**Paper title** Dialectically situating medieval accounts of the subject matter of logic

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# **Abstract**

This paper examines three different Medieval approaches to the subject matter of logic along with the interrelations between them. The first approach associates the subject matter of logic with acts of understanding; the second, with the syllogism; the third, with the argument. Versions of the first approach are championed by Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas; of the second, by Duns Scotus and Walter Burley. An early version of the third thesis is posited by Albertus Magnus, who finds support for it in Al-Farabi and Al-Ghazali, and later defended by John Buridan. The first answer was dominant among commentators in the period from the beginning of the systematic study of Aristotle’s logical works to the final quarter of the thirteenth century; the second period, from the last quarter of the thirteenth to the beginning of the fourteenth century; the third, from the middle to later fourteenth century.

In the first part of the paper, I present the arguments given by Aquinas, Scotus, Burley and others for their respective positions on the subject matter of logic. I then show that the shifts from one answer to another can be accounted for by larger shifts regarding the notion of a subject matter itself. In the earliest phrase, ‘subject’ is taken to refer to that which is directly addressed in all of the different branches of logic. In the middle period, however, the subject matter of a science is taken to be that which it is *principally* concerned with. In the final period these two meanings of a subject matter are (perhaps intentionally) conflated.