Dante and Heterodoxy

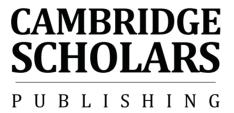# Dante and Heterodoxy:
The Temptations of 13th Century Radical Thought

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SCHOLARS**

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INTRODUCTION

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The topic of heterodoxy in Dante's time includes different lines of thinking and movements that were circulating in Europe, and in particular in Italy. *Dante and Heterodoxy: The Temptations of Thirteenth Century Radical Thought* collects several studies devoted to discussing Dante's work in the light of the intellectual debate that develops in thirteenth century Europe after the entrance of the new Aristotelian learning, the diffusion of Greek-Arabic thought, in particular the Latin translations of works by Ibn Rushd (Averroes), the twelfth century Muslim commentator on Aristotle, who exercised a strong influence on Latin scholastics from about 1230. The philosophical movement that emerged in Europe was explored in the nineteenth century, starting with Renan's pioneering work, *Averroes and Averroism* (1866)*,* and has been known as "Averroism" or "Latin Averroism".

Actually, the terms "Averroism", "radical Aristotelianism", and "heterodox Aristotelianism" are common twentieth century ways of indicating a late thirteenth century movement among Parisian philosophers, whose views were not easily reconcilable with Christian doctrine. Such thinking arose mostly in the second half of the thirteenth century, especially after the spreading of new models of *curricula studiorum*. A new idea was disseminated regarding human nature and human powers, which introduced new issues and debates. Among these was the principal error of so-called monopsychism, from which derived the denial of the immortality of the individual soul and the so-called philosophical happiness, conceived as an earthly happiness very different from and in some cases opposed to afterlife beatitude as conceived of in the Christian religion. Around 1270, the term *Averroistae* ("followers of Averroes") began to be used, principally to characterize adherents of the view that there is only one shared human intellect. Two condemnations were promulgated in Paris in 1270 and 1277, followed by others in Oxford, in which the Church sought to oppose such dangerous thinking. In the condemnation of 1277, the Bishop of Paris, Etienne Tempier, accused anonymous masters of arts of the University of Paris of paying more attention to philosophy than to

Christian revelation, and of behaving as if there were two truths, one of philosophy and another of faith. This line of thought was first investigated in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and increased in the twentieth century thanks to the new studies that brought to the attention of scholars an enormous amount of documents never before explored. Significant contributors included European medievalists such as Mandonnet, Grabman, Kristeller, Gilson, Van Steenberghen, Gauthier, and Nardi. The investigation continues today in the work of Alain De Libera, Gianfranco Fioravanti, R. Imbach, Luca Bianchi, and others.

It was F. Van Steenberghen who started to revise the term "Averroism", replacing it with "radical Aristotelianism", later also indicated as "integral Aristotelianism". The new appellation included a new perspective that denied a "Latin Averroism" as a passive reception of Averroes's thought and assumed instead the rise of a rational secular course of learning related to and influenced by the new Aristotelian learning and the debates concerning it. This resulted in the elaboration of a new independent line of thinking.

Important representatives were philosophers such as Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia in Paris, and others including John de Jandun, Petrus of Abano, and Marsilius of Padua. But it also involved medical doctors and natural philosophers such as Giacomo da Pistoia, Taddeo Alderotti, Dino del Garbo in Bologna, and in Florence Guido Cavalcanti—poet, natural philosopher and Dante's first friend. Although Dante's involvement with these radical ideas is uncertain, it is today widely accepted that he was largely aware of such thinking, primarily because his first friend Guido Cavalcanti was participating in it. The field of Dante studies in the United States has been scarcely involved in deepening this line of thought. This collection of essays attempts to shed light on this almost neglected issue. It intends to reread Dante's works in light of the great debate that took shape in Paris, Oxford, and Bologna, as testified by the thirteenth century condemnations, in particular those of 1270 and 1277 in Paris.

What takes form in the various articles is the emerging of an interest in the philosophical and scientific contents of Dante's opus, as the essays largely deal with Dante's philosophical and scientific studies. Heterodoxy in this volume is thus linked to, but not always coincident with, what medieval scholars such as Ferdinand Van Steenberghen or Alain De Libera term "radical Aristotelianism" or "Integral Aristotelianism".

Our exploration of this side of Dante's thought does not, however, aim at emphasizing Dante as a radical thinker, or excluding or giving less importance to other aspects of his intellectual profile. The word

"temptations", as its meaning clearly shows, is not delineating an organic link with heterodox or radical ideas but rather an intermittent inclination to include or evaluate themes related to these ideas. Moreover, "temptations" implies a search, an interrogation that consists of doubts and uncertainties of a poet strongly involved in the intellectual debate of his time and culture, and for whom philosophy and theology are not fields of opposition but different modes of inquiry.

What takes form in the various approaches and studies collected in this volume is the profile of a new kind of intellectual who is greatly interested in philosophy, politics, rhetoric, science and who looks at learning in a new way, in which secular contents and secular ideas about human beings are not seen as opposed to theology. He is one who is open to confront himself with what is stigmatized as heterodox, who participates in the intellectual debates of his time but rethinking and assuming them in a perspective that is his own. The idea of a possible relationship between Dante and heterodoxy began to circulate at the time when Nardi was working on Siger of Brabante's refusing to accept his pretended conversion to Thomism and underlying his Averroism. In 1940 he wrote his famous essay on Guido Cavalcanti, which for the first time established, with appropriate tools, the existence of a radical thought (Nardi called it "Averroism") in a leading poet of Dante's circle. While Busnelli and Favati were opposing Nardi's line of exploration, Nardi started to reshape the relation between Dante and Aquinas, emphasizing Dante's inclination to organize an eclectic thought in which a large role was played by Albertus Magnus and thus by Neoplatonism—not just that of the so-called Pseudo-Dionysius but also, and importantly, that of the *Liber de causis*. More or less in the same period, pioneering works were shedding light on Dante's geographical cultural milieu. These included Grabmann's study of the Aristotelianism at the University of Bologna, as well as Kristeller's discovery of a new manuscript of the *Quaestio de felicitate* (a text already discovered by Grabmann), which was dedicated to Guido Cavalcanti. According to Kristeller, this confirmed Nardi's interpretation of the philosophical position of Dante's "first friend". In addition, the poetry of the so-called *dolce stil novo* was reconsidered in the light of its links with the University of Bologna, where Giacomo da Pistoia was a master of arts.

Giacomo da Pistoia's *Quaestio* was a treatise devoted to discussing earthly happiness largely based on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and in some ways close to *De summo bono* of Boethius of Dacia, but organized in a different way; it intensified the appeal to further explore Cavalcanti's poetry, and in particular his canzone *Donna me prega*, and more generally to evaluate this direction in Dante's work. In 1981, Maria Corti introduced

a fascinating issue relating Dante's linguistic theory to the speculative grammar of the Modisti. In a second book entitled *La felicita mentale* (1983) she shaped a formal interpretation of Cavalcanti's canzone *Donna me prega*, relating it to an Averroistic commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* and to Giacomo's da Pistoia's *Quaestio de felicitate*. Along this line of thought she also considered that a theory of intellectual happiness entered in Dante's *Convivio*, although she related this theory to that of Albertus Magnus and not, as she had done for Cavalcanti's major canzone, to Averroism or radical Aristotelianism. It was, however, her first book that created what has been defined as "Corti's case". Opposed by various scholars, among them the historian of medieval philosophy Alfonso Maierù, Maria Corti's *Dante a un nuovo crocevia* and *La felicità mentale* have, however, been responsible for a debate that has given new strength to the field of Dante studies, not just in Italy but throughout Europe. As Fioravanti (2005) has recently pointed out, Corti, by focusing on *felicità mentale*, opened the door to new investigations. Corti's model, continues Fioravanti, appears in some sections to be suggestive of works written by Bianchi (1990), De Libera (1991), and Imbach (1996), and it presides over some publications of the project of a new edition, with commentary, of Dante's philosophical works that has been organized in Freiburg. There is no doubt that beyond the conference organized in New York in 2012, whose proceedings this volume collects, there was the desire to focus on an aspect of Dante's thought that has shaped the debate about him since the early 80s in Europe, but which is scarcely represented in the United States. In the light of it, the conference included both European and American scholars, also involving younger generations active in the United States and emphasizing their participation.

The authors of the essays collected in this volume are in part historians of medieval philosophy or scholars in the field of medieval Italian studies, and of Dante in particular.

I start by introducing and briefly summarizing the contents of the various contributions. I begin with the essay by Costantino Marmo, which is devoted to exploring the relationship between Dante and the theory of the speculative grammar of the Modisti. As said above, this theory was introduced into the field of Dante's studies by Maria Corti in her book *Dante a un nuovo crocevia* (1981). It was Corti's idea that Dante did in fact participate in the current of thought called Modism, whose advocates included Boethius of Dacia and Italian philosophers such as Gentile da Cingoli. Marmo starts by exactly opposing Corti's construction. He writes that Gentile da Cingoli cannot be assigned the role of mediator between

Dante and Boethius of Dacia, and that we cannot be certain about Dante's knowledge of his work.

Marmo then proceeds to the core of his discussion, briefly touching on the criticism that Corti's theory raised among scholars of medieval philosophy, but his position and the reason for his criticism confront Corti's theory in a new way. Marmo goes to the root of the problem. The attribution of such a theory to Dante took place in a culture, he writes, that was reading the theories of the Modists, but not from direct sources, which were few and limited at that time, but using the book that G. Bursill Hall (1971) has written on what he calls speculative grammar. According to Marmo, the theories that Bursill Hall attributes to the Modists are not traceable in their works. Marmo asserts that Hall's book was written under the influence of Chomski's theory of language and innate syntactical structure. What Marmo opposes is that the grammatical theory of the Modists implies the idea established by Corti of a generative grammar, and that language is the mirror of reality. He stresses that, for Boethius of Dacia and his colleagues, grammar is universal, but he denies that this theory would imply, for Boethius, that the common linguistic structure of the various languages would provide the background to the Averroistic theory of the unique common intellect.

Traces of linguistic thought are evident in the article by Federica Anichini, who rereads a passage from *Paradiso* 3 in a new perspective, and in which a major role is played by grammatical theories. Anichini's analysis takes its point of departure from two words, *concetti* and *affetti*, which appear in a tercet from *Paradiso* 3 and which she uses as a road map for a reflection on Dante's theory of vision as encompassed in language. The words are related to two different cognitive experiences. According to Anichini, the term *concetti* holds a mobile semantic and is referred to an earthly knowledge, while *affetti* are related to the cognitive experience of Paradise shaped by *affectus* or a Paradisiac mode of vision independent from the senses that she traces back to Augustine *affectus spiritualis*. According to her analysis, the images of Paradise are deprived of a reference to a sensible vision and are not therefore the result of *concetti*. The language of Paradise marks the invention of a language of *affetti*, that is, of images deprived of sensorial referents. Anichini uses fragments of Boethius of Dacia, *Modi significandi* or of Gentile da Cingoli. A few predicates of so-called speculative grammar appear to be the pretext on which to build a new exploration, in which she links Augustinian contents to grammatical theory of the thirteenth century. Rather than focusing on heterodoxy, Anichini shows that Dante made a discrete employment of texts and authors assumed to be heterodox, linking

them to others belonging to the Christian theological tradition for a freely shaped discourse, in which the distinction between what is in line with orthodoxy and with heterodoxy is not important at all.

Gianfranco Fioravanti assumes that the only heresy in Dante is political and is coincident with the construction of an autonomous political reality as the result of conceiving the intellectual unity of the possible intellect, and this is the heresy that was condemned by Pope John XXII and Cardinal Bertrand du Pouget in the second decade of the fourteenth century. This position does belong to Dante's *Monarchia*. Briefly touching on the *Convivio*, Fioravanti shows that this work is full of contradictions but nevertheless remains within the borders of orthodoxy. Taking into consideration the book's first lines—"Tutti li uomini naturalmente desiderano di sapere"—Fioravanti takes up Dante's discourse about human knowledge. The natural desire to know God, writes Fioravanti, can be fulfilled naturally. In opposition to Aquinas, who thinks that divine knowledge (although natural) can be reached by Grace, Fioravanti aligns Dante with the position of John De Jandun and Matheus of Gubbio. According to these philosophers, such knowledge is possible *per viam continuations* and during earthly life, that is, by virtue of an operation proper to human intellect that without such operation would be otiose. In keeping with this landscape, Fioravanti evaluates Dante's position in the *Convivio* that acknowledges, in the exercise and love for philosophy, the satisfaction of the natural human desire for knowledge. Philosophy, in this sense, is identified with the *donna gentile*. Dante's answer is that it is in the limitations of its possibility of fulfillment that the human being creates his own desire. We satisfy in a natural way our desire, so that this desire corresponds to our human limits. Dante shares with the *magistri artium* an idea of human happiness that is Aristotelian. Using the answer that John de Jandun offers to Aquinas, Fioravanti explains Dante's position in the *Monarchia*. Against Thomas, who assumes that perfect knowledge cannot be reached by the human being in earthly life, Jandun asserts that there are two *modi cognoscendi*: one individual, the other collective. Individually perfect knowledge cannot be reached, but it is possible when human beings are taken collectively. This is Dante's position in the *Monarchy* and is the basis of his political construction and program for an autonomous political entity condemned as heretics

The theme of the desire to know that opens the *Convivio* is crucially important for John Freccero, who confronts Dante's Ulysses and Statius as embodiments of a pagan philosopher and a Christian intellectual, respectively. According to Freccero, the *Convivio* represents the philosophical enterprise that ends with a shipwreck. The prologue to the

Inferno shows a continuity with the failure of the metaphorical navigation of *Convivio*. Using material from the classical tradition as filtered and sustained by Neoplatonic authors who influenced Christian thinkers like Augustine and Ambrose, Freccero shows that the life of the philosopher ends with a shipwreck coincident with the founding of the life of salvation. He thus proposes the *Commedia* as the work in which the heterodoxy of *Convivio* is superseded. Dante's Ulysses is to be identified not with the fictional Ulysses, but with the pilgrim of the first canto of *Commedia*, who survives the shipwreck and starts a new life. Freccero in this way resolves the aporia he notes at the beginning of his article: we desire a happiness that we cannot satisfy with human philosophical tools and that can be attained only through the intervention of Grace. It is Statius, then, whom Dante represents as the paradigm of conversion, and who is saved thanks to that special water that the Samaritan asked as grace (*Purgatorio* 21.1-3).

Dante's Ulysses as mask for the philosopher also enters in Piero Boitani's contribution. Boitani proposes a correspondence between the heretics of the Sixth Circle and the fraudulents of the Eighth Circle, which he establishes on the basis of the fire that marks their pain. His contribution thus discusses the Epicureans of *Inferno* 10 ("che l'anima col corpo morta fanno"), and defines as a special sect thinkers like Averroes and his followers, such as Siger of Brabante and Boethius of Dacia. Boitani puts forth as a doubt the identification of Epicureans with what he calls the Averroists of the thirteenth century. Thus, in his discussion of Dante's heterodoxy, Boitani opens the door to the entrance of the shadow of Guido Cavalcanti (*Inferno X*). He asserts that the only certainty about a link between Dante's Epicureans and the Parisian Averroists lies in the work of Cavalcanti, which bears traces of Averroism. Boccaccio, too—he notes—suggests a link between Averroism and Epicureans.

Dante himself proposes Cavalcanti's Epicureanism, along with his *altezza d'ingegno* and disdain. Boitani's Ulysses, who is condemned because he has transgressed the boundaries of possible knowledge, is thus linked to thinkers like Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia. The profile of philosopher, which Boitani constructs from a few fragments of Boethius of Dacia and which appear consonant with the rhetoric used by Ulysses in *Inferno* 26, proves that Dante's Ulysses is a philosopher who counteracts the theological image of Beatrice in a linguistic correspondence. In conclusion, Dante's Ulysses shares with thinkers like Boethius and Siger the exploration of the strange sea of thought. This signals the crisis and transformation of the cognitive model that marks a whole age of western culture.

Luca Bianchi's study focuses on Dante's Siger and his inclusion in the *Paradiso*. Bianchi rereads Siger's presence in Paradise in the light of the intellectual debate of Dante's time. His contribution is divided into two sections. In the first, he summarizes the interpretations given of Siger's case by scholars like Mandonnet and others, and including the most recent contributions. Bianchi locates these interpretations in the context of philosophical studies on the synchronous thought. In the light of the most recent studies, he offers his own interpretation of Dante's Siger in Paradise and his *invidiosi veri*.

Siger is seen on the one hand in the light of the condemnation of 1277, and on the other in the context of *Paradiso* 10, along with other authors who enter at that point. Bianchi's method aligns different theses and inquiries. In the light of Fioravanti's research, for instance, he shows how Siger's conversion to Thomism is untenable. Bianchi's reading is resolved in an appeal to history and textuality. Because we do not know what Dante actually knew of Siger's work, and because Siger's conversion to Thomism is doubtful, we may confront other authors who appear in the heaven of *Sapienti*. And here he launches his idea. Because Joachim of Flore and Thomas were also involved in the prohibition or were suspect, to establish Siger's heterodoxy involves distinguishing heterodoxy from orthodoxy. Bianchi assumes that this perspective is anachronistic. In the light of his analysis, the inclusion of Siger sounds less exceptional and dramatic. And, he notes, probably far more important is the role Dante gives to Aquinas. Dante, writes Bianchi, has created the myth of Siger, and in the same way that of Aquinas. *Invidiosi veri* are not the heretical truths as Nardi thought. Siger in Paradise cannot be a thinker of truths that are in disagreement with the general idea of Paradise. His philosophical conclusions should be true also in the perspective of Paradise. The *veri* are therefore those of faith and reason seen as truths that take shape from different fields, every field having its own rules, a distinction of which Dante was aware. Bianchi concludes, thus echoing and reshaping the title of one of his former studies: philosophy in Paradise is a truth not dissonant, but rather consonant, with theology.

Siger of Brabant is also the focus of Bryan Brazeau's contribution. Brazeau discusses the Brabantine philosopher mostly by focusing on the concept of authority and on Dante's attempt to locate himself as an *auctoritas.* He examines Siger's work and follows the process that his opus delineates from his *in Tertium* to his later works he sees in such process an evolution in which the superiority of the philosopher is replaced by the priority of revealed truth. Thus he touches on Dante's *Convivio* and the *gentle lady* assuming that she represents revealed truths

and at the same time philosophical truths. Then noting that in the fourth book of *Convivio*, Dante, enlarges the concept of authority to include philosophical as well as political authorities, he underlines that with regard to the philosophical authority Dante shows some uncertainties on the contrary of the certainties of the political.

He underlines the condemnation of philosophers in limbo, and deduces that the relationship between faith and reason is resolved for Dante in the superiority of faith. He uses an illustration of *Paradiso* 10 by an artist of the fifteenth century that presents the *auctores* as exhibiting a codex, noting that in this canto the only codex recalled is that of Dante, who defines himself as *scriba* (X, 27). He concludes that the poet employs the old authorities in order to build his own *auctorita*s. Also, Siger's inclusion in Paradise is the result of his having organized his discourse on *auctoritates*, and *invidiosi veri* are the truths of the *auctoritates* that Siger is able to use in his philosophical thought. In this choice, writes Brazeau, we may read a likeness between Siger and Dante. He concludes that Siger is not a foreign element among the others in this circle of heaven but is in harmony with them.

Albert Russell Ascoli offers a contribution that is absolutely personal. His discussion centres on method. A discussion of Dante's heterodoxy, he writes, requires an evaluation of what Dante read—how and when he read, and in what context. Then he touches on the problem of Dante's library. According to Ascoli, Dante's heterodoxy consists in the substance of his choices because he uses his sources in a transgressive way. Ascoli poses several questions regarding, for instance, how we are to evaluate Dante's exposure to thinkers such as Averroes or Siger, or to poets such as Guinizzelli or Cavalcanti, or to Brunetto's work. Ascoli problematizes both Dante's mode of reading and the reading itself, along with his use of allegory, palinode and intertexuality. Dante's heterodoxy requires that we attend not only to which texts Dante read, and when, but more importantly to the general context in which he locates them and in their relation to the part of his work already written. Ascoli offers two examples to illustrate his methodology and approach to the question of heterodoxy. One is Uguccione's *Derivationes*, from which he takes (and recreates) the concept of author. The second example is taken from *Purgatorio* 2 and the performance given by Casella when he sings the canzone *Amor che nella mente mi ragiona*. The goal is, in this case, to underline an intertextuality internal to Dante's work, in order to show that Dante's reading changes at one certain time of his life and of *Commedia*, and in light of it the different readings that every reader can make in different times. In other words, Ascoli does not confront the topic of Dante's heterodoxy but inscribes it

inside in a methodological discourse that includes Dante's mode of reading. It is in such a context that we must investigate the problem of Dante's heterodoxy and/or orthodoxy.

Ascoli's discourse on method offers a useful framework for introducing Maria Luisa Ardizzone's text. Ardizzone shows how much Dante's tendency to include contents assumed to be heterodox in his time does not draw on sources related to this line of thinking. She rereads several fragments of *Convivio* and explores the meaning of two fragments from Boethius's *De Consolatione*, which Dante quotes in a passage from *Convivio* 3, focusing on the word "philosophy", which he introduces, she assumes, in order to discuss and link divine and human knowledge. Thus evaluating a few more fragments of *Convivio* 3, Ardizzone shows how Dante introduces the problematic issue of human intellection in a way that is clear and allusive at the same time. Her conclusion is that the love for the gentle lady organizes a complex pathway to the idea that human beings think together, in community with one another. According to Ardizzone, this was a tenet at first proper to the canzone on which this treatise commented (*Amor che nella mente mi ragiona*), and was traced thus in Dante's Florentine years, that later in the *Convivi*o he has reorganized rethinking and assuming it in a new perspective.

The reading of *Convivio* implies, she notes, that Dante's writing strategy creates empty spaces that require a reader able to fill them. As a result, he organizes a text in which what is defined as heterodox in the thirteenth century appears rethought and retraced in the antique medieval tradition and reshaped in the light of the contemporaneous debate and with new goals. She stresses Dante's tendency to include heterodox contents as instrumental, but also the negotiation it implies with old philosophical and theological issues of antiquity and medieval tradition.

Zygmunt G. Baranski in his essay opposes in full Dante's heterodoxy and the theme itself at stake in this book. Although he titles his contribution "The Temptation of a Heterodox Dante", the title seems ironic. Baranski takes as a field of exploration not the works traditionally researched in such perspective, but only the *Commedia*. He announces his thesis with clarity: Dante would not have accepted a type of knowledge that is totally earthbound and which does not recognize that all knowledge derives from God. Therefore, he does not share the positions of intellectuals such as those of Paris faculty of arts and their belief in the independence of reason and philosophical exploration. This does not exclude the possibility, he continues, that he strongly values human reason as a source of earthly happiness. Baranski criticizes those who reduce the discussion about Dante's intellectual commitment to the opposition

between heterodoxy and orthodoxy. In the second part of his article, however, he considers such opposition and confronts the *invidiosi veri* of *Paradiso* 10. Here he refutes any involvement of Dante with the philosophy of Averroes, and furthermore refutes the view that in the *Monarchia* an Averroistic tenet occurs in the theory of the possible intellect and the idea that Dante regards Siger as a heretical thinker. He stresses that Siger was not a heretical thinker to either his contemporaries, or to the author of *Il fiore* himself. In conclusion, the presence of Siger in Paradise does not interfere with the orthodox basis of the *Commedia*. Dante, he concludes, does approach, draws near to, reason and faith. Baraski's position in the second part of his contribution thus echoes in part Bianchi's conclusion.

As her title announces, Donatella Stocchi Perucchio addresses what she indicates as the limits of Dante's heterodoxy in *Monarchia*. Beginning with an analysis of Guido Vernani's *Reprobatio* and his allegation of Dante's belief in the Averroistic theory of the oneness of the possible intellect for human beings, she proceeds to assess the theses of historical readers such as Nardi, Gilson, and the more recent contributions by De Libera and Imbach. Coming to her own interpretation, she considers the political aspects of the theory of intellect in *Monarchia*, and stresses the universal principles that moved Dante to establish the possible intellect as one. According to Stocchi, Dante is very far from both the Averroistic theory of intellect and that of intellectual earthly happiness propagated by the Parisian masters. On the contrary, she highlights the significance of *karitas* as *recta dilectio* in order to construct a theological frame for *Monarchia*. The treatise puts forth the construction of an ideal society in the likeness of God and peace as the best way to reach similitude to God. Earthly happiness consists in the integration of contemplative and active life. While peace is the condition to make the contemplative life possible, the contemplative life is at one with the peace engendered by the unity of the wills, and thus coincides with the perfect state of the blessed. In the second section of her study, Stocchi discusses parts of the *Commedia*, stressing a continuity between this work and the political-theological vision of *Monarchia*. The human *polis*, seen in the mirror of the divine city, shows the continuity Dante establishes between *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso*, and the Latin political treatise. In its final part, the article discusses Dante's way of shaping heterodox characters such as Guido Cavalcanti and Frederick II. Although she titles her article "the limits of heterodoxy," Donatella Stocchi Perucchio, in fact, dispenses with Dante's heterodoxy.

Paola Ureni's study focuses on contents that can be defined as for the most part secular rather than heterodox. Tracing a link between medicine and radical thought, but dealing with the Galenic tradition that was circulating in Dante's time, Ureni starts by introducing the emergence of the Galenic tradition in the twelfth century, and its taking root in the thirteenth. She stresses how Galenic thought has an affinity with positions unacceptable to the thirteenth century church because it tends to give supremacy to the corporeal dimension of the human being, and uses an approach methodologically based on proof and demonstration. Also, as she points out, the discourse on the human soul, which is based on Aristotle and thus conceived in its link to the body, is implicitly heterodox—when, for instance, the biological dimension of the human being is exalted, and when biology and the theory of physical temperaments is conceived as influencing the rational activity of the soul. Considering the traces of this thought in Dante, she examines the *Convivio's* fourth treatise and the theory of the origin of human soul as given by God to the body. With these themes in mind, she evaluates Galenic traces that she also locates in *Purgatorio* 25. Ureni retraces other Galenic elements in Dante's language and discusses Dante's terminology in the light of them. She explores medical notions that open a new field of investigation.

Danielle Callegari discusses the theme of digestion, an issue not much yet treated in the study of Dante. She explores this theme in its medical, physiological and metaphorical significance. Callegari explores this theme concentrating on *Purgatorio* 21-25, in particular Canto 25. Like Ureni, she does not enter into the field of heterodoxy but rather underlines the secular aspects of Dante's thought. According to her, the study of digestive process was, in the thirteenth century, regarded with suspicion by the church. Aristotle's translations created new curiosities, and Albertus Magnus, and in particular Avicenna's *Canon,* inspired the circulation of a new study of digestion in connection with reproduction. Callegari quotes from the Parisian condemnation of 1277, a proposition that she reads, following Hissette, in relation to such themes. She alternates between literal and allegorical discourse. One of the texts she recalls is Dante's metaphor of *pane degli angeli* from the first treatise of the *Convivio*, and the *pane orzato* (barley bread). Callegari shows how Dante creates a parallel between food and knowledge, as it derives from the assimilation of a text regarded as intellectual food in that she focuses on a passage from *Purgatorio* 25, which she reads in both its literal and symbolic meaning, the latter a discussion of how we eat and how we have to digest a text. The relationship between the physiology of digestion and the production of the

human embryo followed by the divine intervention that breathes the rational soul into the human body creates a problematic issue, according to Callegari. Callegari looks at this problem, but she seems more interested in confronting the line of reading that assimilates chewing and digestive activity with the activity of understanding and generating knowledge, thus recalling the activity of *ruminatio* proper to the mystics. She concludes by recalling Statius's talk as a veiled metaphor of poetic generation through sexual reproduction.

The volume contains the *Conclusion* of Teodolinda Barolini, whose book *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (1992), offered American criticism a new pathway and perspective on Dante. Her contribution thus seems to be the most appropriate to conclude this collection of studies on Dante, which, while looking at, discussing, and opposing his heterodox *penchant*, allows the profile of a poet and intellectual, always autonomous and transgressive, to emerge.

CHAPTER ONE

HAD THE MODISTAE
ANY INFLUENCE ON DANTE?
THIRTY YEARS
AFTER MARIA CORTI'S PROPOSAL

COSTANTINO MARMO

1. Introduction: A short chronicle of a quarrel

Maria Corti's book on Dante (Dante at a New Crossroad, 1981) proposed a new interpretation of his *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (DVE) based on the relationships between Dante's work and some late thirteenth century modistic grammarians, such as Boethius of Dacia. It received immediate (and mainly negative) reactions from both Dante and Modist scholars. In chronological sequence, the first reaction came from Ileana Pagani (1982) who, even though she was unable to include this book in her bibliography, devoted a last-minute appendix to refuting it. Impressed by the depth of Corti's scholarship, but not fully persuaded by her thesis, Mengaldo (1983) is very cautious about her main conclusions, and especially about the link between Dante and Boethius of Dacia. Displaying a less negative attitude, yet raising a handful of doubts, was the review published in a literary journal by a historian of medieval philosophy (Fioravanti 1983). A veritable quarrel between the reviewer and the author was provoked by the review of Corti's book by Alfonso Maierù, a distinguished historian of medieval logic and philosophy of language, published in an Italian journal of medieval studies (Maierù 1983), followed by an annoyed response from Maria Corti (1984) and a short, harsh and meticulous reply by the same reviewer (Maierù 1984). During the quarrel between Maierù and Corti, an article was published by a Latin literature scholar in *Letture Classensi* about Dante and speculative grammar (Alessio 1984)—the author appeared to welcome Corti's study, but did not subscribe to all her interpretations (pointing to other pre-

modistic authors as possible sources of Dante's theories), his article was appealed to by both disputing parties as support for their respective arguments. It is worth mentioning, at the end of this short chronicle, another scholar, a linguist and philosopher of language (Lo Piparo 1986), who, dealing some years later with the same problem, held that Dante's idea of language was the exact contrary of that of the Modistae, so that their influence on Dante was obviously out of question.

The main criticisms of Corti's hypothesis concerned the relationship between Dante and the Modists: for some reviewers, not only had Corti insufficiently proved the connection between Dante and Boethius of Dacia (the main character of her reconstruction), but had also misinterpreted some crucial passages of Dante's DVE. In what follows, without referring to all these reviews and articles, I will add some new arguments and evidence against the existence of any connection between Dante and the Modistae.[1] I will show first that Gentilis of Cingoli is unlikely to have played any role in letting Dante know of Boethius of Dacia's texts, in particular his *Modi Significandi* (MS) or commentary on the first part of Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*; second, I will discuss some basic features of Modistic grammar, underlining how it has often been inaccurately interpreted. Finally I will point out some major misunderstandings on Corti's part which, in my view, definitively undermine her proposal, based as it was on the knowledge of the texts and literature available at the end of the 1970s. However, knowing my limitations, I prefer not to take a stance on Dante's philosophy of language.

2. The alleged intermediation role ascribed to Gentilis of Cingoli

Maria Corti (1981) confronts the question of how Dante became acquainted with speculative grammar, devoting the first chapter of her book to illustrating the path that the new theories (and among them Modistic grammar), followed when they spread from the University of Paris to Italy, and in particular to the University of Bologna. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, research on the Faculty of Arts and Medicine of the University of Bologna was just beginning, so Corti could count on a some articles by Martin Grabmann (1941, 1946), Bruno Nardi (1949), Charles I. Ermatinger (1954) and Anneliese Maier (1956).

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[1] I will not touch upon the problem of the relationship between Dante and Siger of Brabant, which is dealt with by Luca Bianchi in this same volume.

Zdzisłav Kuksewicz also published a series of Bolognese texts relating to the question of the unity of the intellect (1965) and a monograph on the evolution of that theory from Siger of Brabant to Jacob of Piacenza (first half of the fourteenth century) (1968). In the meantime, some German and Danish scholars, such as Heinrich Roos (1961) and Jan Pinborg (1967), had published groundbreaking works on Martin of Dacia and on the Modistic philosophy of language, including the Bolognese commentaries on Martin of Dacia. Many of these articles and books were mainly concerned with the big issue of Bolognese Averroism, a topic that does not appear relevant to the present issue. In 1970, however, Luigi Marchegiani published some grammatical and logical texts by Gentilis of Cingoli and others; finally, in 1971 Geoffrey L. Bursill-Hall published an extensive study on speculative grammar, mainly focused on Thomas of Erfurt: as will become clearer below, the role played by these texts in Corti's view cannot be underestimated.

　　After the publication of Corti's essay, however, knowledge of the teaching of logic and grammar in Bologna has developed, so that many new texts and studies are now available. As is well known, Gentilis of Cingoli, one of the pupils of the physician Taddeo Alderotti (Siraisi 1981), was probably sent to Paris by his master and came back in the 1290s with a new and richer cultural baggage. Before 1295, he thus began teaching not only logic, but also grammar, following the trends in the 1280s of the Parisian Faculty of Art: as far as grammar is concerned, he commented upon Martin of Dacia's treatise on the modi significandi (MS), instead of the traditional Priscian or Donatus, just like Simon (of Faversham?) did in Paris (see Alessio 1992, 6); on the other hand, as a teacher of logic, he probably also imported the custom of commenting on Peter of Spain's *Summulae Logicales* up to the fifth treatise (i.e. omitting supposition theory), just like Simon of Faversham did in Paris (see Maierù 1992, 498-99).[2]

　　Gentilis's strong contribution to the formation of the Faculty of Arts and Medicine at the University of Bologna persuaded Maria Corti to take for granted that Dante definitely read Gentilis's works, and possibly attended his classes (1981, 24). According to Corti, Gentilis represents the link between Dante and Boethius of Dacia, which could explain the similarity between some themes and the structure of some arguments dealt with in DVE and MS. As evidence, she points to two texts. First, she summons as a witness a fifteenth century manuscript in which Boethius's

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[2] On Gentilis's life and works, also see Marmo 2004, 19-25 (with other bibliographical references) and 1992, where the connections to Simon of Faversham are clearly pointed out.

MS are ascribed to magister Gentilis, and which contains two questions on conjunctions, perhaps written by Gentilis himself (Corti 1981, 29). This manuscript is "very important" from Corti's viewpoint, and it becomes, some pages after, "a copy of a manuscript used by Gentilis" (1981, 37): from the fact that, in this manuscript, MS are falsely ascribed to Gentilis, and from the hypothesis that the two supplementary questions might have been written by him, she concludes that Gentilis actually used Boethius's MS, a hypothesis that should not be proposed so confidently. Second, she refers to one of the prologues that Gentilis wrote to his commentary on Martin of Dacia's MS, published by Marchegiani (1970, 137-47), which begins with these words "Anima est quodammodo omnia" (1981, 29). It must be said, however, that Maria Corti misplaced her trust in Marchegiani's assumptions (based on Grabmann 1941), since Pinborg (1967, 98-9) had already pointed out that the commentary "Anima est quodammodo omnia" quotes its three previous commentaries, including Gentilis's, so that it cannot be ascribed to Gentilis himself.[3] Corti should have known that, being Pinborg (1967) one of her main sources on speculative grammar (1981, 16, n.18).

Since the first point appears very weak (we cannot definitely say that Gentilis used a manuscript of Boethius's MS) and the second insubstantial, the link between Dante and Boethius of Dacia tends to disappear. Nobody among her reviewers raised these objections, though, and Corti might have always replied that a link between Gentilis and Boethius could be found in his grammatical works, at that time completely unedited and not yet studied (see Fioravanti 1984, 204). Now we are in a position to say something more on the relations between Gentilis and Boethius, since one of his grammatical works (a commentary on Priscianus Minor, i.e. on syntax) and 13 questions from his commentary on Martin's MS have been published (respectively, Martorelli Vico 1985; and Alessio 1992, 23-71).

In the introduction to his edition of Gentilis' questions on MS, Gianfranco Alessio (1992, 16) compares the positions of various authors (Boethius and Martin included) on different subjects, usually discussed at the beginning of their grammatical works, and even after a cursory examination one observes that wherever a divergence between Martin and Boethius emerges, Gentilis sides with Martin. For instance, Martin thinks that the *modi essendi*, *intelligendi* and *significandi* are just the same (*idem*),[4] being only different in some accidental features, just as Socrates is always the same man, whether he is at home, in temple, or in the main

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[3] Maierù 1983, 741, makes the same point but without drawing all the conclusions which I'm going to draw.

[4] I will discuss these ideas below.

square. Martin also raises an objection against those (like Boethius) who hold that the *modi significandi* are signs of the *modi essendi* (via the *modi intelligendi*): according to him, just as the wine signified by the circle (made out of foliage or a barrel hoop) used as a shop sign is not the sign of the wine that is kept in the cellar, so the modi significandi are not signs of the *modi essendi*; they are just identical and nothing can be a sign of itself (following a long tradition which stems from Augustine).[5] In Gentilis's position one can already see a crucial evolution of the whole theory, based on the distinction between active and passive modes of signifying that will eventually lead to a definitive systematization in Radulphus Brito and Thomas of Erfurt (Marmo 1994, 155-159).

Martin and Boethius also take opposite views on other basic points of doctrine: where do the modi significandi exist as accidents in their subjects? In the words (*dictiones*, Boethius) or in the signified thing (*in re significata*, Martin)? Does grammar deal with vocal sounds (*voces*) or not? Boethius answers in the positive, Martin in the negative. Gentilis, again, sides with Martin. On another point, such as the identification of the specific mode of signifying of the verbs, where Boethius takes a different position from Martin, Gentilis criticizes Martin's points of view and completely disregards Boethius's peculiar position, developing his own theory (cf. Marmo 1994, 179-185). Gentilis's texts give a more complex image of the Bolognese master than that of a simple link between the Italian and Parisian cultural milieus: he shows a good, but not always complete, knowledge of the Parisian grammatical debates; yet he does not restrict himself to the simple repetition of Martin's theories (or of his commentator, Simon), but often works out his own solutions to standard problems, showing a rare freedom of mind towards revered authorities (such as Averroes, cf. Marmo 1992, 388-9). It is unlikely that such a thinker played the role of intermediary between Boethius of Dacia and Dante. If the intermediation of Gentilis of Cingoli appears unlikely, a direct knowledge of Boethius's texts on Dante's part cannot be excluded. Clarifying the type of image that Maria Corti had of Modistic grammar, however, makes me think that a direct knowledge can also be excluded.

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[5] Martin of Dacia, *Modi significandi*, Pro. 2.7-8, ed. H. Roos, Hauniae: G.E.C. Gad, 1961, 6-7. Cf. Boethius of Dacia, *Modi significandi sive Quaestiones super Priscianum maiorem*, q. 26, eds. J. Pinborg, H. Roos and S. Skovgaard Jensen, Hauniae: G.E.C. Gad, 1969, 81 (cf. also Marmo 1994, 153-4). On the problem of the diversity between signifier and signified, presupposed by the notion of sign, see Marmo 2010, chap. 8 (on angels' talk), with other references to previous debates.

3. Corti's image of speculative grammar

The aim of getting a clearer idea of the image of Modism implied by Corti and supported by the texts and secondary literature available at the end of the 1970s, is better reached clarifying some key points of doctrine, answering some basic questions so as to finally get rid of the still surviving (and widespread) biased interpretations of Modism.

3.1. Some preliminary observations

What is 'speculative' in speculative grammar? To simplify things a little, two answers have been given to this question by various scholars. On the one hand, Heinrich Roos (1961)[6] and Jan Pinborg (1967; 1972) very seldom, if ever, use the phrase 'speculative grammar'; Geoffrey H. Bursill-Hall, on the other hand, not only entitles his book Speculative Grammars of the Middle Ages (1971), but in his introduction to his translation of Thomas of Erfurt's Treatise on the modi significandi (cf. 1972, 21[7], 23, 29 and so on; repeating 1971, 39, 41) he also emphasizes the etymological meaning of the adjective 'speculative', ascribing to the Modistae a sort of Wiederspiegelungstheorie, i.e. a theory of the language as a mirror of reality, based on the Modistic theory of the derivation of the modi significandi from the modi essendi (i.e. the properties of the things). Maria Corti certainly reiterates Bursill-Hall's version when she says that: "Hence the effort of medieval thought to work out a speculative grammar, a mirroring one, a grammar able to find again, through reason, the linguistic universals given by God to Adam in the *forma locutionis*" (1981,

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[6] Roos 1961, 146 and 150, refers to the Modistae's work as a "philosophical-speculative explanation of the linguistic categories", and traces back the opposition between positive vs. speculative grammars to the opposition between positive vs. speculative theology, characterized as an attempt to interpret the positive data of scripture and tradition in a systematic and thoughtful way; the hallmark of speculative grammar lies in methodology: "In other words: this method consists in its capability of building up a system (*diese Methode ist systembildend*)" (p. 151: my translation).
[7] He appears to depend on other linguists' texts, such as J. Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1968, p. 15, where he indicates as root of 'speculative' *speculum* (mirror, cf. Bursill-Hall 1972, 21, n. 8; cf. Robins 1967 (1997), 92: "In essence, the grammar of Priscian and Donatus was presented [by the Modists] as an accurate *reflection of* the constitution of reality in the powers of human mind, on which it depended"—italics mine; in his previous book—Robins 1951, 77-90—there is no hint at the etymology of 'speculative'). Eco 1995, 45, among others, appears to share this view.

49: my translation). I'll return to the notion of *forma locutionis*, but for the moment I'll dwell on the adjective "speculative". No doubt *speculativum* derives from *speculum* (mirror); in Medieval Latin, however, the verb *speculari* had rather to do with thought than with the action of reflecting (i.e. throwing back) light, that a mirror usually performs. Similarly, the noun *speculatio*[8] refers to thought or the rational consideration of a topic, just as 'reflective'—in the sense of inclined to deep thought—derives from the verb 'to reflect', taken not in the literal sense of bending light, heat or sound without absorbing it, but rather in that of thinking carefully about something. In this sense, from Severinus Boethius on, a branch of philosophy has been labeled "speculative" because it aimed at considering the highest intelligibles, as in theology and metaphysics, or the causes of the natural things, as in physics.[9] Classifying the sciences in a tree-like taxonomy has a long tradition in western philosophy, and such a Modist as John of Dacia also wrote a treatise on that.[10] Without entering the details of a very complex classification, it is sufficient to observe that he divides liberal sciences in speculative sciences (metaphysics, mathematics and physics) and rational sciences, which sustain them (adminiculativae) (such as grammar, logic and rhetoric).[11] When he comes to discuss whether grammar is a science, at the outset of his *Summa Gramatica*, John ends up saying that grammar and logic can be considered speculative sciences as far as they sustain, or are instruments of, speculative sciences, in a proper and higher sense.[12] It is only in this sense that grammar is called "speculative" among the Modists of the first two generations.[13] Gentilis of Cingoli examines the same question, and his solution is that grammar can be considered both speculative and practical, though from different viewpoints: as far as it reflects (*speculando*) on the properties and distinctive features of its object it is speculative; as far as it is used by other sciences it is practical. He then concludes by saying that considered in simple terms (*simpliciter loquendo*) it is practical rather than speculative.[14] In the 1290s Radulphus Brito called it *regularis* or

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[8] Severinus Boethius translate with *speculatio* the Greek term *theōria* at the beginning of Porphyry's *Isagoge*.

[9] See A.M. Severinus Boethius, *In Isagogen Porphyrii commenta,* editio prima, I, ed Samuel Brandt, Vindobonae—Lipsiae: Tempsky—Freytag, 1906, 8-9.

[10] John of Dacia, *Divisio scientie*, ed. A. Otto, Hauniae: G.E.C. Gad, 1955.

[11] *Div. scientie*, 24 and 34ff. On the context of these classifications, see Marmo 1990.

[12] John of Dacia, *Summa gramatica*, ed. A. Otto, Hauniae: G.E.C. Gad, 1955, 50.

[13] Cf. Boethius of Dacia, *Modi sign.*, q. 3, 18.

[14] Gentilis of Cingoli, *Quaest. sup. Prisc. min.*, q. 1, 5-6.

speculativa (in opposition to both *positiva* and *usualis*), because it proceeds demonstratively from the causes and principles (of well-formed constructions), i.e. the *modi significandi* and the properties of the things from which they derive.[15] There are no grounds for the idea that the Modists held a theory of language mirroring reality. On the contrary, Boethius of Dacia as well as Gentilis of Cingoli and Radulphus Brito are very clear about one point: the *modi significandi* of a word do not derive directly from the properties of the thing denoted by that word.[16] This simply means that language is no mirror of reality: it is not true that a word (even a mental word, if any) denotes a thing and together with it it also connotes all of the properties of that thing, which correspond to its *modi significandi*. The notion of language as mirror of reality is just a myth, a serious obstacle to the understanding of Modistic grammar, that we should finally get rid of.

What are the *modi significandi*? This is probably the most difficult question to answer. It implies the possibility of finding an equivalent notion in contemporary linguistic terminology. It is not to be taken for granted that there is any, first of all because the Modistae adopt a viewpoint that denies the relevance of sound (*vox*) in grammar, going against a basic tenet of traditional grammar and contemporary linguistics, i.e. that its subject-matter is spoken language. The Modistae work out their approach to the study of language developing traditional tools, and one of them is the notion of *modus significandi*. Without going too far back in the past, it is sufficient to look at grammarians' texts of the first half of the thirteenth century to recognize a difference in its use. Among them, Nicolas of Paris and Robert Kilwardby used to distinguish the meaning of a single word (*significatum speciale*, lexical meaning) from the grammatical meaning (*significatum generale*) conveyed by its belonging to a general word class (noun, pronoun, verb, participle, and so on), so that they reserved the notion of *modus significandi* to the indication of some accidental features of grammatical meaning, directly depending on the types of word class. Thus, among the *modi significandi* of nouns they listed case, gender, number; among those of verbs, mood, tense, person, number, and so on. Furthermore, each of these accidental features was linked to parts of the words, such as inflections (usually endings), directly comparable to what nowadays morphology calls functional/grammatical morphemes or morphs. Against this background, the Modistae extend the notion of *modus significandi* to the function of defining the various types

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[15] Radulphus Brito, *Quaestiones super Priscianum min*orem, q. 14, ed. Pinborg, Bad Cannstatt: Holzboog, 1977, 137.

[16] Cf. Pinborg 1972, 89; Marmo 1994, 144-150.

of word class (putting aside the notion of *significatum generale*), and develop a complex theory of the derivation of the *modi significandi* from the *modi essendi* (properties of things) via the *modi intelligendi*, so duplicating on a grammatical level the relations between phonic expression (*vox*), concept (*intellectus*) and thing (*res*), traditionally studied in logic. Lexical meaning, according to them, is a relation (*significatio* or *ratio significandi*) that the mind adds to a string of sounds (*vox*), and has as its term a concept or a thing; this relation constitute the essential (or substantial) form of the so-called *dictio*; *modi significandi essentiales* (also called *rationes consignificandi*) are relations that the mind adds to a meaningful string of sounds (*dictio*), transforming it into a word or a part of speech (*pars orationis*) and giving it some associated grammatical properties.[17] This progressive building of the part of speech corresponds to a two-stage representation of the original imposition: first, the original name-giver linked *voces* to things, making them meaningful (first articulation), then added the *modi significandi* (second articulation: first the *modi significandi essentiales*, and then the *accidentales*, such as gender, number, mood, tense, and so on).[18] Martin and Boethius of Dacia discuss the question where the *modi significandi* inhere as in their subjects, and disagree: according to Martin, the MS (which are identical to the *modi intelligendi* and to the *modi essendi*, see above) inhere in the signified thing as in their subject and in the phonic expression (*vox*) as in their sign;[19] consequently, they are not identifiable with portions of the phonic expression that constitute the matter of a word, since the phonic expression works as a whole in its semiotic function. According to Boethius, on the contrary, the MS have as their subject of inherence the dictio, which include the phonic expression as its matter. As a matter of fact, only in Boethius's text one can find as examples of MS actual morphemes of Latin (such as *-ior* as morpheme indicating the middle degree of comparison, and *-issimus* as indicating the highest degree).[20] Boethius takes a peculiar stance in the current, since he gives particular emphasis to the phonic expression, while others (Martinus and Gentilis, for instance) consider it

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[17] Adding the *modi consignificandi*, as Bursill-Hall (1971 and 1972) does, to indicate the grammatical features of words interested in syntax, seems based on some texts by Siger of Courtrai that do not find any confirmation in other texts, not even in Thomas of Erfurt's, so that it appears to be just unnecessary. Cf. Pinborg 1972, 113, where clearly the phrase *ratio consignificandi* is considered as equivalent to *modus significandi*.

[18] Cf. Martin of Dacia, *Modi sign.*, Pro. 4.11-12, 8.

[19] Martin of Dacia, *Modi sign.*, Pro. 3.9, 7.

[20] Boethius of Dacia, *Modi sign.*, q. 29, 88 (cf. Marmo 1994, 255-264).

only as an accidental or secondary subject matter of grammar.[21] Boethius, however, agrees with his fellows about the fact that grammar is universal and is not limited to the study of Latin.

Why is grammar universal and what is its subject-matter? The *modi significandi* play a pivotal role in the Modists' answer to this question, since they are both the principles of the word class definition and the principles of syntax (whose rules are described in terms of similarity or correspondence between MS, both *essentiales* and *accidentales*). Boethius of Dacia, for instance, says that:

> All languages have one grammar (*Omnia idiomata sunt una grammatica*), because the whole grammar derives from the things—it cannot be a fiction of our intellect and to what is fictitious nothing corresponds in reality; furthermore, because the essences of things are the same for all, the *modi essendi* and the *modi intelligendi* are similar for all those who speak different languages; consequently, also the *modi significandi* are similar, together with the ways of constructing phrases (*modi construendi*) or of talking (*loquendi*). Therefore, the whole grammar that one can find in a language is similar to that one can find in another.[22]

As examples, he refers to the fact that both Latin and Greek have nouns and verbs, so that the MS which make the Latin and Greek words belong to one or another word class must be the same (*modi significandi essentiales*), their only difference lying in how their phonic expressions are formed (*figurationes vocis*), a feature which is merely accidental from the viewpoint of a universal grammar. Boethius appears to draw his conclusion from a double argument, the one (tendencially) *in*ductive, and the other *de*ductive. First, we can see that both Latin and Greek have nouns, verbs and other similar parts of speech (their only divergence being in articles), so that we can infer by abstraction that all the languages have similar parts of speech; second, the *modi significandi* derives from the *modi essendi*, that are the same for all human beings, therefore, they must be the same, too; furthermore, they are the principles of word class definition in both Latin and Greek, therefore grammar (that deals with *modi significandi*) must be the same for all languages. Grammar, in the Modists' hands, has acquired the epistemic status of an Aristotelian science since it has a universal, unchangeable subject matter, i.e. the *modi significandi*, which are also the principles from which the rules for defining the parts of speech and their syntactic behavior can be inferred.

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[21] Boethius of Dacia, *Modi sign.*, q. 6, 27 (cf. Martin of Dacia, *Modi sign.*, Pro. 3.10, 7; Gentilis of Cingoli, *Quaest. sup. Prisc. min.*, q. 2, 11-12).

[22] Boethius of Dacia, *Modi sign.*, q. 2, 12.