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WHAT IS COGNITION? PETER AURIOL'S ACCOUNT

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Abstract

My paper aims at presenting Peter Auriol's theory of cognition. Auriol holds that cognition is "something which makes an object appear to someone." This claim, for Auriol, is meant to be indeterminate, as he explicitly says that the "something" in question can refer to any type of being. However, when he states how cognition is "implemented" in cognizers, Auriol specifies what this "something" is: for God, it is simply the deity itself; for creatures, cognition is described as something "absolute," i.e. non-relational, more precisely a complex entity made up of a cognitive power and a "likeness." However, one also finds Auriol saying that created cognition, as a "likeness," is relative. Yet, when Auriol talks of created cognition as something relative, he does not make an ontological claim: he means that one cannot think of cognition without thinking of it as having a relation to an object. In brief, created cognition, for Auriol, is ontologically absolute, but it is always *represented* together with a relation.

1. Introduction

Peter Auriol is well known among historians of medieval philosophy for his theory of intentionality, and above all for his idea that cognition is directed toward objects with "intentional being" (*esse intentionale*) or "apparent being" (*esse apparens*). Scholars are mostly interested in the "object-side" of Auriol's theory, notably in the exact nature of this intentional or apparent being and in its relation to real being.¹ There are fewer studies on

¹ On Auriol's theory of intentionality, see notably K. TACHAU, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham. Optics, Epistemology and the Foundation of Semantics, 1250-1345*, Leiden 1988, pp. 85-112; R. PASNAU, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 69-76; D. PERLER, *Theorien der Intentionalität im Mittelalter*, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, pp. 255-294; as well as, more recently, R. L. FRIEDMAN, "Act, Species, and Appearance. Peter Auriol on Intellectual Cognition and Consciousness," in: G. KLIMA (ed.), *Intentionality, Cognition, and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, New York 2015, pp. 141-165; L. LIČKA,

the “subject-side” of intentionality in Auriol, namely on the nature of cognition itself.² In this paper, I would like to explore this less studied theme, by focusing on the problem of the ontological status of cognition, concerning which additional inquiries are needed. As a matter of fact, it is not immediately clear how Auriol’s various claims on the topic can be put together in a coherent whole. In Auriol, the notion of intentional or apparent being is also crucial for the understanding of the “subject-side” of intentionality. Indeed, apparition is used by Auriol to explain the very nature of cognition. According to Auriol, cognition is anything by means of which which an object appears: as soon as something makes an object appear, this something is a cognition. Thus, what is determinate in cognition is that there is an apparition, but cognition itself is indeterminate, in the sense that any sort of being can be a cognition, provided that an object appears thanks to it. Given the indeterminacy, there seems to be a sort of “ontological neutrality” in this account of cognition. However, Auriol does not stop his analysis at this level of indeterminacy. Once he has made this very general claim about cognition, he brings ontological distinctions back into play, more precisely the standard scholastic opposition between absolute vs. relational entities. Indeed, according to Auriol, cognition must be “implemented,” i.e. occur in a form or another, in cognizers, and this leads to further specifying its nature. Now, cognition is differently implemented when it concerns God and the creatures. For God, Auriol has a minimalist account: what cognition is is nothing other than the “deity” to the extent that an object appears to it. Cognition posits no further reality in God than the deity itself. By contrast, for creatures, Auriol’s explanation is harder to follow. First, Auriol clearly affirms that created cognition is something “absolute,” namely a complex entity made up of a cognitive power and a “likeness” of the object, that is, a representational means. Then, Auriol introduces a further complication: he holds that the likeness in question must be understood as being related to the object. This seems to imply that cognition is relative, not in the sense that it is itself a relation, but in the sense that it always comes together with a relation, or that a relation “sticks” to it, so to say. However, Auriol is a conceptualist about relations. Thus, in the final analysis, his claim concerning the relative nature of cognition does not mean that cognition is ontologically

“Perception and Objective Being: Peter Auriol on Perceptual Acts and their Objects,” in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 90 (2016), pp. 49-76; and H. T. ADRIAENSSEN, “Peter Auriol on the Intuitive Cognition of Nonexistents,” in: *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy* 5 (2017), pp. 151-180.

² One major exception is R. L. FRIEDMAN, “Act, Species, and Appearance. Peter Auriol on Intellectual Cognition and Consciousness”, which I will discuss below.

relative, but that one cannot think of cognition without thinking of it as having a relation to an object.

In this paper, I will enter into the details of Auriol's views on the nature of cognition, by carefully presenting one after the other the elements mentioned above. In order to do so, I will explain in detail two texts of Auriol. First, I will focus on distinction 35 of *Scriptum*, book I, where Auriol presents cognition's general ontological status and its status as implemented, i.e. how it in fact occurs, in God and creatures. Second, I will turn to a passage rarely commented in the context of Auriol's theory of intentionality, namely distinction 30 of *Scriptum*, book I, where the relational nature of cognition is discussed. In the conclusion, I will summarize and briefly evaluate the philosophical relevance of Auriol's intricate theory.

2. Auriol on Cognition's Ontological Status

The longest discussion in Auriol of cognition's ontological status is found in distinction 35, part 1, of the large and early version of his Commentary on I *Sentences*, his *Scriptum*.³ In this text, Auriol presents various accounts of cognition defended by his contemporaries, criticizes all these accounts and then introduces his own comprehension of cognition.

Auriol discusses the thesis, defended by Durand of Saint-Pourçain, that intellection is neither absolute nor a composition of an absolute entity and a relation, but a mere relation.⁴ Against this view, Auriol argues that the equating of intellection with a relation

³ See PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, ed. R. L. FRIEDMAN, coll. C. SCHABEL (*The Peter Auriol Homepage*: www.peterauriol.net), discussed in R. L. FRIEDMAN, "Act, Species, and Appearance. Peter Auriol on Intellectual Cognition and Consciousness."

⁴ See DURAND OF ST.-POURÇAIN, *Quaestio de natura cognitionis (II Sent. [A] D. 3 Q. 5) et Disputatio cum anonymo quodam nec non Determinatio Hervei Natalis O.P. (Quol. III Q. 8)*, ed. J. KOCH, Münster 1935; the first text is now found in DURAND OF ST.-POURÇAIN, *Scriptum Super IV libros Sententiarum. Dist. 1-5 libri Secundi*, ed. F. RETUCCI, Leuven 2012. On Durand's theory of intentionality, see J.-L. SOLÈRE, "Durand of Saint-Pourçain's Cognition Theory: Its Fundamental Principles," in: R. L. FRIEDMAN – J.-M. COUNET (eds.), *Medieval Perspectives on Aristotle's De Anima*, Leuven / Louvain-la-Neuve 2013, pp. 185-248. Durand is not mentioned by name in *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, but as established by Friedman, it is clear that Durand is the philosopher Auriol discusses here (see M. BRÎNZEI – R. L. FRIEDMAN – C. SCHABEL, "The Late-Medieval Reception of Durand's *Sentences* Commentary, with Two Case Studies: Peter Auriol (†1322) and Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl (†1433)," in: A. SPEER – F. RETUCCI – Th. JESCHKE – G. GULDENTOPS (eds.), *Durand of Saint-Pourçain and His Sentences Commentary. Historical, Philosophical, and Theological Issues*, Leuven 2014, pp. 295-341, esp. 313-318, as well as R. L. FRIEDMAN, "Peter Auriol versus Durand of St. Pourçain on Intellectual Cognition", in: *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales* (forthcoming).

cannot account for situations in which the object, although appearing to the cognizer, does not really exist. More precisely, he considers the case of an object actually causing intellection, and wonders whether the result of the causation could be merely a relation, on the one hand, or has to be something absolute, on the other. His answer is that if it were a relation, the disappearance of the object would entail the disappearance of cognition. Indeed, it is a standard thesis in the Middle Ages to say that a real relation cannot exist without two real *relata*.⁵ Yet, one can imagine a situation in which someone first sees something that exists and that causes the vision, but then hallucinates and continues to see it even after it has disappeared. Although an object would still be given from the point of view of the one hallucinating,, there would no longer be a real object. Thus, the result of the object's causation cannot be a mere relation, since such a relation would require two real *relata*.⁶

When making this claim, Auriol himself refers to the prologue of the *Scriptum*, where he develops similar arguments, not against Durand, but against Scotus.⁷ More precisely, Auriol discusses Scotus' account of "intuitive cognition," that is, the type of cognition whose objects are present and existent and which, thus, includes perception.⁸ For Scotus, intuitive cognition requires the *real* presence and existence of the object. By contrast, for Auriol, the *appearance* of an object as present is enough and, thus, its real existence is not required. In that context, an argument that Auriol attributes to Scotus is that intuitive cognition is a relation, and thus requires two real *relata*:

No relational designation can be posited without its proper relatum: for it is impossible to posit the Father without positing the Son. But an intuitive cognition seems to be said denominatively and relatively, designating the existence and actual presence of its object. For when one says *I see Peter*, it seems to follow that *Therefore Peter exists*,

⁵ On this question, see notably THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, 13, 7, and M. G. HENNINGER, *Relations. Medieval Theories 1250-1325*, Oxford 1989, p. 7.

⁶ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, ed. R. L. FRIEDMAN, 9.460-470. In this paper, when both pages and lines are mentioned, they are separated by a period, without the express references "p." and "l." Moreover, unless otherwise specified, all translations are mine.

⁷ See PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, , 9.467-468, where he refers to the discussion "above" (*supra*) in which it has been argued that "vision can remain even when the visible thing disappeared" ("potest manere visio, visibili abscedente").

⁸ JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Cuestiones Cuodlibetales, Quod. VI, § 8*, ed. F. ALLUNTIS, Madrid 1968, n° 19, p. 213. On these questions, see R. CROSS, *Duns Scotus's Theory of Cognition*, Oxford 2015, pp. 150-170.

insofar as *to see* entails the existence of that which is seen, as its *relatum*. Therefore, it is impossible for an intuitive cognition to occur without the object's being present.⁹

Against Scotus, Auriol notably refers to experience: he mentions cases of intuitive cognition in which the object does not exist – most notably hallucinations, but also other deceptive experiences, such as dreams.¹⁰ Auriol's argument is straightforward: in these cases, intuitive cognition is occurring, but there is no real object; thus, intuitive cognition is not a relation. Of course, one could oppose to Auriol's line of argumentation that someone who is hallucinating is not seeing something and thus is not having an intuitive cognition. Auriol answers this objection by arguing that hallucination is a case of vision: when we say that someone is hallucinating, or is "tricked," we do not mean that "there is no vision in <him>," but that "it is a false vision."¹¹

Another argument given in distinction 35 against the relational account of intellection is that cognition must be "like," or similar to, its object, but that a relation is unable to account for this. As Auriol puts it, there must be some representational means which explains cognition's being similar to the object, and this representational means can only be something absolute. Auriol's argument is not easy to understand, but an attempt to explain it could be the following: cognition is a representation of its object; a relation taken as such is not a representation, but rather what connects the representation and the object; the representation itself is one of the *relata* of the relation and something absolute.¹²

Auriol also rejects three other ontological explanations of intellection. The first, attributed to Godfrey of Fontaines, holds that intellection is a passion. More precisely, according to this view, intellection amounts to the reception, in the intellect, of an

⁹ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum, Prooemium*, sect. 2, a. 3, n° 74, ed. E. M. BUYTAERT, vol. 1, St. Bonaventure, New York 1956, 197.3-10, transl. C. BOLYARD – R. PASNAU, in: R. PASNAU (ed.), *The Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 178-218, slightly modified: "Nulla enim relativa demonstratio potest poni absque proprio termino; impossibile est enim poni Patrem quin Filius ponatur. Sed intuitiva notitia videtur denominative et relative dici ad rei existentiam et praesentiam actualem; nam cum dicitur 'video Petrum', sequi videtur 'ergo est Petrus', pro eo quod 'videre' includit esse illius, quod videtur per modum termini relativi. Ergo impossibile est intuitivam notitiam fieri, nisi re praesente."

¹⁰ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum, Prooemium*, sect. 2, a. 3, n° 81-87, ed. E. M. BUYTAERT, 198.40-199.93.

¹¹ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum, Prooemium*, sect. 2, a. 3, n° 100, ed. E. M. BUYTAERT, 203.206-208, transl. C. BOLYARD – R. PASNAU: "Cum enim ludificatos dicimus non videre sed decipi, et videri sibi quod videant, hoc non dicitur quin in eis sit visio, sed quia est visio falsa [...]." For a presentation of Auriol's thesis that intuitive cognition is directed toward objects with apparent being, and a defence against accusations of scepticism made by Chatton and Wodeham, see H. T. ADRIAENSEN, "Peter Auriol on the Intuitive Cognition of Nonexistents."

¹² PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 9.429-436.

“intelligible species.” This theory is inspired by Aristotle’s *De anima*, where sensation and intellection are understood as the reception, in the soul, of the “form” (εἶδος) of the thing without its matter.¹³ The second view, attributed to Aquinas, says that intellection is a real action, made on the basis of the above mentioned intelligible species. It is not clear what exactly this “action” is meant to be, according to Auriol. Maybe he assimilates this action to the production of a cognitive means.¹⁴ In such a case, this second view would be inspired by Augustine’s idea that thinking implies the production of a “word” (*verbum*).¹⁵ The third view, attributed to Scotus, says that intellection is a quality, ontologically distinct from both the intellective power itself and the intelligible species. On this view, first, the intelligible species presents the object to the intellective power; then, intellection, a quality, takes place and the soul cognizes the object.¹⁶

Auriol rejects all these theories. He argues that cognition is neither a passion nor an action. One of his arguments is based on a careful distinction between cognition and the causal processes which precede it: Auriol invites us to distinguish between the reception of a cognitive means, the use of a cognitive means to produce a cognition, and the cognition itself. Even if one admits that cognition results from some causal input or from some internal production, one must strictly set apart these processes and their very result, i.e. the cognizing itself. A comparison with a picture helps to understand Auriol’s point: one has to distinguish the process of painting a picture and the picture itself; the representation is not the act of painting, but the picture itself, which exists once the act of painting is achieved.¹⁷ This is an interesting point, as it shows that causality and intentionality are strictly distinguished in Auriol. In his framework, there is no need for, say, a cognizer to have a causal relation to an object in order to be intentionally directed toward it, as the example of hallucination given above already made clear. Besides, in the cases where cognition is produced by an internal entity, as supposed in Auriol’s

¹³ See GODFREY OF FONTAINES, *Quod*. IV, q. 18, ed. M. DE WULF – A. PELZER, Louvain 1904 (quoted in PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 2.102) and *Quod*. XII, q. 1, ed. J. HOFFMANS, Louvain 1932, as well as ARISTOTLE, *De anima* II, 12, 424a17-24.

¹⁴ See PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 10.519-525, as well as PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 9, p. 1, a. 1, ed. R. L. FRIEDMAN, coll. C. SCHABEL (*The Peter Auriol Homepage: www.peterauriol.net*), 4.169-184.

¹⁵ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theol.*, I, 85, 2 (quoted in PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, ed. R. L. FRIEDMAN, 3.145) and *De potentia*, 8, 1, ed. P. M. PESSON, Torino / Roma 1965, as well as AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate*, XV, 12, 22, ed. W. J. MOUNTAIN (CCSL 50-50A), Turnhout 1968, 50A, 493.87-494.96, quoted in R. L. FRIEDMAN, *Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University. The Use of Philosophical Psychology in Trinitarian Theology among the Franciscans and Dominicans, 1250–1350*, Leiden / Boston 2013, p. 29.

¹⁶ JOHN DUNS SCOTUS, *Ord.*, I, d. 3, *Opera Omnia*, vol. III, ed. Commissio Scotistica, Civitas Vaticana 1954 and *Quod.*, q. 13, ed. F. ALLUNTIS, Madrid 1968 (both quoted in PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 4.191).

¹⁷ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 10.510-518.

distinctions mentioned right above, the causal relation has this internal entity as its *relatum*, but the entity in question is not what is thought of, that is, cognition is not intentionally directed toward it.

Another argument against the assimilation of cognition to a passion or an action regards God's cognition. The reception or the production of a cognitive means implies some change. Now, God is not subject to change. Thus, one would have to say that he possesses his cognitive means "from all eternity" (*ab aeterno*) and thus without any reception or production of the cognitive means in question.¹⁸

Against the position attributed to Scotus, Auriol affirms that on such a view, an object would appear twice to the cognizer: first as presented by the intelligible species, and then as cognized by intellection, which is "redundant" (*superfluum*) and "contrary to experience" (*contra experientiam*).¹⁹ Besides, in Scotus, the species is said to be a "likeness" (*similitudo*) of the object. Yet, Auriol affirms, following John the Evangelist's authority, as well as the claims of the Ancients, that cognitions are also likenesses. Thus, there would again be a redundancy, since one would "posit in the same power two likenesses directed toward the same object."²⁰ In addition, if the intelligible species taken alone is already presenting an object, i.e. independently of any cognition, it would seem to imply that objects could appear to the mind even when there is no current cognition. Yet this is absurd, since an object that appears necessarily implies a cognition by means of which it appears.²¹

Thus, for Auriol, intellection is neither a relation, nor a passion, nor an action, nor a quality. When Auriol starts to give his own account of what intellection is, things become quite intricate. Auriol holds that the concept of intellection, or more broadly of "cognizing in general" (*cognoscere in universalis*) is connotative. Connotative concepts refer to two things, one "directly" (*in recto*), as the concept's main referent, the other "obliquely" (*in obliquo*), as that which the concept connotes. The direct reference is linguistically expressed by a nominative, and the oblique reference by what in Latin grammar is called

¹⁸ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 10.519-525. For a third argument, based not on psychology, but on hylomorphic metaphysics, and that I pass over here, see PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 11.526-533.

¹⁹ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 11.570-12.582.

²⁰ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 12. 593-602, as well as the reference to John 3:1 and (probably) ARISTOTLE, *De anima*, II, 5, 418a3-6.

²¹ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 12.583-592. For another argument against Scotus, based on the authority of Aristotle and Averroes, which holds that the species and cognition must be equated, see PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 12.593-602.

an “oblique case,” i.e. all cases other than nominative. Now, the concept of cognition is to be understood as “that by means of which things appear to something” (*id quo alicui res apparent*), that is, to a cognizer.²² What is referred to obliquely, i.e. what is connotated by the concept of cognition, is “determinate” (*determinatum*): it is, abstractly speaking, the “appearance” (*apparitio* or *apparentia*) of something or, concretely speaking, “something to the extent that it appears” (*aliquid ut apparens*). Auriol also talks in an abstract manner of what cognition is as the “having” (*habitio*) of an appearing object. Importantly, the object here is an intentional object, since it has “apparent being.” As for the connotation itself, it is linguistically expressed by an instrumental ablative: cognition is that “by means of which” (*quo*) things appear. In contrast with the connotated item, which is determinate, what the concept of cognition refers to directly is, according to Auriol, “indeterminate” (*indeterminatum*): anything which makes an object appear is a cognition.²³ As Auriol says:

[...] whatever it is by means of which something is had as present in the way mentioned above, <that is, as appearing,> be it a picture on the wall, a brain in the head, a spirit in the brain, an icy humour in the eye, a species or anything else, as soon as by means of it things are had as present and appearing, there is no doubt that one would speak of comprehensions and cognitions of some type.²⁴

In brief, “intellection is nothing else than that by means of which things appear to something.”²⁵ Thus, if Auriol is unsatisfied with the various ontological explanations found among his contemporaries, it is above all because none of them focuses on the “right side” of cognition, namely on the object’s being given to the cognizer. They all try to show that cognition is a “this” or a “that” in the cognizer, but by doing this they all miss the main point: appearance. Although Auriol gives arguments against each of these specific

²² See PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 9.424, and on the fact that things appear to a cognizer, 10.512-515 and 14.732-734. Auriol sometimes also says that things appear to the cognitive power (see e.g. PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 14.729-731, quoted below, fn. 31).

²³ On this connotative account of cognition, see PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 7.316-10.506 and 13.650-15.762. On connotation itself, see PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 8, q. 3, a. 6, n° 192, ed. R. L. FRIEDMAN, coll. C. SCHABEL (*The Peter Auriol Homepage: www.peterauriol.net*), p. 33, ed. E. M. BUYTAERT, vol. 2, St. Bonaventure, New York 1956, 1026.49-1027.59.

²⁴ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 8.411-414: “[...] quicquid sit illud quo habeatur aliquid praesens per modum praedictum, sive illud esset pictura in pariete, sive cerebrum in capite, sive spiritus in cerebro, sive glacialis humor in oculo, sive species, sive quodcumque aliud, dum tamen res per illud haberentur praesentes et apparentes, non dubium quod dicerentur comprehensiones et notitiae quaedam.”

²⁵ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 9.425: “Non enim est aliud intellectio quam id quo alicui res apparent [...].”

ontological accounts, the most important thing to say about cognition, according to him, is that cognition implies the appearance of something “in front of” the cognizer. As soon as there is something appearing, there is cognition, no matter how this is explained from an ontological point of view.

However, as Auriol goes on, nothing in reality is indeterminate. Thus, “it is necessary, as soon as intellection is said to exist in the things, that this indeterminate concept coincides with a certain reality of a determinate nature.”²⁶ In other words, once it has been established that cognition is something by means of which an object appears, it remains to be said what kind of thing exactly this indeterminate “something” may be in various types of cognizers, that is, what cognition is when “implemented” in various particular cases. It even holds for God, although as regards God, intellection is simply the deity itself. Indeed, as Auriol says, in a minimalist manner:

[...] intellection adds nothing directly to the notion of deity, neither something real, nor something conceptual, but a certain connotated thing, namely the presentation of the thing in apparent being.²⁷

Thus, what happens for God is that if you take deity *plus* the appearing of an object you have intellection. Auriol holds that one could “maybe” (*forsitan*) think of deity “in an absolute manner” (*absolute*), but this does not mean that one could “cut him off from the objective apparition” (*praescindi ab apparentia obiectiva*): it belongs to deity’s “primary concept” (*conceptus primarius*) to be always actually intelligizing all beings.²⁸ What this seems to mean is that although God’s deity itself is absolute, the concept of deity is connotative, since it also always obliquely refers to some appearing objects.

As for creatures, Auriol has a more complicated story, in which the question of the absolute nature of cognition plays an important role. Auriol explicitly defends the idea that cognition, when implemented in creatures, is an “absolute” entity. More precisely, in creatures, cognition is a composite entity made up of both a cognitive power and a cognitive means or “likeness” that “informs” the power. A cognitive power taken alone

²⁶ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 9.428-429: “[...] necesse est, dum intellectio ponitur existere in rerum natura, quod coincidat ille conceptus indeterminatus in aliquam realitatem determinatae rationis.”

²⁷ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 3, 24.1220-1221: “[...] intelligere ad rationem deitatis nihil addat in recto, nec reale nec rationis, sed certum connotatum, scilicet praesentialitatem rei in esse apparenti.”

²⁸ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 3, 27.1395-1399 and 28.1424-1465.

would not be a cognition, i.e. it needs – say – a “representation” of such-and-such an object; and a cognitive means or “likeness” taken alone would not be a cognition, since cognition in fact belongs only to living beings.²⁹ Thus, as stated by Auriol, created intellection is something “absolute,” and “this something absolute [...] <is> a certain conjunction made up of the intellective power and of the likeness itself.”³⁰ Once both sides of the concept of intellection in creatures have been determined, Auriol summarizes his view as follows:

Intellection, formally and directly spoken of, in the created intellect, is nothing other than the intellect with a likeness of the thing to the extent that what is posited in apparent being appears to it, hence it connotes the appearing thing as appearing to it.³¹

Yet Auriol’s position seems to be problematic: isn’t the notion of “something by means of which an object appears” a relational notion, since it connects two items? Once we allow that this is what defines cognition, wouldn’t then cognition, in the final analysis, be relative? But then, wouldn’t this contradict the passages where Auriol says that the deity as cognizing is absolute and, still more explicitly, that created cognition is

²⁹ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 9, p. 1, a. 1, 9.385-397 and 9.415-425, quoted and discussed in R. L. FRIEDMAN, “Act, Species, and Appearance. Peter Auriol on Intellectual Cognition and Consciousness”, pp. 151-152 and 154. See also Friedman’s paper for the importance of life in Auriol’s theory of cognition. I pass over this aspect here.

³⁰ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 9, p. 1, a. 1, 9.394-395: “illud absolutum [...] coniunctum quoddam ex potentia intellectiva et ex similitudine ipsa.” See also PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 8.416-10.506. Note that Auriol sometimes talks of the conjunction in question in terms of “the absolute of intellection” (*absolutum intellectionis*) (see, e.g., PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 27, p. 2, a. 2, ed. R. L. FRIEDMAN [*The Peter Auriol Homepage*: www.peterauriol.net], 16.557-565, quoted in R. L. FRIEDMAN, *Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University*, p. 586). On all these questions, see above all R. L. FRIEDMAN, “Act, Species, and Appearance. Peter Auriol on Intellectual Cognition and Consciousness.”

³¹ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 14.729-731: “[...] intellectio, formaliter et in recto loquendo in intellectu creato, non est aliud quam intellectus cum similitudine rei, in quantum id quod positum est in esse apparenti sibi apparet, unde connotat apparens ut sibi.” As said above, the distinguishing point in Auriol’s account of cognition is the very idea of appearance. Now, Auriol holds that the cognitive faculty can be in act, and so that an “act of cognition” can exist, but without anything appearing to the cognizer, in which case one could not talk of cognition strictly speaking. Auriol distinguishes these two cases of “cognition” in his theory of intellection, where the act of intellection without the appearance is named a “real intellection”; as for the act with the appearance, one could call it an “intentional intellection.” These two kinds of acts, i.e. with and without appearance, are used by Auriol to explain the distinction between habitual and occurrent intellection. In what follows, I will set this complication aside and only treat of cognition to the extent that it is accompanied by appearance. On these questions, see R. L. FRIEDMAN, “Act, Species, and Appearance. Peter Auriol on Intellectual Cognition and Consciousness,” p. 157-165, who uses the expression “intentional intellection”; the mention of a “real intellection” is found in PETER AURIOL, *In II Sent.*, d. 11, p. 3, q. 1, ed. Rome, 1605, 130bB–E, ms. Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, conv. soppr. A.3.120, f. 48va.

“absolute”? Auriol tackles this issue by emphasizing the opposition between connotative and relative concepts. According to Auriol, a relative concept refers to two things, one “directly,” as the foundation of the relation, the other “obliquely,” as the end-point of the relation. In other words, this concept puts a relation in a thing, and connects the thing to something else via this relation. For example, “father” is a relative concept. It refers directly to a father, i.e. to a substance bearing a relation of paternity, and obliquely to a son, as that toward which the relation of paternity is pointing. As seen above, a connotative concept also refers to two things, one directly and the other obliquely. However, in contrast to a relative concept, the connotative one does not put a relation in the thing designated directly; rather, it refers to it as something absolute. For example, “flesh” is a connotative concept. Although flesh is the flesh *of someone* (genitive), flesh itself is something absolute.³² According to Auriol, this is exactly what holds for cognition: it is “something by means of which an object appears.” Although “by means of which” etc. is an oblique reference to an object (made in the ablative), the “something” in question is not relative. Thus, saying that intellection is “something by means of which an object appears” does not imply the positing of a relation in the cognizer: as Auriol explains at length, God, by intelligizing, is not enriched by a relation.³³ Similarly, created cognition, even if it makes something appear, is not relative, but “absolute.”³⁴

In brief, for Auriol, cognition is any item by means of which an object appears. In God, it is the deity itself; in creatures, it is a combination of a cognitive power and a likeness of the object. Yet Auriol’s claims about the absolute nature of created cognition do not prevent him from saying that this kind of cognition, although absolute in itself, always comes with a relation. Indeed, during an analysis of the notion of “appearing,” in distinction 9 of the *Scriptum*, Auriol affirms that created intellection, although absolute – as a composite entity made up of both a cognitive power and a cognitive means –, has two “respects” (*habitudines*) to its object.³⁵ First, created intellection is always accompanied by an action. This action amounts to the production of an object in apparent being. Note that this production, which concerns cognition “as a preceding step” (*per modum praevii*), is not a “real action” (*actio realis*), but an “intentional action” (*actio intentionalis*), which

³² See PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 8, q. 3, a. 6, n° 192, ed. R. L. FRIEDMAN, p. 33, ed. E. M. BUYTAERT, 1026.49-1027.59, and the reference to ARISTOTLE, *Categories*, 8a13-8b24.

³³ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 3, 24.1227-26.1360.

³⁴ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 7.320-336.

³⁵ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 9, p. 1, a. 1, 10.427-12.534.

amounts to “putting a thing in apparent being” (*ponere res in esse apparenti*).³⁶ Second, Auriol says that created intellection always comes with a “relation” (*relatio*) to the object understood as the “content” of cognition. Notably too, distinction 9 is not the only place in which such claims are made. Indeed, in distinction 27, Auriol also holds that created intellection comes along with two “respects” to its object, one which is “active”, and the other which is “terminative.”³⁷ In distinction 35, Auriol briefly states why created intellection implies a relation:

[...] intellection in creatures implies a relation of the measure to what is measured, due to its being a certain diminished likeness copied and exemplified from the object, but not from the fact that it is that by means of which a thing appears to the intellect.³⁸

Thus, Auriol’s thesis is that created intellection is relative to the extent that it is made with the help of a cognitive means or a “likeness,” a reproduction or a copy of the object. As a matter of fact, this notion of “likeness” understood as reproduction or copy is a relational one. The kind of relation which is implied here is that “of the measure to what is measured.” This is a reference to the third class of relations of *Metaphysics* Δ, 15, in which Aristotle includes cognition and its objects. According to Auriol, God does not intelligize with such a likeness, i.e. with a reproduction or a copy of the object, since he is “eminently” (*eminenter*) all being, so that it is rather the objects which are reproductions or copies of him. God is not thinking with a “reproductive likeness,” but he is himself the “eminent likeness”, and he makes everything else appear by simply turning his intellectual gaze towards himself. Thus, by contrast to what happens with created intellection, there is no relation to be attributed to God to the extent that he intelligizes.³⁹

³⁶ On this specific action, see PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1, 8.370-381, 11.554-556 and 11.564-567.

³⁷ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 27, p. 2, a. 2, ed. R.L. FRIEDMAN (*The Peter Auriol Homepage: www.peterauriol.net*), 21.762-767. On these passages about cognition and relation, see R. L. FRIEDMAN, “Act, Species, and Appearance. Peter Auriol on Intellectual Cognition and Consciousness”, notably the summary on p. 164.

³⁸ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, resp., 29.1486-1488: “[...] intellectio in creaturis importat relationem mensurati ad mensuram, pro eo quod est quaedam similitudo diminuta transcripta et exemplata ab obiecto, non autem ex hoc quod est id quo intellectui res apparet.” For the background of the notion of “diminished likeness,” see A. MAURER, “*Ens Diminutum*: a Note on its Origin and Meaning,” in: *Mediaeval Studies* 12 (1950), pp. 216-222.

³⁹ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1 and resp., 9.431-433 and 29.1488-1490. On God’s being an eminent likeness and on divine cognition as turned toward God itself, see notably PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 36, p. 2, a. 1, ed. R. L. FRIEDMAN – L. O. NIELSEN – C. SCHABEL (*The Peter Auriol Homepage: www.peterauriol.net*). For a presentation of Auriol’s views on divine cognition, see C. SCHABEL, *Theology at Paris, 1316–1345. Peter Auriol and the Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents*, Aldershot 2000, esp. pp. 67-132, and M.

So, although Auriol insists on the thesis that cognition is not relational, he seems to hold that created cognition, despite its absolute nature, always comes with a relation to an object. Does Auriol mean that cognition in creatures is in fact an ontologically complex item, namely something absolute, but to which a relation always “sticks,” so the say? The tricky point, however, is that Auriol does not give relations any ontological weight of their own, so that the relation added to created cognition does not bring with it an additional entity. This point is explained in the section of *Scriptum*, book I, that analyses relations, namely distinction 30, in which Auriol also discusses cognition. This text is rarely analysed by scholars working on Auriol’s theory of intentionality. Yet for the understanding of the relational aspect of created cognition, it is the missing piece of the puzzle.

3. Cognition and Relations in *Scriptum*, distinction 30

a. Cognition and “Conceptualism” about Relations

In distinction 30 of the *Scriptum*, Auriol discusses the relational nature of cognition, or, as he says, “the relation of knowledge to the knowable, of the act of intellection to the intelligible, or of the act of vision to the visible.”⁴⁰ Cognition falls in the third class of relations of *Metaphysics* Δ, 15, that of “the measure to what is measured.” It is relational to the extent that it is made with the help of a cognitive means or a “likeness,” which is understood as a reproduction or a copy of the object. As Auriol puts it, this cognitive means can also be described as an “imitation” of the object.⁴¹ The idea is that the object is

RENEMANN, *Gedanken als Wirkursachen. Francisco Suárez zur geistigen Hervorbringung*, Amsterdam 2010, pp. 46-48.

⁴⁰ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 1, a. 2, ed. Rome, 1596, 672aC, ms. Vat. Borghese lat. 329, 323rb: “[...] relatio scientiae ad scibile, vel actus intellectus ad intelligibile, aut visionis ad visibile [...]” I compared the text of the Rome edition (= *R*), which is not always reliable, with the Borghese manuscript (= *B*) and Christopher Schabel’s collation of the two texts. I thank Christopher Schabel for having allowed me to use his collation and Heine Hansen for having provided me with the document. Corrections of the Rome edition are indicated in angle brackets.

⁴¹ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 1, a. 2, ed. Rome, 672aB-673aF, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 323rb-324ra, notably 673aE-F, 324ra: “[...] mensurata sunt similitudines diminutae, et mensurantia <B/ R: mensurata> sunt quaedam exemplata. Sicut igitur <B/ R: ergo> similitudo est inter formas aequales, et pares, <R add.: et> mutua indistinctio, sic inter formam diminutam, et principalem non est aliud relatio mensurati, nisi quaedam indistinctio, sive <B/ R: seu> assimilatio, aut imitatio formae diminutae ad formam exemplarem, non tamen e converso, quia talis assimilatio non est ex parte exemplaris, propter quod Philosophus dicit in V <B/ R: quinto> Metaphysicae quod in talibus <R add.: non> est relatio tantum ex parte alterius extremorum.”

the “measure” in the sense of a model or a standard and that cognition is “measured” in the sense that its adequacy as an imitation is evaluated by comparing it to the object. As stated above, since God does not cognize with the help of such cognitive means, the discussion about the relation of cognition to its object does not pertain to him but only to created cognition.⁴² Now, despite the relational description of created cognition, Auriol will take great care to show that this cognition does not come with a relation *from an ontological point of view*. As a matter of fact, Auriol is a conceptualist about relations.⁴³ So, as I will show, what he means, when he says that created cognition always has a relation to an object, is that this sort of cognition is always *represented* together with a relation to an object.

Auriol, in distinction 30, holds that there is a relation from cognition to its object, but he also stresses that this relation is “only in the mind” (*in sola apprehensione*). He affirms that ontologically speaking, cognition is an absolute entity, which does not require real objects in order to exist:

Knowledge, with respect to its absolute reality, does not require the existence of the knowable.⁴⁴

Auriol explicitly refers to his previous arguments against the relational nature of cognition from an ontological point of view, namely those provided in the prologue of the *Scriptum*:

Knowledge remains in the soul when the thing is destroyed, nor does knowledge of the rose require the rose’s reality more than vice-versa <i.e. more than the reality of the rose requires knowledge of the rose>. This is why many things are known, though they do not yet exist – for example, it is manifest that the astrologer knows future eclipses – , and many things which have been and which do not exist anymore. Moreover, when the object disappears, vision could at least be preserved in the eye by divine power, and even by nature, as has been proven in the question on intuitive cognition in the

⁴² PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 35, p. 1, a. 1 and resp., 9.431.-433 and 29.1488-1490.

⁴³ See M. G. HENNINGER, *Relations. Medieval Theories, 1250-1325*, Oxford 1989, pp. 150-173.

⁴⁴ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 1596, 696bB-C, ms. Vat. Borghese lat. 329, 335rb: “Scientia quantum ad suam realitatem absolutam non coexigat scibilium entitatem.”

prologue. Again, it is manifest that intellection, which is related to the intelligible, remains when the intelligible is destroyed.⁴⁵

Of course, Auriol admits that there are, so to speak, “standard cases” in which cognition is caused by a thing existing outside the soul, i.e. by something real.⁴⁶ But as already indicated above, causality and intentionality are not identified in Auriol. He rather insists that the object toward which cognition is directed need not exist in reality. Its “intentional being,” also called “judged being,” is enough:

The objects of the senses, which are active and moving and causing sensations, necessarily have real being. But the objects which are not efficient but only terminating and which have intentional and judged being need not have being <in the world> outside, as has often been shown above concerning many experiences.⁴⁷

The idea, thus, is that a real relation requires two real *relata*, that cognition does not always have a real object and, thus, that cognition is not ontologically relational. Its relation to its object is “only in the mind” (*in sola apprehensione*).

In fact, Auriol, in distinction 30 of the *Scriptum*, not only shows that there is no real relation between cognition and objects. His “program,” so to speak, is larger: he wants to show that no relation at all exists in reality. The strategy that he adopts is the following: he takes, one after the other, the three classes of relations that Aristotle mentions in *Metaphysics* Δ, 15, and he tries to show that they all exist “only in the mind.” He rejects the reality of relations of more and less, like being bigger or smaller, and of identity, similarity, equality, the reality of causal relations, and the reality of relations between the “measure”

⁴⁵ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 696aD-E, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 335ra: “Remanet enim scientia in anima, re corrupta, nec plus exigit scientia rosae eius realitatem quam econverso. Unde multa sciuntur, quae nondum sunt, ut patet quod astrologus novit futuras eclipses, et multa quae fuerunt, et modo non sunt. Et iterum <B/ R: tamen> visio saltem per divinam potentiam potest <B/ R: poterit> conservari in oculo abeunte objecto. Immo etiam per naturam, ut supra probatum fuit in quaestione de notitia intuitiva in prologo. Iterum etiam patet quod intellectio, quae refertur ad intelligibile, manet, intelligibili destructo.” On the prologue of the *Scriptum*, see the discussion above, notes 9-11.

⁴⁶ On this point, see D. PERLER, *Theorien der Intentionalität im Mittelalter*, p. 272, quoting PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum, Prooemium*, q. 2, a. 4, n° 120, ed. E. M. BUYTAERT, 209.67-70.

⁴⁷ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 1, a. 3, ed. Rome, 687bC, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 331ra: “[...] objecta sensuum quae sunt activa et motiva et sensationes causativa necessario habent esse reale. Objecta vero quae non sunt efficientia sed tantum terminantia <B/ R: terminativa> et habentia esse intentionale et iudicatum non oportet quod habeant <B/ R: habeat> esse extra, ut frequenter supra ostensum est in experienciis multis.”

and “what is measured,” including cognition and its objects.⁴⁸ In other words, Auriol, as Henninger shows,⁴⁹ is a “conceptualist” about relations. Auriol provides general reasons for the denial of the reality of relations. The arguments that I have presented so far are directed solely against the reality of the cognitive relation: the relation of cognition to its object cannot be real, since a real relation requires two real *relata*, whereas some cognitions are deprived of a real object. However, Auriol also offers arguments against the reality of every relation whatsoever. One of Auriol’s claims echoes *Physics* V, 2 (225b11-13) and *Metaphysics* N, 1 (1088a23 and 1088a29-35). In these texts, Aristotle says that relations have the least “being” (ὄν), “essence” (οὐσία), or “nature” (φύσις) of all things. One reason for this is that there is no change specific to relations, i.e. that their change is a mere “Cambridge change”: relations can appear and disappear independently of their bearer undergoing any causal effect. For example, Socrates can stop being bigger than Plato and start being smaller than him without undergoing any effect, but simply because the height of Plato has increased. For Auriol, such facts do not show that relations have less reality than other categories, but that they have no reality at all.⁵⁰

Thus, when Auriol, in distinction 9, 27, or 35, says that created cognition, to the extent that it is a likeness, i.e. a reproduction or a copy, is always related to an object, what he means is that although ontologically absolute, such cognition has a conceptual relation to an object: in view of his account of relations in distinction 30, the relation between cognition and its object cannot exist in reality.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Another way to put it would be to say that Auriol rejects the “actuality” of relations, not their reality, if by “actuality”, one understands “extra-mental existence”, and by “reality”, the underlying essential or accidental property on which relations are founded, e.g. quality for the relation of similarity. This terminology is used by R. L. FRIEDMAN, *Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University*, pp. 550-563. For my part, I will use the term “actual” (or rather the expression “in act”) by contrast to “potential”, as this couplet of notions is used by Auriol himself in distinction 30. As a conceptualist, Auriol, in this distinction, rejects the thesis that a relation is a “thing existing in nature” (*res in natura existens*) or a “reality” (*realitas*) (see PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 1, a. 2, ed. Rome, 673bA-674bE, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 324ra-vb). However, in order to respect authorities, he tries to make sense of the standard medieval distinction between “real relations” and “relations of reason,” via the notions of “actuality” and “potentiality”, as will be shown below.

⁴⁹ M. G. HENNINGER, *Relations*, pp. 150-173.

⁵⁰ See PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 1, a. 2, ed. Rome, 673bA, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 324ra. For a discussion of the notion of “Cambridge change” in the context of the Aristotelian theory of relations, see M. MIGNUCCI, “The Stoic Notion of Relatives,” in: J. BARNES – M. MIGNUCCI (eds.), *Matter and Metaphysics: Fourth Symposium Hellenisticum*, Naples 1988, pp. 129-221. One could object here that some relational changes are real changes, e.g. when Socrates starts being bigger than Plato because Socrates’ own height has increased. However, an answer to this would be that the acquisition of the relation “being bigger than” itself is not a (real) change, only Plato’s increase of height is a (real) change. The example of a change of height in someone else than the bearer of the relation points out the distinction between the change of height and the acquisition of a relation.

⁵¹ On this point, see also D. PERLER, *Theorien der Intentionalität im Mittelalter*, pp. 263-266.

b. Cognition and “Real” Relations

However, this is not the end of the story. In order to understand adequately in what sense created cognition is said to be relational, one needs to consider some additional distinctions in Auriol’s theory of relations. I will present them, and then explain how they apply to cognition.

Even if Auriol defends the idea that relations exist “only in the mind,” he nevertheless admits the standard scholastic distinction between “real relations” and “relations of reason.” Since all his relations are “conceptual”, this distinction is not a distinction between real relations and conceptual relations, as was normally the case in the Middle Ages.⁵² According to Auriol:

[...] a relation is not called “real” because it is in act in a thing, but because it is in proximate potency in a thing, so that the intellect is forced to reduce it in act not from something extrinsic, but from the innermost parts of the foundation.⁵³

Auriol also says that real relations are those relations that the intellect grasps “immediately” (*statim*), through a “unique apprehension” (*unica apprehensione*), “quasi imperceptibly” (*quasi imperceptibiliter*), as if they were “coming from the nature of the thing” (*ex natura rei*), or as if they were “in the thing” (*in re*). Relations of reason, on the other hand, are those relations that are not “in proximate potency,” but which the intellect “reduces in act from something extrinsic,” i.e. they do not seem to come “from the nature of the things,” but the intellect attributes them – so to speak – “mediately” to a thing, because it grasps this thing as the end-point of a real relation.⁵⁴ For example, similarity is

⁵² On this distinction in Auriol, see also M. G. HENNINGER, *Relations*, pp. 166-167; T. DEWENDER, “Der ontologische Status der Relationen nach Durandus von St.-Pourçain, Hervaeus Natalis und Petrus Aureoli,” in: S. F. BROWN – T. DEWENDER – T. KOBUSCH (eds.), *Philosophical Debates at Paris in the Early Fourteenth Century*, Leiden 2009, pp. 287-307, esp. 306-307, and C. GIRARD, *Le réalisme des relations. Étude des réponses apportées au problème de la différence entre la relation et son fondement (1250-1350)*, PhD, University of Lausanne / Université Paris-Sorbonne 2015, pp. 611-612.

⁵³ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 698aC-D, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 336ra: “[...] relatio non dicitur realis ex hoc quod sit <R add.: in> actu in re, sed quia est in re secundum propinquam potentiam, ita quod cogitur intellectus illam reducere in actum non ex aliquo extrinseco <B| R: intrinseco>, sed ex intimis ipsius fundamenti.” Note that although *in re* could seem here to mean “in reality,” Auriol, immediately after this passage, asks whether “being on the right” (*dextrum*) is potentially “in a column” (*in columna*) (PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 698aD, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 336ra).

⁵⁴ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 698bB-699aA, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 336rb: “[...] intellectus statim concipit scientiam ut imitativam scibilis (...). Ergo manifestum est quod haec est ratio <B| R: rationem> quare relationes debent iudicari reales. (...) intellectus respectu relationum se habet <B| R: habent> dupliciter. Aliquando enim unica apprehensione et quasi imperceptibiliter necessitatus ex natura rei reducit eas in actum, tamquam proprios actus et proprias passiones rerum, et tales relationes dicuntur

a real relation. Indeed, when the intellect grasps a white thing, and when it compares that thing to another white thing, it “immediately” thinks the first white thing as similar to the second, and also the second as similar to the first. A white thing is similar to another white thing because of something intrinsic to it, i.e. because of its whiteness. Causal relations are also real. As soon as one thinks of an active thing as exercising its power on a passive thing, one “immediately” attributes a relation of cause to effect to the active thing, and also a relation of effect to cause to the passive thing. An active thing is said to be the cause of an effect, and a passive thing the effect of a cause, because of something intrinsic to them, i.e. their active and passive powers.⁵⁵

The situation is different with relations of reason. Relations of reason are attributed to a thing not “immediately,” but rather “mediately,” i.e. because something else has a real relation to them. For example, “being depicted” (*pictus*), for Caesar, is a relation of reason. This relation is attributed to Caesar because he is the end-point of a real relation belonging to something else, namely a relation of depiction belonging to a picture of Caesar.⁵⁶ The intellect, when it grasps the picture of Caesar and its relation of depiction, attributes to Caesar the relation “being depicted,” but this relation does not “come” from something intrinsic to Caesar, i.e. from some intrinsic feature; rather, it is attributed to Caesar on the basis of an “extrinsic” feature, which is to be found in the picture of Caesar. As a matter of fact, what allows us to say of Caesar that he is a depicted thing is a certain disposition of lines and colours on a canvas, not something which is in Caesar himself. In sum, Auriol sets up an opposition between cases where the intellect attributes a relation to something in virtue of an intrinsic feature of the thing, on the one hand, and cases where the intellect attributes a relation to something not in virtue of an intrinsic feature of the thing, but because something else is related to this thing, on the other. He thinks that when the intellect attributes a relation to something in virtue of an intrinsic feature of the thing, the relation seems not to be “fabricated” by the intellect (*operari, fabricare*), but rather to

reales. [...] Quandoque vero non unica apprehensione format intellectus relationes circa res, nec necessitatus ab ipsis rebus [...]. Et tales sunt relationes secundum rationem.”

⁵⁵ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 698aF-bC, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 336ra-rb: “Similitudo enim, et aequalitas reputantur relationes reales, similiter etiam duplicitas et subduplicitas, paternitas quoque et filiatio. [...] Albedo enim ex natura rei est proprium susceptibile similitudinis, ita ut appareat ex terminis, quod est in potentia propinqua ad eam. [...] Similiter etiam potentia activa est immediatum fundamentum, et susceptibile habitudinis principii <B/ R: principiiis>, quae non est aliud quam paternitas in potentia generandi.”

⁵⁶ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 698bC-E, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 336rb: “[...] nulla relatio rationis aliter attribuitur rebus, nisi quia <B| R: quod> sunt res termini aliarum relationum. [...] nec pictum est aliquid fundatum in Caesare, nisi in quantum de eo est pictura.”

be “found” in the thing (*reperiri*). In that case, the fact that the intellect is “fabricating” the relation is “hidden” to the intellect (*latere*). When the intellect attributes a relation to something not in virtue of an intrinsic feature of the thing, but because something else is related to this thing, the fact that the intellect is “fabricating” the relation is not “hidden” to the intellect, i.e. the relation does not seem to be “found” in the thing.⁵⁷

So, how does the distinction between real relations and relations of reason apply to created cognition? As stated above, Auriol holds that created cognition is something absolute, more precisely a combination of a cognitive power and a likeness that reproduces or copies the object. However, he also holds that created cognition, although absolute, comes with a relation, due precisely to its being a likeness, and that this relation falls in Aristotle’s third class of relations, that of the measure and what is measured. Now, for Auriol, it seems that the relation from cognition to its object is “real.” At any rate, in distinction 30, Auriol explicitly says of “knowledge” (*scientia*) that it has a real relation to its object.⁵⁸ In fact, following the standard medieval view, Auriol holds that the relations, in Aristotle’s third class, are “non-mutual,” i.e. one relation is real, whereas the other is a relation of reason. As a consequence, one also finds Auriol saying that on the side of the object of knowledge, the relation is not real, i.e. like in the case of “being depicted” for Caesar: “being known” (*scitum*), for a stone, is a relation of reason, in the sense that being known expresses the fact that the stone is the end-point toward which knowledge is directed.⁵⁹ Once the intellect grasps knowledge and its relation to a stone, it attributes “being known” to the stone, but “being known” does not “come” from an intrinsic feature of the stone. Can these claims be extended to cognition in general? Although Auriol, in distinction 30, does not explicitly say that the relations between intellection or perception and their objects are to be counted among non-mutual ones, it is likely that he defends the view. Indeed, he treats intellection and perception on a par with knowledge in distinction 30, as belonging to Aristotle’s third class of relations, which are non-mutual.⁶⁰ Thus, one may say that for Auriol, “cognizing” in general always comes with a “real relation,” whereas “being cognized” is a relation of reason. In Auriol’s framework, this does not

⁵⁷ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 698bF-699aA, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 336rb-va.

⁵⁸ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 698bB-C, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 336rb, quoted above, note 54.

⁵⁹ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 2, a. 1, ed. Rome, 698bB-E, ms. Vat. Borgh. lat. 329, 336rb. On non-mutual relations, see notably M. G. HENNINGER, *Relations*, pp. 31-39 and R. W. SCHMIDT, *The Domain of Logic According to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Den Haag 1966, pp. 150-156.

⁶⁰ See PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 30, p. 1, a. 2, ed. Rome, 1596, 672aC, ms. Vat. Borghese lat. 329, 323rb, quoted above, note 40.

mean that in cognition a relation is posited from an ontological point of view, but that the intellect, when it thinks of cognition, i.e. when it has a higher-order representation of cognition, “immediately,” through a “unique apprehension,” or “quasi imperceptibly,” attributes a relation to cognition, as if the relation came “from the nature of the thing” or as if it was “in the thing.”

Finally, one should be aware of an important difference between, on the one hand, relations of similarity or causality, and, on the other hand, the relation of cognition to its object: relations of similarity or causality are only attributed to something when some other real thing with a specific feature exists, for example another white thing for similarity or a passive thing for causality; by contrast, the relation of cognition to the object is attributed to cognition independently of the real existence of something else, i.e. cognition can be directed toward non-existent objects. Thus, the relationality that Auriol discusses in distinction 30 is an “internal relationality” to the object, and it is independent of the way things hold in the outer world.⁶¹ To be sure, Auriol makes a subsequent claim concerning cases in which the object of cognition exists in reality, i.e. concerning cases in which cognition is veridical. As a matter of fact, as Auriol tells us, one and the same object can exist with two different modes of being: one intentional, in the mind, and the other real, in the outer world.⁶² In such a situation, i.e. when the object that is thought of also exists in the outer world, cognition is not only grasped as a “likeness” of the object, but also as having a relation that expresses the veridicality of cognition, i.e. a relation of “conformity”:

[...] the reality of the vision does not require the real presence of an existing object, although the truth of a vision requires this, since the truth adds to the reality of a vision the relationship of conformity to the thing.⁶³

However, this relation of “conformity” is not to be confused with the relation of the measure to what is measured, which is attributed to cognition independently of the real existence of the object.

⁶¹ I thank Russell Friedman for his suggestion to talk here of an “internal relationality.”

⁶² PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum*, d. 27, p. 2, a. 2, ed. R. L. FRIEDMAN, 18.645-648.

⁶³ PETER AURIOL, *Scriptum, Prooemium*, q. 2, a. 3, n° 91, ed. E. M. BUYTAERT, 200.123-126, transl. C. BOLYARD – R. PASNAU, slightly modified: “[...] realitas visionis non exigit realem praesentiam obiecti existentis, quamvis exigat eam veritas visionis pro eo quod veritas addit super realitatem visionis respectum conformitatis ad rem.”

In sum, the intellect, when it thinks of created cognition, “immediately” attributes a relation to it, as if the relation came “from the nature of the thing.” Cognition is not represented as relational because something else is related to it, but rather because of its intrinsic features. Moreover, it is represented as relational independently of the real existence of something else, i.e. its cognitive relation does not depend on the real existence of the object (although it may also have an additional relation of conformity to the object, when the object really exists). In brief, every time the intellect has a representation of cognition, it “immediately” attributes to it a relation, on the basis of the intrinsic features of cognition and independently of the real existence of the object. Thus, for Auriol, created cognition, understood as a combination of the cognitive power and a “likeness,” is ontologically absolute, but can only be *represented* (that is, can only be thought about in a higher-order representation) as having a relation to an object.

4. Conclusion

Auriol has a sophisticated theory of cognition. He holds that cognition is anything by means of which an object appears. This is a general claim, which describes cognition in an indeterminate manner. However, when discussing the implementation of cognition, Auriol makes a distinction between God and creatures. In God, cognition is just the deity itself. In creatures, things are more complicated: cognition is something absolute, more precisely a composite entity made up of a cognitive power and a “likeness.” Although the description of cognition as “that by means of which something appears” seems to be relational, since it includes something *plus* an appearing object, Auriol is careful in distinguishing relative and connotative concepts. The concept of cognition is connotative: it refers directly to anything which makes an object appear, and obliquely to the object as appearing, but it does not put any relation in the direct referent. This is to be contrasted with a relative concept, e.g. father, which also refers directly and obliquely, but in addition puts a relation in its direct referent, e.g. paternity. Interestingly, with the help of this distinction, Auriol manages to account for the view that cognition entails some “object-giveness,” namely the apparition of an intentional object, but he *avoids* positing any relation to explain it, either real or conceptual. In other words, Auriol admits that

intentionality implies the presence of an object “in front of” the cognizer, but shows that accounting for this does not necessarily require a relation.

However, Auriol also holds that created cognition, since it is made up of a “likeness” of the object, a reproduction or a copy, entails a relation to the object. Yet, this additional claim does not imply an ontological enrichment of cognition. Indeed, since Auriol is a conceptualist about relations, when he holds that created cognition always comes with a relation, what he means, in the final analysis, is that created cognition can only be *represented* (that is, can only be thought about in a higher-order representation) as having a relation to its object. From an ontological point of view, created cognition remains absolute. As for God, since he does not intelligize with reproductions or copies, there is no relation to be posited in him anyway.

To be sure, Auriol’s account of cognition is quite complex, mainly due to his twofold division into divine and created cognition, which each have their own structure. However, instead of criticizing this complexity, one could also try to exploit it by distinguishing in Auriol two interesting models of cognition, one which allows for some “object-giveness” without positing any relation, real or conceptual, and another one which allows for some relationality, but by positing only a conceptual relation.⁶⁴ Both these models would seem to be useful in contemporary discussions in philosophy of mind, more precisely in defence of non-relational accounts of intentionality. Indeed, in recent debate, some authors reject the thesis that the *ontology* of intentionality is relational.⁶⁵ One major argument against the relational theory of intentionality is the problem of non-existent objects: some mental acts have objects that do not exist; relations need two existing *relata*; thus, mental acts are not relational.⁶⁶ Now, Auriol furnishes two different models of cognition which could both be used for contemporary purposes. First, cognition can be treated as a connotative concept, with the addition of no relation at all, either real or conceptual. This would be the “*strong non-relational theory*,” based on Auriol’s account of divine cognition. Second, one may like to allow for some relationality, in arguing that after all, the logical-linguistic structure of intentionality is relational: cognition is always *about* something. In that case, one could adapt Auriol’s account of created cognition, and say that intentionality is

⁶⁴ For a distinction of several “models of intentionality,” see D. PERLER, *Theorien der Intentionalität im Mittelalter*, esp. pp. 1-30.

⁶⁵ See notably U. KRIEGEL, *The Sources of Intentionality*, Oxford 2011, e.g. p. 154.

⁶⁶ Note that this is one of the reasons that has motivated Auriol himself to reject the relational account of cognition, as made clear by the texts quoted notes 10, 11, 44 and 46 above.

ontologically absolute, but can only be represented as having a relation to an object. This would be the “*weak non-relational theory*,” which would admit that the logical-linguistic structure of intentionality is relational, and thus that we think of it as a relation, *but* that our best ontological explanation of intentionality is non-relational. Thus, in the final analysis, the complexity of Auriol’s theory of cognition may be seen as a richness.⁶⁷

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