



UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO

DIPARTIMENTO DI LATINITA' E MEDIOEVO

DOTTORATO DI RICERCA IN FILOSOFIA, SCIENZE E CULTURA DELL'ETÀ TARDOANTICA,  
MEDIEVALE E UMANISTICA

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*INTENTIONES E SIGNIFICATIONES*

LA FILOSOFIA DELLA GRAMMATICA DEI MODISTI

ABSTRACT

TESI DI DOTTORATO

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The aim of this thesis is to offer a global and theoretical reconstructions of the grammatical speculative of the Modistae.

Medieval speculative grammar is a theory that grew out of the schoolmens work with ancient Latin grammar, but with a new approach. There is a double consideration of the linguistics facts: a grammatical and logical one. This authors tried to give a theoretical frame work based on expressly formulated premises. This theory has been labeled “modistic” from the concept of *modus significandi*.

In the first part of my work a try to give a briefly roundup on the most important critical works with the aims to explore the reasons why the storiography used the categories of modistae and speculative grammar.

In the central part I give a reconstruction of the modistic theory of grammar. The most important factor for the development of this theory is the recovery of the whole Aristotelian corpus, especially the *Posterior Analitics*, the *Metaphisics* and the *De Anima*, with their strong requirements for the construction for the construction of a scientific theory and their more complex semantic doctrines based on an elaborate epistemological foundation. Since vocal expressions differ from one language to another, they cannot constitute the true objects of grammar. The obvious place to look for universal features of language is in the semantic component, but it is not the meanings of the individual words which prove to be relevant to the grammarian. But a different form of sinfication that Modistae call *modi significandi*.

When the grammarians wanted to raise the course of grammar they try to collect it with the medieval status of the science. It was accordingly determined to be a speculative and auxiliary science: speculative because its goal was not to teach language but to describe and explain the nature and organization of the language (in this case Latin) as the most important and convenient vehicle of communication; auxiliary because grammar, like logic, was not directly concerned with the world, but with the reflection of it in our description.

In the final part of the work I give some introductory remarks on the problem of intentionality in the last decades of XIII century – and particularly on the Modistic doctrine of *intentiones*. In the last years many scholars have faced the problem of intentionality in the Middle Ages, but very few studies have been dedicated to the modistic theory of *intentiones*. The *Modistae*, a group of Masters who taught Logic and Grammar in Paris in the second half of XIII Century –, maintained a very original theory of intentionality: in other contexts and in other authors, the *intentiones* were either a *psychological-ontological* content of the knowledge's theory (the so called *species* theory), or the mind's capacity to tend towards things. In the modistic theory there is a double approach to the problem of *intentiones*: a psycho-logical approach and a linguistic one, according to their tendency to melt the respective limits of Logic and Grammar. That is why we can call the approach of the Modistae, to the theory of intentionality, a *Semantical approach*.

A part of this section is dedicated to the origin of the concept (from the Aristotelian and Arabic logic) of *intentio*. In the Aristotelian works *De interpretatione* and *De Anima*, through their Latin and Arabic translations/commentaries,- many authors had seen the origin of the concept, but in these two books there is also the beginning of many problems (in connection with intentionality),

which were handed on from author to author until the end of the Middle Ages, such as the nature of the *passiones animae* and the *species*. These problems were also discussed by the Modistae who gave an original answer to the question of the nature of *intentiones*, on which focuses the subsequent part of my paper. Definitely, *intentio*, for the Modistae, is something like a *processio* through which a thing, outside the mind, is *intellecta* and then expressed by a word.