

# Foreword

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/sihols.101.01for>

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**The Mirror of Grammar: Theology, philosophy and the Modistae**

**L.G. Kelly**

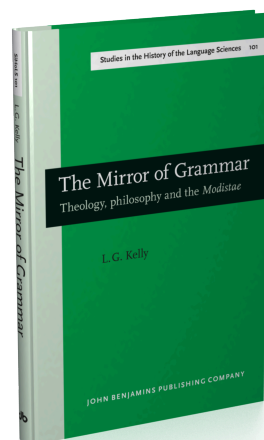
[Studies in the History of the Language Sciences, 101]

2002. x, 236 pp.

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## FOREWORD

It is no accident that the first moderns to do any significant work on the *modistae*, Martin Grabmann, for instance, classed their theory as a *Sprachlogik*: their grammars have all the trappings and intellectual rigour of a medieval logical treatise, and many of them were logicians as well as grammarians. But the word, *Sprachlogik*, would certainly have caused some indignation among the *modistae*, who would have acidly pointed out that the object of their science was the workings of language, not the norms of reasoning. This claim to independence raised the question of the place of *grammatica speculativa* in the intellectual life of the time, and the material left aside from my edition of Michel de Marbais (1995) contained some interesting material on the antecedents of the *modistae*. Historians of linguistics had paid little attention to the rise of the *modistae*, although much was already known about the attention paid language by contemporary philosophers and theologians.

In its early years the project was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Grant 410 94 0442), whose assessors supplied many helpful comments. I have on many occasions thought ruefully about their dire warnings about the complexity of the task over the seven years I took to complete it. The University of Ottawa kindly released me from one course in the autumn term of 1994, and awarded me a sabbatical leave which I spent at Darwin College, Cambridge, for the academic year 1995–1996. Darwin then gave me an academic home on my retirement from Ottawa. The willing and expert help given me by librarians on both sides of the Atlantic was crucial. The work began in the libraries of the University of Ottawa and of l'Université St-Paul, Ottawa, and was completed in the University Library, Cambridge, and the British Library in London.

In a work of this type the question of citations raises a number of thorny problems. Modistic Latin is deceptively transparent, and very vulnerable to skewing when translated into English. I have therefore left the snippets quoted in Latin, and where expedient, have given a guide to their interpretation in the context. For similar reasons I have quoted Aristotle in the medieval Latin translations: some of these, particularly the twelfth-century versions, do tend to be skewed, and it is important that the modern reader know what was presented to the medievals as Aristotle's doctrines.

This project would have been impossible without the thorough grounding given me years ago by Father Thomas O'Reilly CM at Holy Cross College, Mosgeil, New Zealand. More immediately, Irène Rosier generously gave me considerable useful material and much good advice as the project was getting under way. Since then the book has benefited from many discussions with colleagues at Darwin College and from the questioning one usually undergoes when presenting papers at academic congresses. I owe much to the helpful and incisive comments of the late Professor Robins and of Professor John Gallup of Université Laval, Québec, and to the encouragement of the late Dr Vivien Law of Trinity College, Cambridge. I am also grateful to my readers, Professors John Joseph of Edinburgh and Mark Amsler of Milwaukee, for saving me from the worst of my indiscretions, and to Professor Konrad Koerner for his guidance on preparing the book. He and John Benjamins have been very patient throughout the long saga of writing, rewriting and preparing copy. Lastly to my family I owe much for their patience in accepting yet another group of medieval visitors into the household.

Cambridge, March 2002

## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations refer to both the originals and the medieval commentaries on them.

<i>APost.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Analytica Posteriora</i>
<i>Cat.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Categoriae</i> / <i>De praedicamentis</i>
<i>CEut.</i>	Boethius, <i>Contra Eutychen</i>
<i>De an.</i>	Aristotle, <i>De anima</i>
<i>De dial.</i>	Augustine or Abelard, <i>De dialectica</i>
<i>De div. nom.</i>	Ps.Dionysius, <i>De divinis nominibus</i>
<i>De trin.</i>	Augustine or Boethius, <i>De trinitate</i>
<i>Doc. christ.</i>	Augustine, <i>De Doctrina christiana</i>
<i>L. VI. princ.</i>	Anon., <i>Liber sex principiorum</i>
<i>Metaph.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>PeriH.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Perihermeneias</i>
<i>Phys.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Physics</i>
<i>Sent.</i>	Peter Lombard, <i>Liber Sententiarum</i>
<i>STheol.</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>