). He does, however, have his own, distinctive approach to the category of relation. Unlike Augustine, or Aristotle himself, Boethius makes a strong contrast between what he considers the intrinsic predications made in the categories of substance, quantity and quality, and the extrinsic ones made in the other categories, most strikingly in that of relation. He uses the extrinsic character of relational predicates as his central argument to establish his aim in the treatise: that the distinction between the Persons of the Trinity does not compromise the unity of God's essence.

The seven extrinsic categories (relation (*ad aliquid*), posture, having, when, where, doing and being-done-to) show what surrounds a thing, its *circumstantiae.* They "do not show a thing to be something but rather in some way attach something extrinsic to it". By contrast, predications in the other three categories – substance, quality and quantity – "as it were show the thing", they "are so predicated that they show a thing to be something" and are thus called "predications according to the thing"⁴. Boethius explains his position with an example (of a predication in the category of where). Where can indeed be predicated of a human or of God, as when we say that the man is in the forum or that God is everywhere, "but in such a way that that which is predicated is not as it were the thing itself about which it is being said". When, therefore, we say that the man is in the forum, we do not do so in the same way as we say that he is white or tall. In these latter cases, we are saying that he is "surrounded and determined by some property by which he could be designated according to himself", whereas in this predication of where "he is shown only in so far as he is indicated by other things"⁵.

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4. *De trinitate* 4; Boethius (2005: 177): "Iamne patet quae sit differentia praedicationum? Quod aliae quidem quasi rem monstrant aliae vero quasi circumstantias rei; quodque illa quae ita praedicantur, ut esse aliquid rem ostendant, illa vero ut non esse sed potius extrinsecus aliquid quodam modo affigant. Illa igitur, quae aliquid esse designant, secundum rem praedicationes vocentur".

5. *De trinitate* 4; Boethius (2005: 175): "Nam ubi vel de homine vel de Deo praedicari potest: de homine, ut in foro, de Deo, ut ubique; sed ita ut non quasi ipsa sit res id quod praedicatur. Non enim ita homo dicitur esse in foro quem ad modum esse albus vel longus nec quasi circumfusus et determinatus proprietate aliqua qua designari secundum se possit, sed tantum quo sit illud aliis informatum rebus per hanc praedicationem ostenditur".

Boethius presents relatives as extrinsic predication in its most extreme form. Relatives "most of all seem not to make a predication according to themselves, since they are clearly seen to obtain from the coming of something else"[6]. Relative predication, he goes on to explain, "wholly does not consist of being something which exists, but rather obtains in some way in that it is in comparison (and not always with something itself, but sometimes with the same thing)"[7]. Boethius looks at an example to illustrate his point, the case of master and slave. It might seem that a predication such as "this man is this master's slave" is not merely extrinsic, but does in fact predicate something in itself, because if the slave ceases to belong to the master, the master ceases to be a master. Boethius tries to show why this view is wrong by contrasting the case of a predication such as "This thing is white". Here too, when the whiteness is lost, the white thing ceases to be a white thing, but here the whiteness is an accident which attaches to the white thing. In the case of the master, it is rather "the word by which he is called master". The servant is not an accident that attaches to the master in the way whiteness attaches to the white thing, but "a certain power, by which the slave is coerced, and since this power disappears when the slave is removed, it is clear that it is not an accident per se of the master but extrinsically in a certain way through the coming of slaves"[8].

What Boethius means here is not entirely clear. According to one interpretation, the accident described as "a certain power by which the slave is coerced" is not itself considered to be relational. This non-relational accident is all that there is in reality at the basis of the relation, which is itself thought of as a purely linguistic phenomenon: because of the non-relational accident of power, the man can be *called* a master. According to a second interpretation, Boethius may be saying that we should think of there being a relational accident, between the master and one or more slaves. However, precisely because it depends on something outside the man concerned, it is not the man's accident in the full sense of the word.

Boethius goes on to give a second example – one of what philosophers now would call "merely Cambridge change". The relations "to my left" and "to my right" can be successively true of a man who is sitting completely still, if I move from one side to the other of him. This shows, says Boethius (5; Boethius, 2005: 178), that "relative predication does not according to itself add, take away or change anything of the thing about which it is made". The choice of this example shows how anxious Boethius is to minimize the ontological

6. *De trinitate* 5; Boethius (2005: 177): "Maxime enim haec (*sc.* relativa) non videntur secundum se facere praedicationem, quae perspicue ex alieno adventu constare perspiciuntur".
7. *De trinitate* 5; Boethius (2005: 178): "Quae (*sc.* praedicatio relativa) tota non in eo quod est esse consistit, sed in eo quod est in comparatione aliquo modo se habere, nec semper ad aliud sed aliquotiens ad idem".
8. *De trinitate* 5; Boethius (2005: 178): "At in domino, si servum auferas, perit vocabulum quo dominus vocabatur; sed non accidit servus domino ut albedo albo, sed potestas quaedam, qua servus coercetur. Quae quoniam sublato deperit servo, constat non eam per se domino accidere sed per servorum quodam modo extrinsecus accessum".

weight of relations. It suggests that (in line with the second interpretation above) Boethius is not trying to argue that there are no real relations, but that relations not only do not simply belong to the things related, but also that they can be entirely extrinsic to one of them.

Boethius was also the translator of Aristotle's *Categories* and wrote a commentary on it. Neither of these works was generally available before the late 10th century (cf. Minio-Paluello, 1961). There were, however, two widely-used sources from which early medieval scholars could learn indirectly about how Aristotle discussed the category *ad aliquid.* The *Categoriae Decem*, usually attributed to Augustine from the time of Alcuin, is a Latin paraphrase-commentary of the *Categories* made in the circle of the 4th-century Aristotelian, Themistius. The paraphraser is to a large extent a faithful interpreter of Aristotle. He does indeed treat some of the other categories as types of things, rather than explaining them in terms of types of predication, but not *ad aliquid*, where the discussion, as in the *Categories*, is about relatives, not relations. One innovation in the *Categoriae Decem* which does, however, affect relatives is the adoption of a four-fold division of all the *Categories*. There is the first category, which is always given its Greek name, *ousia*, rather than the Latin *substantia*. Quality, quantity, posture (*iacere*) are said to be inside *ousia*; where, when and having outside; and relation, doing and being-done-to are both inside and outside (52-54; Aristotle, 1961: 144-45; for a comparison with Boethius's division, see de Libera, 2015: 38-41). Book Four, on logic, of Martianus Capella's very popular encyclopedic prosimetrum, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii,* contains a long exposition of relatives (1983: 122-26), which follows Aristotle's discussion quite closely, but takes its own line at the end (see below 2.3).

2.2. John Scottus Eriugena

John Scottus Eriugena had discussed the category of *ad aliquid* when commenting on Martianus Capella, probably in the early 850s (see below, 2.3), but his most original thinking about relations is found in his dialogue *Periphyseon* (early 860s). This five-book masterpiece is distinguished both by its use of Greek authors, such as Gregory of Nyssa, pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor, and its author's own original, idiosyncratic turn of mind[9]. A long section of Book I is devoted to examining whether any of Aristotle's *Categories* can be predicated of God. Although this exercise takes up the tradition of Augustine, Boethius and Alcuin, Eriugena departs from it when, prompted by pseudo-Dionysius, he claims that none of the *Categories*, not even *ousia,* can be applied to God (cf. Marenbon, 1981: 50-51, 72-73). He moreover proceeds to make a number of different divisions of the ten *Categories*, which are original to him, even if traces of the influence of Maximus the

9. For a general introduction to Eriugena, see Moran (1989); Erismann (2011: 193-292); Moulin (2016).

Confessor and perhaps others may be found (cf. Courtine 1980; de Libera 2015). Although Eriugena knows Boethius's *De trinitate*, he does not allow it to affect his treatment of relation.

Eriugena's most interesting comments on relation come when he is explaining his novel division of all the *Categories* into those which fall under *motus* and under *status*. Ousia, quantity, situs and locus are at rest; the others in motion. But the question is posed by the pupil in the dialogue: why are *ad aliquid* and *habitudo* (that is to say, the two most obviously relational categories) not at rest? A *habitus* is a fixed disposition, and a relation such as that of father to son or twofold to single does not change (I 469BC; John Scottus, 1996: 40). But the Master immediately disagrees. A *habitus,* he explains, strives towards perfection but never reaches it. Furthermore, he continues:

> I do not know why you hesitate about relation, when you see that it cannot be in one and the same thing, for it always seems to be in two things. Now who can doubt that the appetite of two things towards each other comes to be by a certain motion?[10]

Eriugena seems to be clearly talking about relations, not relatives as in Aristotle or the *Categoriae Decem* (the text through which he knew the *Categories*); and by treating them as appetites, he endows relations with a certain reality. He does, however, have a very clear idea of these things as what philosophers now call 'polyadic': relation, he says, must be *two* things, which move towards each other because of it.

2.3. Early Medieval Glosses

From the late 9th to the turn of the 12th century the study, usually in monasteries, of scholarly texts, such as Boethius's *De trinitate,* the *Categoriae decem* and Martianus Capella, is witnessed by glosses written in the margins and between the lines of the authoritative works. Editors who try to reconstruct fixed commentaries and attribute them to definite authors underestimate the instability of these sets of glosses, which are neither entirely the same nor completely different from manuscript to manuscript (Marenbon, 1981: 116-17, 173-79). The comments that follow are based, therefore, on a mere sampling of this material from editions and manuscripts.

The tradition of glosses on Boethius's *Opuscula sacra* is particularly badly known (see Erismann, 2009: 157-58 for a summary). A so-called commentary, misattributed by its editor a century ago to Eriugena, provides an indication of how the *De trinitate* was approached in the late 9th or early 10th century. Explaining the passage where Boethius is discussing how a master ceases to be a master if he no longer has a slave, the glossator writes:

10. *Periphyseon* I, 469D; John Scottus (1996: 41): "De relatione […] miror cur dubitas, cum uideas eam in uno eodemque esse non posse; in duobus nanque semper uidetur. Duorum autem ad se inuicem appetitus motu quodam fieri quis dubitarit?"

> The word (*vocabulum*) alone perishes, but not the substance, because the category *ad aliquid* is not predicated of the substance but about words, because one <word> depends on the other and they are said in some way to exist and to be converted to each other, and when one perishes, so does the other – so someone is not said to be a master unless there is a slave who is ruled by him, nor a slave, unless there is a master[11].

The glossator, then, opts for the first of the two interpretations of Boethius's text mentioned above, according to which relations are purely a matter of language.

The glossed manuscripts on the *Categoriae Decem* do not seem to take any stand of their own on the nature of relatives or relations, but rather appear to follow the line of the paraphrase, where they are not adding material irrelevant to the question of relatives[12]. Even the glossator of Sankt Gallen 274 who, unusually, has access to Boethius's commentary on Aristotle's *Categories,* does not put forward a distinctive view[13]. One gloss suggests, however, that there may have been an underlying position like that found in the glosses to *De trinitate.* The paraphraser writes (Aristotle, 1961: 158) that "when the slave is removed, the lord does not exist, and when the lord is removed, neither does the slave appear". This statement about things is given a purely linguistic interpretation: "For although the substance remains, the word which is called 'lord' perishes"[14].

At least two early medieval treatments of Martianus Capella deal with the section there on relatives. One of them consists of glosses which may well, wholly or in part, go back to Eriugena (cf. Marenbon 1981: 117-119); another takes the form of a continuous commentary, based to a great extent on these and other glosses, and put together by Remigius of Auxerre at the beginning

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11. Rand (1906: 44): "Vocabulum tantum perit, non autem substantia, quia categoria ad aliquid non praedicatur de substantia, sed de vocabulis, quod pendet alterum ex altero et dicuntur aliquo modo se habere atque convertuntur adinvicem et dum unius perit vocabulum, perit et alterius; ut dominus non dicitur, nisi sit servus cui dominetur, neque servus, nisi sit dominus".

12. On the manuscripts containing these glosses, and the distribution of glosses among them, see (most recently) Marenbon (2013: 142, 154-156). My conclusions here are based on examining three MSS: Paris BnF lat 12949 (s. x), St Petersburg, Publichnaya Biblioteka im. M. E. Saltykova-Schedrina, E.V. class. lat. 7 (s. ix), Sankt Gallen Stiftsbibliothek 274m (s. ix²). These MSS all contain a good collection of the standard glosses, as well as some individual material.

13. On the use of Boethius's commentary in these glosses, see Marenbon (1997: 28-29). In the section on relations, the glossator borrows and abbreviates from Boethius's commentary (1891, 225AB) in a gloss on p. 39.

14. BnF, lat 12949, f. 31v: "Licet enim substancia maneat, uocabulum tamen quod 'dominus' uocabatur perit. Hinc Sedulius: 'Infelix mater nec etiam modo mater quia filium amittebat'". (This gloss is also in the Leningrad and Sankt Gallen MSS, and probably others). The well-chosen reference is to Caelius Sedulius's *Carmen Paschale*, 125-26, where the poet comments on the plight of the erstwhile mothers whose children have been slain by Herod. The context, which contains expressions such as "the lord is the lord of a servant" and "the servant is the servant of a lord", may have contributed to this linguistic interpretation.

of the 10th century. Although for the most part these glosses stay close to the text, without taking up any particular stance about the nature of relatives or relations, there are a couple of exceptions. The first concerns the very beginning of the passage on relatives, where Martianus explains that:

> There is a relative when the very thing which is said is of something or may be referred to something in some way, as a son cannot be understood without father and mother, nor a slave without a master […] (Martianus Capella, 1983: 122).

According to the glossator, Martianus's means to say

> Not *the very thing*, which is according to nature or substance, but *the very thing which is said*; that is, the naming itself, and not just the naming, but what is signified through this naming. For it is not the name of a substance, but the name of an accident. For a man is not by nature a father or a son. For it happens as an accident (*accidit*) to a man to be a father or a son[15].

This comment was moreover incorporated verbatim by Remigius into his commentary (Ramelli, 2006: 1170). At first, it seems that the glossator is taking a linguistic approach similar to that suggested by the *De trinitate* and *Categoriae decem* glosses cited above. However, the glossator continues by considering what relative words signify and, on pointing to the way in which "it happens as an accident to a man to be a father or a son", he is implicitly pointing to the *relation*, the accident by which a substance, such as a man, becomes a relative, such as a father or a son.

Another gloss also moves in the same direction. Here Martianus himself has prepared the ground. Martianus proposes a new, second definition of relatives (which does not correspond to the new definition Aristotle proposes at the same point): relatives are those things which refer to something *with the exception of what is in something* (Martianus Capella, 1983: 125). With this cryptic qualification he means that when the reference is only to part of the thing concerned (like a feather to a feathered thing), then the item concerned is not a relative. A slave, he says, passes the test, because enslavement refers to the master, as well as being in the slave himself. Here, Martianus has silently, and perhaps without being aware of it, moved from talking about relatives to talking about a relation, enslavement (*servitus*). An Eriugenian gloss also taken by Remigius emphasizes this by the inclusion of a number of examples of relations. Slave, son and single are "true relatives" because enslave-

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15. Von Perger (2005: 297); Ramelli (2006: 292 [keyed to Martianus Capella 1969, 174, line 11]): "ac si dixisset: 'Non hoc ipsum, quod est secundum naturam vel substantiam, sed *hoc ipsum, quod dicitur*, id est: ipsa nominatio; et non solum nominatio, sed quod significatur per illam nominationem'. Non enim est nomen [relativum] substantiae, sed nomen accidentis. Homo enim secundum naturam non est pater neque filius; accidit enim homini pater vel filius esse".

ment, sonship (*filiolitas*) and singularity refer not to them but to the lord, the father and the double[16].

2.4. Anselm

Anselm, who knew the *Categories* through Boethius's direct translation of Aristotle's treatise, characteristically worked out his own approach to the doctrine in the *Monologion*, allowing himself more freedom than most of his predecessors and successors (Marenbon, 2005: 237-242). His approach to relations, like Boethius's in *De trinitate*, is to reduce their ontological standing almost to nothing. However, unlike Boethius, who regards all of the seven categories other than substance, quantity and quality in this way, Anselm restricts this characterization to just some relations. Moreover, his starting point is quite different from Boethius's. Anselm poses a dilemma (*Monologion* 25; Anselm, 1946: 43-44). Since God is immutable, he cannot even be thought to be varied by accidents. But does not the fact that he is greater than all other natures and dissimilar to them come to him as an accident? Anselm proceeds to distinguish between accidents, such as colours, which cannot come to and leave their subjects without altering them, from those, such as "certain relations", which "are known to bring about no change whatsoever to what they are said of when they come to or leave it" (*alia nullam omnino vel accedendo vel recedendo mutationem circa id de quo dicuntur efficere noscuntur*). He asks the reader to consider Boso who will not be born until after the present year. When the baby Boso is born, Anselm will acquire a relation of being bigger than him and will later – when Boso becomes a strapping six-footer – lose it and acquire the relation of being smaller than him, without any change to himself[17]. Anselm goes on to conclude tentatively that what he has called accidents of this sort, which do not change anything, are not properly called accidents at all. He has thus solved his dilemma: when God created the world, it became the case that he holds the relation of being greater than it, but this relation is not (even) an accident.

What, then, are such relations? Two and a half centuries later, Ockham – who wished to eliminate all the categories except quality and, in some theological contexts, quantity from his ontology – saw Anselm as an ally in anticipation. According to this passage from the *Monologion*, Ockham says, a relation is not "a form really informing the substance of which it is said, as

16. Von Perger (2005: 300); Ramelli (2006: 295-296) [keyed to Martianus Capella (1969: 178, line 8/9)]: "Nam servitus non ad servum refertur, sed ad dominum; nec filiolitas refertur ad filium, sed ad patrem; nec simplicitas refertur ad simplum, sed ad duplum; atque adeo ista sint vera relative". For the passage in Remigius: Ramelli (2006: 1174).
17. I have drawn out the point from Anselm's elegantly concise Latin, and given the baby a name: "Constat namque quia homini post annum praesentem nascituro nec maior nec minor nec aequalis sum nec similis. Omnes autem has relationes utique cum natus fuerit, sine omni mei mutatione ad illum habere potero et amittere, secundum quod crescet vel per qualitates diversas mutabitur".

whiteness is", but rather "something contingently predicable of something, because it can be successively affirmed and denied because of the changing of that of which it is said or of another […]"[18]. The implication is that, in Ockham's interpretation, Anselm considered relations as merely linguistic items, a view which some of his early medieval predecessors may have shared. Ockham's account is, however, seriously misleading[19]. Anselm makes it clear that he is talking only about relations in the case where the changing is not that of the thing about which the relation is said, but of another. Anselm does indeed seem to hold that when he, without changing his height, becomes smaller than Boso, it is merely a matter of "is smaller than Boso" becoming truly predicable of him. However, his description at least leaves it open that Boso, as he grows, also acquires accidents of relation (such as being-taller-than) to Anselm. Rather than falling into the early medieval linguistic approach, or anticipating Ockham, Anselm seems rather to be adumbrating the later medieval idea that God has merely relations of reason with creatures, but creatures have real relations with God (Henninger, 1989: 33-39).

2.5. Abelard, William of Champeaux and the Standard Theory

Anselm wrote his *Monologion* in 1075-76. If the analysis above is correct, it may be that a position about normal relations not far from the Standard View underlies his brief discussion of the abnormal case of relations and God, although it is so vague that it can hardly even be called implicit. By contrast, in Peter Abelard's *Dialectica*, dating from c. 1105-15, the Standard View is fully in evidence (Peter Abelard, 1970: 83-92). The relation between a father and his son is explained by two, reciprocal real monadic relational accidents, inhering their subject substances, fatherhood in the father, sonship in the son. For Abelard, as a nominalist, each of these accidents is a particular form, and so the father who is blessed with ten sons is informed by ten distinct relational accidents of paternity. However, the Standard View also appears in early 12th-century commentaries on the *Categories*, and one of them, at least (C 8)[20], takes the position, open (though with difficulty: cf. Martin, 2016: 463) to a realist, that such a father does not need ten particular paternities, but just universal paternity, duly individuated. C8 has been connected with, or even

18. Ockham, *Summa Logicae* 51 (William of Ockham, 1974: 169): "Non enim <relatio> dicitur accidens quia sit forma realiter informans substantiam de qua dicitur, sicut albedo, sed quia est quoddam predicabile de aliquo contingenter, quod potest successive affirmari et negari propter transmutationem illius de quo dicitur uel alterius, ut aequalitas et similitudo, dominus, creator etc".

19. I owe this reference to Ockham to Christophe Erismann (2014: 16-19), and I have also used his characterization of Anselm as "Ockham's Ally". Erismann rightly notes (19) how Ockham's account deviates from the *Monologion,* but in my view the difference goes beyond his text's being "plus clair et plus affirmatif" than Ockham's.

20. The pre-1200 commentaries on Aristotelian logic have been given standard numbers, with those on the *Categories* called 'C1', 'C2' etc. The fullest list of these *Categories* commentaries is in Marenbon (2013: 157-167).

attributed to, the defender of realism over universals, William of Champeaux. However, this commentary, which varies from manuscript to manuscript, is a multi-layered composition, not simply attributable to any one writer. Although William was Abelard's teacher, it cannot be assumed that the discussion of relations in C8, or C7 (see Erismann, 2014: 20-23) — a view close to Abelard's — is earlier than that in the *Dialectica*[21].

Since the treatment of relation in these texts has recently been discussed by two of the finest contemporary historians of logic, Christopher Martin (2016) and Christophe Erismann (2014), there is no need to dwell on it here. Their thorough analyses do not, however, explicitly address a question which the framework of the present paper raises rather pointedly. As explained above, it is easy to see how, once they started to think, not about relatives but about relations, medieval scholars reached the Standard View on the basis of Aristotle's general theory about accidents. However, what led them to focus on relations rather than, as Aristotle himself did, relatives?

It cannot be the switch from using the *Categoriae Decem* to using Boethius's translation of the *Categories* itself (cf. Minio-Paluello, 1962), since Aristotle's own text, the pseudo-Augustinian paraphrase and, for the most part, the account in Martianus Capella are all concerned with relatives. Possibly the shift to talking about relations at the end of Martianus's discussion, and the way it was taken up in the commentary tradition, had some influence. Another influence behind the shift to thinking about relations was probably Boethius's commentary on the *Categories*. Although this commentary was occasionally copied and, rarely, used (as by the Sankt Gallen commentator of the *Categoriae Decem* (see above, 2.3)), it was not widely read until the 11th century — not surprisingly, because it was only then that the Aristotelian text on which it comments, rather than the paraphrase, came to be widely studied. Boethius (1891: 216-38) considers most of Aristotle's chapter on *ad aliquid* to be the presentation of a Platonic view (1891: 217c), which Aristotle himself rejects only towards the end, when he proposes a new definition of relatives (8a34-35), as "those for which to be is the same as to be related to something" (*eis est esse quod sunt ad aliquid*: Boethius's composite translation, Aristotle, 1961: 62). Although it is important to stress that Boethius himself discusses both definitions only in terms of relatives, the second definition is easier to apply to relations, and Boethius's idea that most of the chapter on *ad aliquid* is discussing a Platonic view rejected by Aristotle made it far easier for later interpreters to neglect Aristotle's own treatment of relatives so as to extract from him a theory of relations, the Standard View, based on his general framework of substances and accidents.

Perhaps too, paradoxically, Boethius's *De trinitate* itself had some influence in this direction. Although it was, and remained, the basis for a different

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21. Yukio Iwakuma has developed arguments to link C8 (which he believes forms a single complex, along with C7 and C14 – but note the very different stance on relations between C7 and C8) to William of Champeaux (see Iwakuma, 2009: 89-91; cf. Marenbon, 2011: 196-98). Iwakuma does not, however, think for *Categories*, Chapter 6 and onwards, including the section on relatives, that these manuscripts preserve William's own work.

approach, at odds with the Standard View, it does consider relations, rather than relatives.

3. Conclusion, where Nothing is Concluded

The Standard View of relations seems to have been dominant in logical texts since its introduction in the early 12th century, although this statement must remain tentative until more of the material has been edited or at least examined. From a sampling of the anonymous commentaries, a view of this sort was taken, not just in C7 and C8, as already mentioned, and in Abelard's commentary (C10) as well as his *Dialectica*, but also in C15 (cf. Hansen, 2015) from the mid-12th century, and in the Porretan commentary C12 (cf. Ebbesen 2001). One striking exception in this tradition is Peter Abelard. In his *Theologia Christiana* (c. 1126), he arguably abandoned the idea that relations are real things at all (Marenbon, 2013: 192-98). This turn is backed up both by a note about the views of Peter Abelard in the manuscript, Avranches, Bib. Mun. 232, f. 69r, that contains the only copy of his *De intellectibus* (Marenbon, 2013: 189-92) and by the lack of mention of real accidents of relation in the nominalist *Categories* commentary C26 (Ebbesen, 1999).

It was, however, in commentaries on Boethius's *De trinitate* that ideas about relations sharply different from the Standard View, and closer to those in the earlier Middle Ages, continued to flourish. They are found in the most influential and complex of them all, by Gilbert of Poitiers (finished in the 1140s; Gilbert of Poitiers, 1966); in the various commentaries, usually (mis)attributed to Thierry of Chartres (Thierry of Chartres, 1971; on the misattribution, see Marenbon, 2012: 416) dating from the second half of the century, and in that by Clarembald of Arras (Häring, 1965). This final chapter in the story of relations in the early Middle Ages, which there is no space even to begin here, is perhaps the most fascinating of all[22].

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22. I spoke about this in the lecture I gave to the SOFIME conference (Barcelona, November 14-16. 2016), for inviting me to which I thank Alexander Fidora and Jaume Mensa.

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