

A Brief Biography of the Pope Pedro Hispano: A Portuguese Philosopher and Physician of the Christian World

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Abstract

Pedro Hispano (Petrus Hispanus) was a Portuguese philosopher and physician who would become Pope, in the 13th century, under the name John XXI. In this brief essay, we will describe the most important milestones of his life, namely the main works written by him in the areas of philosophy and medicine. We will also describe his most important work in the area of theology.

Keywords: Pope John XXI (Pedro Hispano), *Tractatus*, *Thesaurus pauperum*, *Scientia Libri de Anima*.

I. Introduction

Pedro Julião Rebelo or Pedro Hispano (Petrus Hispanus) [1] is one of the most important Portuguese figures of the Middle Ages. He was born in Lisbon around 1215 and studied medicine and theology at Sé (Lisbon). He continued his studies at the University of Paris where he had several well-known scholars, such as, St. Albert Magno and St. Thomas Aquine [2].

Pedro Hispano is traditionally identified with the author Peter of Spain, an important figure in the development of logic and pharmacology [3]. Between 1240 and 1245, it is assumed that Pedro Hispano taught himself logic at the University of Paris [4] where he wrote many philosophical and theological works [5]. One of them, known as *Summulae Logicales* (Collection on logical issues), is a systematization of Aristotelian logic applied to some theological issues of the 13th century. Another work, which has been identified as Peter of Spain, is *Syncategoreumata* (Treatise on syncategoreumatic words) and it was written probably a few years after the *Tractatus* [6]. This period of medieval Christian thought became known as “Scholastic” [7], being used as a method of teaching in European medieval Universities, because it sought to reconcile faith with rational thinking.

Around 1245 and 1250 Pedro Hispano became a scholar of medicine at the Faculty of Siena [8]. In his spare time, he did charity, as a priest, in a local leprosarium. In fact, during the 13th century, the practise of Western medicine by members of the clergy was closely linked to the philosophy of the Christian religion of helping others [9].

Between 1250 and 1258 Pedro Hispano returned to Portugal, where he served as archbishop of Braga followed by canon of the cathedral of Lisbon. He was also the counsellor of the Portuguese king Alphonso III, in matters of church. However, in 1261, he left Portugal and went to Viterbo, where he became private physician of the Pope Gregory X. During this time, Pedro Hispano wrote his most important work on medicine called the *Thesaurus pauperum* (Treasury of the poor). This work is a compilation of the main medical treatments written by the most important physicians of Greco-Roman and Arab history, such as, Hippocrates, Galen, Rasis and Avicena. The main purpose of this book was to take care of the health of the poorest who were not able to go to any kind of physician, rather than to be a medical reference treaty [10]. Meanwhile, the Pope Gregory X, at the council of Lyon (1274), appointed Pedro Hispano as cardinal-bishop of Tusculum (at the present Frascati). In 8th of September 1276, Pedro Hispano was elected Pope of the catholic world, named by John XXI [11] and remained in this position until 20th of May 1277.

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As a Pope, he rebuked Alphonso III for interfering in episcopal elections. He sought to reconcile with the Eastern Church, as well as, reconcile the Filipe III of France and Alphonso X of Castile kings. He also encouraged and protected the culture of medieval society. This diplomatic side of his personality awakened the distress of some faction of the catholic clergy. Pedro Hispano died prematurely due to the fall of the roof of the Palace where he lived in Viterbo, not being sure of the causes of this incident [12]. His successor was Nicholas III, the cardinal Giovanni Gaetano Orsini.

II- Pedro Hispano's most important works on philosophy

Peter of Spain has been established as the medieval author of the work known as *Summulae Logicales Magistri Petri Hispani* (Collection on logical issues by Peter of Spain). The *Tractatus* [13] has a large number of manuscripts and printed editions, which are evidence of the enormous success that this work had for all European Universities until the 17th century. This monumental work can be divided into two main parts.

One part deals with *logica antiquorum* - old logic and new logic - and the other part deals with *logica modernorum* - properties of terms. The first part of *Tractatus* is divided into five tracts. The tract one, *De introductionibus* (On introductory topics) explains the concepts used in traditional logic, while the tract two, *De predicabilibus* (On the predicables) gives us the common and different characteristics of the various types of predicables. Tract three, *De predicamentis* (On the categories), discusses the ten Aristotelian categories, while the tract four, *De syllogismis* (On syllogisms), gives us an explanation of the syllogism and paralogisms. The tract five, *De locis* (On topical relationships), gives us an explanation of the notions *argumentum*, *argumentation* and *locus* (the place of an argument). The second part of the *Tractatus* is divided into seven tracts. The tract six, *De suppositionibus*, deals with the theory of supposition, while the tract seven, *Fallaciamaiores* (Major fallacies), deals with the theory of fallacies. The tract eight, *De relativis* (On relatives), deals with the relative pronouns. The tracts nine, ten, eleven and twelve are named respectively by *De ampliationibus* (On ampliation), *De appellationibus* (On appellation), *De restrictionibus* (On restriction), *De distributionibus* (On distribution) and they are elaborations of the theory of supposition. In fact, Peter's most important work on Logic [14] is related to the *doctrine of supposition* that deals with the properties of terms *ampliation*, *appellation* and *restriction*.

On the other hand, the work *Synecategoremata* [15] is a kind of annex of *Summulae Logicales*, and seeks to analyze the terms constituting the propositions. The terms are divided into *categorematics* (which have meaning for themselves) and *syncategorematics* (which have the function to change the meaning of the first). This kind of philosophical work was very important in the Middle Ages. The first two chapters of *Synecategoremata* deal with the words *est* and *non*, while the third chapter deals with the words *solus* and *tantum*. The fourth chapter deals with *exceptive* words, while the fifth chapter discusses the characteristics of the word *si*. The sixth chapter deals with the notions of *motion* and *time*, while the seventh chapter deals with *modal* terms. The eighth chapter deals with the use of *connective* words.

III-Pedro Hispano's most important works on medicine

Pedro Hispano wrote the famous work on medicine called *Thesaurus pauperum* which circulated extensively as a manuscript and in printed form, from 13th to 17th century, not only among physicians but also outside Universities. This medical work has been translated into Hebrew, French, English, Portuguese, German, Spanish and Italian. The *Thesaurus pauperum* preface says that the purpose of this medical work is to "take care of the diseases of the human body from the head to the feet". Thus, it begins with the description of headaches, myopia and many others diseases of the human being, giving the treatment and the appropriate medicine for each case. Pedro Hispano states that he himself took some of the medicines referred to in this medical book. These medicines consisted of products of mineral, vegetal and animal origin.

In 1973, Maria Helena da Rocha Pereira [16] published a critical edition of the *Thesaurus pauperum* which included the *Tractatus de febris*, *Liber de conservanda sanitate*, *De regimine sanitatis*. These medical works describe some infectious diseases and diets suitable for people working in leprosarium. These three compilations were influenced by Arabic medicine, and Pedro Hispano himself used some Arabic words, in these works. *Liber de conservanda sanitate* is a medical work dedicated to Frederic II, and consists of a set of advices to maintain a balanced health, such as, do not eat/drink too much. He argued that we should avoid contracting diseases (preventive medicine) instead of taking medicines to cure illness (curative medicine).

One of the most important chapters of the *Thesaurus pauperum* is the tract eight. This tract referred to as *De dolore oculorum* refers to the theory of the eye, describing its anatomy (such as, muscles), as well as, physiology of vision according to the medieval medical theory. This tract coincides with the contents of the book *Liber de oculo* [17], which is a treatise on ophthalmology, consisting of several chapters that are cited by the famous surgeon Guy de Chauliac. In this regard, Michelangelo, who had some problems with the vision, took the medicine *aquae mirabilis* described in the *Liber de oculo*. Pedro Hispano wrote another fourteen works on medicine, discovered at the National Library of Madrid, that are comments to the works of Hippocrates, Galen and Isaac. These medical works are directed to medical students, in the form of questions (*questiones*) and answers, which was the typical way of exposing medical knowledge in Medieval Ages[18].

IV – Conclusions

This paper sought to reflect on the most important works of Pedro Hispano, namely, in the philosophical and medical areas. Wherever he studied, he focused on logic/philosophy, medicine and theology/metaphysics. In relation to the theological/metaphysical area, Pedro Hispano wrote three works, namely *De Tuenda Valetudine*, *Comentários ao pseudo-Dionísio* and *Scientia Libri de Anima* [19]. In this last theological work, he talked about the philosophy of mind and psychology, being considered by some scholars, as the most important work in this area of knowledge, during the “Scholastic”. In this work, Pedro Hispano exposed the arguments in favour of the existence of the soul. The foundation of the existence of the soul is based on a Theory of Substance, and on the relationship between Creator and creature. Then, he talked of the soul-body relationship, defended the unity of the human soul and the plurality of physical forms, having described about the various ways of acquiring knowledge. This knowledge might come through the experience with the body or through the experience with the soul. The latter being considered by Pedro Hispano as the perfect way to achieve maximum knowledge. Finally, he talked about the relationship soul-body and how this inner connection might influence the Cosmos where we are inserted. In this regard, we must refer that Pedro Hispano had an alchemy laboratory, at Viterbo, where he developed a “spiritual science”, where at the same time, knowledge about philosophy, medicine and religion coexisted. Perhaps for this reason, there was speculation that John XXI had been a necromancer, that is, a person who knows the future by talking to the dead. In fact, John XXI is sometimes referred to as a magician by some biographers. Most positively, there are many other researchers [20] who have concluded that Pedro Hispano was one of the greatest religious figures of Middle Ages. Pedro Hispano, in addition to having cultivated a “spiritual facet”, also promoted a well-marked “earthly facet” that built a “strong network of relationships that led him to the top of the religious hierarchy”. For example, Inocêncio V and Adrian V who succeeded Gregory X as a Pope, only remained in Rome just a few days. It was the strong relationships of friendship, with others members of the clergy that Pedro Hispano cultivated, that contributed to his election as Pope in Rome.

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