



Women and Logic in the Middle Ages

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A bit of background

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- A growing recognition of the gender-imbalance in logic/math/philosophy.

A natural combination of these two issues results in the question: Where are the women in medieval logic?

The easy answer

Proposition

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Proof.

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Universities didn't admit women.

Ergo, there were no medieval female logicians. □

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- The university was not the only place to learn.
- There's more to the Middle Ages than just the 13th C onwards.

Women in the Universities

Bologna

- Maria di Novella was professor of mathematics at Bologna in the 13th C.
- Dorotea Bucca (1360–1436) was chair of medicine and philosophy at Bologna from 1390–1430, following the death of her father.

Salamanca

- Beatriz Galindo (c. 1465–?) studied grammar at one of the university's dependent institutions, and then taught philosophy and medicine at Salamanca, as well as tutored Isabel the Catholic in Latin. A commentary on Aristotle, *Notas y comentarios sobre Aristóteles*, is attributed to her. Little on the *Notas* appears to be available in English.

Study outside the universities

- Correspondence courses.
 - ▶ Letters from Alcuin (8th C) to nuns on syllogisms.
- Private tutoring.
 - ▶ Eloise d'Argenteuil (12th C)
 - ▶ Flamenca and Margarida (late 13th C)

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*Flamenca said to her, "Who has taught you,
Margarida, who has shown you—
by the faith you owe me—such dialectic?" (5441–5443)*

What makes one a logician? (1)

- ① One who writes treatises on logic?
- ② One who practices or uses logic?

What makes one a logician? (2)

If (1), then maybe there were no medieval women logicians. Why?

- Strong connection between production of textbooks/theoretical treatises and university activity.
- Logic as a male pursuit.
 - ▶ Eloise rejects what Townsend calls the “tradition of dialectical disputation and the social customs of ritualized male aggression”
 - ▶ “Je ne suis logicienne”, Christine de Pizan write to Pierre Col.

Eloise d'Argenteuil

- c. 1090?/1100?–1164.
- Student and lover of Abelard.
- Recognized as an important ethical philosopher in her own right in modern times.
- After Abelard's death, Peter of Cluny complimented her on the fact that she had “left logic for the gospel, Plato for Christ, the Academy for the cloister”.

The education of women

- Depended on social class/time period.
- Focus on the promotion of virtue.
- Leonard Bruni (1370–1444): girls should study the ancient classical and Christian authors in order to learn grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, moral philosophy, and how to become virtuous.
- Public oratory and disputation are omitted, because they are “considered unbecoming and impractical for women”.
- Ludovico Dolce (1508–1568): Women should “not teach school or ‘dispute’, that is, participate in academic disputation”.
- “A girl ought not require Latin learning, because she had no public role to play” (Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600*, p. 89).

Christine de Pizan

- Born in Venice, 1364; grew up in the French court of Charles V as her father was the king's astrologer, alchemist, and physician.
- Began writing after being widowed at 25.
- Best known for her French courtly poetry, but also wrote books on practical advice for women.
- *The Book of the City of Ladies*: Dialogue between allegorical women representing Reason, Justice, and Rectitude, written in a highly skilled dialectical style.
- “Je ne suis logicienne”: But shortly afterward she poses a standard logical puzzle: “Se tu dis oyl, c'est faulx. . . Se tu me dis non, doncques te dis je vraye ma proposicion” (“If you say yes, it's false. . . If you tell me no, then you have proved true my proposition”).