Medieval Logic (II)

In the Middle Ages, Aristotle's theory of syllogism became the dominant model of correct reasoning. Historically, medieval logic is divided into:

(i) Old logic (*logica vetus*), from Boethius (c. 480-525 CE) to Abelard (1079-1142);

(ii) New logic (*logica nova*), from the late twelfth century to the Renaissance.

This division reflects the availability of ancient logical texts. Before Abelard, medieval logicians were familiar only with Aristotle's *Categoriae* and *De Interpretatione* and Porphyry (233-309 CE)'s *Isagoge* or *Introductio in Praedicamenta*. The book *Prior Analytics*, where Aristotle had developed the theory of the syllogism, was unknown at this time. Nevertheless, they did know something of his theory through secondary sources. The *Prior Analytics* reappeared in the West in the middle of the twelfth century and in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries some commentaries about it began to appear.

Aristotle's theory of syllogism was a remarkable achievement and virtually complete in the *Prior Analytics*. Medieval logicians could not add much to the original theory. Some small changes were sometimes made and it was systematized in different ways, but essentially the original work was preserved. In the mid-fourteenth century people's understanding of syllogistic logic began to change. Johannes Buridanus (1300-1358 CE), the French logician who sowed the seeds of the Copernican revolution in Europe and prepared the way for Galilei's concept of inertia through his theory of *impetus*, re-worked logic in general and placed the theory of the syllogism in the context of the more comprehensive logic of consequence. Moreover, the theory of the modal syllogism was incomplete in the *Prior Analytics*. Medieval logicians made a remarkable progress in this direction.

In this talk I will consider in some detail the following process: the first commentators tried to save Aristotle's original theory and in the course of doing so they produced some interesting solutions. Nevertheless, they were unable to make the system work. The next generation of logicians simply abandoned the idea of saving Aristotle's original work and instead they introduced new distinctions and developed a completely new theory that subsumed the logic of syllogisms.