

# The Practice of lectio in the Medieval tradition

## *Lecturis salutem*

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**ABSTRACT.** Current paper deals with the practice of reading texts within the framework of the medieval university, particularly in the teaching cultivated by masters and students according to institutionalized pedagogical norms. Reading was a constant concern among the masters of the medieval period. This fact was revealed either in the warnings on readings that fail to build the Christian character because they worship only eloquence and not the virtue of wisdom (Isidore of Seville), or in the importance given to reading and the ways in which we should read certain texts (Hugh of Saint Victor) to train ‘the careful reader’ (Abelard) and prepare him to face the great themes of Philosophy provided in the schools of the twelfth century and in the future universities of the thirteenth century. The university is organized as a corporation and it is inseparable from what, within the sphere of the culture of the time, is called ‘Scholasticism’, with the masters’ teaching as the radiating element and focus of university studies. Current paper demonstrates how the practice of reading in the medieval tradition, present in the method recommended by the authors of ‘Scholasticism’, is met. In particular, Thomas Aquinas’ comments on Boethius’ treatise On the Trinity, regarding the classification of theoretical knowledge, will be highlighted.

**Keywords:** reading; teaching; ethics; medieval university; scholasticism.

### O exercício da lectio na tradição medieval - *Lecturis salutem*

**RESUMO.** O tema deste artigo se refere à prática da leitura de textos, no âmbito da universidade medieval, particularmente ao ensino cultivado por mestres e alunos segundo normas pedagógicas institucionalizadas. O exercício da leitura foi uma preocupação constante entre os mestres do período medieval, algo consignado, seja nas advertências daquelas leituras que não edificam a formação do caráter do cristão, por cultuarem tão somente a eloquência e não a virtude da sabedoria (Isidoro de Sevilha), seja pela importância dada ao saber ler e aos modos pelos quais devemos ler determinado texto (Hugo de São Vítor), a fim de formar um ‘leitor cuidadoso’ (Abelardo) e preparado para enfrentar os grandes temas da filosofia, como aqueles oferecidos nas escolas do século XII, ou na futura universidade do século XIII. Essa universidade é organizada como uma corporação de ofício e é inseparável daquilo que, na esfera da cultura da época, se denomina como ‘escolástica’, cujo ensino magistral é o elemento irradiador e foco dos estudos universitários. Veremos, neste artigo, como se consubstancia o exercício da leitura, na tradição medieval, presente no método preconizado pelos autores da ‘escolástica’ e, em particular, destacaremos o comentário de Tomás de Aquino ao tratado Sobre a Trindade, de Boécio, no tocante ao tema da classificação do saber teórico.

**Palavras-chave:** leitura; ensino; ética; universidade medieval; escolástica.

### El ejercicio de la lectio en la tradición medieval - *Lecturis salutem*

**RESUMEN.** El tema de este artículo se refiere a la práctica de la lectura de textos, en el ámbito de la universidad medieval, particularmente a la enseñanza cultivada por maestros y alumnos según normas pedagógicas institucionalizadas. El ejercicio de la lectura fue una preocupación constante entre los maestros del período medieval, algo consignado, sea en las advertencias de aquellas lecturas que no edifican la formación del carácter del cristiano, por adorar tan sólo la elocuencia y no la virtud de la sabiduría (Isidoro de Sevilla), por la importancia dada al saber leer y los modos por los cuales debemos leer determinado texto (Hugo de San Vítor), a fin de formar un ‘lector cuidadoso’ (Abelardo) y preparado para enfrentar los grandes temas de la filosofía, como aquellos ofrecidos en las escuelas del siglo XII, o en la futura universidad del siglo XIII. Esta universidad es organizada como una corporación de oficio y es

inseparable de lo que, en la esfera de la cultura de la época, se denomina como ‘escolástica’, cuya enseñanza magistral es el elemento irradiador y foco de los estudios universitarios. En este artículo, veremos cómo se consubstancia el ejercicio de la lectura, en la tradición medieval, presente en el método preconizado por los autores de la ‘escolástica’ y, en particular, destacaremos el comentario de Tomás de Aquino al tratado sobre la Trinidad, de Boecio, en lo tocante al tema de la clasificación del saber teórico.

**Palabras-clave:** lectura; enseñanza; ética; universidad medieval; escolástica.

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## Introduction

Current analysis deals with the practice of text reading within the Medieval University and investigates teaching cultured by teachers and students according to institutionalized pedagogical norms. Nowadays, during lectures in the classroom, Paulo Freire’s words should be remembered: “[...] reading anticipates itself and prolongs itself in the world’s intelligence” (Freire, 1989, p. 9). Anyway, what is reading? For a start, it would be prudent to understand the reading of the written text and disregard other types of reading, equally important, such as, for instance, those related to the attribution of meanings of visible things, as when one ‘reads’ the coming of rain from the dark clouds hovering above. I would like to underscore the importance of reading the written text. Do we apprehend the totality of what is proposed by the author when we read the written text? Although great efforts are spent in text reading and comprehension, do we not have the impression that something (or even many things) remains unreadable? What is written is frequent marked by the insufficiency of contents and ideas, or by their opposite, by excess, which distances us from its understanding.

One may say that reading is not just grasping the literality of words or their fruition. It is a detachment from the text, shunning passivity, to construct, with great effort, the mental reality which the text fails to tell. In other words, reading is not just the grammatical assimilation of the text (syntax and vocabulary), but the effort to understand what has been said. Grammatical assimilation is the external section of reading, whilst comprehension is its internal section, marked by reflection. Let us take for instance a certain practice in the teaching of philosophy within higher education, where teaching is based on reading and in the teaching of reading. Philosophical formation occurs through the reading of philosophical texts pinpointed as such by the history of Philosophy. When reading a philosophical text, one should highlight the balance between the objectivity of the text and the subjectivity of the reader. It does not boil down to retake it literally or to deform it by the reader’s intervention. This is why Merleau-Ponty invites the reader ‘to think again’ when he reads a determined philosophical text so that he may re-encounter the meanings posited: “[...] thinking again is not repetition; it is a renewal while thinking what is hidden between the thing meant and the explicit meaning” (Chauí, 1980, p. 431).

The exercise of reading was a constant concern among medieval teachers. It was a factor in the warnings found within readings that did not form the character of the Christian since they underlined either mere eloquence and not wisdom (Isidore of Seville) or relevance given to the knowledge of reading and to the modes by which we read certain texts (Hugh of St. Victor), to train the ‘careful reader’ (Abelard) and prepare him to cope with the great philosophical themes provided by the schools of the 12<sup>th</sup> century or in the future universities of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Reading is a section in the teaching of the Schools and, subsequently, the Universities. The act of reading in Scholasticism is perceived as a distinctive teaching factor. The author of several studies on medieval philosophy, Chenu says: “[...] medieval pedagogy is based on the reading of texts and university Scholasticism institutionalizes and applies such a task” (Chenu, 1950, p. 51). In current paper, we will perceive how reading constructs itself within the medieval tradition, which is present in the ‘method’ conceived by the Schoolmen, with special reference to the ‘reading’ of Thomas Aquinas on Boethius’s treatise *On the Trinity* with regard to the classification theme of theoretical knowledge.

## The Scholastic method: *quaestio et auctoritas*

When we analyze *lectio/lectura* within a medieval context, we advance in the Scholastic method. In fact, it is a pedagogical procedure of the university, the main institution in medieval society, organized as a trade union of teachers and students, with very clear rules. The medieval university is not divisible from

what was called Scholasticism within the period's cultural sphere. Teaching is the focus and the radiating factor of the university. The teacher and student corporation defines the texts for reading and commenting. It also pinpoints the forbidden texts. Philosophical and theological text require the reader's preparation, a mastering of learning techniques and the overcoming of difficulties. Prior to dealing with such pedagogical procedures, we have to explain the origin of the Scholastic method and the role of authority to which it is essentially due.

The 'Scholastic method' started in the Latin Middle Ages in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and was greatly developed in pedagogical practices in the universities. One cannot refer to the method for the acquisition of knowledge before this period. It may be termed 'cultural ideal', as that conceived by Augustine when he organized, with great depth, the elements of ancient culture (Jeauneau, 1980). His *Christian Doctrine* provides an example of such Christian cultural formation when it defends the cultural appropriation of the ancient Philosophers to the benefit of Christians: "[...] the so called philosophers [...] should be neither feared nor avoided. We should vindicate these truths to our use" (Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, II,41,60). Marius Victorinus, the translator of Porphyry and author of works on grammar and on the theology of the Trinity, may be quoted as an important author for the establishment of such a Christian cultural ideal.

However, it is Boethius (2005), a 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Roman philosopher, who forwards the origins of the Scholastic method and its influence on the theologians of the Middle Ages. As translator of Aristotle (especially the *Organon*) and as the author of philosophical (*De consolazione philosophiae*) and theological (*de Trinitate*) works, Boethius provides a model of philosophical exposition comprising themes, such as divine prediction, the relationship between reason and faith, the division between speculative and practical Philosophy. This gives rise to a hearty discussion on the statute of logic, whether it is an art or a science, or whether it may be considered part of philosophy or merely a tool at its service. The above themes are relevant for the medieval philosophy of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and, as we will see later on, for the 13<sup>th</sup> century, within the reading made by Aquinas.

It may be posited that the central element of the Scholastic method boils down to Boethius's *quaestio*, in the sense of *propositio dubitalis*, or rather, a proposition whose formulation places a doubt and its members form a contradiction. At the head of *De Trinitate*, the title may be taken as a question: *How is the Trinity one God and not three gods?* – an issue that defies the notions of unity and plurality in God. With regard to the Trinity, one should underline the theme of divine predictability. Predicting the category of compound beings is different from that of divine prediction. For instance, when we say 'God' as substance, we are not saying any substance, such as a stone or a river, but somebody beyond substance. If one does not accept this sort of thing, doubts and controversies abound.

At the beginning of Scholasticism or of the first Scholasticism, as some historians of Philosophy call it, Anselm of Canterbury (1984) again uses the term *quaestio*. From Anselm's point of view, the term is related to an issue that must be solved, internal to argumentation or, in certain cases, originates from an external difficulty and serves as a topic for thought. Its more incisive use lies in his last work *De concordia*, with three objective issues: 1) on pre-science and free will; 2) on predestination and free will; and 3) on grace and free will. Anselm considers them *difficiles quaestiones*, issues of great relevance in his moral reflections. As an example of structuring a question, it is enough to quote the third, since it is born (*ista questio nascit*) from the fact that the Bible seems, at certain moments, to attribute to grace the work of salvation (corroborated by the following Biblical passages: Jn 15:5 and 6:44; 1Cor 4:7; Rm 9:16-18), whilst, at other moments, to the effort of the free will (as in Is 1:19; Psal 33:13-15; Mt 11:28-29). The issue seems to oppose grace and free will as if they were non-reconcilable terms. The only task seems to delete the apparent contradiction and the difficulty. The presentation of the contrary theses allows the approach to the issue and its solution will be established within a strict dialectic argumentation.

Boethius's essential nucleus, used preliminary by Anselm, will be rigorously tested by Abelard in the preface of his *Sic et non*, a pioneer philosophical work within the scholastic method. It is a collection of quotes extracted from the Fathers of the Church which give an opening to "[...] a determined issue through an apparent discordance which urges the initiating readers to the full exercise of their research for truth and make them more penetrating through research" (Abelard, 2015, p. 127). The issues are characterized by what makes them seem not merely different but also adverse. It is not a contradiction between texts, but to the limits of our understanding:

[...] so that they could be perceived as non-contradictory and, therefore, reconcilable, we should understand that frequently the authors expresses themselves strangely, using, for instance, the same word but with different

meanings; that many apocryphal writings are mixed up with authentic ones; that texts may have been altered and corrupted, which also happens in the Bible (Nascimento, 1988, p. 47).

Meticulous interrogation and the role of the doubt will be the method for understanding. Truth has to be discovered and all points of view and opinions may be improved. The reader and the academic of a philosophical or theological theme should be aware of the different meanings of the terms in their different enunciations, following Rule Four of Abelard's *Sic et Non*. When two authors have divergent positions on the same theme or when the same source has different opinions, one should investigate in which context the statement was emitted and the worth of the meaning of the terms employed. Science is not the static reflection of divine order. It is not the repetition of theses with authority, but a set of human propositions that should be improved. When Abelard plays the role of the theologian, he discusses the meaning of the three persons of the Trinity. When he reflects on ethics, he wants to define sin (Jolivet, 1987). The method's main rule is based on a logical and semantic analysis. Terminist logic will complete the task. Abelard was a teacher of Dialectics whose aim, among others, was to sharpen the students' mind for discussions and provide them with contents for their exercises in Theology. Jolivet (1987, p. 28) states: "[...] the author of *Sic et non* is not a theologian that happens to know Dialectics, as many 13<sup>th</sup> century authors did. He is a theologian who, early in life, was a dialectician and remained thus throughout all his life, working within the two domains". In his works, we have a tremendous contribution to the *quaestio* technique and we may clearly state that the Scholastic method discovers its birth certificate in this mode. For the 12<sup>th</sup> century, we may place the names of Gilbert de la Porrée and Clarembau d'Arras together with Abelard.

The authority concept (*auctoritas*) is an important approach to the Scholastic method. When medieval philosophers were dealing with the production of knowledge, they did not start from scratch or from a *tabula rasa* of knowledge. They based themselves on traditional authors and texts, or rather, the basis of their reflections and their starting point. We are dealing with authorities. Quoting an author and remembering an author's thesis was not a mere rhetorical design but a central part of argumentation and contra-argumentation.

The origin of the term *auctoritas* belongs to the judicial sphere, or rather, the written proof that guaranteed a business relationship. The *auctor/authenticus* was the person who gave credibility, who was credible and true. In the Middle Ages, an authority was a person whose opinions and decisions were authoritative due to his canonical, judicious or intellectual position. Our interest is on intellectual authority since it represents the truth, since it was seen or spoken. Therefore, *auctoritas Augustini* implies that Augustine's texts are worthy guarantees of truth. St. Bonaventure is the most 'authentic' doctor (who contains the worth of truth) among the exegetes of the Bible. The authority text is not a mere external support, a part of rational truth. *Auctoritas* becomes either rational or revealed truth, or rather, written for use in posterity. It is not correct to bond directly the idea of authority of a text with the doctrinal authority of the Church, although, as from 1220, the Church (her bishops and synods) reinforced intellectual authority and prohibited the reading of several authors, such as the condemnation of Aristotle's works and the so-called Latin Averroes.

Consequently, the Middle Ages established who were the true *auctores* whose works were for mandatory reading. The Bible, the Fathers of the Church and Peter Lombard are *auctores* in Theology. For the *trivium*, Donatus and Priscianus are *auctores* in grammar; Aristotle and Boethius in Logic and Cicero in Rhetoric; the monk Gracianus in Law; Avicenna's *Canon* in Medicine; Plato in Philosophy (prior to 1200), together with Calcidius, Macrobius and Boethius; Aristotle in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Lectio**

Christianity used the term *lectio* within the monastery where the main task of the monk was the *lectio divina*, the reading of texts from the Bible, especially from the Books of Wisdom. The book becomes the main tool of the monks' daily practice. Consequently, one had to have the books and was able to read them. A characteristic feature of the monastic *lectio* was reading aloud, an 'acoustic reading', very different from the silent reading which consolidated itself later on. Since *legere* is not separated from *audire*, reading activities for the monks, such as singing and the Bible, occupied "[...] entirely the body and the soul" (Leclercq, 1990, p. 32). The assimilation of reading occurred through *meditatio*, a personal act, marked by deep interiority. This may be surmised within the monastic world lived by Anselm. The monk's main task – *lectio divina* – includes meditation, which constitutes the progressive conquest of interiority for the self-

knowledge of the soul and to seek God in Faith: the mind's journey towards God. The general meaning of *meditari* is to think and reflect. It is a term related with *cogitare* and *considerare*, both frequently used by Anselm. In the practical meaning, the term signifies thinking in something with the aim of doing, coupled to the idea of preparing and anticipating oneself. Within the Christian world, *meditari* is related primarily and directly to *lectio*: for the ancients, meditating means the reading of a text and its internal assimilation so that one may express its contents orally, fix it in the memory, harness it with the intelligence and place it into practice through the will

An important witness of the importance of *lectio* in Christian tradition and in pre-Scholasticism is provided by Isidore of Seville (7<sup>th</sup> century) in his commentary on the *Sentences*. He praises the assiduity of the Christian in reading the Scriptures and the Fathers and warns him on the danger of 'the poets' fiction' since the urge to lust is produced by the pleasure of reading the stories. Where does profit lie when knowledge in the teaching of the world increases, but is empty in divine doctrine? The sentences of the gentiles shine in their exterior through eloquence but they are internally lacking in virtue and wisdom (Isidore of Seville, 2009). Truth and not words should be appreciated in reading. The teaching of grammarians may be useful only if well employed. Even if reading is useful to instruction, the most important is dialogue "[...] since it is better to talk than to read" (Isidore of Seville, *Los tres libros...*, III,13,1). In fact, dialogue makes learning easier.

So that the term *lectio* may be analyzed correctly, 12<sup>th</sup> century authors should be studied. One cannot forget, within the history of the role of *lectio*, the relevant place reserved to Hugh of St. Victor's *Didascalicon* (The Art of Reading)<sup>1</sup>, written in 1127, and is considered to be an introduction to the study – perceive the meaning of *lectio* – of the Arts and Sciences, philosophy's main task. The Greek title refers to the art of teaching and instructing, and *lectio* refers to study. Its preface is highly instructive: "Two things are required so that one may have knowledge, namely, reading and meditation (*lectio et meditatio*)" (Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, I, 1). Hugh deals with the rules (*praecepta*) of reading: "[...] one should first know what one must read; second, the order in which reading should take place; third, how one must read" (Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, I, 1)<sup>2</sup>. The medieval *lectio* includes three phases: *littera*, or the literal explanation of the text, or rather, the meaning of the words employed; *sensus*, or the explanation of the text's contents; and *sententia*, or the text's explicit meaning and deep intention. The later is the highest point in interpretation. Hugh of St. Victor insists that in-depth understanding of the text is possible through exposition or interpretation (Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*). Besides the reading order, the way it develops is also important: from finite things to infinite ones and from things known to us to more hidden ones. The task of division is the very work of the reason which we investigate "[...] getting down from the universal to the particular, dividing and investigating the nature of each thing" (Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, III, 9). Hugh is thus challenged to classify the sciences and structure the scientific edifice by composing the most complete and detailed list in contemporary knowledge. Philosophy, the set of Arts and Sciences, is divided into four great areas:

- Theoretical and speculative sciences: Theology, Mathematics and Physics;
- Practical Sciences: solitary (Ethics); private (Domestic) and public (Civil);
- Mechanical sciences: wool weaving, war (architectonic and metalurgy); navigation, agriculture, hunting, medicine, drama;
- Logic: grammar (letters, syllables, diction, speech); the art of arguing (probable demonstration, Dialectic, Rhetoric, Sophistic, Poetry)<sup>3</sup>.

Within the environment of city schools, *legere* is associated with the idea of text reading, following Hugh. The contemporary John of Salisbury pinpoints the ambiguity of the term *legere*, which simultaneously means teaching and reading. The entire passage follows:

Since the term *legere* is ambiguous for the task of the teacher and for the learner, for the activity of the person who examines the Scriptures for themselves, a specific word, *praelectio*, taken from Quintilian, may be used within the interchange between the teacher and the disciple. The word *lectio* may be used for the attentive examination of the Scriptures (John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, I,35 ).

<sup>1</sup> Hugh placed the abbey of St Victor on an important stance for its intellectual and cultural statute, within the Renaissance of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>2</sup> This is the triple medieval stance of *lector artium*, *lector sacer* and *homo interior*; for the later, the *lectio* concentrates on the Bible. There is a propaedeutical strategy to prepare man for *divinitas*, or divine science. Hugh does not mention *theologia*, as Abelard did. History has its importance in the study of the disciplines since it indicates what should be read, following a proper method and shows how to think on a religious economy of time.

<sup>3</sup> Domingos Gundisalvo wrote *De divisione philosophiae* in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century when he employed Greek, Arab and Jewish sources. He proposed a division of philosophy that became popular in medieval universities during the next century: 1) science of wisdom (theoretical and practical philosophy); 2) sciences of eloquence (sciences of the word and civil sciences); 3) intermediate sciences (logic) (Kinoschita, 1988).

The term *praelectio* refers to teaching and *lectio* refers to personal reading<sup>4</sup>. Several works of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a transitional period, are basic to understand reading in the Middle Ages. They are actually witnesses of how medieval people thought on teaching (access to knowledge), reading and argumentation. During this period, we are aware of certain working tools which were indispensable for reading and the understanding of themes studied in different areas, such as the *Glosa ordinaria*, in the comprehension of the Biblical text, the *Decretum*, by Gratian for the study of Law, and the famous *Liber Sententiarum*, by Peter Lombard, a real compendium of the teaching of the Fathers, indispensable for the study of Theology. Its Preface reveals his intention: “[...] to compile in a single volume the opinion of the Fathers so that the researcher does not need to consult a great number of books. The brevity of the abstracts provides what he needs without much effort” (Peter Lombard, *Les quatres... , praefatio*).

Jacqueline Hamesse underscores that the progressive development of compendia, compilations, summaries and concordances caused an impoverishment of the read text, since the original text was ranked second due to fastness and accessibility of information (Hamesse, 1998). Compendia of Aristotelian philosophy circulated among the students of the Arts Faculty, aiming at summarizing and explaining the Stagirite’s difficult theses. The four volumes of Lombard’s *Sententia* were summarized into a single volume, with indexes, subdivisions and summaries of the main theses. A quick consultation was undertaken to obtain the necessary information. The problem of text selection, compilations and their quality is thus provided, which implies in the reception of the author’s thought.

### Thomas Aquinas and the commentary of Boethius’s *De Trinitate*

An example of pedagogical practice of teaching in the Middle Ages may be perceived in Thomas Aquinas’s commentary on Boethius’s *De Trinitate*. When he reads and exposes Boethius’s text, Aquinas reveals his manner of understanding the scientific statute of Theology and the issues which belong to it, such as God’s cognoscibility, the relationship between faith and reason, the distinction between Theology and other speculative sciences (Physics and Mathematics, and the procedures in theological discourse. Aquinas’s commentary belongs to his early teaching period in Paris, between 1252 and 1259, finished between the end of 1258 and the start of 1259. Thomas Aquinas was the sole commentator of Boethius’s text in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, whereas it had 20 commentaries during the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, known as the Boethian Age. Prior to the introduction and affirmation of the Aristotelian text of the *Metaphysics*, Boethius’s speculative thought, especially in this study on the Trinity, takes a deepened metaphysical stance on the issue of the ontological statute and the extension of the categories, since the possibility of interpreting the persons of the Trinity through the relation category leads towards the reconsideration of the totality of categories.

Aquinas’s commentary to Boethius’s text may be seen from two aspects, namely, the literal exposition of the text and a series of issues that examine in detail passages of the commented text<sup>5</sup>. Aquinas’s exposition refers to the *proemium*, the first chapter and a section of the second chapter. Each of these three sections is followed by two issues with four articles each, totaling six issues and 24 articles. The articles follow the classical structure of the ‘dispute’: arguments for a possible solution are forwarded for each theme; the arguments in favor of the opposite solution (*sed contra*) come next and, finally, the exposition of the solution proper (*responsio*) and the respective *replica* of all the arguments given in favor of the rejected solution (*ad argumenta*)<sup>6</sup>. The theme on the division of speculative philosophy and the distinction of its procedure modes are provided in questions 5 and 6, respectively.

It is important to underline two philosophical themes taken into consideration by Aquinas in the first article of question 5: the conceptual determination of the speculative/practical pair, within the dominion of the sciences, and his position with regard to the Stoic division of Philosophy.

<sup>4</sup> The term *lectio*, as our term lesson in Portuguese, is an ambiguous term and means: 1) give a course; 2) attend a course and 3) particular reading. The first meaning is the commented reading of an authority text, which may be cursive, short textual explanations or ordinary, a longer and more detailed explanation. The two were present in the Middle Ages within the *glosae*.

<sup>5</sup> One should also mention the practice of *lectura* understood as a method of text exposition and explanation. In the schools of Law, the text studied in the classroom was presented with explanations at the margin. They gave explanation to difficult passages. Later, the term had the technical meaning of a lesson or the commented reading of a text: “The term *lectura* refers to the teaching method and to the commented reading of texts. Different from *lectio*, *lectura* never means a single lecture. It is a series of lessons on a certain theme, or rather, teaching as a course. Similar to *lectio* in its original meaning, *lectura* means ‘reading’, the act of reading, and, thus, the teaching of teachers based on certain texts” (Weijers, 1987, p. 300).

<sup>6</sup> “The *quaestio disputata* characterizes university medieval thought. It regulated teaching and learning, and conferred its form to the masters’ writing. As a rule, the *quaestio disputata* may be defined as a confrontation of arguments: the opponent (*opponens*) and the respondent (*respondens*) discuss an issue. The initial interrogation of the debate is the thesis which may be invalidated or confirmed, always involving alternatives” (Porro, 1997, p. 67).

The distinction between speculative and practical sciences is based on their aims: the former aims at seeking the truth, whereas the latter aims at activities. Since the matter of one science is always proportional to its end, the matter of the practical sciences consists in what we may achieve, “[...] things that may be done by our effort [...]” and which, somewhat or other, are within our reach. This is different from the matter of the speculative sciences, which do not depend on us (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the thesis...*, q.5, a.1, *respondeo*). The distinction between speculative sciences is based on the object to which each science refers, conceived by Aquinas as the object of speculation or speculable object, or even as the object of theoretical scientific knowledge. The object of speculation has two factors: it must be immaterial and necessary, that is, it must lack any movement. From such a stance, we may have speculable objects that depend on matter to exist and those that do not depend on matter. Physics deals with the former and Mathematics with the latter. The speculable object that do not depend on matter (such as God and the Angels) or that which is negatively immaterial (substance, quality, being, act, potency) refer to Theology or divine science. Theology “[...] is called Metaphysics, that is, beyond Physics, since we have to pass from the sensitive to the non-sensitive, and first philosophy, because all other sciences, which receive their principles from it, come after it” (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary to the thesis...*, q.5, a.1, *respondeo*). One should underscore that, in Aquinas’s opinion, the understanding of divine science reveals “the unitary character of Metaphysics, as a means of understanding God as the main matter to be taken into consideration, as within the order of learning, since it comes after Physics, and as it studies the principles of knowledge<sup>7</sup>.

Another point that should be underscored is Aquinas’s critical stance in the wake of the division of Philosophy, not only in its acceptance of stoic origin (rational, natural and moral), but also in the classical division of the seven liberal arts, as given by Hugh of St. Victor <sup>8</sup>. With regard to the Stoic division, Aquinas states that logic is the handmaid of the other sciences: “[...] logic is not contained under speculative philosophy as the main part in so far as it provides its tools to speculation, or rather, the syllogisms, definitions and similar things, which we need in speculative sciences” (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary to the Thesis*, q.5, a.2). With regard to the division of philosophy into the seven liberal arts, Aquinas underscores that “[...] the seven liberal arts do not divide theoretical philosophy adequately” ( Thomas Aquinas, 1999, q.5, a.2). The seven arts have only a propaedeutic role for those who study philosophy, as the authority of Hugh of St Victor testifies and also Aristotle’s “[...] since the procedure mode should be sought in the sciences” (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary to the Thesis...*, q.5, a.3). The second aspect focuses on the meaning of the term ‘Arts’ (liberal arts), distinct from theoretical sciences and even from the mechanical arts. They are called Arts “[...] since they comprehend not merely knowledge but a work that proceeds immediately from reason, such as the construction of a syllogism, of a sentence” (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary to the Thesis...*, q.5, a.3).

## Conclusion

In the case of pedagogical practices in the medieval university, with regard to *quaestio* and to *lectio*, one should acknowledge that there is not one scholastic method but several ones, in consonance to the variety of Philosophies and Theologies in the Middle Ages. Otherwise, one has to admit the same method throughout the Middle Ages and a specific doctrine as a norm for the whole period. In fact, we cannot admit that the 13<sup>th</sup> century were the highest point of Scholasticism. What occurred before was not Scholasticism; what came afterwards was its decline. This would take Scholasticism by the Scholastic method. The school and didactic aspect of the practice of Theology and Philosophy belongs to Scholasticism, characterizing a method. Scholasticism is a collective term that designates those who practice Philosophy and Theology and it is not bonded, necessarily and exclusively, to the medieval period. In fact, scholastics may be found in Modernity, such as the thinkers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Portugal and Spain. A method to grasp the relationship between History and Philosophy is the knowledge that there is no history of philosophical problems (reason and faith; eternity in the world; transubstantiation), as if they were autonomous and eternal. Rather, they rise from institutional issues or from text interpretation which should be read and

<sup>7</sup> See the 'Introduction' by Carlos Arthur R. Nascimento on the *Commentary on the thesis de Trinitate by Boethius* (Thomas Aquinas, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> “The *trivium* and the *quadrivium* belong to the ancient Roman intellectual system. They were received early within the intellectual traditions of Christianity. It must be estimated that the complete formation of the person included the study of the sciences of expression ( *trivium*: grammar, rhetoric, dialectics or logic) and the reality sciences (*quadrivium*: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music). Boethius transmitted and consolidated such a perspective of formation (Hugh of St. Victor, 2001, III, 3).

commented. The philosophical issues are the products of culture and they are not conditions prior to philosophical knowledge.

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