Petrus Hispanus’ Attributed Works: 
Searching for New Interpretations

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Abstract

Brief introduction to the project on Petrus Hispanus and the papers presented at the Symposium that was part of SOFIME’s Congress “De relatione”. It includes a sketch of the corpus petrinicum and a presentation of some literary, philosophical and doctrinal problems involved, with a consecutive bibliography of the published works and key studies.

Keywords: Petrus Hispanus; corpus petrinicum; medieval philosophy

Resumen. Las obras atribuidas a Petrus Hispanus: En busca de nuevas interpretaciones

Breve introducción al proyecto sobre Petrus Hispanus y a los artículos presentados en el Simposio que formó parte del congreso «De relatione» de SOFIME. Incluye un esquema del corpus petrinicum y la presentación de algunos problemas de carácter literario, filosófico y doctrinal que supone dicho corpus, acompañados por la bibliografía de obras editadas y de los principales estudios.

Palabras clave: Petrus Hispanus; corpus petrinicum; filosofía medieval

A symposium on the works attributed to Petrus Hispanus was included in the program of SOFIME’s Congress “De relatione”, benefiting from the possibilities opened up by this great meeting for the discussion of ongoing research.

Petrus Hispanus is a major name of Iberian medieval philosophy, nowadays with avatars that wrongly emphasise a spurious Spanish origin. In fact, the names Peter of Spain, Pierre d’Espagne, Pietro Spano are a traditional though wrong translation of the Latin name Petrus Hispanus. “Hispanus” was used in the medieval academic context, at universities such as Paris, Bologna or Oxford, to identify all students and scholars coming from the Iberian Peninsula, as Aquinas indicate the original regional of Thomas. In medieval universities, normally the members of the corporation where in fact identified by their geographical or national origins, as is the case for almost all medieval Arts Masters, Theologians, Canonists, etc. When two or more people from roughly the same region were given the same name, another geographical restriction
was needed and used, and so a distinction was introduced between Petrus Hispanus Portugalensis and Petrus Hispanus Aragonensis. None of these being Spanish, it is better, for the sake of precision as well as to avoid confusion and anachronistic uses of the modern national designation, not to translate and simply apply the designation “Petrus Hispanus”, as in the German language. Or maybe a linguistic calque should be preferred, as in the Portuguese or Spanish name “Pedro Hispano”. “Peter Hispanic” would be a more accurate translation in modern English, but to avoid confusion with the uses of “Hispanic” in modern American English, the simplest solution is to return to the Latin form, Petrus Hispanus.

Besides the name and biography, there are much more important questions concerning the works attributed to Petrus Hispanus. A long tradition has identified this Petrus Hispanus with the Portuguese Petrus Juliani, Pedro Julião, who became Pope John XXI, from September 1276 to May 1277 (Pontes, 1977; Meirinhos, 2000; 2005; 2007). By an unthinking process of cumulative identification, a whole range of facts and events was attributed to a Petrus Hispanus — from teaching Medicine in Siena, to political activities in Portugal or at the papal curia, or even the forgery of money in Perugia (Nicolini, 1967) — and they all have been linked to the same person. The same was the case for a long list of around 50 titles that in more than 700 manuscripts are attributed to Petrus Hispanus (cf. Meirinhos, 2009a, 2009b and 2011). Without criticism, they have all been identified with this one same person, except whenever it was impossible to identify them with a 13th century persona; as is the case with a Petrus Hispanus, author of the 12th century grammatical text Summa cuiuslibet (Kneepkens, 2000). The question whether the author is a single persona or several personae has recently been subjected to debate (Meirinhos, 1996). A particular case was put forward by Angel d’Ors on the identification of the author of the Tractatus or the Summulae logicales (D’Ors, 1997, 2001 and 2003), but all the proposed Dominicans (implying that the pope was not the author of the logical works) have been rejected with sound and well-documented arguments by Simon Tugwell (Tugwell, 1999 and 2006).

The pioneering study on the complexities concerning the works attributed to Petrus Hispanus was published by José Maria da Cruz Pontes (Pontes, 1972). In several occasions I tried to propose the delimitation of the content and limits of a possible “corpus petrinicum” (Meirinhos, 1999/2002: 363-372). For the sake of introduction, these works can be summarized and assigned to scientific fields, without considering either their genre or chronology. In this tentamen the titles in italics are available in printed editions (see the Bibliographical references):

1. Logic
   Tractatus or Summulae logicales (ed. L. M. de Rijk, 1972).
2. Natural philosophy
   A) Anthropological psychology
   *Commentarium in De anima Aristotelis I-II* (ed. M. Alonso, 1944).

   B) Zoology
   *Sententia cum quaestionibus super De animalibus* (1 ms.).

3. Theology and Apologetics
   *Expositio librorum Beati Dionysii* (ed. M. Alonso, 1957), includes:
   *Expositio in librum de angelica hierarchia*;
   *Expositio in librum de ecclasiastica hierarchia*;
   *Expositio in librum de divinis nominibus*;
   *Expositio in librum de mystica theologia*;
   *Expositio in epistolas I-VI Dionysii*.
   *Sermones praedicabiles* (mss.).

4. Medicine
   A) Receipts
   *De phlebotomia* (ed. Gil-Sotres, 1986).
   *Dietae super chirurgia* (ed. Sudhoff, 1918).
   *Synonima* (2 ms.) + *Tabula phlebotomiae secundum Avicenam* (1 ms.).

   B) Commentaries and Gloses
   *Commentarium cum questionibus super libro de urinis Ysaaci* (ed. in *Omnia Opera Ysaaci*: ff. 156r-203r).
   *Commentarium cum questionibus super libro dietarum particularium Ysaaci* (ed. cit. ff. 103r-156r).
   *Commentarium cum questionibus super libro dietarum universalium Ysaaci* (ed. cit., ff. 11r-103r).
   *Glose super libris de febribus Ysaaci* (mss.).
   *Glose super Tegni <Galeni> seu in artem parvam Galeni* (mss.).
Notule super Johannis Ysagoge ad Tegni <Galen> (mss.).
Notule super regimine acutorum Hippocratis (mss.).
Probemata supra pronostica Hippocratis (mss.).
Questiones super de pulsibus Filareti (mss.).
Questiones super libris aphorismorum Hippocratis (mss.).
Questiones super libro de crisi et super libro de diebus decretoriis Galeni (mss.).

5. Some misattributed works
Concilium de tuaenda valetudine (ps. -Aristote Secretum secretorum, transl. by Johannes Hispalensis).
De venenis (by Peter of Abano).
Expositio libri de anima II-III an anonymous text (ed. by Alonso, 1952: 87-401) found in another manuscript attributed to Alexander (Alexandriae?) and attributed by R. Wood to Richard Rufus of Cornwall.
In Pseudo Aristotelis physonomiam (by William of Aragon).
Alchemy (Petrus Hispanus, 14th C.):
Operatio (1 ms.).
Veni mecum (1 ms.).
Verba secreta magistri Petri yspani in arte Alkimie (1 ms.).

For a medieval scholar, it is not at all unusual to cover different scientific areas or to write works in such different literary genres. There are many authors with lengthier works, more titles, and more diverse in their genres. Remember, for instance, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Ramon Llull, John Buridan, etc.

The textual and doctrinal problems that arise from the works deserve in their own right to be studied and are quite interesting, portraying discussions and offering insights on mid-13th century scientific and philosophical discussions. But this corpus is polluted by a series of misunderstandings, errors and false assumptions that compromise an understanding of the ideas conveyed in each work.

The unity of authorship of these works must be discussed in detail and the arguments and sources must be critically taken into account. Simultaneously, some of the edited texts must be critically reedited. With critical texts, the scientific and doctrinal content of the works could offer new materials on the issues of chronology and context of composition of each one of them. These are precisely some of the aims of the project “Critical Edition and Study of the Works Attributed to Petrus Hispanus — 1” (CESWAPH-1), based at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Porto. For a brief sketch of the project see <http://ifilosofia.up.pt/proj/ph/project1>. The project began in May 2016 and will last until April 2019.
The five papers published here are an exploratory result of the ongoing research we are doing in CESWAPH-1. All the authors of these papers are members of the project’s team.

Mário Correia, who is preparing a PhD thesis on the *sufficiensia praedica-mentorum* in Petrus’ *Tractatus* and their commentators, as in the commentaries on Aristotle’s *Categories*, analyses a concept discussed in two distinct parts of the *Tractatus*. “Relation / relatio” is discussed in *logica antiqua* part (tr. III on Categories) and in *logica modernorum* part (tr. VIII on Relatives), the first one of Aristotelian origin, and the later a 12th or 13th century innovation, as a case of supposition. Even where Petrus himself distinguishes both concepts, Mário Correia tries to show that there are similarities and parallelisms between these two approaches that can point to the author’s position on the relationship between words and mental content.

Celia López Alcalde, a core researcher of the project and now preparing a critical edition of Petrus’ *Commentary on the De anima*, discusses the importance for medieval anthropology of the question of the unity of the substantial form and the soul-body dualism. Petrus’ position is compared with that of several contemporary authors, who proposed similar or quite different solutions. This essay shows how these detailed discussions can contribute to identify Petrus’ doctrinal position on the nature of the soul, and thus suggest a chronology and context of composition of that work, which conceals a number of questions waiting to be solved.

Francisca Sánchez Navarro, the editor of the *Questiones super libro De animalibus Aristotelis* (2015), offers a study on the Avicennian sources in this zoological work. The question is interesting in itself, so as to determine the extent to which Petrus knew Avicenna’s medical works and how. The *Canon* is extensively used, quoting from almost all of its books, but with Book I and the humoral theory prevailing throughout the *Questiones*. The combination of medical and philosophical sources can suggest that these *Questiones* may have been composed for the benefit of philosophy or medicine students.

João Rebalde, who is a project’s post doc grant holder, discusses the commentaries attributed to Petrus Hispanus on the *corpus dionysiacum* and its closeness to the *Explanatio* by the victorine Thomas Gallus. A particular point is studied, v.g. the ideas of hierarchy and order in the commentary to *De angelica hierarchia*. The method of commentary used by Petrus is problematic in what regards the clear exposition of its own positions, as he usually follows the text itself too closely, without adding extended or profound explanations. João Rebalde identifies the small *notae* and additions introduced by Petrus, concluding that they can offer brief indications to reconstruct the author’s thought on a set of theological and philosophical questions connected with *hierarchia* and *ordo* in this mystical and theological work.

Eleonora Lombardo, who is one of the project’s core researchers and is presently preparing a critical edition of Petrus Hispanus’ *Sermones*, proposes here the first study ever published on these homiletic texts. The *Sermones* attributed to Petrus Hispanus was never the subject of a study, not even after
Johannes Baptist Schneyer published the list of two collections found in different manuscripts (Schneyer, 1974: 652-663). The preliminary study of two of the three different extant collections of sermons conveyed in the manuscripts under the name of Petrus Hispanus, leads Eleonora Lombardo to propose that their author was a Dominican friar active in Central or Northern Italy by the early second half of the 13th century. In fact, it is not impossible that they have been composed by two different authors. Much more work must be done until a definitive solution for the puzzle is reached, but the petrinicium dossier can be greatly enriched with the study of these sermons, which thus initiates here.

This set of papers is an example of the work being done in the project on Petrus Hispanus. The corpus petrinicum is asking for new interpretations, through the study of manuscript transmission and close and contextual reading of the texts, bringing together the resources of critical edition and the history of ideas. Covering a broad span of scientific fields and a set of works not yet critically edited, the project will progress slowly though we hope that the achievements will offer consistent steps toward the solution of the many puzzles involving Petrus Hispanus’ attributed corpus, so contributing to put it in the position the author(s) deserves in the history of philosophy and science. To be continued.

Bibliographical references

Published editions


**Studies**


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