

On the Truth-Value of Categorical Propositions with Empty Terms in Duns Scotus' Logical Commentaries

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Abstract: According to Aristotle's *Categories*, any pair of contradictory propositions satisfies at least two conditions. Firstly, such propositions consist in one affirmation and one negation about the same subject and predicate. Secondly, the distribution of their truth-values is such that one is true while the other false. To assess the truth-values of any assertion, Aristotle relies both on existential import and on a correspondence theory of truth. As a consequence, given "A is B" and "A is not B", the emptiness of any term is sufficient to determine the falsity of the affirmation and the truth of the denial. Although this last claim has been considered standard by several medieval authors developing the Aristotelian logical tradition, Duns Scotus' *Parva Logicalia* mark an exception. While generally preserving most of Aristotle's theoretical elements, such as the correspondence theory of truth and the bivalence principle, Scotus claims that given the emptiness of "A", "A is B" can be true while "A is not B" false, detaching truthfulness and falsehood from existential import. We will show how the main arguments for such a claim rely on a form of categorical ontology, Aristotelian to its core, and on a distinctive conception of predication, which will determine some relevant semantic outcomes.

Keywords: Duns Scotus, Contradiction, Emptiness, Existential Import, Predication.