

John of Ripa's Theory of Distinction

Sylvain Roudaut

CNRS (SPHERE – Université Paris Cité)

Abstract: This paper explores the theory of distinction developed by John of Ripa. While inspired by John Duns Scotus' doctrine, John of Ripa's theory of distinction possesses unique characteristics that distinguish it from other 14th-century attempts to articulate sound accounts of intermediate types of distinction between the real distinction and the rational (or conceptual) distinction. The paper examines more precisely how John of Ripa employs a three-fold classification of types of extra-mental distinctions to address various philosophical and theological problems. The initial sections present this classification, followed by an analysis of John of Ripa's interpretation of the formal distinction (Section 4). The final section (Section 5) discusses what may be the most original aspect of his theory: his 'radical gradualism' about distinctions, which posits that each type of distinction admits of degrees.

Keywords: John of Ripa, Distinction, Formal Distinction, Formality, Degree.