Abstract
Discrete supposition occurs whenever a discrete term, such as 'Socrates', is the subject of a given proposition. I propose to examine this apparently simple notion. I shall draw attention to the incongruity, within a general theory of the semantic variation of terms in a propositional context, of the notion of discrete supposition, in which a term usually has a single semantic correlate. The incongruity comes to the fore in those treatises that attempt to describe discrete supposition as a sort of personal supposition, although the same term cannot be in simple supposition in another propositional context, because it has no significate distinct from its suppositum. This shows a fundamental link between common signification, simple supposition and predicability, three notions that rely on the existence of a significate distinct and independent from the suppositum of the term. The connection is to be seen especially in William of Sherwood’s Introductiones, the only author of a terminist Summa who recognizes the existence of simple supposition for discrete terms.

Keywords
discrete supposition, predicability, individuals, proper name, individual form, universal

Introduction¹

What is a Discrete Term?
Discrete supposition is generally described through the occurrence of a discrete term such as ‘Socrates’ as the subject of a given proposition. This definition

¹) For brevity appellation has been excluded from this presentation. For the same reason, only the treatises belonging to the first period of terminism are studied here.
depends on the way singular propositions are described in the *Peri hermeneias*. A discrete term is mostly identified with a proper noun, a paradigmatic example, but it can also be a pronoun such as *iste* or a complex expression formed by the addition of a deictic pronoun to a common noun, such as *hic homo*. All those expressions are suited to form a singular proposition. Their signification is both singular and substantive because they can be the subject of a proposition and can identify a singular subject to which the predicate is applied.

As proper nouns were the models according to which discrete terms were conceived, grammatical theories played an important part in terminist discussions. The commentators on Priscian’s *Institutiones* in the twelfth century taught that the pronoun and the proper noun had a common function (the identification of a determinate individual as the subject of discourse), but also that each of them performed its referential function by distinct semantic means. The pronoun has a deictic force (*deixis, demonstratio*) which leads directly to the person and signifies only substance, whereas the proper noun,