

The King and the Kingdom seen by the preacher: Vincent of Beauvais and the concept of Christian kingship in the 13th century

André Luis Pereira Miatello*

RESUMO

O presente artigo discute, com base no *De morali principis institutione*, de Vicente de Beauvais, os critérios, a instituição e a função social da realeza cristã no século XIII. Tal propósito nos levou a perscrutar a imagem antiga do pastorado régio por oposição à ideia de razão de Estado. Escrevendo para o rei capetíngio, Luís IX, Vicente de Beauvais contrapõe a situação ordinária em que o governo político se apresenta, no plano histórico, ao modelo social visível em uma realidade sobrenatural, chamada *ecclesia*. Se, por um lado, a *ecclesia* permanece sempre uma referência idealizada e mística, por outro lado, a cristandade, regida por reis-pastores, pode oferecer a antecipação histórica da condição escatológica e pós-histórica que é o destino final dos homens.

Palavras-chave: política; realeza; pastorado régio.

ABSTRACT

In this article I am concerned with the Vincent of Beauvais's *De morali principis institutione*. The aim is to analyze his political ideas about the criteria, the institution and the social function of Christian kingship in the 13th century. In order to understand Vincent of Beauvais's political thought, I counterpose the ancient figure of royal pastorate (the pastoral power of the king) and the reason of state. Vincent of Beauvais wrote his treatise for the Capetian King Louis IX in which he contrasted the ordinary situation of political and historical government with the social model called *ecclesia*, a supernatural reality. For Vincent *Ecclesia* always remains an idealized and mystic reference while Christianity, governed by the shepherd king, may be a historical anticipation of the scatological and post-historical condition that is the final destiny of the mankind.

Keywords: politics; kingship; royal pastorate.

* Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). Departamento de História. Av. Antônio Carlos, 6627, Pampulha. 31270-901 Belo Horizonte – MG – Brasil. andremiatello@gmail.com

In this article, I intend to revise a theme considered classical in medieval political historiography: royalty and consequently the royal institution and its social function. It can be considered classical, as it has been widely talked about, researched, discussed, but not in the sense of having found the definitive scope for its *ethos*. I will not present here an overview of the principal works which have collaborated in recent centuries to the celebrated and discussable association of monarchy and the sacred, or to those who, criticizing the hegemony of this type of interpretation, engendered undoubtedly instigating debates, but which were nonetheless questionable.¹ The discussion I propose, starting with the political thought of Vincent of Beauvais in the thirteenth century, is concerned with circumscribing a field of analysis of public power in light of the criteria mobilized by thinkers of the period, identifying the key-points of the definition of what the exercise of government is and its social functionality for Latin Christianity.

These objectives required prior clarifications: the expression ‘social function’ comes of course from Durkheimian vocabulary, according to which social institutions, comparable to the live organisms of a biological body, exercise specific functions for maintaining the life of the ‘body’ of which it is part. However, specific meaning of ‘function,’ and consequently the organicist understanding of society related to it substantially predate contemporary sociological schools. St. Paul described the Christian *ecclesia* as a *body* formed by many members (or organs), with Christ as the head (1 Cor. 12), subsequent doctors of the Church (in the East and West), loyal to Pauline authority, explored this analogy in various meanings even establishing a functional hierarchy, according to which the *members* of the body, understood as *ecclesia* or Christianity, are ordered (or staggered) according to their greater or lesser importance for the survival of the entire ecclesiastic ‘organism.’

In a more specific manner, Bishop John of Salisbury (c.1120-c.1180), in a political and moral treatise entitled *Policraticus*, applied the Pauline metaphor to describe the kingdom of England, whose head was the king, in his theomimetic ‘function’ (cf. Book IV, 1-6). After the publication of this work, which enjoyed considerable good fortune, the organicist reference of the Church and society came to be used by many other scholars in medieval Western European, principally by Vincent of Beauvais, always applied to what over time came to be conceived as *societas christiana*, in other words social reality interpreted as the mystic junction of the kingdom and the Church. It is in this biblical and patriarchal sense that I adapt the expression ‘social function’ to my analysis of the work of Vincent of Beauvais.

The choice of this erudite Dominican is not fortuitous; in fact, it allows the proposed review to return to a somewhat 'classic' meaning, as mentioned. Vincent of Beauvais, author of one of the greatest works of history composed in the thirteenth century (*Speculum historiale*), was also the compiler of a wide-ranging theological and philosophical tract (*Speculum doctrinale*) which discusses themes related to power, the government, the royal ministry, its natural and supernatural *functions*, the constitution of a political community and the need for this. In addition to theorizing about politics, Vincent also sought to educate rulers, in the sense of teaching the art of governing: two of the principal works of the thirteen century about this question are his, one of which will be our starting point (*De morali principis institutione*).²

Notwithstanding the extreme finesse with which he analyzes questions of a political nature, we can consider it representative of a socially majoritarian manner of thinking, because, despite his particular concerns, which will be discussed below, Vincent always intended to be and was a great compiler of the ideas then in vogue. At the moment when modern historiography questions the emergence in the Middle Ages of a mode of government which we can call laicized, opposed to the dogmatic precepts of religion, or also those which projected during this period the effects of the autonomy of the political and/religious in relation to the social whole, Vincent of Beauvais' texts can help to clarify the discrepancies between lay and dogmatist analyses of medieval politics. Beforehand, it is useful to look at the context of this discussion.

POLITICAL POWER AND THE COMMON GOOD

In the introduction to the book *Da política à razão de Estado: a ciência do governo entre os séculos XIII e XVII*, Maurizio Viroli states that in the fourteenth century there occurred a 'revolution' in political language of such magnitude that it caused what can be understood as political science to change meaning completely; since then politics has no longer been seen as a noble art and came to be considered as an "ignoble, depraved and sordid: no longer the weapon with which to fight corruption, but the art of adapting to it."³

Using the expression 'reason of state,' which entered into the vocabulary of political science at the end of the Middle Ages, Viroli observes that this revolution signified the loss of the strictly moral orientation which constituted a large part of the understanding of politics before the sixteenth century. After this conceptual turn, the expression 'reason of state' was used to indicate the efforts of maintaining and expanding the dominion or the power of a deter-

mined person or social group over public institutions. Its purpose was understood as the act of maintaining the state, legitimate or illegitimate, just or unjust, with effective means, not being concerned with whether they were legitimate.

Obviously, Viroli developed the explanation of this conceptual revolution with great skill. It happens that from the point of view of the conception before the emergence of the *reason of state*, the fact that the political act had become a ignoble and corrupt thing had more profound and complex causes than the pure and simple loss of moral reference. Before entering into the discussion of the political assumptions of Vincent of Beauvais, it is useful to problematize the limits of this transformation of the modes of conceiving politics.

We can take the case of Brunetto Latini, in his work *Li Livres dou Trésor*,⁴ and Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, in *Collationes in Hexaameron* (Coll. V),⁵ both thirteenth century authors. The former, linked to the lay circles of Italian communal power, the latter related to the Parisian university ambient, more willing to talk about mysticism than politics. It is true that these two scholars represented different social places and that the diversity of places provoked differences of perspective. Nonetheless, in relation to the point being discussed here, both these *litterati* shared a specific comprehension of the political that was openly opposed to the concept of reason of state; for this reason any theoretical discrepancies between these authors and Vincent of Beauvais does not diminish the epistemological scope of the explanations given by them to the nature of political action.

In fact these authors can be seen in light of the important epistemological inflection that occurred in the thirteenth century: the time of the development of a certain philosophical, scientific and political rationality.⁶ However, it is better not to exaggerate the significance of this inflection, which was far from a rupture with the intricacies of previous scholarship, as I hope to show in this text. To the contrary of certain contemporary explanations, this epoch cannot be solely conceived as a harbinger of teleologically understood 'modern' times, as we can find in authors such as Quentin Skinner.⁷ In fact, Brunetto Latini is the first example of 'laicized' political thought, but this adjective simply indicates that he was not a cleric, but a public notary. For him politics is the art of governing with justice and reasons, the aim of which is to preserve the *republica* understood as the community of men who live together under the shelter of justice and the government of law and for this reason the means of sustenance of this art should be legitimate:

[Politics is] the highest science and the most noble craft there is among men, since it teaches us to govern the foreign peoples of a kingdom and a city, a people and a commune in times of war and peace, with reason and with justice.⁸

This definition of Latini's in itself does not entirely contradict the assumptions of reason of state as defined by Viroli, since the thirteenth century rhetorician argues that his work, *Li Trésor* (The Treasure), was written to teach rulers how "to increase their power and to safeguard their states in war and peace" (*Li Trésor* I.1.1). The difference in my opinion resides in the complement of the citation in which Latini notes that politics is the greatest of all arts because it depends on rhetoric: "the science of speaking well and governing people is more noble than all the arts of the world" (*Li Trésor* I. 1.4). The reference to rhetoric here allows us to understand political activity as the exercise of an *art* which is learned through the imitation/emulation of the authorities (*auctoritates*), the basics of which refers to the learning of that *traditio* which is part of the doctrine or science of governing well. In this case the moral orientation of politics continues to maintain all its significance.

Brunetto explicitly announces that his proposal of studying politics is based on the 'the uses of Italians,' in other words on that modality of parliamentary government (through an assembly) which constitutes the first communal experience in the proper sense; within this modality, the *spoken word* has an unlimited importance, since it becomes the principal prerogative of *power*. In Italy at the end of the twelfth century, and throughout the thirteenth, a new political culture of urban government was built in which the confluence of politics and language became evident and imperious, even resulting in the emergence of a new category of governor, the itinerant potentate (*podestà*); the latter was not only a 'representative of the interests of the commune,' but was beforehand a professional exempt from the interests within it, capable of favoring a balance between the factions (or parties), allowing peace and cooperation. The potentate, through the use of the public word (or politics), presented himself as an antidote to the evils which afflicted cities, and it was based on this highly rhetorical professional configuration that the Italian communes affirmed their *status quo*.⁹

Brunetto Latini's considerations and before him those of Orfino de Lodi (*De regimine et sapientia potestatis*, 1245) and John de Viterbo (*Liber de regimine civitatum*, 1260) lead us to perceive that 'civil science' (*civilis scientia*), understood in the terms of the epoch, demands another category for the political, absent from the sixteenth century onwards, as Viroli highlights, which

we can call the *moral education of the ruler*; because rhetorical learning was not just an exercise in the declamation of discourses in the assembly, but a pedagogical process (individual and collective) in which the men involved in politics seek to acquire the *sapientia* which, according to the Romans, such as Cicero, constituted the public man *par excellence*. Enrico Artifoni said that “word, moral, society and politics are conjugated in the same treatise, which gives space to some models of discourse ... but excludes the normative about the technical construction of *concione*.”¹⁰

We can find similar considerations outside the communal environment of Italian cities in the thought of men such as Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, who wrote his *Collationes in Hexaemeron* (Sermons about the six days of creation) in the Parisian court (1273). In these sermons, aimed at the university community of Paris, the Minorite theologian lists the principal theses related to his mysticism and his scatology. We can also find some references in them about the actual political sphere. I would like to highlight some: in first place, Bonaventura states that the good of the *republic* (*respublica*) should come before any other human interest, even the private friendships that men come to have. Second, the ignorance of good and, as a result, the practice of evil result from the fact that men no longer love the public good and come to love the private good (*bonum privatum*): the root of the political ills is the loss of the sense of collectivity and in the lack of consideration of the primacy of the common good.

Bonaventura verifies that this loss or lack of consideration is much more noxious when done by governments: “the prince should not seek his own utility, but that of the republic,” and in this point, agreeing with Aristotle, with whom he dialogues, the theologian sees the difference between the prince and the tyrant: the latter puts the private interest before that of the collective, acts like Herod who, fearing that he would lose his kingdom, order all the innocent children in Bethlehem killed; the prince to the contrary makes great efforts to privilege the common utility (*communem utilitatem*). It appears certain that Bonaventura did not forget the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, according to which it is impossible for men to practice good fully. In this case the prince, even when he desires to act according to his status, slips into error and behaves like a tyrant. Not for nothing Bonaventura provides for princes and governors (*rectores*) to learn the art of governing (*artem gubernandi*), in other words they act like the captain of a ship who does not adventure onto the high seas without dominating the techniques of piloting.

The theme of learning the art of governing was not recent;¹¹ medieval

thinkers do justice to the love they nourished for the *auctoritates* of the ancient world, Greco-Roman and biblical. However, Bonaventura, in enunciating the principle of governability through expertise, contradicts another long established assumption, the heredity of princes. For him, in the wake of John of Salisbury, heredity right could compromise the stability of the royal house if the successor was not capable of conducting it with political mastery and principally the moral of his antecessor:

Thus, when they preside they govern the republic badly. David saintly; Solomon, although inconstant, was wise; Rehoboam foolish because he divided the kingdom. The Romans, instigated by the devil, chose Diocletian. They had to chose the one eating at an iron table and finding him eating over ploughshare chose him, and he committed much evil. From this it results that the Romans when they elected their rulers chose very wise men and for this reason the republic was well governed; nevertheless, when the succession was introduced, everything was destroyed.¹²

The rapid reference to Brunetto Latini and Bonaventura da Bagnoregio allows us to verify the weight of the *tradition* of a type of political thought which beginning with Pythagoras, Plato or Aristotle, passing through Cicero, Seneca, reaching Augustine of Hippo, Gregory Magnus and John of Salisbury, made politics an experience of looking for the Good, if not absolute Good, at least that good which can be found in life. For all these thinkers, the search for Good, philosophically or theologically talking, covers the political field with a content that is moral and, in the Christian case, scatological, since the Good, absolute or sovereign, allows men and human society to enjoy the fruition of felicity,¹³ in this and in the other world. It is precisely here where can be found the knot of the question discussed by Michel Foucault in his 1981 talk *Omnes et singulatim*,¹⁴ which to me seems to expand Maurizio Viroli's discussion.

For the philosopher the modern concept of reason of state starts with the assumption of what constitutes an art, in other words, a technique based on *rational rules*. The reason of state, as the name indicates, demands that a political community be conceived based on criteria of rationality and other rationalizable criteria of the state. The question was totally ignored or rejected before the sixteenth century: according to Foucault this was because previous thinkers conceived the political community as something to be submitted to the three distinct, though interdependent, legislative references: human law, natural law and divine law. In the last two cases, in other words in natural law

and in divine law, there can be glimpsed the weight of the Christian conception of the providence of God which governs history and which in this case reduced the autonomy of human reason. The notion of justice and of good, for example, is presented as being linked to a certain conformity with the three bodies of the laws: the political community and consequently their rulers, did not have a purpose in themselves; they needed to conform to a purpose which went beyond them – in the same way that the body needed to be ruled by the soul, the universe had to be ruled by God: “Man needs someone capable of opening the way to celestial felicity by shaping here on earth what is *honestum*” (ibidem, p.375). Thus, in both Brunetto Latini and in Bonaventura, two very distinct examples of thirteenth century erudite thought, the theme of the education moral of the ruler, or the art of ruling, was presented as a *sine qua non* condition of the actual possibility of acting politically: celestial felicity inevitably depended on the honesty of earthly life which could only be learned through faith and asceticism.

VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS, EDUCATOR OF PRINCES

The Dominican friar Vincent of Beauvais was one of the most prolific and influential preceptors of princes and authors of treatises on royal education. Notwithstanding the eminent political role he acquired when he was nominated *lector* of the royal abbey of Royaumont by Louis IX in 1246, nothing is known about his birth, which perhaps occurred in the final decade of the twelfth century, about his initial studies, or even the date of his death, which appears to have occurred around 1264. After being admitted to the convent of Saint-Jacques in Paris, between 1215 and 1220 Vincent participated in the intense academic and university verve which involved the preaching friars in the first years of the new foundation. Approximately 20 years later, around 1244, Vincent was no longer just an unknown friar among the many Dominicans who frequented the *studium generale* in Paris looking for philosophical and above all theological learning: his *Speculum maius* raised him into a superior category in the world of studies. It was one of the most exquisite compendia of erudite knowledge compiled in the Western medieval world, a work which took ten years of study and research. This immense ‘encyclopedic’ work intended to present a summary of natural, doctrinal and historical knowledge; a large part of the work dealt with questions and content we can call political, such as the section in which Vincent discussed universal history,

specifying the historical place of kingdoms and kings according to divine providence.

The reputation which he gained from the success of *Speculum maius* gave Vincent a leading place among the Dominicans who had made themselves renowned through their intellectual efforts, which most have facilitated his entrance into the court of King Louis. As a preacher and confessor of the royal family, Vincent of Beauvais also became a member of the royal entourage, involving himself with the monarchical policy of Louis IX, especially with the practical questions of French government which employed numerous Dominicans and Franciscans as part of the administrative apparatus of the kingdom. During the thirteenth century, these orders applied themselves to constructing a project of royal policy with the aim of implementing this inside and outside the kingdom of France.

We should not be shocked to see friars from the mendicant orders at the service of important kings or kingdoms, such as the *Francia* of Louis IX, or the *Anglia* of Henry III: whether beside kings or dukes, or alongside common governors, such as the Dominican Iacopo de Varazze, in Genoa, the mendicant orders expected to act in a forceful way in the political space, implementing in centers of power their specific penitential ethnics. Therefore, despite the hierarchical and social differences between a monarchy and a commune, the friars leveled their practices to a differentiated perspective of political action which, according to Paolo Evangelisti,¹⁵ contributed effectively to the ‘construction of a state’ to the extent that the spiritual elements proposed by the friars corresponded to the interests of the respective centers of power. Evangelisti, in fact, notes that in the kingdom of Aragon, especially after Pedro III (1276-1285), the Mendicants developed a political discourse which managed to equal the theological understanding of *caritas* (sic) to the political understanding – monarchical and communal – of *utilitas publica*; the Mendicants commenced with the concept of *passio Christi*, politically mobilized, to explain the *communio* formed by the citizens of a kingdom (or commune) which was nothing other than a social body, divided into many members, but united by *caritas Christi*. Here there returns the organicist metaphor discussed at the beginning of the text and which served to define the *functions* of each member within this mystic body.

From old times in the company of the Capetian kings, Vincent was instigated by Louis IX, his queen Margarida and by Theobald, Count of Champagne and King of Navarra, to write works that would serve for the instruction of princes and of courtiers; this request corresponded to what was the intellec-

tual forte of the friar and his mission as the preacher of the royal house. The work would not be so difficult as Vincent already had at hand most of the bibliographic references necessary to fulfill the request of the royal family.

Vincent wrote three books of a politico-didactic nature: the treatise “About the education of the sons of nobles” [*De eruditione filiorum nobilium*], composed around 1246-1247, “Letter of consolation for the death of a friend” [*Epistola consolatoria ad Ludovicum regem de morte amici*], written in 1260 and finally the treatise “About the moral instruction of the prince” [*Tractatus de morali principis institutione*], written in stages and completed around 1263. All the works were written at the request of the king himself, which leads us to think that Vincent, in his greater function of a preacher, was responding to a preeminent political demand which placed practical application ahead of philosophical theorization; and it is about this practical side to his political thought that I want to discuss.

THE DOMINICANS AND POLITICS

Contemporary historians, such as Jean-Philippe Genet¹⁶ and Jacques Le Goff,¹⁷ have highlighted how Louis IX built around his court a ‘political academy’ with the friars from the Order of Preachers (or Dominicans) at the front. That the project was assumed by the Dominican order itself is evident in the convocation of the master general, Humberto de Romans, who designed the convent of Saint-Jacques in the heart of Paris, to be the base of this political academy linked to the Capetian court.

According to the critics, Vincent of Beauvais composed the manual *About the education of the sons of nobles* with this perspective of collective work. The first ambition of the king’s ideologue friars was to produce a collection of works which would contain a summary of all biblical and patristic knowledge related to the nature and purpose of monarchical power which could provide kings with more authoritative advice on how to govern. In the language of Vincent of Beauvais, this knowledge constituted political science (*scientia civilis*) capable of establishing and solidifying the actual kingdom.

Based on a reading of John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*, the Dominican friars, including Vincent and afterwards the Franciscans, such as Gilberto de Tournai, threw themselves into the great venture of composing mirrors for princes, in other words moral treatises whose purpose was to instruct kings to govern their own lives according to virtue and to govern the kingdom according to justice; it was not by chance that we can count dozens of works entitled

specula principum composed in the thirteenth century and whose authors were precisely the Mendicant friars.

VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS AND THE QUESTION OF POWER

In the following pages I intend to present in a summarized manner the fundamentals of Vincent of Beauvais's thought. It is not my intention to present a Vicentine *discourse analysis*, a method which I do not have mastery of, but rather to circumscribe a theoretical ambit in which the friar moved and through which he composed his work. I am not in search of something new or original, I only want to elucidate, loyal to the concept circumscribed by him, the limits of his political projection which certainly should have made complete sense in the court in which he had lived for many years. For this I will concentrate on his explanation of the origin of royal power and about the functionality of the office of king, which corresponds to chapters I-IV of *De morali principis institutione*.

1. De Regis institutione

To explain the origin of the monarchy and the notion of power exercised by men, Vincent of Beauvais starts with the biblical premise of the Book of Genesis, in which human history is divided into two stages. First, the creation of the first couple, and the second after Adam and Eve disobeyed God's law and the later punishment they received. In making an exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis, Vincent showed that before Adam and Eve's sin (preternatural time), there had been no kings among men, because they were all equal by nature. Vincent called this idyllic period of the history of humanity *principio da natureza bem instituída*, i.e., the epoch when everything was in its due place:

The word 'prince' signifies the first head or the one who occupies first place or the primacy. This position did not exist among men at the beginning of properly ordered nature, but had its origin when malice grew due to the ambition of the infidels. Since they were all equal by nature, Nemroth, from the family of Caim, was the first to usurp the kingdom over men by winning for himself their support.¹⁸

Vincent of Beauvais noted that monarchy originated in the craving for power (*amor dominandi/appetitus dominandi*) which signified the breaking

of the perfect order (*natura bene instituta*) of creation before sin. The concept of sin is here fundamentally a cosmological and political category: the error of the first man broke the balance of creation, since humanity was placed on top of the world.

Sin caused a rupture between God and the men and prevented them from having access to the bliss of divine familiarity. As a result the people born from the descendents of Cain are infidels, moved by malice (*malitia*) and by ambition (*ambitio*), men created an inequality so pernicious that it could have led to the destruction of the human race (seen in the fratricide of Cain) if divine providence had not prepared the means for countering the malice of men.

After showing that the defectiveness in the human condition generated inequality and the vice of prepotency (*amor dominandi*), Vincent discusses the development of infidel (born from disobedience) kingdoms (*res publica*) and empires, pointing out the particular acts of each great general or prince (from Nemroth to Julius Caesar) who moved by the vice conquered power for themselves. It is interesting to note that Vincent, before presenting the model of the perfect Christian prince, visible in Louis IX, spends various pages of his treatise to show princes inflamed by *amor dominandi*: beginning with Nemroth, Vincent discussed the Egyptian pharaohs and Greek kings, Aeneas, Brutus, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, all corrupted by the ambition to have power for themselves. As the power of kings began with an usurper such as Nemroth and in the sin of Cain, kingdoms could only begin among the infidels, despisers of the law of God, traitors of his love.

In the ideal plane, i.e., in the time before the Fall, there was no royalty; in the same way, in the time of the primitive Church, i.e., before the conversion of Constantine, the community of believers did not know the monarch. This is because the *ecclesia*, in the opinion of Vincent, restored by the sacrament to the ideal order broken by sin, in the same way that before the Fall Adam and Eve only dominated the animals as their pastors, likewise the Church the ministers are called pastors and not kings.

Faced with this addicted and corrupted political scenario, Vincent opposed *ecclesia* and *regnum*. Drawing on the cited authority of Gregory the Great he stated that in the Church the pastors were not “kings of men, but shepherds of sheep” (*Regula Pastoralis* II, 6), in a clear demonstration that the first founders of *ecclesia* were not stained by *amor dominandi*.

In this ideal of the primitive Church, the inequality between man is not substantial, since all are shepherded sheep, neither dominated nor subjugated. Vincent invokes the name of Noah to express that men are only superior to

animals and not among themselves. For this reason the faithful people (the Israel of the Old Testament) did not have a king until the times of Samuel, which shows that monarchy is not a divine institution (*ex voluntate dei*), but rather human, since in the case of ancient Israel, the royalty was decided by the general will of the people.¹⁹

In reference to the *amor dominandi* which founded the kingdom, there can be read surreptitiously the authority of St. Augustine (*De civitate Dei*, XIX, 15) who speaks of a *libido dominandi* which imposes inequality among men. According to the Augustinian reading of the report of creation, man by nature was created superior to fish, birds, reptiles, animals. It is licit according to nature to dominate them, thus it can be read: “the first just men were created more as shepherds of cattle than kings of men” (*primi iusti pastores pecorum magis quam reges hominum constituti sunt*).

Creation is hierarchically ordered, defining that the rational will dominate the irrational, as it should be among superior beings. In the same way, in man, his rational part (the soul) should command the irrational part (the body); however, when man falls into sin, distorting his natural condition, disorder takes over and he who was once free becomes subject to his vices. The term ‘subject’ has a strong meaning in Augustine, who appeals to the authority of Paul. The sinner is the slave of sin. In the paradisiacal state there was no subjection between men, and for this reason there were no kings; the emergence of royalty is due to sin which makes men slaves (*servus*, a term whose significance St. Augustine explains): inequality among men, which provokes the existence of a king, is due to sin, although divine justice accompanies human government aiming for an eternal good.

The theme seems to have had wide repercussions in Christian thought: Ambrosius of Milan also uses a similar expression when he speaks of *ambitio potestatis* (*Hexaemeron*, V, 15, 52). In Ambrosius it can be read that power, considered in itself, is good, because it has an origin in God. However, the unregulated or depraved use of this positive potency damages the ideal ordered inscribed in natural law and in revealed law (defended by the bishop of Milan). Ambrosius restricts the use of this potency to a single aspect: when its aim is the good. In this case power is good, but ambition is bad, because it wants more than the just average: there is thus a just way and an unjust way of using the power that God inscribed in the world.²⁰

Vincent of Beauvais explicitly cites St. Augustine in his work *Quaestionum in Heptateucum* (Livro V, 26) to fortify his point of view; in this work, the Bishop of Hippo interprets chapter 17 of the biblical book of Deuteronomy

(versus 14-15), in which Moses declared that if the people of Israel, when they entered the promised land wanted to chose for themselves like the other nations, they should elect who God chose, and this person should be a member of the Israelite people and not a foreigner.

The biblical problem which St. Augustine tried to explain was this: how could the same scriptures indicate the choice of king for Israel was not the will of God, and if it shows that God permitted the choice of king and establishes its criteria? St. Augustine resolves the question stating that the institution of royalty was not *secundum voluntatem Dei*, but divine permission to those who wanted it (*sed desiderantibus permisit*); the aspect of divine permission is perhaps the only criteria which justifies the presence of kings in the history of salvation. The question was serious: Scripture showed that God used kings according to his intentions for salvation and that the power of kings came from God. Vincent could not contradict the authority of the Bible, so he stated: "for this reason the condition of kings is never reproachable before God since for him kings reign and princes order, as can be read in the book of Proverbs, Chapter 8."²¹

The example of Saul was also symptomatic of this trajectory: he was a king chosen and anointed with divine instruction, and his kingdom was only undone because like Adam, Eve and Cain, he offended God with pride (*per superbiam Deum offendisset*). David, to the contrary of Saul, because he was loyal to God, not only did not lose the kingdom, but left it to his inheriting sons; there was, thus, a way for royalty to please God and to answer his task of salvation.

2. Why do kings exist?

In the dynamics explained above, the opposition between the time of grace and the time of sin was fundamental; the original equality between men and the inequality resulting from pride. The biblical logic continues to be important in the explanation which Vincent of Beauvais formulates about the purpose of royalty. The *history of perdition* described in the first pages of the Scriptures supposes the *history of salvation* described in all the other pages and which constitutes the work of God par excellence. The *misery* of Adam is talked about to exalt the *mercy* of God.

There comes into play the theological principle of divine providence in which God knows how to get the best even from evil: in this case, the origin of royalty can be the usurpation of Nemroth, in the same way that the origin of

the first city was the fratricide of Cain. However, God, who did not abandon history, used kings and cities to prove the life of men. The disorder of peace is followed by the order of merit. Based on the criteria of virtue, in opposition to vice, Vincent of Beauvais justifies the existence of social hierarchy in the post-fall world: if there is already no equality, then inequality will be perceived in the hierarchy of merits– the best presiding the worst.

The existence of kings thus meets the need to control human vices, to count passions in order to prevent one from killing another. Since selfishness, which always loves the private good, is responsible for the individual actions of men, the king becomes the one responsible for assuring and defending the public good, acting at the root of political depravation,²² with even physical coercion being allowed. The government and the laws constitute the way that the king exercises his social attributes. In this way the king proposed by Vincent is the same as that of Paul and Peter the apostles. He is the one who punishes errors and rewards the correct, he is the just king; in other words, he tries to lead the men submitted to him to that state which sin lost, but which is restored by grace in the foundation of the *ecclesia*.

The understanding of this last reasoning requires us to understand, first, the opposition which Vincent of Beauvais establishes, based on references to St. Augustine and to Gregory the Great, between *regnum* and *ecclesia*: the former, marked by *libido dominandi*; the latter by *amor Dei*. Kingdom and Church are here metaphors of those two primitive state separated by the disobedience of Adam. In this case, the king contemplated and proposed by Vincent can only exist in the conceptual field of *ecclesia* who projects the prince on a mission of salvation.

It is necessary to emphasize that by opposing *regnum* and *ecclesia*, Friar Vincent did not seem to be referring to a actual kingdom or Church, in other words he is not discussing the relations of the kingdom of France or the Holy Roman-German empire with the Roman Church, as might be thought based on a superficial reading.²³ Both concepts, maintained in their original Latin here, function as references to an ideal state which should exist, but which was lost: a world ruled by grace or by divine love (*charitas Dei*) and a world dominated by sin or by lack of human control (*libido dominandi*); like St. Augustine of Hippo and his *mystical cities*, *ecclesia* and *regnum* mystically expressed immaterial realities. It is thus necessary to be cautious when stating that Vincent of Beauvais defended a ‘theocratic conception of the political,’ as Javier Vergara did²⁴ in the analysis of the same first four chapters of *De morali principis institutione*, linking the Vicentine argument with the theory of ‘political agnosti-

cism,' coined by Henri-Xavier Arquillière in the context of the Neo-Thomism of the twentieth century and the conciliatory ecclesiology of Leo XIII.²⁵

There are no major problems if by theocracy we mean a system of government based on values and laws referring to a supernatural life; the Dominican thinkers, like all other Christians, theorized based on the unquestionable assumption of divine regency. However, in Vincent of Beauvais the question is not reduced to the otherworld or to the spirit dimension: by proposing the predominance of *charitas* or *amor Dei* over *libido/ambitio dominandi*, Vincent does not think only in spiritual or theological terms and does not simply want to impose divine law over positive law, nor impose clerical power over lay power; so much so that in both John of Salisbury and Helinando de Froidmont (1160/1170-1229), he wants to identify the conditions that make possible social coexistence despite original sin, whose root is pride. These authors are concerned with a better life here! In this question there is no way not to note the influence of a certain reading of Ciceronian work, particularly *De inventione* and *De officiis*, read and glossed from long since by Christian authors (Nederman, 1988, p.11). For this reason it is not enough to say that Vincent of Beauvais defends a theocracy; it is necessary to prove it in light of the references that he himself mobilizes.

The *ecclesia*, as it is marked by *amor Dei*, prevents the Christian king from being moved by *libido dominandi*; to the contrary, the love of God means that he, in the words of Gregory the Great, cited by Vincent, is concerned with being a *useful being*, and not in *dominating*. This association of ideas confers with the opposition between the figure of the shepherd before the Fall and the dominator after the Fall. Nor does the shepherd let himself be moved by thirst for power, but by the simple desire to preserve the life of his sheep and to lead them to abundant pastures.

The fact is that Vincent wrote for a visible kingdom, in other words one subject to the imperfections of the post-fall world. The king he had before him was a Capetian, devote, but nonetheless a sinner. The Vicentine attempt to educate the king, the princes and all the court was based on a desire to form a society based on the laws of charity which constituted the *ecclesia*.

From this results that the king proposed by Vincent of Beauvais and that of many of thinkers, such as John of Salisbury, is the shepherd king. In Vicentine works there is an opposition, already discussed by Michel Senellart,²⁶ between the verb *regere*, in which St. Augustine and Isidore of Seville saw the origin of the name king, and the verb *dominare*, which immediately refers to the relations of power in the private space that is the *domus*, whose leader re-

ceives the name of *dominus* (despot in Greek). The royal discourse formulated by the Mendicant friars proposes that the king is not a dominator, i.e., treats his subject like a lord treats his slaves, but is a shepherd, that is he leads his subject to the best pasture in this life and to the pasture of eternal life. In this sense the king *rules* his conduct by divine precepts and *corrects* the conduct of his subject aiming at the condition of ideal life; in this case the king does not dominate but shepherds.

The figure of the shepherd king, which can be found in Homeric narratives or in Pythagorean and Platonic references dating long back, (Sassier, 2002, p.20) is here resignified based on biblical references; thence it can be said that the monarchy is only a beneficial state for Vincent, when backed by the unity of faith which constitutes the *ecclesia* and with faithful kings, since these are the only ones who enjoy the legitimacy of governing. If political domination is the fruit of sin, then its remedy can only be found in the medicinal source of grace, the *ecclesia*, and Christian kings are the shepherds most apt to correct the men of vices, according to the authority of Paul in Letter to the Romans, chapter 13.

In this case the primary action of a king is to defend and ensure justice which means recognizing the place of God (and his law) and the place of man in the sphere of history. It is up to the king to revert the disorder of Adam and in this case fight with *humilitas* the noxious effects of *superbia*. Christian kings (who are the objects of consideration of Vincent) have a more soteriological mission than political, and their horizon is scatology, in other words the consumption of history in the kingdom without sin.

In relation to this, Vincent follows on from Gregory the Great: to rule is to lead men to salvation. In addition since men are body and soul, the king must correct the bodies and the bishop the soul. In a world that has developed following the drives of vices, Vincentine thought, like that of any medieval Christian, is concerned with the world of perfections, the kingdom of grace.

This proposal should correspond, if not to the feelings of Louis IX, renowned for his tireless devotion, at least to the image he tried to construct for himself²⁷ and which after his death was widely publicized by his Dominican biographers/hagiographers, such as Geoffroy de Beaulieu, in *Vita et sancta conversatio piae memoriae Ludovici quondam Regis francorum* (1272), in which Chapter 15 registers a complete synthesis of the *teachings* which King Louis drafted and left as a legacy to his heir. This spiritual testament coincides with the principal lines of argument of treatises on Christian royalty, such as the chapters collated under the name of *De constituendo Regis*, present in

Helinando de Froidmont *Chronicon*, a work which survives thanks to the compilation made by Vincent in his *Speculum maius* (Vergara, 2010, p.70-71).

It is the *Speculum historiale*, a part of *Speculum maius*, that we can find complementary references to the theoretical discussion of *De morali principis institutione*. Referring to the Roman Empire at the time of Julius Caesar and Augustus, the Dominican sees it as profoundly marked by *libido dominandi*, a property of the pagan kingdoms (of infidels, according to the common nomenclature). Nonetheless, this is the same Vincent who, upon dividing the stages of universal history, chose to mark them by the empires and emperors, reserving for the life of Christ a more theological role than historical.²⁸

In the same way, even arising out of the *desire for domination*, empires can become legitimate due to two factors: the general consensus of citizens or divine choice. In the Roman case, the two things happened, because according to Vincent, the peoples dominated by Rome had already consented to obey its laws and in addition it was within the empire that the son of God was born. The empire, it was understood, foreshadowed and prepared the kingdom of Christ on earth. In other words, Christ chose to be born during the 'peace of Augustus' because the empire offered the conditions for the coming of the messiah and for the birth of the *ecclesia*. It was when the limited human work collaborated with the divine will founding a human institution, but one with a divine vocation, having to conciliate the dimensions of *regnum* and *ecclesia*. This profane or divine legitimacy, in accordance with the will of peoples or of God, conferred on the political community a positivistically valued constitution.

As has already been observed by Mireille Schmidt-Chazan, Vincent of Beauvais did not make the Roman Empire and previous empires equal. Only one is the empire which prepared and sustained the coming of Christ, and for this reason it is superior to the others. It is the metaphor of that divine-human reality called *ecclesia*, which St. Augustine had difficulty in defining as the church of his time. In the wake of Jerome (*Chronicon*, fourth century) and Bede the Venerable (*Historia ecclesiastica*, eight century), Vincent conceived the Roman Empire as legitimate, universal and providential because it allowed the Christ and his *ecclesia* which exercises on earth these three saving prerogatives. The secular army of the Church or the earthly expression of *ecclesia*, the Roman Empire, dressed as the Carolingian Empire, and afterwards Saxon, manifests the oscillation between spiritual and temporal, which is from the time of Vincent and from which he cannot escape. The fact remains that according to his own providentialist reading, the political community, represented by the reality of the Roman Empire, allows space to conceive of

Christianity molded around the 'peace of Augustus' which has become the 'peace of the Church.' In this way we cannot fall into the illusion of defining Vincent as an advocate of papalist theses to the detriment of imperialist, or vice-versa, but only as giving voice to the omnipresent Christian belief that grace supposes nature.

The fact is that Louis IX benefitted considerably from the political theory of Vincent of Beauvais and of the Dominicans as a whole, principally because any reduction of the imperial prestige of the Hohenstaufen could signify an increase in the prestige of the king of *Francia* in the body of Christianity. We cannot forget that it is Christianity, as a concept and a mystic-temporal reality, which excited Louis and the Dominicans to seek to justify political action, even culminating in the military and religious movement known as the crusades.

Vincent of Beauvais' political theory has little to do with the criteria of governing the modern state, present in the concept of *reason of state*. As we can observe in the discussion of Michel Foucault, the ideas of the royal pastorate fortified and increased the power of the king within a community which wanted to have a supernatural life. The subsistence of the community did not reside in the king, but in what he represented; to the contrary, reason of state implies precisely the strengthening of the state and not the prince, and it is the state which needs to last indefinitely. The royal pastorate supposes that the king is not an autocrat which dominates a territory, but the image of God who leads the boat of men to the port of salvation. This theological and moral criteria constitutes an important limit for the libido of power of any monarch, even St. Louis IX, and also a limit for the development of a political idea which advocates the overcoming of dogmas and the religious truth synthesized in the sovereignty of God.

NOTES

¹ We can find an important questioning of the old and new approaches to political history in an article by BOUREAU, Alain. Des politiques tirées de l'Écriture. Byzance et l'Occident. *Annales – Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, année 55, n.4, p.879-887, 2000. In relation to studies about royalty in the Middle Ages, I suggest to the reader the important introduction of SILVA, Marcelo Cândido da. *A realeza cristã na Alta Idade Média: os fundamentos da autoridade pública no período merovíngio (séc. V-VIII)*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2008. p.17-40.

² I use as a reference the critical edition edited by Robert J. Schneider. VINCENTII BELVACENSIS. *De morali principis institutione*. Turnholt: Brepols, 1995.

³ VIROLI, Maurizio. *Dalla politica alla ragion di stato: la scienza del governo tra XIII e XVII secolo*. Roma: Donzelli, 1994. p.VII.

⁴ BRUNETTO LATINI. *Li Livres dou Trésor*. Ed. Francis J. CARMODY. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1998.

⁵ BOAVENTURA DE BAGNORÉGIO. *Collationes in Hexaameron*. In: _____. *Obras de San Buenaventura*. Ed. bilingue. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1947. Tomo III.

⁶ Cf. Rodríguez de la Peña, drawing on B. Wilkinson (“The Political Revolution of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century in England”, *Speculum*, v.24, 1949), who even says that a ‘political revolution’ occurred in the thirteenth century, resulting from other revolutions in the various fields of erudite knowledge; Cf. RODRÍGUEZ DE LA PEÑA, Manuel Alejandro. *Imago Sapientiae: los Orígenes del ideal sapiencial medieval*. *Medievalismo*, Revista de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, v.7, p.11-39, 1997. p.17.

⁷ SKINNER, Quentin. *As fundações do pensamento político moderno*. Trad. Renato Janine Ribeiro. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996.

⁸ BRUNETTO LATINI, 1998, I, 4.5: “c’est la plus haute science et dou plus noble mestier ki soit entre les homes, car ele nos enseigne gouverner les estranges gens d’un regne et d’une vile, un peuple et une comune en tens de pés et de guerre, selonc raison et selonc justice”.

⁹ Cf. ARTIFONI, Enrico. I podestà professionali e la fondazione retorica della politica comunale. *Quaderni Storici*, v.63, ano XXI, fasc. 3, p.687-719, 1986.

¹⁰ With the Italianized term *concione*, the author refers to the discourse of the assembly (in thirteenth century Latin *concio*), much practiced in Italian communes. Cf. ARTIFONE, Enrico. Gli uomini dell’assemblea. L’oratoria civile, i concionatori e i predicatori nella società comunale. In: CONVEGNO INTERNAZIONALE, XXII. Assisi, 1994. La predicazione dei frati dalla metà del ‘200 alla fine del ‘300. *Atti...* Spoleto: Cisam, 1995. p.141-188. p.147.

¹¹ A good discussion about the antiquity of the Mirror for Princes genre can be found in the article by artigo de BORN, Lester K. The specula principis of the Carolingian Renaissance. *Révue belge de philosophie et d’histoire*, Tomo 12, fasc. 3, p.583-612, 1933.

¹² BOAVENTURA DE BAGNORÉGIO, 1947, p.286: “Unde quando per successionem prae-sunt, male regitur respublica. David fuit sanctissimus; Salomon, etsi lubricissimus, tamen sapiens; Roboam stultus, quia divisit regnum. Romani per artem diaboli elegerunt Diocletianum. Debebant eligere comedentem super mensam ferream et invenerunt comedentem illum super vomerem; qui postmodum multa mala fecit. Unde quandiu Romani illos qui praeessent, elegerunt, sapientissimos elegerunt; et tunc bene gubernata est respublica; sed postquam ad successionem venerunt, totum fuit destructum”.

¹³ Cf. CAILLÉ; LAZZERI; SENELLART (Org.) *Histoire raisonnée de la philosophie morale et politique*. Tome I – De l’Antiquité aux Lumières. Paris: Champe; Flammarion, 2001.

¹⁴ FOUCAULT, Michel. *Omnis et singulatim: uma crítica da Razão Política*. In: _____. *Michel Foucault estratégia, poder-saber*. Org. e sel. Manoel Barros da Motta; trad. Vera Lúcia Avellar Ribeiro. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2003. p.355-385. p.374.

¹⁵ EVANGELISTI, Paolo. *I francescani e la costruzione di uno stato: linguaggi politici, valori identitari, progetti di governo in area catalano-aragonese*. Pádua: EFR – Editrici Francescane, 2005.

¹⁶ Saint Louis: le roi politique. *Médiévales*, v.34, p.25-34, 1998. p.29.

¹⁷ Portrait du roi idéal. *L'Histoire*, v.81, p.71-76, 1985.

¹⁸ VINCENTII BELVACENSIS, 1995, p.11: “Princeps dicitur quasi primum caput uel primum capiens siue primatum. Qui utique locum non habuit in hominibus a principio nature bene institute, sed inscrescente malitia ortum habuit ab infidelium ambitione. Cum enim omnes natura essent pares, Nemroth de stirpe Cham primus regnum super homines usurpauit, dum ad hoc ipsum sibi suorum ânimos conciliauit” (cap. II).

¹⁹ Ibidem, p.15: “the Lord did not send a man to be made king among his people, however, if it were the will of the people who wanted this, that he be elected in this manner, and as it is said, it is how he behaves” (“non precepit dominus ut homo rex in populo suo constitueretur, sed ut, si propter voluntatem populi oporteret eum constitui, sic eligeretur et taliter, ut ibi dictum est, conversaretur” – cap. II).

²⁰ Cf. SASSIER, Yves. *Royauté et idéologie au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2002. p.42-43.

²¹ VINCENTII BELVACENSIS, 1995, p.16: “Sed numquam ideo status regum reprobabilis est apud deum; absit quin potius per ipsum ‘reges regnant et principes imperant’, ut legitur Proverbiorum VIII” (8, 15-16).

²² Cf. NEDERMAN, Cary J. Nature, sin and the origins of society: the Ciceronian Tradition in Medieval Political Thought. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, v.49, n.1, p.3-26, 1988. p.16.

²³ Perhaps it is necessary to directly compare *Speculum historiale* and *De morali principis institutione* to see if Vincent incarnates the concepts of *regnum* and *ecclesia* in the kingdom of France and in the Roman Church; even if this were found to be true, it would still be the case that in *De morali principis* the author is concerned with ‘what should be done’ and not ‘what actually happened.’

²⁴ VERGARA, Javier. *La educación política en la Edad Media: el Tractatus de morali principis institutione* de Vicente de Beauvais (1262/63). Una apuesta prehumanista de la política. Pamplona: Ed. Universidad de Navarra, 2010. p.95.

²⁵ HERNANDEZ, Alfonso. Los límites de los conceptos ‘agustinismo político’ y ‘gelasianismo’ para El estudio de las ideas acerca del poder y la sociedad em la Alta Edad Media. *Signum*, v.11, n.1, p.26-48, 2010.

²⁶ SENELLART, Michel. *As artes de governar: do regimen medieval ao conceito de governo*. Trad. Paulo Neves. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 2006. p.20.

²⁷ For information about the construction of the image and memory of Luís IX, the great reference is the work of LE GOFF, Jacques. *São Luís: biografia*. Trad. Marcos de Castro. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2010.

²⁸ This means that Vincent inserted the narrative of the birth of Christ in the section in which he discusses the Roman Empire, placed after the narration of other previous em-

pires, such as that of Alexander the Great; in this case the narrative centrality falls on empire and among them on the Roman Empire. Cf. SCHMIDT-CHAZAN, Mireille. L'idée d'Empire dans le *Speculum historiale* de Vincent de Beauvais. In: PAULMIER-FOUCART, Monique; LUSIGNAN, Serge; NADEAU, Alain (Org.) *Vincent de Beauvais: intentions et receptions d'une oeuvre encyclopédique au Moyen Âge*. Paris: Vrin, 1990. p.253-282.