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

edited by

Ernesto DEZZA  
and  
Antonio PETAGINE

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*Monica Brânzei*

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# The Portraits of William of Ware

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The cover of this volume reproduces the image of a friar teaching before an audience found in manuscript Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C. 78, Inf., f. 1ra. This is no doubt a portrait of William of Ware, dressed in a dark Franciscan habit. Among the many medieval witnesses transmitting the text of Ware's *Sentences* commentary and discussed in this volume,<sup>1</sup> another manuscript, Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 1424 contains similar iconography: the same Franciscan presides in front of a somewhat larger group of listeners. The two codices, possible produced in Italy, date from the fourteenth century, at a time when such portraits were in no way unique to Ware. Many codices containing *Sentences* commentaries begin their text with the figure of an instructor customized according to the religious affiliation of the author. Just in the Franciscan camp there are a number of examples, including those of John Duns Scotus (Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, 881, f. 1ra and Città del Vaticano, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 871, 874, 876, and 888), Peter Auriol (Lyon, Bibliothèque municipale, 1659 [1637], f. 1r), Landulph Caracciolo (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, G.I. 646, f. 1r), Francis of Meyronnes (Vat. lat. 893, f. 5r), John of Ripa (Vat. lat. 1083, f. 1va and 5738, f. 2r), and Peter of Candia (Vat. lat. 5738, f. 2r). None of these is a simple stereotypical representation of a theologian, but each contains details that personalize the scholar portrayed. The Franciscans were not alone in pursuing a policy of promoting major figures of their order historiated initials, since

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Costante Marabelli's contribution in this volume. I would like to thank Ernesto Dezza, William Duba, Russell Friedman, Stephen Metzger, and Chris Schabel for their comments on this note.

portraits of Dominican, Augustinian, Carmelite, and Cistercian authors in surviving commentaries indicate that this was a canonical method of fostering their authority.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of William of Ware, both manuscripts, Milan (*M*) and Vienna (*Wb*),<sup>3</sup> have been employed for philosophical analyses or editorial projects,<sup>4</sup> but they have never been discussed from the perspective of their iconography. The two portraits themselves contribute to a better understanding of the theological authority of Ware, while reflecting details in his academic career. The material and cultural investment devoted to decorating the main text of an author with his image suggests the great esteem he enjoyed in the eyes of his contemporaries, and one assumes that the motivation was a desire to emphasize and praise his legacy.

In both instances, the image of William of Ware is enclosed inside the red letter Q from the incipit of the text, *Quoniam testante beato Augustino*. . . , framed in a blue square. While manuscript *M* has limited gilding with only two bits of gold in the border of the letter Q, in codex *Wb* the gilding consists of six generous spots of gold, evidence that more money has been lavished on the production of the second image. Accordingly, the entire scene in the image in *M* is simpler than that in *Wb*, a further reflection of the greater effort involved in its execution.

<sup>2</sup> So far I have established a corpus of 35 manuscripts containing such portraits. The results of this inquiry are forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> I am using the standard sigla of manuscripts as established in this volume, above, pp. XX.

<sup>4</sup> A. DANIELS, "Quaestio über das menschliche Erkennen," in *Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie: Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag. Clemens Baeumker gewidmet von seinen Schülern und Freunden*, ed. J. GEYSER (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, Supplementband 1), Münster 1913, pp. 311–318; M. SCHMAUS, "Augustinus und die Trinitätslehre Wilhelms von Ware," in *Aurelius Augustinus: Die Festschrift der Görres-Gesellschaft zum 1500. Todestage des Heiligen Augustinus*, ed. M. GRABMANN, J. MAUSBACH, Köln 1930, pp. 315–352; L. HÖDL, "Literar- und problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Sentenzenkommentar des Wilhelm von Ware O.M. (nach 1305)," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 57 (1990), pp. 122–141; R.L. FRIEDMAN, C. SCHABEL, "Trinitarian Theology and Philosophical Issues IV: English Theology ca. 1300: William of Ware and Richard of Bromwich," *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen Âge grec et latin* 75 (2004), pp. 127–128; 128–133; 133–135; 135–141; 141–146. I compiled this list based on the paper of A. COLLI, "Boni libri or scartafacia? An Inventory of the Commentaries on the 'Sentences' as a Mirror of Theological Education at the Dominican *Studium* at Bologna (14<sup>th</sup> c.)," in *Die Bibliothek-The Library-La Bibliothèque*, ed. A. SPEER, L. REUKE (Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 41), Berlin 2020, pp. 135–156.

The increased detail, additional figures, and fancier design of the portrait in *Wb* probably correspond to a higher production cost for this artefact.

*Wb*'s more sophisticated iconography, which might explain another detail of the codex's posterity. The manuscript is currently in the Austrian National Library in Vienna, and although it is not an Austrian production, it has remained there since the first half of the fifteenth century. In fact, the codex contains the following donation note on the top of folio 1r:

In isto libro continetur *Scriptum* Guarri super quatuor libris  
*Sententiarum*, quod traditus (?) est ad librarium collegii  
ducalis venerabilis olim Magister Petrus de Pirchenwart. . .

This is an intriguing detail, since Peter Reicher of Pirchenwart was a major figure at the University of Vienna, especially in the Faculty of Theology.<sup>5</sup> Pirchenwart lost his life in 1436 as a victim of a violent episode of the plague that placed the entire university in lockdown for a few months, as recorded in the colophon to the *Sentences* commentary of one of his students, John Grössel of Tittmoning.<sup>6</sup> When Pirchenwart caught the infectious disease, it is possible that, just a few days before the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in 1436, he decided to bequeath what is now ÖNB 1424 to the library of the *Collegium Ducale*. This manuscript lacks abundant *marginalia* or other traces of extensive use, and so it is difficult to decide to what extent Pirchenwart used *Wb* in his teaching. In Book IV of his *Sentences* commentary, we find an explicit reference to Ware, but it is in a generic quotation, in which the (future) *magister* at Vienna refers the reader to a cohort of *magistri* from Paris.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> M. ESU, "Peter of Pirkenwart's Textual Workshop from His *Principium IV* (1417)," in *Principia on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: Exploring an Uncharted Scholastic-Philosophical Genre*, ed. M. BRÎNZEI, W. DUBA, 2 vols. (*Studia Sententiarum*, 7), Turnhout 2024, vol. 2, pp. 331–379.

<sup>6</sup> See M. BRÎNZEI, "A Student's Notes on the Plague in Codex Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 4497," *Chora* 20 (2022), pp. 371–381, with Grössel's emotional testimony on p. 380: "Attamen invalescente pestilentia anno predicto, videlicet 36, adeo quod de certo die una sepeliebantur 70 funera ante Assumptionis Beate Virginis, me tunc Wyenne constituto, pluribusque notabilibus suppositis universitatis pro tunc et paulo ante defunctis, videlicet professore Sacre pagine Magistro Petro Pirchenbart in collegio Ducis seniore regente ac lectore in theologia."

<sup>7</sup> PETRUS REICHER DE PIRCHENWART, *Questiones in IV Sententiarum*, q. 50 (on d. 49), a. 4, §203 [K 264vb, G 360rb] and in Vat. lat. 1120, f. 210vb: "Item,



In the two images (*M* and *Wb*), William of Ware is depicted in his Franciscan habit, with the long hood and the hemp rope that invoke the humility and simplicity of St. Francis. The illustrator had clear instructions, or at least the obvious intent, to represent Ware as an authority: he dominates not only the image space, but also his public, occupying a superior position and gazing down on his audience from above. The goal is to emphasize the hierarchical relationship between Ware and the others. Although the general scenography is very similar in both manuscripts, the symbolic meaning of the two images appears to be different.

In each codex William of Ware is portrayed on the left in front of an audience on the right, with an open book between the two sides by which the artist orchestrates Ware's gestures. If in *M* the book is placed on a simple desk, in *Wb* there is a fancier support, similar to a *cathedra*. The act of teaching is more animated in *Wb*, and this corresponds to the larger public of students, all of them Franciscans. This detail implies that he is lecturing inside a *studium* of his order. What is quite significant is the movement of his hands, both of which are involved in his performance. Discussing the representation of *magistri* in medieval iconography, Antoine Destemberg considers this motion part of the oral communication. According to the French historian, the dance of the hands has a specific meaning: "si la main droite est celle de la transmission et de l'autorité, la main gauche est celle de la connaissance."<sup>8</sup> This

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multa alia inconvenientia secuntur ad illam positionem Durandi, quare — salva sua reverentia — dicta ipsius non sunt fundata. Nulli ergo debet esse dubium quin duo corpora possint esse simul penetrative in eodem loco. Et qui de hoc materia latius videre voluerit, videat sanctum Thomam, Scotum, Gwarronem, Durandum et Franciscum de Maronis, qui late et discordanter ipsam pertractant. Et hoc de articulo quarto." I am grateful to Matteo Esu for indicating this precise passage to me. He is currently working on the critical edition of book IV of Pirkenwart. For a list of authorities quoted in book IV from manuscript Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 1121, see M. BRÎNZEI, "Stanislaus of Znojmo and the Arrival of Wyclif's Remanence Theory at the University of Vienna," in *Wycliffism and Hussitism: Contexts, Methods of Thinking, Writing, and Persuasion, c. 1360- c. 1460*, ed. K. GHOSH, P. SOUKUP (Medieval Church Studies, 47), Turnhout 2021, pp. 245–274, at p. 263. Another list is compiled from two different manuscripts, Göttweig, Stiftbibliothek 261 (272) and Klosterneuburg, Augustiner-Chorherrenstift 340, in W.J. COURTENAY, "From Dinkesbühl's *Questiones Communes* to the Vienna Group Commentary. The Vienna 'School', 1415–1425," in *Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl and the Sentences at Vienna in the Early XVth century*, ed. M. BRÎNZEI (Studia Sententiarum, 1), Turnhout 2015, pp. 267–315, at 304–315.

<sup>8</sup> A. DESTEMBERG, « *Magister et majestas*. « La contribution des images à la

detail is discreet in *M*, where Ware appears simply to hold his book as a symbol of his possession of knowledge. At the same time, his gesture hints that he is flipping through some pages. Laura Cleaver deciphers this body language in medieval iconography as communicating that the figure is “in connection with the written words and thus presumably identifying him as their author.”<sup>9</sup>

Although technically William of Ware was still an advanced student in theology, a bachelor, when he lectured on the *Sentences*, the product of which lectures is contained in the manuscripts, the evident message of the iconography in *Wb* is that Ware is a professor in the act of a *lectio magistralis* captured in a dynamic moment of instruction, in control of his students and of his knowledge. The image in *M*, however, seems to head in a different direction and highlights another element of Ware’s biography. As the editors of this volume attest in the introduction, Ware was identified as the *magister Scoti* or *praeceptor Scoti*. From the simplicity of the design in *M*, we can see in the image a more personal relationship between a master and a disciple. Yet this disciple seems to be someone who possesses knowledge in his own right, because he is also represented with an open book in his hands. The right of the image is focused on this figure, although it seems that the top of the tonsured pate of another friar may be visible behind him. If the scene in *Wb* is a teaching moment, the image in *M* captures a dialogue or exchange between two established *magistri*. The disciple does not have the juvenile features of the students in the audience in *Wb*, but appears more mature and closer to his master. He has a mature countenance, but looks younger than his master. Some very delicate traces of white ink on the face of Ware in *M* also indicate that Ware has reached the age of wisdom and is therefore comparatively advanced. Although at first glance the iconography in *M* appears to be very similar to that in *Wb*, one can have distinct interpretations. From *M* we deduce the dual role of Ware as authority and as *magister* of another authority, John Duns Scotus, even if in reality, again, Scotus would have been a bachelor or advanced student himself. The cost of execution of *M* were probably

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construction de l’auctoritas magistrale à la fin du Moyen Age, » in *Faire et voir l’autorité pendant l’antiquité et le Moyen Age. Images et Monuments. Actes de la journée d’étude édités sous la direction scientifique d’A.-O. Polipré*, mise en ligne 2016, pp. 112–132.

<sup>9</sup> L. CLEAVER, “The Image of the Master,” in *Education in Twelfth-Century Art and Architecture. Images of Learning in Europe, c. 1100–1220* (Boydell Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture, 8), Woodbridge 2016, pp. 110–129, at p. 112.

less that in *Wb*, as mentioned above, but the message is still just as meaningful.

The semantics of the figurative initials in *M* and *Wb* thus mirror two fundamental aspects of William of Ware's biography: his position as the mentor of John Duns Scotus and his activities as a teacher within the Franciscan order. The two portraits reveal the high regard that William of Ware enjoyed in the eyes of his contemporaries.

*M**Wb*

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