

PAULUS NICOLETTUS VENETUS, *Sophismata aurea* [Golden Sophisms]

In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper

Northern Italy, Reggio d'Emilia (Ferrara?) or Padua?, dated 1417

65 ff., complete (collation: i-iii12, iv-v10, vi9 [10-1, with last leaf of quire likely a cancelled blank]), on paper (a number of watermarks, respectively close to (1) Briquet, no. 2637-2638: "Basilic" (e.g. f. 7), Reggio-d'Emilia, 1404, Ferrara, 1406, Udine, 1402-1408; see also Briquet no. 2663: Ferrara, 1417; (2) Briquet, no. 809: "Arc" (e.g. f. 27), Siena, 1410: Lucca, 1423 [but also Cologne, 1419]; (3) Briquet, no. 11687: "Monts" (e.g. f. 57), Padova, 1408-1415 or Briquet, no. 11689, Florence, 1411-1421 or Pisa, 1416), written in a tight and highly abridged gothic bookhand by a single hand (except table of contents on f. 65v, by a different although contemporary hand), text in two columns, quire signatures, a few catchwords (e.g. fol. 24v), paper ruled in brown ink (justification 186 x 140 mm.), paragraph marks in red, some capitals struck in red, painted initials in red or blue throughout, some larger parti-colored initials in red and blue, a variety of contemporary or slightly later marginal annotations and corrections (worthy of in-depth study). Bound in uncovered pasteboard, spine reinforced with snippets of inscribed parchment, spine sewn on three raised thongs left apparent, covers and spine meant to subsequently receive a leather covering (unfinished), pastedowns lined with reused paper copied in a cursive bâtarde script in brown ink, containing excerpts from Italian notarial documents pertaining to the town of Novalino (?) (another form for Nodano, near Brescia?) and the monastery of San Pietro de Novalino and dated 1504 (Some foxing, a few waterstains, mostly marginal, first paper leaf darkened, perhaps due to past exposure, still completely legible). Dimensions 303 x 225 mm.

Dated manuscript, signed by the scribe (the German Augustinian Johannes de Buchheim, near Cologne), of this rare text on Sophisms by Paul of Venice, renowned philosopher and logician at the crossroad of the Medieval and Renaissance eras in Italy. Copied in 1417, the manuscript is contemporary with the author and his teachings in Padua and other centers of learning. The work still awaits a modern critical edition and a fuller study of the manuscript tradition, for which there are only four recorded codices including the present manuscript.

PROVENANCE

1. Copied and decorated in Italy (based on watermarks), by the scribe Johannes de Colonia or Johann van Buchyheim, as stated in a number of places, often at the end of certain chapters. The signed columns vary, with forms such as "Broder Johann van Buchiheim" (f. 13); "Broder Johan Buchyheim" (f. 23); "Frater Johannes" (f. 26v); "Broder Johann van Buchyheim" (f. 34v); "Broder Johann van Buchyheim" (f. 41v); "Johan syg wr dych" (f. 43v). Buchheim is indeed a district of Cologne, which would explain the colophon which refers to the scribe as "Johannes de Colonia" (colophon found on f. 64; see text below). The scribe is said to be "frater" or "broder" but we do not know from which order, perhaps the Augustinians since the text is composed by Paulus Venetus who was an Augustinian Hermit. The inclusion of a few Germanic words further corroborates the place of origin of the scribe, with a few columns ending with sequences such as "got wals al wege" (f. 2); "han han syg wr dych war do liff" (f. 61).

As "Johann van Buchyheim," the scribe does not seem to be recorded in Bénédictins du Bouveret, *Colophons des manuscrits occidentaux...* (1973), unless he is the "Johannes of

Cologne," cited twice. There is a "Johannes de Colonia" active in Padua towards the end of the 14th century (Bouveret, III, no. 9313 [manuscript dated 1393]) and another "Johannes de Colonia" active in the 1420s (Bouveret, III, no. 9314 [dated 1426]).

The manuscript is dated 1417, and thus interestingly is contemporary with the author Paulus Venetus (1370?-1429). This date is confirmed by the watermarks found in the paper which clearly point to an Italian origin for the paper, in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, perhaps Reggio Emilia or Padua. It seems likely the present codex is a copy made in a university environment, transcribed by a monk who might have attended university courses. Had Johann van Buchyheim studied in Padua, perhaps even in classes dispensed by Paulus Venetus himself, it seems that he would figure in the list established by Zonta, C. and J. Brotto. *Acta Graduum Academicorum Gymnasii Patavini ab anno MCCCCL*, Padua, 1970. But, we have not found trace of him in this publication.

2. A later inscription, perhaps 18th century, appears in the upper margin of the first leaf: "MSS dell'anno 1417 come apparicie dal fine."

3. European Continental Collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-64, Paulus Nicolettus Venetus, *De sophisticatibus*, incipit, "Logica propositiones ab inicio sophisticatum..."; first sophism, "Primum sophisma est Omnis homo est omnis homo..."; explicit, "[...] quod a non asserit se esse falsum quod negatur"; colophon "Expliciunt sophisticata excellentissimi magistri pauli de venetiis completa anno domini Mo CCCCo XVII [1417] in vigilia apostolorum petri et pauli per me fratrem Johannem de Colonia";

ff. 64v-65, blank;

f. 65v, Table of contents, added by a near-contemporary hand, with colophon, "Explicit tabula sophisticata reverendi magistri pauli de veneciis ordinis fratrum heremitarum sancti augustini Deo gratias amen etc." [also included and published in *Sophismata magistri Pauli Veneti*, Venice, Bonetum Locatellum, 1493].

Paulus Venetus O.E.S.A. or Paolo Veneto or Paul of Venice (1372?-1429) was a philosopher and reputed logician, one of the most important Italian thinkers of his times. He was an Augustinian Hermit (he joins the convent of Santo Stefano, in Venice), once rector of the University of Siena, later Ambassador of the Republic of Venice in Poland and as such was embroiled in the complex political issues of his day. Having studied in Padua and later assigned to the Augustinian *studium* at Oxford, Paulus Venetus became Doctor of Arts and Theology by 1405. He subsequently taught in Padua at the University where he participated in examinations for students and an influential teacher, in Siena (1420-24), and Perugia (1424-28). He died in Padua in 1429, while commenting the *De anima* (*On the Soul*) of Aristotle.

Considered, perhaps in a reductive fashion, as one of the last tenants of Italian Averroism, Paulus Venetus was above all a logician well-versed in linguistic and epistemological problems, influenced by such authors as Walter Burley and John Wycliff. In his *Sophismata*, he adopts some very original semantic interpretations in order to resolve tricky sophisms. Sophisms were "ambiguous propositions" which caused puzzlement and invited theoretical clarification, and did

not, in the Middle Ages, necessarily imply fallacy. To the medieval logician there were ways to show that a sophism could be both true and false. Sophisms such as "The infinite are finite"; "A man is an animal"; "Man is the worthiest of creatures," etc., were mainly used for teaching logic.

Paulus Venetus wrote many philosophical and theological treatises (the complete list of his some twenty works and a guide to the 240 extant manuscripts is found in Perreiah 1986, pp. 35-71: "Paolo Nicoletti Veneto: Manuscript Census"; for the dating of his main philosophical works see Conti 1996, pp. 9-20). The date of composition of the present *Sophismata aurea* [Golden Sophisms] has been suggested circa 1399 (or later according to Perreiah, 1986, p. 6, who suggests between 1410-1415; a fourteenth-century date of composition is supported by Conti, 1996, p. 13), hence more or less contemporary with his *Logica parva* (*Small Logic*), c. 1393–95 and the *Logica magna* (*Great Logic*), c. 1396–99.

The manuscript tradition is sparse for the *Sophismata aurea*, as opposed to, for instance, the *Logica parva* found in over 80 manuscripts, which was to become the first printed textbook of scholastic logic (see Perreiah, 1986, pp. 42-43). Indeed, following Perreiah (1986, p. 44), the *Sophismata aurea* is recorded in only three other codices: Padua, Bibl. Universitaria, MS 925 [fifteenth century] (see also Kristeller, II, 15); Vatican, BAV, Vat. lat. 2134 misc. item 1 S (Maier, *Codices Vaticani Latini*, 1961, 29-30); Venice, Bibl. Marciana, Z. lat. 527 misc [dated 1416] *De sophismatibus* (Kristeller, II, 214; Mohan, 1952, p. 415), with the following colophon: "Ista sophismata cum logica praecedenti scripsit quidam frater Andreas de Anglada ordinis sancti Augustini conventus Arthezis et provinciae Tolosanae filius, unius notabilissimae civitatis quae vocatur Usani, anno Domini 1416, primo anno studii in conventu paduano ordinis Heremitarum S. Augustini" [These sophisms with the preceding logic were written by Brother Andreas de Anglada of the Order of Saint Augustine, convent of *Arthezis*, Province of Toulouse ... in the year of Our Lord 1416, during his first year of study in Padua, convent of the Order of the Augustinian Hermits]. Hence the present codex apparently constitutes the fourth witness for this text, an important one because like the Venice codex (dated 1416), it is dated 1417.

The *editio princeps* of the *Sophismata* by Paulus Venetus first appeared in Pavia, Nicolaus Girardengus, 1483 [Goff, P-236], with a second edition published ten years after in Venice, Bonetus Locatellus for Octavianus Scotus, 1493 [Goff, P-237]. There is no modern critical edition based on the extant codices of this work. The present codex is important because it is contemporary with the author, and reveals repeatedly at the foot of many columns the name of the scribe (student?): Broder Johann van Buchyheim, a German national studying, or at least carefully copying, this work in Italy. Further research might establish ties with Paulus Venetus's teaching. One might signal, also for further research, another manuscript containing a copy of the *Logica parva*, copied by a Johannes Beylarius de Colonia in Padua in 1420 (see Zonto and Brotto, 1970, II, pp. 174-175, no. 1762; manuscript described in H.P. Kraus, *Catalogue* 191, Part I, no. 40, pp. 35-36). The Schoenberg Database records no works of the Golden Sophisms sold at auction.

A definitive study of the dating, authenticity, and interrelationships has yet to be undertaken for the extant codices containing philosophical and theological works by Paulus Venetus. Known only in incunable and early sixteenth-century editions, the *Golden Sophismata* merits a critical edition based on the few manuscripts preserved, of which two are dated and copied by foreign *studentes* in Italy, respectively 1416 (Venice, Bibl. Marciana, MS Z. lat. 527 misc) copied by Andreas de Anglada of Toulouse and 1417 (the present codex) copied by Broder Johann van

Buchyheim, near Cologne. It offers a little-studied work on an important theme in medieval logic, that of sophistic reasoning.

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

On Paulus Venetus

http://www.cassiciaco.it/navigazione/monachesimo/historia_ordinis/perini/1394_venetus.html

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paul-venice/>

Biographical chronology for Paulus Venetus OESA

[http://www-cgi.uni-](http://www-cgi.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/phil_Fak_I/Philosophie/Gesch_Phil/alcuin/philosopher.php?id=1700)

[regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/phil_Fak_I/Philosophie/Gesch_Phil/alcuin/philosopher.php?id=1700](http://www-cgi.uni-regensburg.de/Fakultaeten/phil_Fak_I/Philosophie/Gesch_Phil/alcuin/philosopher.php?id=1700)

Digitized edition, *Sophismata aurea*, Venice, Bonetum Locatellum, 1493 [second edition]
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k58880m/f4.im>

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