

# The Mental Furniture of the Pre-Reformation Mind: The Dialectica of Peter of Spain in the Humanist Reaction to Scholasticism

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## Synopsis

Surveying the educational landscape at the time of the Renaissance rise of humanism, one finds the little known Peter of Spain, not Thomas Aquinas, was identified as personifying scholasticism. This was because of Peter's universally used logic text, the *Tractatus*. This compendium became the routine text of the medieval university shortly after its publication. Knowing more of Peter and his dialectics enlightens the dynamics of the Pre-Reformation period and further illuminates the relationship between scholasticism and humanism. Moreover, such a discussion provides a deep historical foundation to current classical educational trends.

## Introduction

Medieval logic has been a fruitful field of much research in the last fifty years.<sup>2</sup> The schoolmen excelled in the science and art of *dialectic* and utilized their art for the defense of Christianity.<sup>3</sup> To start, *dialectics* may be simply defined as the "art of disputation."<sup>4</sup> The medieval schoolmen's *dialectics* made an interesting contribution to the very development of logic.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the contribution of the medievals with all their precise logical terminology and intricate linguistic definition was the most vehemently attacked targets by the Renaissance humanists. Among those that formatively contributed to the development and the perpetuation of the medieval dialectics is the little known, *Petrus Hispanus*, Peter of Spain (1210-1277).

## Medieval Education — Then

To fully consider medieval dialectics in relation to the Reformation, one must grasp the educational framework of medieval education. The influence of Petrus relates to the dialectical foundation in the medieval university. The place of dialectics in medieval education is firmly rooted in the larger educational paradigm, the seven liberal arts, or as they are also known, the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*. *Trivium*, as a term, literally means the "three-fold way." The three components are grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. *Quadrivium* refers to the four other areas of study: arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.allsaintspresbyterian.com](http://www.allsaintspresbyterian.com) and [www.veritasacademy.com](http://www.veritasacademy.com) for more information.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Broadie, *Introduction to Medieval Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); Philotheus Boehner, *Medieval Logic: An Outline of Its Development from 1250-c. 1400* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1952); William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1962); Eleonore Stump, *Boethius's de Topic Differentiis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1978); Joseph Mullaly, *The Summulae Logicales of Peter of Spain* (Notre Dame, 1945); *Peter of Spain: Tractatus Syncategorematum and Selected Anonymous Treatises*, Joseph P. Mullally and Roland Houde, Tr. (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1964); Especially the multiple articles by Lambertus Marie de Rijk (1924-) on Petrus, e.g., "On the genuine text of Peter of Spain's 'Summulae Logicales', Part I. General problems concerning possible interpolations in the manuscripts," *Vivarium* 6: 1-34 (1968).

<sup>3</sup> It might be interesting in these days of increased Islamic sensitivity to note that their art aimed at the conversion of Muslims. It is interesting to observe the recapitulation of the medieval times, both in dialectical method and content. Thomas Aquinas', *Summa Contra Gentiles* was written as a kind of missionary training manual at the request of St Raymond of Penafort for equipping those engaged in the conversion of the Moors in Spain. It also specifically mentions pagans, Jews, and Muslims. Evangelical apologetics has provided a substantial expansion and restatement of Thomism (Norman Geisler, et al). Christian Reformed (CRC) philosopher Alvin Plantinga gained fame and ushered in a new millennium of Christian philosophy with the defense of Anselm's ontological argument with modal logic by Christian philosopher and careful responses to the problem of evil. This has led to a Copernican Revolution in epistemology, as well. See the popular version of this in *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) and for the impact of Reformed epistemology, A. C. Plantinga & N. Wolterstorff (Eds.), *Faith and Rationality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1983) and the big trilogy by Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, *Warrant and Proper Function*, and finally, *Warranted Christian Belief*, all published by Oxford.

<sup>4</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1964), 189.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of this see, William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1962).

The influence of this educational structure in the Christian West is owing especially to its formulation from the pagan, Martianus Capella. Capella, a Carthaginian, brought the elements of the Trivium and the Quadrivium together for an educational approach in an allegory *de Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, (*The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*) written sometime prior to 330 A.D. “This was of importance for the Middle ages, which made the seven liberal arts the basis of education as the Trivium and Quadrivium.”<sup>6</sup> Cassiodorus (480-575) was the first known Christian writer to use the term “the seven liberal arts.”<sup>7</sup> The seven liberal arts, as these elements are known, became the core studies of the developing medieval university. “The concept is classical, but the term liberal arts and the division of the arts into the trivium and the quadrivium date from the Middle Ages.”<sup>8</sup>

For the medievals the *Trivium* and the *Quadrivium* were more than mere curricula and more than a philosophy of education. C.S. Lewis, in his introduction to medieval and renaissance studies, *The Discarded Image*, illumines the universal value of the seven liberal arts to the world and life view of the medievals. They personified this educational curriculum, giving it “a place in the Model of the universe,” as in Dante’s *Convivio* which “mortises the Arts into the cosmic framework.”<sup>9</sup>

Lewis brings out an interesting mnemonic couplet on the arts:

“*Gram loquitur, Dia verba docet, Rhet verba colorat, Mus canit, Ar numerat, Geo ponderat, Ast colit astra.*” [Grammar talks, dialectic teaches words, rhetoric colors words, music sings, arithmetic numbers, geometry considers, astronomy tends stars.]<sup>10</sup>

Grammar teaches one Latin and Latin was synonymous with language. Dialectic teaches words or how to talk sense, argue, prove or disprove. Rhetoric colors words with structure and style. Lewis notes that, “There is no antitheses, indeed no distinction, between Rhetoric and Poetry.”<sup>11</sup>

An illuminating description of the arts is found in Sister Miriam Joseph’s, *The Trivium*, a recent book length work on the subject (published in June of 2002):

The trivium includes those aspects of the liberal arts that pertain to mind, and the quadrivium, those aspects of the liberal arts that pertain to matter...Logic is the art of thinking; grammar, the art of inventing symbols and combining them to express thought; and rhetoric, the art of communicating thought from one mind to another, the adaptation of language to circumstance. Arithmetic, the theory of number, and music, an application of the theory of number (the measurement of discrete quantities in motion), are the arts of discrete quantity or number. Geometry, the theory of space, and astronomy, an application of the theory of space, are the arts of continuous quantity or extension.<sup>12</sup>

The Trivium formed the course of study for the medieval undergraduate. The bachelor then passed on to the Quadrivium—arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy—his conquest of which was denoted by the licence

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<sup>6</sup> Fredrick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy, vol. I, Greece and Rome* (New York: Image, 1962 [1985]), 484.

<sup>7</sup> *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts* (two volumes), translated and introduced by Stahl, Johnson, and Burge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); *Martianus Capella’s An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings*, translated by Leslie Webber Jones (New York: Octagon Books, 1966).

<sup>8</sup> Sister Miriam Joseph, *The Trivium: The Liberal Arts of Logic, Grammar, and Rhetoric - Understanding the Nature and Function of Language* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2002), 3.

<sup>9</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1964), 185-186.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, 186.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, 190-191.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph, 3.

or degree of master of arts. To these seven arts, the thirteenth century added the three philosophies, natural, moral and metaphysical.<sup>13</sup> It is this academic landscape to which Renaissance Humanism of the Pre-Reformation era addressed itself.

### **Dialectics — A Survey of Development**

Logic as a science was born on Greek soil, but it was nourished as an art in the ivory towers of Europe. It survived an uncomfortable adolescence in the Reformation, with reason itself being the “devil’s whore” and all. With the rise of modern formal logic with Frege and Peirce, all the art was forthrightly removed and dialectical science became fully abstract, symbolic, and less useful for arguing about the number of angels which may dance on pins. There is now, of course, a move in the direction of re-introducing dialectics into the educational curriculum of early secondary education, not only in classical schools, but in the “critical thinking” movement so widespread in government education.<sup>14</sup>

The most popular contemporary college text begins with the definition, “Logic is the study of the methods and principles used to distinguish good (correct) from bad (incorrect) reasoning.”<sup>15</sup> Students far and wide, however, must sit at the feet of Master Aristotle (384-322 B.C.). He first expounded “logic” in a set of books that generally go by the name *Organon*, meaning the “instrument” of reason.<sup>16</sup>

The *Organon* passed through the Christian era because of Boethius’ Latin translation. Many have observed the significance of Boethius (c.480-c.525 A.D.) as the Latin translator of Aristotle for the medievals. Due to his translations of Aristotle, Boethius was the progenitor of the basic philosophical Latin vocabulary of the Middle Ages. Stump points out the immense importance of Boethius and the value of Peter’s *Tractatus*.

[Boethius was] for a long time the direct, perhaps the sole, source for the study of dialectic, and his work remained an important indirect source even when it was superseded by later treatments of the subject, such as that in Peter of Spain's *Tractatus*, a standard logic textbook from the late thirteenth to the end of the fifteenth centuries.”<sup>17</sup>

So you have then the passing of the baton from Aristotle, to Boethius, to Peter.

Of correlative importance to the medieval dialectical method is Abelard’s (1079-1142) *Sic et Non* (“Yes and No”). He was perhaps the originator of the *questionio* method, which Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) followed in his great *Summa* and other works, and which became such a characteristic of scholasticism. During this stage, as an older contemporary of Thomas, Petrus Hispanus produced his compendium of logic, the *Tractatus* afterward called the *Summulae Logicales*. Copleston, the well-known historian of philosophy, notes that “in the thirteenth century there naturally appeared a variety of commentaries on the Aristotelian logic and of logical handbooks and treatises.”<sup>18</sup> He cites the Englishman William of Shyreswood (d. 1249), *Introductiones ad logicam*, the French Lambert of Auxerre and Nicholas of Paris.

Perhaps the high point of dialectical fermentation was precipitated by Petrus. Since, following him, the fourteenth century produced the universal thinkers, Walter Burley, William Ockham, John Buridan, Albert of

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<sup>13</sup> “English and Scottish Education. Universities and Public Schools to the Time of Colet” in *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature: An Encyclopedia in Eighteen Volumes*, ed. by A.W. Ward, A.R. Waller, W.P. Trent, J. Erskine, S.P. Sherman, and C. Van Doren (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons; Cambridge, England: University Press, 1907–21).

<sup>14</sup> Richard Paul and Linda Elder, *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001); Richard W. Paul, *Critical Thinking: How to Prepare Students for a Rapidly Changing World* (Dillon Beach CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Irving M. Copi & Carl Cohen, *Introduction to Logic*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: Macmillan: 1990), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander Broadie, *Introduction to Medieval Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Boethius's De topicis differentiis*, translated, with notes and essays on the text, by Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 24. Stump also cites Rijk, pp. 55-78 for the proliferation of the *Tractatus*.

<sup>18</sup> Fredrick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, vol. III (New York: Image, 1962 [1985]), 51.

Saxony, and Paul of Venice. Right up to the end, even in the years just prior to the Reformation, “important discoveries were being made in logic by men who were very much part of the medieval logical and philosophical world.”<sup>19</sup>

### A Biographical Overview of Petrus

On Peter of Spain’s identity, there has been much confusion.<sup>20</sup> As it turns out, his biographical information is quite interesting. First, he was not “of Spain.” He was not a Spaniard at all, being born in 1210 in Lisbon, Portugal. He was named Pedro Giuliano. At the height of all its medieval, dark age, glory, he was a student at the University of Paris. He subsequently studied medicine and became a personal physician of pope Adrian V. Then, of all things, he became pope himself! This medieval logician became Pope John XXI on September 13, 1226.<sup>21</sup> Not only was he not “of Spain,” despite the name, he was the one and only Portugese pope, thus far.<sup>22</sup> Further, he should not have been named pope John XXI. It was due to confusion in the medieval listing of popes that he became, John XXI; there is no John XX. Even so, this Pedro, not of Spain, was also the one and only Portugese pope. He served with distinction, however, since he is the only pope in heaven — at least, according to Dante. While other popes are in hell and many are being refined from their popery in purgatory, *Petrus non Hispanus* made it.<sup>23</sup>

In the classic poem, *The Divine Comedy*, by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), is the tale of the poet's journey through Hell, Purgatory and, finally, through Heaven. The text pertaining to *Petrus* reads,

Illuminato and Augustine are here, who were of the first unshod poor brethren that with the cord made themselves God’s friends. Hugh of St. Victor is here with them, and Peter Comestor, and Peter of Spain, who down blow shines in twelve books;<sup>24</sup>

Earlier translations have it as: “*Pietro Ispano*, who gave Logic light, below there, in his twelve books.”

Peter learned in the light of those dark ages, at the rich environment of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century University of Paris. One of his “masters” in Paris may have been Johannes Pagus and Albertus Magnus, Albert the Great, also teacher of Thomas Aquinas. Peter was the recipient of the Greek-Latin sources of logic, the Boethian-Aristotelian logic. Those who would have been the authorities in the field of grammar to Peter would have been Priscian and Donatus.<sup>25</sup>

Peter's reputation as a scholastic philosopher was widespread in the time prior to the Reformation. He was also an astronomer and professor and physician. He was also a noted commentator on Aristotle and one of the first

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<sup>19</sup> Alexander Broadie, *Introduction to Medieval Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 2.

<sup>20</sup> The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy summarizes the lengthy and pedantic matter in this way: “There is also another, earlier tradition, according to which the author of the *Tractatus* was regarded as Spanish, and a member of the Dominican order. Yet another attribution, dating from the fifteenth century, was to a Petrus Ferrandi Hispanus (d. between 1254 and 1259), which would be consistent with the idea that the work originated from the first half of the thirteenth century. According to still another attribution, the *Summule* was compiled by a Black Friar no earlier than in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.” See the entry on “Peter of Spain,” Joke Spruyt (2001).

<sup>21</sup> *Great Books of the Western World, vol. 19, Dante Chaucer*, ed. Mortimer Adler (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990), 162, n14.

<sup>22</sup> There is a regular conference held in Portugese, Conferências Petrus Hispanus, which hosts the Petrus Hispanus Lectures, even now.

<sup>23</sup> Dante’s *Paridiso: Canonto XII*, see below.

<sup>24</sup> *Paridiso: Canonto XII*, trans. by Princeton University, 1975 in *Great Books of the Western World, vol. 19, Dante Chaucer*, ed. Mortimer Adler (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990), 105.

<sup>25</sup> Spruyt, Joke, "Peter of Spain", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2001 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2001/entries/peter-spain>.

western scholars to write on Aristotle's *De animalibus* and the *De anima*.<sup>26</sup> His death was even related to his scholarship. He had a library with an observatory added to his palace at Viterbo. Only nine months after his election to the papacy the ceiling of the library collapsed and killed him.

### The Influence of the *Tractatus*

It appears that Peter's logic text, the *Tractatus*, was the common property of the medieval university shortly after its publication, believed to have been written between 1230 and 1245. Kneale's study magnum study of the development of logic says, "This work came to be accepted as the standard textbook of logic through all the later Middle Ages and was still in use as late as the beginning of the seventeenth century, by which time there had been no less than 166 printed editions."<sup>27</sup> He observes that it contained better mnemonic verses than similar early works. It was even translated into Greek which caused some significant bibliographic confusion later. Some historians thought it was a translation of a Greek manuscript to Latin. The work went on to form the basic material for several later compendiums of logic.

Peter's *Tractatus* formed the meat of dialectical study in the Universities of Paris, Vienna, Cologne, Freiburg, Leipzig, Ingolstadt and Tübingen.<sup>28</sup> "In 1389 a statute was passed at the University of Vienna requiring of students in the faculty of arts that they should attend lectures on the logical works of Peter of Spain..."<sup>29</sup> In fact, the *Tractatus* was of Peter would have been committed to memory by every undergraduate in most of the medieval universities. "The text held such a monopoly in the curriculum that first-year students at Paris were surnamed *Summulistae*."<sup>30</sup> They were initiated, as the later humanists would jab, in the "mysteries" of Peter of Spain.<sup>31</sup> By virtue of its sheer repetition in academic contexts, it defined the late scholastic mind. The editor of Thomas More's work notes that the language Petrus "was the mental furniture of every university student"<sup>32</sup> This *Tractatus*, afterwards called *Summulae logicales* or "Compendium of Logic," is therefore of immense importance, though it is hardly known today.

### The Content of the *Tractatus*

The content of the *Tractatus* began with a restatement of Aristotelean logic, including the familiar square of opposition. Then the distinctive contributions of medieval logic follow in the later sections. In the *Tractatus* we find the Memoria Technica verses, containing feminine names for logical forms, *Barbara*, *Celarent*, etc. which are quite popular in older logic texts.<sup>33</sup>

William Kneale and Martha Kneale of Oxford describe the contents of the *Tractatus* succinctly:

The *Summulae* consists of twelve tracts, six about Aristotle's themes (propositions, predicables, categories, syllogisms, topics, and fallacies) and six about specifically medieval themes (supposition,

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<sup>26</sup> *The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 446 to 593*, 1516-1517, trans. R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson, annotated by James K. McConea. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1977), 11.

<sup>27</sup> William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1962), 234.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Mullaly, *The Summulae logicales of Peter of Spain* (Notre Dame, 1945), 133-158.

<sup>29</sup> Fredrick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, vol. III, *Ockham to Suarez*, 148.

<sup>30</sup> *Synecategoremata*, in English & Latin by Peter of Spain (Petrus Hispanus Portugalensis), first critical edition with an introduction and indexes by L.M. de Rijk; with an English translation by Joke Spruyt (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1991), 16.

<sup>31</sup> Thus we are informed by Ramus in his *Scholae in liberales artes* (1569). See note 29: col. 1049 referred to by Walter Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, 1958), 58.

<sup>32</sup> *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Vol. V, Pt. 2*, Edited by John M. Headley, on Responsio Ad Lutherum, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 924.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., the logic texts of Isaac Watts and Gordon Clark.

relatives, ampliation, appellation, restriction, and distribution). In some editions the latter are grouped together under the title *De Terminorum Proprietatibus* or *Parva Logicalia*.<sup>34</sup>

The first part was referred to as the *logica antiquorum* (ancient logic) and *logica nova* (new logic). This latter portion contains doctrines of what came to be known as the *logica modernorum* (modern logic). These include the medievals contribution to the analysis of terms and their properties.<sup>35</sup>

It is just because of Peter's discriminations on Syncategoremata that not only are logicians interested, but linguists have seen some important development in the *Tractatus*. The only English translation of the entire *Tractatus* available is interestingly titled, *Language in dispute: an English translation by Francis P. Dineen of Peter of Spain's Tractatus called afterwards Summulae logicales*.<sup>36</sup> Dineen's translation is based on the critical edition established by L.M. De Rijk. Interestingly, Dineen, an important linguist, made the translation not as a contribution to dialectics or the history of logic, but for the important linguistic developments in Petrus.<sup>37</sup> Dineen writes, "it is hoped that non-logicians, linguists and those just interested in language may find interest in reading it."<sup>38</sup> Peter is, thus, giving a foretaste to the linguistic difficulties with using an ordinary language for logic. He is conscious of distinguishing *significatio* and *suppositio*. A term like "man" can mean in one sentence, a specific person: the man is walking. Or, "man" can mean all men: men are sinners. This is *significatio* and *suppositio*, respectively. This trajectory leads directly toward a denial of the Platonic universals, toward a nominalism that became full blown in William of Ockham. Copleston says, though, "Peter was a conservative in philosophy and was very far from showing any tendency to anticipate Ockham's 'nominalism'."<sup>39</sup> Still, the logical development of the idea of *suppositio* led directly toward Ockham's logic in his, *Summa Logicae*.

Consider the ongoing development of modern "symbolic logic," "propositional logic," or "formal logic" — which looks very strange and complicated and quite technical in the very simplest forms ( $p \subset q$ ;  $p \equiv q$ ;  $p \supset q$ ;  $\sim p \supset \sim q$ , etc.). The development goes much further, which is why the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy says of logic: "Today, logic is both a branch of mathematics and a branch of philosophy."<sup>40</sup> The deeper study of logic moves one away from natural language into an almost mathematical world. On the other hand, the study of logical forms in ordinary language, as we see in the *Tractatus*, lead to a more rigid application and explanation of natural language. A richer view of language has been the recent development in the field of linguistics.<sup>41</sup> Dineen's comment is important: "Even if, as Hispanus claimed, logical methods test the validity of how other disciplines argue to their conclusions, those methods do not endow dialecticians with a special ability to judge whether terms are appropriately defined."<sup>42</sup>

### Peter of Spain and the Humanists

It is our common conception that Thomas Aquinas is the arch-medieval thinker and that the wrath of

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<sup>34</sup> *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1962), 234-235.

<sup>35</sup> See Spruyt, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

<sup>36</sup> (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: J. Benjamins 1990).

<sup>37</sup> Dineen is also the author of a widely cited textbook: *An Introduction to General Linguistics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967).

<sup>38</sup> Dineen, in the "Foreword."

<sup>39</sup> Copleston, vol. III, 122.

<sup>40</sup> Shapiro, Stewart, "Classical Logic", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2002 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2002/entries/logic-classical>.

<sup>41</sup> Naom Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

<sup>42</sup> Dineen, xix.

almighty humanists was justly bestowed upon him. However, according to the actual writings of the Renaissance humanists, comparatively, Aquinas was treated benignly over against Petrus.<sup>43</sup> In fact, the editor of Erasmus' notes,

Unhappily, the Thomist synthesis was too daring to win widespread acceptance in the schools until the sixteenth, by the end of which Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* had universally replaced the Sentences of Peter the Lombard as the basis for commentary in the theology schools.<sup>44</sup>

Then later in the midst of the intense sarcasm of Erasmus' parody, the editor notes: "Folly, it should be noticed is much harder on Scotus and his followers than on Thomas Aquinas."<sup>45</sup> As noted, only at the end of the sixteenth century did Thomism become dominant. Thus, Aquinas was much less a part of the academic landscape in the Renaissance, than was the primer of Petrus which virtually every Pre-Reformation student parroted.

Whereas references to Aquinas are relatively benign, Petrus was targeted by Erasmus, Thomas More, Vives, and Peter Ramus as the culprit of dialectical disaster. Petrus was an easy target. Erasmus speaks of the ubiquitous use of the *Tractatus*, saying that "boys" are ripe for the universities when they "got by heart a great part of the Dialectic of Petrus Hispanus."<sup>46</sup> More criticized him in the *Responsio ad Lutheran*. For Thomas More, it was Lombard through his Sentences which provided "the Trojan horse" of scholasticism. That taken with the *questiunculae* and Peter's, *Parva logicalia*, which is the later sections of the *Tractatus*, became the object of "his impatience and disgust."<sup>47</sup>

Indeed, More, mimics the form of scholastic logic, even in Luther. He mocks Luther's more medieval form of reasoning which is well-known through the formula of Petrus. The editor of More points out, "The language of the schoolmen is readily exemplified in the standard textbook of Peter of Spain, *Summae logicales*."<sup>48</sup> More, in bitter sarcasm, scathingly attacks Luther using the logical form found in medieval dialectics, exemplified in Petrus.

I am certain that the reverend friar father is an ass; therefore the reverend friar father is an ass. If the reverend father should here grant me this antecedent premise, how many conclusions I may infer: he will undoubtedly have to eat hay; he will have to bear burdens; and what is most galling, he will have to do without beer; Father Tossplot would be vexed to hear that.<sup>49</sup>

Remembering the *ad fontes* (to the sources) mindset of the humanists, the common criticism of Erasmus and Vives was that Latin had been wilfully defiled and obfuscated in the service of the dialectics of Petrus. The editor of Vives' critical edition of *In Pseudodialecticos* says,

In the clever and forceful rhetoric of the tract itself Vives provides a fine example of the expository virtues of the Latin language which he extolled. The pretentious demeanor of the doctors, cloaked and

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<sup>43</sup> For example, he is not addressed in Vives, *Pseudodialecticos*, nor in Erasmus', *In Praise of Folly*.

<sup>44</sup> Introduction to *Praise of Folly and Letter to Martin Dorp 1515* by Erasmus of Rotterdam, trans. Betty Raddice with an Introduction and notes by the A.H.T. Levi (New York: Penguin, 1971), 18.

<sup>45</sup> Folly, 162, n 106.

<sup>46</sup> *The Correspondence of Erasmus: Letters 446 to 593, 1516-1517*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson, annotated by James K. McConica. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1977), 11.

<sup>47</sup> *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Vol. V, Pt. 2*, Edited by John M. Headley, on *Responsio Ad Lutherum*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 779.

<sup>48</sup> *Complete Works of More, V*, 910.

<sup>49</sup> *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Vol. V, Pt. 1*, Edited by John M. Headley, on *Responsio Ad Lutherum*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 317.

bearded and mumbling their private lingo, was the object of the unceasing ridicule of the humanists. In no other of his extant works, distinctive among humanistic writings for their moderation, does the Spanish scholar, whose motto was 'sine querela', indulge in such acrid polemics. It was for good cause, the freeing of higher learning from the trammels and aridities of a fossilized system of learning, which no longer had anything to do with life or reality. ....Vives reserved some choice *sallvos* for one whom he considered especially responsible for the corruption of the Latin language and the perversion of the discipline of logic, the 13<sup>th</sup> century logician and physician, Peter of Spain....<sup>50</sup>

The last six or seven tracts of this work, commonly referred to as the *Parva logicalia*, or *Little Logicalis*, introduced the student to the elaborate, abstract vocabulary that so infuriated the humanists. It was "Lombard through his Sentences, according to More, [which] provided the Trojan horse whence has issued such a host of arid problems. Indeed the *questiunculae* of scholasticism, together with the *Parva logicalia* of Peter of Spain, occasioned his impatience and disgust."<sup>51</sup>

Vives and More ridiculed even the titles of the treatise, using a play on the title words *parva logicalis* — *little logicalis*. They said it contained "little logic." The attack which was uniform by the humanists was that instead of attending to the higher concerns of philosophy, they spent their time sharpening their wits with myriad distinctions and endless futile quibbling.

### **Dialectics: The Quest for Mental Alchemy**

The first words of the *Tractatus* are significant:

*Dialectica est ars artium et scientia scientiarum ad omnium methodorum principia viam habens.*<sup>52</sup>  
[Dialectic is the art of arts and science of sciences possessing the way to the principles of all curriculum subjects.]

There is a certain attraction and romance of the medieval world. This is captured by Dorothy Sayers:

There is, of course, also the human and historic panorama of those astonishing centuries--a spectacle none the less moving and impressive in itself because it has sometimes been over-romanticized: the founding of the grammar schools and the great universities; the gathering of scholars from all corners of Europe to hear famous masters lecture in a language that all Europe could understand; the disputes and rivalries of the Faculties...<sup>53</sup>

A distinctive piece of this attraction is also glimmering in the opening line of the *Tractatus*, "Dialectic is the art of arts and science of sciences . . ." This leads one to see the medieval vision for dialectics. Copleston observes, "A similar statement of the fundamental importance of dialectic was made by Lambert of Auxerre."<sup>54</sup>

While alchemists searched for valid and invalid chemical connections between the elements, dialecticians looked for valid and invalid relations of ideas. To change lead into gold was a quest of power; but so was unlocking all knowledge by a series of mental inquiries. Dialectics is the art of all arts because it is the ground and foundation of all the other arts. It is the science of all sciences (remembering that *scientia* is the Latin for knowledge) because through it all knowledge was accessible. Like Socrates who led the slave boy to discover within himself the Pythagorean theorem, dialectics was the mental alchemy to unlock the world of knowledge.

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<sup>50</sup> Fantazzi, 15-16.

<sup>51</sup> *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Vol. V, Pt. 2*, Edited by John M. Headley, on Responsio Ad Lutherum, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 779.

<sup>52</sup> Rijk rejects the superlatives in his critical edition, *Tractatus, Peter of Spain, First Critical Edition from Manuscripts with an Introduction*. Edited by L.M. De Rijk (The Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum & Comp., 1972).

<sup>53</sup> *Curtis* 1950, vii-viii [Dorothy L. Sayers].

<sup>54</sup> Copleston, vol. III, 51-52.

Remember, too, the deep ontology of ideas following the Platonic, neo-platonic, and Augustinian realism of ideas. The larger medieval vision went to seed, though. The scientia vision of a set of logical skills which would unlock the secrets of knowledge and wisdom degenerated in worthless triflings about words. The wooden use of logical Latin which was pressed and shaped to be an inadequate precise logical language. So it appeared to even the educated that dialectics was a mere linguistic game with no connection to reality beyond the sophisms of the dialecticians. It was this loss of real world applicability, coupled with an exaggerated technical usage of Latin—over against the literary use of the classics which brought the curses of the Humanists.

### **Medieval Education — Now**

Along with appreciating the academic landscape of the Pre-Reformation, one may also observe the current recapitulation of classical, medieval, and renaissance education within the Christian world today. There is wide spread educational interest in the medieval educational method of the Trivium. In today's educational milieu, the Trivium is being cultivated over-against existentialist and progressivist approaches to schooling and seems to be quite successful and popular.<sup>55</sup> The classical education movement is wielding major influence within educational reform movements all across America, even beyond Christian communions. This was documented by the Capital Research Center in a book entitled, *Classical Education: The Movement Sweeping America* by Gene Edward Veith, Jr. and Andrew Kern.<sup>56</sup>

There is an unprecedented proliferation of the curricula resources for classical home education, as well. It is an interesting feature of the contemporary return to the Trivium that such “classical and Christian education” is being self-consciously propagated in and by Christians who embrace Reformed doctrine. Yet, they imbibe both a Renaissance return “to the sources” (*ad fontes*) and a strong component training in logic and dialectics, complete with knowing the square of opposition, rules for immediate inference, distribution, and a vocabulary laden with medieval logical terms and concepts. In fact, the movement of classical education within Christian circles inculcates the teaching of Latin and Greek for a return to the sources of Western civilization, a hearty training in the dialectical arts which rose to their highest point in the medieval period, and an emphasis on rhetorical facility, which had a rebirth in the Renaissance. Yet, in most of the movement, the leading theological paradigm is committed to distinctly Reformed views theologically.

The Trivium in current usage involves several educational functions. In contemporary application, the Trivium functions as (1) an approach to learning - each subject has its own grammar, logic, and rhetoric; (2) as an approach to students - there is a grammar (elementary) stage of learning, a dialectical stage, and rhetorical stage, (3) the Trivium implies a set of subjects, Latin, logic, and rhetoric. The modern application of the Trivium and especially its dialectical component is a quest for the imparting the skills of educational facility, or to put it in Dorothy Sayers' oft-repeated terms, the “tools of learning.”<sup>57</sup> Miriam Joseph says, “The trivium is the organon, or instrument, of all education at all levels because the arts of logic, grammar, and rhetoric are the arts of communication itself in that they govern the means of communication—namely, reading, writing, speaking, and listening.”<sup>58</sup>

This is nothing less than the beautiful, non-dark, and enlightened, medieval goal of education. The medieval mind desired a not merely to know words, but to think well with them and unlock every subject by means of dialectical method. In current educational philosophy and practice, we must recapture the heart of this liberal arts approach. We will do well to remember that dialectics should not be divorced from the literary sources of the classics and the rhetorical use of language. Logic must lead to language; dialectic must flourish into rhetoric. Then we may realize the fullest use of dialectics, “the art of arts and science of sciences.”

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<sup>55</sup> For the seminal article on the recovery of the Trivium, see Dorothy Sayers' 1947 article, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” included in the book which has spawned the current movement, Douglas Wilson's, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* (Downer's Grove: Crossway, 1992), now revised and expanded into *The Case for Classical Education* (2002). For a succinct survey of this educational approach, I refer the reader to Gregg Strawbridge, *Classical and Christian Education: Recapturing the Educational Approach of the Past* (Lancaster, PA: Veritas Press, 2002). See also, The Association of Classical and Christian Education (ACCS), Moscow, ID; Covenant Classical School Association (CCSA), Franklin, TN; and the Eastern Consortium for Classical, Christian Schooling (ECCCS), Lookout Mountain, TN.

<sup>56</sup> This book is a 2002 updated version of a similar title published by the Capital Research Center, Washington, D.C., in 1997.

<sup>57</sup> See Sayers' essay.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph, 6.