

Poglądy Johanna de Rupescissa na temat leczniczych właściwości tzw. kwintesencji

The views of Johannes de Rupescissa on the curative properties of the so-called quintessence

SUMMARY

Johannes de Rupescissa, a Franciscan monk of the 14th century, was the author of a number of treatises on religion, as well as on medicine and alchemy. He presented his views of the curative properties of the so-called quintessence in the treatise *De consideratione quintae essentiae* (Thoughts on the quintessence). His basic assumption was as follows: since the human body cannot be prevented from “corruption and decay” by means of things that are themselves subject to such processes, one should search for curative substances that would stand in a similar relation to the human body as the Aristotelian ether (Latin *quinta essentia*) stood to the four so-called elements, of which all earthly things are made.

The treatise *De consideratione quintae essentiae* consists of two volumes (books). In the first, which is divided into nine “canons”, Rupescissa presents the view that we can extract, from anything that only “consists of four elements” thus practically from everything that exists on the Earth, its own quintessence, i.e. its subtle and active element that contains all the characteristic and most valuable properties of that thing. To illustrate this view, Rupescissa gives the example of the method of obtaining the “quintessence” of white wine, as well as the “quintessences” of gold, antimony, human blood and the “quintessences” of various animal stuffs, each of which has unique curative properties. The second volume of the treatise carries sixteen recipes for medicines in which a major role is played by the “quintessences” of white wine, gold and pearls.

The discussion of the treatise in the current paper is supplemented with extensive quotations from the most important fragments of the treatise, which are accompanied by the requisite commentaries; the author of the paper based the discussion on the Oxford manuscript of the treatise (All Souls College, manuscript no. 81, 15th-16th century).