

The *Categories* in post-Avicennan logic

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References

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1. Avicenna (d. 1037)

1.1 This kind of investigation is called “science of logic”. It is the investigation of the aforementioned matters [i.e. the quiddities], inasmuch as one arrives by means of them to making known the unknown, and of what occurs to them inasmuch as they are such, no more.¹

1.2 It is not incumbent on you in so far as you are a logician to explain how this relation [i.e. the relation between the universal notion and the many things to which it refers] occurs; whether this notion, in so far as it is one thing shared [by many other things], has an existence in those things themselves that are regarded as sharing it, and, in general, an existence which is separate and external different from that which is in your mind; or how its realization in the mind occurs. For the investigation of such things belongs to one or two other disciplines;²

1.3 The subject matter of logic, as you know, is given by the secondary intelligible notions, based on the first intelligible notions, with regard to how it is possible to pass by means of them from the known to the unknown, not in so far as they are intelligible and possess intellectual existence ([an existence] which does not depend on matter at all, or depends on an incorporeal matter).³

1.4 Disregarding the ten categories causes no harm to speak of, nor would it be a weakness in logic for one to labour under the misconception that there is a greater or smaller number of categories.

Furthermore, knowing whether some matters should be described as genera is not any more incumbent upon [the student of logic] than knowing whether some others should be described as species.

Rather, the knowledge of these things with regard to the modality of their existence belongs to first philosophy.⁴

1.5 Every knowledge is either Conception or Assertion. Conception is the prior knowledge and it is acquired by means of

¹ *Intro.* 16.10–12, Bertolacci 272.

² *Intro.* 27.10–14, Bertolacci 274.

³ *Met.* 10.17–11, Bertolacci 273.

⁴ *Cat.* 5.6–9, Bertolacci 275.

definition or the like... Assertion is acquired only by means of syllogism or the like... Thus definition and syllogism are two instruments by means of which knowledge of unknown things is acquired through discursive thought... Now every syllogism and every definition is made up by bringing intelligible notions (*ma'ānīn ma'qūla*) into a definite composition so that each would have a matter from which it is composed and by means of which the composition is effected.⁵

2. Sāwī (d. 1145)

...notions—which are the matters (*mawwād*) for explanatory phrases and proofs taken absolutely in so far as they are ready for composition (*ta'līf*) leading to the proper realization (*taḥṣīl*) of something (*amr*) in the mind—these notions are the secondary intelligibles. The meaning of ‘secondary’ here is that a man’s mind acquires the forms and quiddities of things existent outside the mind, and then his mind may act on them, qualifying some with others, attaching to some things that are not part of them, abstracting the reality of some from extrinsic accidents; so the mind’s action makes some qualifications (*ḥukm*) and others qualified. Abstraction and attachment are states which inhere in these quiddities in the mind. These quiddities are the primary intelligibles, and the states inhering in them after their occurrence in the mind (the quiddities’ being predicates and subjects and universals and particulars and so forth of the things you know about) are the secondary intelligibles. The subject matter of logic, therefore, are these secondary intelligibles in so far as they lead to the proper realization of knowledge that did not previously exist.

As for the primary intelligibles, they are investigated when the student tries to implement this canon on specific definitions and demonstrations, and line them up with [the canonical forms] (*yuḥādḥihā bihā*); whereupon one adverts to the primary intelligibles which are the quiddities of existent things, such as their being substances and quantities and qualities and so forth of the genera of existent things, as you will come to know.⁶

⁵Sabra 761–762, quoting *Salvation* 3–4.

⁶*Insights* 6.1–6.14.

3. Rāzī (d. 1210)

The subject matter of logic is the secondary intelligibles in so far as it is possible to pass by means of them from the known (*al-ma'lūmāt*) to the unknown (*al-majhūlāt*). The explanation of 'secondary intelligibles' is that man conceives the realities of things (*ḥaqā'iq al-ashyā'*) in the first place, then qualifies some with others either restrictively or predicatively (*ḥukman taqyīdiyyan aw khabariyyan*). The quiddity's being qualified in this way is something that only attaches to the quiddity after it has become known in the first place, so it is [a consideration] on the second level (*fī l-darajati l-thāniya*). If these considerations are investigated, not absolutely, but rather with respect to how it is possible to pass correctly by means of them from the known to the unknown, that is logic. So its subject matter is certainly the secondary intelligibles under the consideration mentioned above.⁷

4. Ḥillī (d. 1325)

When Ṭūsī finished investigating the five categories which inhere in the ten categories, he began the investigation of [the ten], even though [such investigation] is not part of logic. [This is] because the subject matter of logic is the secondary intelligibles which inhere in the primary intelligibles. How can the primary intelligibles be investigated even though [such investigation] is a [presupposed] part of the science [of logic]? This would be circular. But rather, [the ten categories] are investigated in logic to aid in properly realizing the genera and specific differences. [Such investigation], then, will be a help in discovering (*istinbāt*) what is defined and inferred, even though it is not part of logic.⁸

5. Abharī (d. 1264)

The subject matter of logic, I mean, the thing which the logician investigates in respect of its concomitants in so far as it is what it is, are precisely Conceptions and Assertions. [This is] because [the logician] investigates what conduces to Conception and what the means [to Conception] depends upon (for something to be universal and particular, essential and accidental, and such

⁷*Summary* 10.1–10.8.

⁸*Jewel* 23.4–8.

like); and he investigates what conduces to Assertion and what the means to Assertion depends upon, whether proximately (like something being a proposition or the converse of a proposition or the contradictory of a proposition and such like) or remotely (like something being a predicate or a subject). These are states which inhere in Conceptions and Assertions in so far as they are what they are. So certainly its subject matter is Conceptions and Assertions.⁹

6. Ṭūsī (d. 1274)

If what he means by Conceptions and Assertions is everything on which these two nouns fall, it is the sciences in their entirety, because knowledge is divided into these two; whereupon what is understood from [his claim] is that the subject matter of logic is all the sciences. Yet there is no doubt that they are not the subject matter of logic...¹⁰

[...] If it is said: Everything that conduces to a Conception or an Assertion is a cause (*'illa*) for it, and reflection on something is only concluded by reflection on what is a cause for it. Thus reflection on Conceptions and Assertions is only concluded in reflection on definition and syllogism. Then we say: Reflection on the cause of the subject matter of a science is not a part of the science investigating that subject matter. Were it otherwise, reflection on establishing the existence of the Necessary Existent would be a part of every single science.

The truth is that the subject matter for logic is the secondary intelligibles in so far as reflection on them leads from the known to the unknown (or to something similar, as do reductive arguments or persuasive arguments [146] or imaginative arguments and the like). And if they are characterised by the rider mentioned by the masters of this craft, Conception and Assertion are among the set of secondary intelligibles in just the same way as definition and syllogism and their parts, like universal and particular and subject and predicate and proposition and premise and conclusion.¹¹

⁹*Revelation* 144.14–20.

¹⁰*Setting the Standard* 144.21–u.

¹¹*Setting the Standard* 145.17–146.3.

7. Kātibī (d. 1276) and Taḥṭānī (d. 1365)

The subject matter of logic is known Conceptions and Assertions (*al-ma'lūmāt al-taṣawwuriyya wa-l-taṣdīqiyya*). [This is] because the logician investigates them in so far as they conduce to an unknown Conception or Assertion (*majhūl taṣawwūrī aw taṣdīqī*); and in so far as the means to Conception depends upon them (such as being universal or particular, essential or accidental, a genus or a difference); and in so far as the means to Assertion depends upon them, whether proximately (like being a proposition or the converse of a proposition or the contradictory of a proposition) or remotely (like being a subject or a predicate).¹²

8. Samarqandī (d. c. 1310) quoting the Avicennan scholars

... when quiddities and realities are conceived in so far as they are [what they are]—without considering [any] qualification of them—they are primary intelligibles. When we qualify them restrictively or predicatively in that this, for example, is universal and this essential and this accidental, and so on, their being so is as secondary intelligibles. Were the secondary intelligibles [in turn] qualified restrictively or predicatively, their being so would be on the third level (*fī l-darajati l-thālitha*); similarly, were the tertiary intelligibles qualified, their being so would be on the fourth level. And so on.

The investigation of logic falls on the third level and beyond, because it investigates the essential accidents of the secondary intelligibles with respect to genus, difference, property, general accident, definition, description, their being a proposition, the converse of a proposition, the contradictory of a proposition, a syllogism, an example, and so forth.¹³

9. Samarqandī quoting Khūnajī (d. 1249)

This is the view adopted by the verifying scholars (*al-muḥaqqiq-ūn*), but Khūnajī (*ṣāḥib al-kashf*) and the people who follow him differed from them [9] and said: Logic may investigate the universal and the particular and the essential and the accidental and the subject and the predicate; they are among the questions [of the

¹²*Qootbee* 38.2–pu.

¹³Berlin ms. Ldbg. 1035, f.8 left column lines 9–22.

science]. You are taking the subject matter of logic as more general than the secondary intelligibles so that the secondary intelligibles and [especially] the secondary intelligibles you have mentioned and what follows after them may come under it as logic. It would be correct for you to say that the subject matter of logic is known Conceptions or Assertions (*al-ma'lūmāt al-taṣawwuriyya wa-l-taṣdīqiyya*) not in so far as they are [what they are] but in so far as they conduce to what is sought (*al-maṭlūb*) etc. (see 7 above)¹⁴

10. Samarqandī responding to Khūnajī

You have already come to know [from] what went before that the investigation of secondary intelligibles in logic is just due to its being among the principles [of the science], and not due to its being among its questions. [This is] because [the secondary intelligibles] are established in another science which is more general, and therefore the subject matter [of this science] needn't be more general.

Along with this there is another fault that confounds them, which is that everything logic investigates is either a Conception or an Assertion under the aspect (*al-ḥaythiyya*) mentioned. Were the subject matter of logic taken to be Conceptions and Assertions under this aspect, the investigation of logic would be of the subject matter itself not its accidents—so the subject matter wouldn't be a [proper] subject matter.¹⁵

¹⁴Berlin ms. Ldbg. 1035, f.8 left column line pu to f.9 right column line 8.

¹⁵Berlin ms. Ldbg. 1035, f.9 right column lines 23–33.