Suppositiones and Consequentiae in Medieval Logic: Historical and Philosophical Inquiries

In the Middle Ages, especially in the XIV century, Logic (which includes Semantics and metaphysical issues) is a field extremely flourishing and that reaches a high degree of sophistication. Not only the traditional Aristotelian framework (Logica Vetus, Logica Nova) is deeply studied and meditated by medieval logicians and undergoes some interesting developments, but there are also some new and originally medieval contributions regrouped in the so called Logica Modernorum. Among these, suppositiones and consequentiae are particularly important and interesting, both historically and logically.

What counts as logic in the Middle Ages appears to be quite different from the way we conceive contemporary logic, for example both for the languages involved and the extension of the fields. Yet there are enough similarities to justify the philosophical and logical interest, beyond the antiquarian curiosity, of an historical work on some central notions, such as the notion of consequence. We can't engage with medieval logic without carrying with us our contemporary conceptual baggage, our contemporary questions. If we are aware of this and of the distance that separates and connects us modern logicians to our late medieval colleagues, and if we try to respect our medieval sources, "sitting in the middle", in that distance, could be enlightening for our work as historians and give us, as logicians and philosophers of logic, some new deep insight on the nature and the workings of Logic - on what logic is and could be.

Our symposium aims to give a contribution of this sort to the history and the philosophy of logic. We will focus on some aspects of supposition theory and consequentiae in late medieval logic; by doing so we will tackle some fundamental logical and semantic issues - such as the relation of consequence, propositional truth, the concept of formality and formal validity.

Collective Nouns and Plural Quantification in William of Ockham
Magali Roques, Freie Universität Berlin

This paper is dedicated to the semantics of numerical terms according to Ockham and in particular to their distinctive property, namely that they are collective nouns. Indeed, the proposition in which they stand has peculiar truth-conditions. For instance, if the proposition 'these dogs are five' is true, it is impossible for the proposition 'this – an entity which is five being designated- is five' to be true. There is no such thing as an entity in the world that would explain that the dogs are five and not seven. A concrete natural number is nothing other than the things numbered. In this sense, plural reference is irreducible to singular reference, which is regulated by the truth-conditions given by Ockham in the first chapters of the second part of the Sum of Logic.

Ockham does not acknowledge the existence of a peculiar mode of personal supposition to explain collective reference. In the 1990ies, S. Read has argued that this kind of mode of personal supposition has not been acknowledged as such before about 1330, a long time after Ockham elaborated his semantics of numerical terms. Moreover, the emergence of this fourth mode of personal supposition is not related to a philosophical reflection on collective reference as such, but to questions pertaining to the completeness of the modes of personal supposition. That could explain why Ockham does not speak of collective supposition, and why he uses only the old Priscian grammatical notion of collective noun.

In this paper, we will try to answer more precisely the question why Ockham did not succeed in taking into account this special kind of reference in his supposition theory and we will examine whether his quasi-intuitive notion of plural reference can be compared to contemporary developments on plural quantification.
Two medieval traditions in the meaning of ‘formally valid’
Mikko Yrjönsuuri, University of Jyväskylä

While modern logic relies on a relatively univocal concept of ‘formal’, many late medieval logicians point out that the claim that an inference is ‘formal’ (formalis) or ‘formally valid’ (valet formaliter) can be understood in two fundamentally different ways. (1) On the one hand, the concept is close to the twentieth century concept of ‘analytic validity’, and in this meaning it is often defined with reference to the idea that the consequent is included in the antecedent, or the understanding of the consequent is included in the antecedent. (2) On the other hand, validity was understood to be formal if and only if any inference achieved through any substitution of the material parts of the inference yields an equally valid inference. Neither of these definitions of ‘formal’ was understood to serve as a criterion of validity, since most authors accepted non-formally valid inferences. Furthermore, the second criterion was not taken as an explanation of grounding for validity even by its defenders. The paper discusses these two traditions of the concept ‘formally valid’ in the late thirteenth and fourteenth century contexts, paying attention to such authors as Walter Burley, William Ockham, John Buridan, and so-called Pseudo-Scotus. Paul of Venice is taken under closer scrutiny as an author who thought that the two definitions are incommensurate to the extent that it makes sense to evaluate inferences separately in relation to each definition. Thus, he specified the class of inferences that is ‘formal’ in both senses, the class that is ‘formal’ in the first sense but not the second, and the class that is valid but not ‘formal’ in either senses. As Paul shows, there are no inferences that are ‘formal’ in the second sense but not in the first.

Consequentiale and Expositiones in Marsilius of Inghen's Treatise on Consequences
Graziana Ciola, Scuola Normale Superiore / UCLA

My talk will focus on Marsilius of Inghen's Consequentiae; I will proceed with an overview of the (still critically unedited) text and with an analysis of some relevant aspects of the theory. Marsilius' treatise is divided in two sections: the first one is a theoretical exposition of his doctrine on consequences; the second part implements the set of rules given in the first section to treat specific groups of inferences, expositiones, from some sentence to another that can be derived from it.

For the first section, I will focus on Marsilius' definition of consequentia bona, and his accounts of formal and material consequences. In particular I will examine his stance on the consequentia ut nunc, that he apparently rejects - as already briefly noted by Bos (Bos 1976). By examining the set of accepted rules, I will outline the structure of Marsilius' theory of consequences.

For the second section, I will analyse some expositiones: in doing so, we will see in play the general rules given in the first part and how that set is extended to account for the examined cases. In doing so I will tackle the problematic (Spade 2000) issues of exponibiles and expositio propositionum in Marsilius's case, by means of the his theory of consequence and of supposition.

By giving a more detailed, grounded, and systematic analysis of Marsilius' Consequentiae, on the one hand, I aim to contribute to give a more precise and detailed picture of the articulation of the complex XIV century debates around consequences; and, on the other hand, to shed some light on the related matter of expositiones.