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**The philosophical foundations of the Trinitarian
doctrine in the School of Saint Victor**

PHD THESIS SUMMARY

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Keywords: Richard of Saint Victor, Duns Scotus, Trinity, trinitarian, contemplation, mysticism, Victorine, essence, individuation, *principium individuationis*, individual, person, categories, doctrine, intentionality, condition of possibility.

Thesis statement: Richard of Saint Victor is the one who *establishes the Trinitarian doctrine* in Latin theology in the last half of the 12th century. His dual work, mystical and dogmatic, sheds light on the author's cognitive profile, which promotes a knowing subject capable of complete experience, endowed with faculties of knowledge that operate dually, both in the rational register of conceptual determination and in the supra-rational register of *intellectual indetermination*. By defining the articulation of this type of cognitive subject, we trace more and more precisely Richard's singular position in the intellectual history of the century, captured in a stage of paradigmatic revolution. He gives an innovative epistemological breath, as a promoter of the *transcendental and intentional turn*, of the *essentialist solution* given to the problem of knowing the singular being, thus projecting the modern and still effective concepts of *person, individual* and *relationship*.

Hypotheses that we referred to in order to isolate the Richardian doctrinal singularity:

- Richard of Saint Victor is the first author to mark, in his mystical work, the overcoming of reason by intelligence by affirming a difference in nature between the two faculties, a principle that will also approve the arrival of the truth of the deductions in the treatise *On the Trinity*;
- The pre-scholastic conception of the generation of the divine essence, an effect of the transmission of notions from the Aristotelian *Logica vetus* through Boethian thought and vocabulary, in the Augustinian tradition, was effective until the 1150s. The *Sentences* of Lombardus (1150s) will make it unfrequentable, and Lateran IV (1215) will reject it; The Treatise *On the Trinity* written by the Victorine Richard appeared in the 1160s, immediately after the death of Lombardus, and until Lateran IV it would represent the normative Latin Trinitarian theology;
- The new Aristotelian corpus (completed with the *Logica nova*, naturalistic books, Arabic commentaries), available at the turn of the centuries, consistently contributes to the formation of the new Trinitarian paradigm;

- Richard joins the tradition of the demonstrability of the Trinity, relying on the Anselmian method and correcting the ambiguities inherited from Boethius under the pressure of Abelardian exaggerations;

- The transformation of mystical theology in the first half of the 13th century, when Thomas Gallus established a new type of reading of the Dionysian corpus, based on which intellectual knowledge of divinity would be rejected and only affective union with the divine would be accepted;

- Sentential commentaries added to Aristotelian categorical logic a *logic of faith* (*logica fidei*), which implies two additional rules: (1) *Augustine's rule*, which establishes that in the divine nature, absolute terms are predicated according to the substance and are common to all persons, and relative terms are predicated according to the relationship and are not distributed from one person to another, indicating the distinction between persons; (2) *Anselm's rule*, which states that the only distinction in divinity is by relationship, so both divine unity and relationships are maintained, unless they come into opposition. Richard, long before obtaining this useful tool in divine knowledge, manages to understand the two rules from a careful reading of the works of Augustine and Anselm.

The *research methods* through which we will pursue the achievement of the objectives consist of philosophical exegesis, philological dexterity, historical and theological understanding, logical elaboration. Thus, there is a need to modulate thinking from analysis to synthesis, hermeneutics and textual comparisons, historiographical interrogations. The precision of the philosophical language used must be able to capture the most subtle refinements of thought and clearly express the gradual advance of ideas throughout the research.

The stages we set out to capture are as many *objectives*, which led us to divide the work into four chapters, through which we can smoothly reach the expected results. We will now briefly present the objectives pursued in the *four chapters* of the paper.

Therefore, in the first chapter, we wish to capture the intellectual, spiritual and encyclopedic character founded by Master Hugo at the abbey school of Augustinian canons founded at the beginning of the 12th century at the gates of Paris, between the cathedral and the monastery. The school enjoyed a century of brilliance, during which the Victorines contributed to all fields of knowledge and human activity. The works of the Victorine masters were received

by the scholastics of the following century, and thus entered in the sentential commentaries. We will present the known biographical data about Richard and classify his work, and finally we will present the model of the faculties of knowledge and the human-divine analogy. We will already distinguish the way in which Richard understands the powers of the rational soul, which allows us to capture his own type of cognitive profile.

In the second chapter, we continue to profile the cognitive subject promoted by Richard of Saint-Victor, in order to fully understand the way and register in which he acts. To this end, we will present the authorities that influenced Richard, the Trinitarian doctrines of his contemporaries, which the Victorine strives to correct, and then his intellectual mysticism, in which he manages to innovate through the way he considers intelligence, as a faculty capable of union with the divine. Thus, the main authorities that contributed to the establishment of Richard's cognitive profile were Boethius, Anselm, Dionysius the Areopagite and Abelard. He wishes to correct the former with the method of the latter, drawing inspiration from Dionysius regarding the cherubic level of contemplation, and the pressure exerted by Abélard's rational exaggeration and the way in which he defines the universal catalyzes his effort to reformulate and correct. The commentators of the Boethian treatises presented here, against whom Richardian criticism is directed, are Gilbertus Porretanus, Thierry of Chartres, Clarembald of Arras and Alan of Lille. Richard's confrere, Achard of Saint-Victor, falls into the same category, and their error is due primarily to the influence of a henological cosmology, which persists in medieval thought since Boethius and finds fertile ground especially among the Chartresians and Cistercians. This doctrine is closely linked to that of universals, and extreme realistic or nominalist solutions, applied to the knowledge of the divine, brought numerical difference between persons, hence a pantheistic intermediality. In addition, they promoted a negative and impossible to capture knowledge through categories of the divine essence and persons, also inherited from Boethius. All this prompted Richard's effort to find a solution for categorical thinking in general, so that both universalization and intratrinitarian qualitative distinction would be possible. He finds the solution in his mystical work, where Victorine places intelligence above reason, but not as an extension of it, as was the usual approach, but different in nature from reason, and thus Richard performs the transcendental turn in Latin thought.

Next comes the chapter dedicated to the trinitarian doctrine, in which we will analyze the treatise *On the Trinity*, which we translated (in collaboration) and prepared for publication in a

bilingual edition, with an introductory study and notes. The treatise consists of a prologue and six books, in the first two Richard makes the effort to demonstrate the divine unity, and from here on, the Trinity. Richard confesses that for the demonstration of the divine unity he found support in the Anselmian treatises, *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, while for the demonstration of the Trinity, he found no more references in tradition and was forced to innovate. In order to be able to establish the advance of knowledge from the creature to the creator, Richard avoids metaphysics and starts from the evidence of the concrete sensible, from which he can ascend through valid deductions to the supersensible truths. Thus, wanting to define the human person in order to then be able to define the divine, he finds himself faced with the problem of knowing the individual, for which he had no satisfactory solution. Thus, he makes the effort to solve it and the essentialist solution he finds makes him the discoverer of the individual before Duns Scotus, to whom the non-material foundation of the principle of individuation is attributed. We will not present here the innovations brought by Richard in this treatise, because we have extracted, analyzed and presented them in the results section of the research.

The fourth and last chapter aims to analyze, after having assimilated the mode of operation of the Richardian cognitive subject and the solutions it found in the problem of knowing the human and the divine, the philosophical innovations that Richard brings and their reception in the history of philosophy. We will analyze here Richard's essentialist conception, which emancipates itself from the *forma essendi* to adhere to *esse essentiae* as an alternative to *esse existentiae* and we will present the concept of essential individuality designated by the term *danielity*. The shift of emphasis in the definition of the person from individual substratum to incommunicable existence, carried out by Richard, automatically sends us to the analysis of the principle of individuation. Thus, if for Thomas Aquinas, the principle of individuation still has a material foundation, and the divine person is distinguished by a substantial relationship, Duns Scotus moves the principium individuationis from matter to form, and considers the relationship of distinction of the divine person as a singular essential property. We note that Richard makes this transition before Scotus and we analyze the principle of individuation at length, shedding light on the Scotus-Richard connection. In order to anchor the study in philosophical current affairs, we point out towards the end of the research the assimilation of the Scotist (and Richardian) principle of individuation in Edith Stein's philosophy, thus its takeover in phenomenology. As phenomenology has a special appetite for the transcendental position,

intentionality and essential intuition, the success of Richard's solution was assured in advance. In the simplest words and corresponding to all three philosophers – Richard, Scotus and Stein, the principle of individuation must be a fundamental empty form, intrinsic to the form of the species, and which is qualitatively and personally filled in the constitutive flow of the subject's experience.

In conclusion, the essential *contributions of this research* are the following:

- Presentation of Richardian *cognitive profile*, extracted from the entirety of his mystical and dogmatic work. Such an approach is entirely original and I have not identified any similar attempt. In both treatises on contemplation, *Benjamin minor* and *Benjamin Maior*, Richard asserts a difference of nature between intelligence and reason, and thus moves knowledge through the superior faculty of intelligence into a register of the condition of possibility. According to these statements, the criterion by which we call Richard's cognitive profile intellectual is given by the supra-rational character of the intellect as a faculty that acts in the register of indetermination and of the condition of possibility for any conceptual determination.

Through this *transcendental turn* that Richard performs, he emancipates himself from the emanatist approach of a *forma essendi* and moves the problem of knowledge into a register of the constitution of essence, located halfway between subject and object.

The transcendental solution that Richard finds reconciles realism with nominalism, thus Platonism with Aristotelianism, meets the divine with the human, the Idea with the form. It is the most comfortable epistemological position, a fact verified by the success it enjoyed once it was realized. In conclusion, Richard's essentialist position managed to capture so early a much later conquest of philosophy. In this way, he deserves to receive a privileged place in the history of philosophy.

- Another significant philosophical innovation brought by Richard is that he was the first author to transfer the foundation of *the principle of individuation* from matter to form, and the knowledge of the singular from the act of existence to the possibility of essence. Richard offered the first essentialist solution to the problem of individuation, so that the historiography of knowledge of the individual, from which it is still missing, should reserve for it a privileged place as a founder. It is interesting to note that Richard reaches this exceptional philosophical result in his effort to obtain theological solutions. Thus, wishing to reformulate the Boethian

definition of the divine person using the deductive method by which he advances from the human to the divine, Richard starts from the human person and realizes that he has come face to face with the problem of knowledge of the individual, for which the materialist solution could not be satisfactory. It was necessary to find a solution for defining the concrete singular being, in order to then try to define the divine person. Victorinus understands that the human individual cannot be designated either by substantial attributes or accidental properties, or by a collection of them, and defines him by distinguishing an individual substantial property, which he calls by the term *danielitas* (DTr, C II, 12), the essential incommunicable property that determines the individual Daniel. Richardian *danielity* becomes *haecceity* at Scotus, *essential qualitative filling* at Edith Stein, and we find it in the current common conception of the *person*. Richard can be considered *the first personalist*, but more than in the sense in which R. Javelet asserts this, as a supplement to the human-divine analogy, but in a profound and innovative philosophical sense.

Although it has been noted, in a relatively recent study, that Richard of Saint-Victor transferred the principle of individuation from matter to form before Duns Scotus, this idea remains in an incipient stage, and our consistent analysis has an original articulation.

- Also in relation to the principle of individuation, Richard affirms the ontological priority of *esse essentiae* over *esse existentialiae* (DTr, C IV, 16). A singular existence (*existere*) is determined both by the substantial being (*sistere*), and by the origin from which this substance reaches it (*ex-sistere*), both by the common substantial quality and by the incommunicable relationship of origin. The accidental human origin is excluded for individuation, so that *danielity* captures the Scotist concept of *ultima realitas entis*, a singular irreducible essence, intrinsic to the specific one and which contracts it, determining *haecceity*. The real proper is the individual, its basis is essence, and its actuality, existence. This singular existence of the Richardian type, substantial being with origin (which comes, *existere* = *to be substantial from someone*), reaches Edith Stein in the form of that singular fundamental monadic structure, of divine essence, present in each subject and which each one constitutes uniquely in their own experience.

Thus, within the form of the human species, each individual contains the same fundamental empty form, by filling which he will constitute himself as a singular human person and will be able to *open himself to otherness*. Stein was always concerned with anchoring the finite being in the eternal, so that in terms of otherness, it is as if she had directly read the subtleties of the Scot

Richard, before the texts of the *Subtle Doctor*. In this sense, the great Victorine, establishing that singular existence means *being substantially from someone*, repudiates human origin in the sense of corporeal genealogy and thus the property of individuation must be an essential one, come from the common supersensible substance and yet constitute an irreducible qualitative singularity. Consequently, he observes that *danielity*, as an individual essence, corresponds to *divinity*, as a unique essence. But since in the case of the human, we have several essences in a single person, and in that of the divine we have several persons in a single essence, it follows that the human person is distinguished by an essential property, and the divine by a relative one. But if in the *divinity* we have three persons in an eternal relationship, and as a substantial unity it corresponds to the *danielity*, it follows that the *danielity* also carries within itself the relationship according to the model of intratrinitarian perfection. Thus, the essence that individuates the human person opens it at the same time to otherness. This is the precise meaning of the Steinian fundamental empty form, which determines both individuation and openness to the other. Filling presupposes both individual quality and community relationship.

- We now also notice in the knowledge of the divine person, not only the human one, the way in which Richard of Saint Victor overcomes the Aristotelian-Boethian *logica vetus*, according to which the concrete individual was determined by the accidents that the composition with matter brought into its nature. Since the divine nature admits neither matter nor accidents, but the persons of the Trinity must be distinguished somehow, Richard finds the solution to overcome the logic of categories by assimilating Augustine's distinction between the substantial and the relative utterance (*On the Trinity*, C V, 9 and C V, 12), and the maximal sentence by Anselm in *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, I. Consequently, he was able to consider that the substantial terms are common to all the divine persons, and the relative ones are not distributed from one person to another, indicating the distinction between them. Thus, the great Victorine manages to get out of the errors of the era regarding the trinitarian approach to divinity and can reformulate the definition of the *divine person*.

- In a century dominated by Boethian commentaries, Richard of Saint Victor is the one who realizes that *the definition of the person*, inherited from Boethius, must be corrected, not just interpreted, and in order to reformulate it, a solid foundation of knowledge of the singular being is necessary. In this sense, we list below the evolution of this definition due to Richard:

(1) Boethius: Individual substance of rational nature (*TT*, *CEut*, III, 4-5);

- (2) Richard: Incommunicable existence of divine nature (*DTr.*, C IV, 22);
- (3) Scotus: Incommunicable subsistence or existence of an intellectual nature (*Reportatio I-A*, vol 2, Dist. 23, 16, p. 19).

Therefore, Richard intuited before Scotus that in order to revise Boethius' definition so that it fits both the divine and the human person, the emphasis must be shifted from substance (subject) to subsistence (existence), and singularity can only be designated by an incommunicable property, in the case of the divine relational, and in that of the human essential.

- We also specify that our research has highlighted the fact that Richard of Saint Victor remains *the intellectual mystic par excellence* of Latin culture. Of course, his intellectuality must be understood in the sense presented above, as intellectual intuition, placed in the register of the constitution of essences. Thus, he affirms the intellect as the cherubic summit of the union of the human mind with the divinity. The model of knowledge of the Trinity that he proposes must be understood in this way: it starts from the evidence of the concrete individual, advances through rational deductions, and contemplates through the intellect in that intermediate meeting place of the human with the divine. We emphasize here again the philosophical flair of the Victorine, while his contemporaries and those who followed him could only accept a seraphic affective summit of contemplation.

- We can also propose a methodological value of the Richardian cognitive profile, which *establishes a praxis* of the knowing subject through which he configures his access to a totalizing experience, in which the concepts of reason are surpassed by intellectual intuition. This paideic path implies, of course, a moral renewal alongside the uninterrupted advance in knowledge.

- Richard *discovers the individual* and defines the essential singularity of the person, finding an effective solution not only in the fields of knowledge, but also in our current secular presuppositions, an aspect that I mentioned in the final part of the thesis.

- The concept of *person* proposed by Richard, through the way it was founded and which we have made the effort to present so far, has relevance not only for the scientific and philosophical community but also at an inter- and transdisciplinary level. The term *person* is the most common in the human sphere, so any justification is superfluous.

- Finally, we would like to mention our contribution regarding the (collaborative) *translation* of the treatise *On the Trinity* and its preparation for publication in a bilingual edition, with an introductory study and notes.

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