

ANDREAS KESLER AND THE LATER THEORY OF CONSEQUENCE

E. J. ASHWORTH

1 In another paper I examined the theory of consequence presented by a number of later fifteenth and early sixteenth century writers, ending with Javellus, an Italian who died in 1538.¹ For this earlier period, there was an abundance of material, containing much sophisticated discussion of semantical issues; but the next hundred years do not offer more than a few sources, and these are of limited value. The only really outstanding figure, so far as I can see, is that of Andreas Kesler. He was a Protestant theologian who was born at Coburg in 1595, educated at Jena and Wittenberg, and died in 1643 after a long career in education. In 1623 he published a book entitled *De Consequentia Tractatus Logicae* which is unique, both for its own time, and as compared to the products of the earlier period, in that it explicitly subsumes the whole of formal logic under the theory of consequence. The laws of opposition and conversion, the categorical and hypothetical syllogism, were all seen as different types of consequence. Moreover, no extraneous material was included. Instead of starting with the categories, like the Aristotelians, or with the invention of arguments, like the Ramists, he devoted his first chapter to the definition of consequence. Topics, informal fallacies and other such subjects found no place, whereas some rarely discussed matters like exclusive and reduplicative propositions and the modal syllogism did appear. Thus he stands out for his contents as well as for his organization. All his contemporaries devoted time and space to non-formal matters like the categories; and none of them devoted so much as a separate tract to the theory of consequence. Petrus Fonseca (1528-1599), a Jesuit who taught at Coimbra, treated the subject more thoroughly than most, but only as a brief prelude to the syllogism. Writers like Carbo and Gabriel of St. Vincent followed him in this, whereas others like Timplerus and Blundeville discussed it after the syllogism. Mercado only mentioned the matter in his tract on hypothetical propositions, while Caesarius introduced it in his tract on hypothetical syllogisms. At first sight, Kesler seems to have been the only rigorous formal logician of his time, the only man who saw precisely what kind of material he was handling, and how it should be organized.

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