

## On the Early History of 'Ontology'

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## ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF 'ONTOLOGY' \*

Christian Wolff popularized (in philosophical circles) the word 'ontology' (*ontologia*, *Ontologie*). The word appears in the title of his *Philosophia prima sive ontologia methodo scientifica pertractata, qua omnes cognitionis humanae principia continentur*, first published in 1730. *Ontologia seu philosophia prima* is defined as *scientia entis in genere, quatenus ens est* (*op. cit.*, § 1). Ontology uses a "demonstrative [i.e., rational and deductive] method" (*ibid.*, § 2), and purports to investigate the most general predicates of all *entes* as such (*ibid.*, § 8). Following Wolff, Alexander Baumgarten (*Metaphysica*, 1740) defined ontology (also called *ontosophia*, *metaphysica*, *metaphysica universalis*, *architectonica*, *philosophia prima*) as "the science of the most general and abstract predicates of anything" (*op. cit.*, § 4), in so far as they belong to the first cognitive principles of the human mind (*ibid.*, § 5). Kant launched an epoch-making attack against rational ontology in the sense of Wolff and Baumgarten; for ontology was to him both a pseudo-science and a temptation. He was convinced that he had succeeded in eliminating it by the "transcendental Analytic." The whole *Critique of Pure Reason* is, in a way, the work of a man who was obsessed, and deeply distressed, by ontology. On the other hand, the expression 'ontological proof' (*ontologischer Beweis*) used by Kant is not a mere alternative expression to 'Anselmian proof'; it is intended to emphasize the very nature of the proof. Since Kant is at the crossroads of modern thought, it is important to know what he had in mind when he decided to overthrow the ambitious projects of rational ontologists. An examination of the origins of the concept of ontology is an indispensable step in the clarification of Kant's thought.

Although the concept of ontology preceded the word 'ontology,' it can be assumed that only when such a word (or the alternative word 'ontosophy') came into use, could philosophers begin to understand fully all the implications of the concept.

Aristotle and the commentators of Aristotle in the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Modern Age (*e.g.*, Thomas Aquinas, Jacobus Zabarella, Cardinal Cajetan *et al.*) recognized that *ens* can be said in

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various ways. We can talk, for example, about *ens* as such, and also about *ens* in specific (even if always most general) ways. Indeed, from the very beginning of *Meta tá physiká* there was a possible ground for the distinction between Metaphysics and what was later called "Ontology." Aristotle even coined a name for the study of the nature and first principles of *ens qua ens*: "first philosophy." There was, however, a great deal of uncertainty about the concepts of "first philosophy" and "metaphysics." In most instances, they were supposed to be the same, or were declared to be very similar. Only when Scholastic philosophers began substituting systematic expositions of Metaphysics for commentaries on Aristotle's *Metaphysica*, and when philosophical rather than theological speculations were promoted, did the relatively sharp distinction between a *scientia de ente* and a *scientia* about specific (although very general and abstract) types of *entes* come to the fore. This happened particularly in the metaphysical works of two modern Schoolmen: Francisco Suárez and Pedro Fonseca.

To be sure, neither Suárez nor Fonseca thought it necessary to coin a new term to designate a science dealing with Being as such, or with the principles of this Being. The word 'ontology' - or any such similar word - does not occur in either author. *Metaphysica* was considered quite sufficient. Suárez' *Metaphysicae Disputationes* are quite conservative in respect to vocabulary. Any new term to designate the aforementioned *scientia de ente* should occur in *Disputationes* 1-4, and in particular in *Disputatio* 1, but it does not. An examination of the series of the *Conimbricenses* does not reveal any fundamental departure from tradition in the above respect. Neither does an examination of the work of Fonseca's in which the *scientia de ente* is most thoroughly investigated: the *Commentatorium Petri Fonsecae Lusitani . . . in libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Stagiritae* [in libros quatuor et quintum] (2 vols., 1594 1595). Fonseca uses only the word *Metaphysica* as equivalent to *prima philosophia*: . . . unde collige subjectum *Metaphysicae esse ens per se, ac reale, quatenus dicitur non modo de entibus vere unius essentiae, sed etiam alio modo per se* (*Comm. in IV*, 1594, p. 648). *Metaphysica* as *prima philosophia* is declared to be "indivisible," but there are *plures scientiae metaphysicae* (*loc. cit.*). As an indivisible science, *sola prima Philosophia & Dialectica in toto entis genere versantur* (*Comm. in V*, 1595, p. 424). It will be noted that the word *Dialectica* is introduced here, and this is important in so far as Fonseca takes into account that metaphysical (later: "ontological") principles and logical principles are often the same. Fonseca raises the old question: *utrum ens, quatenus est commune Deo, & creaturis, sit Metaphysicae subjectum*, and his answer is that *Metaphysica* as *prima philosophia* precedes all other metaphysical sciences (including Theology), in so far as it is concerned with *ens qua ens*. But he does not

go any further; indeed, he tends to restate the problem in the same terms as Thomas Aquinas. As Étienne Gilson has pointed out, both Suárez and Fonseca seem to acknowledge the need for a new philosophical discipline, but fail to admit that such a discipline is different from *Metaphysica*. They do not see, therefore, any need to coin a name for it.

Unless I have missed the pertinent texts, a new name for a new discipline of the character stated above - which is at the same time "a new name for some old ways of thinking" - occurred only in the Seventeenth Century. It was proposed by philosophers who did not belong to the Schools, but who had been directly or indirectly influenced by the Scholastic tradition supplemented by the modern rationalist tradition. A number of historians (R. Eucken, E. Gilson, Hans Pichler, Max Wundt, Heinz Heimsoeth) mention Johann Clauberg as the first philosopher who used the new term we are looking for: the term 'ontology.' This is not the case. The first instance occurs in Rudolf Goclenius (*Lexicon philosophicum, quo tanquam clave philosophiae fores aperiuntur, Informatum opera studio Rodolphi Goclenii*. Francoforti, 1613). In his *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe*, Rudolf Eisler refers to this instance, but fails to indicate its significance. In a way, Eisler was right, because it has no significance.<sup>1</sup> The word 'ontology' occurs in Goclenius's *Lexicon* on page 16 as follows: "*ὄντολογία, philosophia de ente.*" This is all. Furthermore, it occurs on the left margin of the article "*Abstractio*," in which the author discusses the concept of *abstractio materiae* according to Alexander of Hales. If this were not enough, Goclenius does not even include an article on Metaphysics or First Philosophy in his *Lexicon*. There is, indeed, an article on Philosophy (*Philosophia*) which contains various definitions, among them the following one: Philosophy can be understood *per excellentiam* as *prima philosophia* (definition 4). Therefore, if it is true that Goclenius actually used the word 'ontology' (*ὄντολογία*), he did very little with it. Neither does he mention such a word in his *Isagoge* (*Rod. Goclenii . . . Isagoge in peripateticorum et Scholasticorum primam philosophiam quae vulgo dicitur Metaphysica*, Francoforti, 1612). Here the expression *prima philosophia* is introduced as a technical term for the more "common" *Metaphysica*. Goclenius writes to this effect: "*1. Duae sunt communissimae disciplinae liberales: Logica, & Metaphysica, quae sapientia dicitur . . . 3. Metaphysica seu prima philosophia cognitio communis est eorum, quae sunt altissimis*

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<sup>1</sup> Jean École, in an article on Wolff's *Ontologia* (*Rivista di Metafisica*, XVI [1961], 114-25), published after the present one was written, also mentions Goclenius. For further information regarding École's interesting findings, see next note. (École's article is a French version of the author's Latin "Introductio" to his critical edition of Wolff's *Philosophia prima*, Hildesheim: Olms, 1962).

*causas & prima principia; . . . 9. Prima philosophia scientia de Ente qua ens, hoc est, universaliter sumto*" (P.A. 4). He therefore relapsed into a relatively long established tradition in philosophical terminology, but 'to relapse into' is probably too strong an expression when he had scarcely done anything to produce a new terminology. At any rate, his introduction of the word 'ontology' in the *Lexicon* does not seem to be the result of a careful plan; it looks more like a purely casual and inconsequential remark.

Any research on the origins of the use of a technical term is likely to become tedious. Before striking on positive instances the researcher will strike more often than not on negative instances. There is no reason, however, why the presentation of his research should be as tedious as the research itself. Describing negative instances would be as wearisome as it is unfruitful. Therefore, I will confine myself to mentioning where and when the term 'ontology' was used for the first time with a sufficient understanding of its meaning and, above all, of its consequences. Contrary to the contentions of Gilson, Eucken, and Pichler, this happened before 1647, namely, before Johann Clauberg published his *Ontosophia*. But in order to grasp the implications of the introduction of 'ontology' as a new term for a new - or supposedly new - *scientia*, some preliminary remarks are needed.

Neither the works of Goclenius nor the Latin philosophical books and dictionaries published up to approximately 1635 contain many new terms to designate "new" philosophical disciplines or, in general, branches of learning. From 1635 on, however, there seems to be a growing interest in classifying philosophy or, for that matter, learning or knowledge in general into different branches and subbranches. Coupled with this interest is a tendency to propose new philosophical disciplines, and to coin new names - often, rather startling names - to designate them. Divisions proposed are intended often to cover all the sciences according to two main branches: logic and metaphysics. 'Logic' is the name of a science (or *ars*) that studies no objects, but only the way, or ways, in which objects are studied by other sciences. Therefore, 'logic' (*logica*) is the name for the ancient (or medieval) *scientia sermocinalis*. 'Metaphysics' (*Metaphysica*) is often another name for *philosophia realis*, particularly if the latter is supposed to deal with objects - "real objects," in a most general sense of 'real,' namely, as whatever can become the subject of a true or false proposition. It is often assumed (as Johann Clauberg forcefully pointed out) that whereas *Metaphysica* is comparable to the *semen* or *porta* of knowledge, *Logica* is comparable to a *manus* or a *via*. *Metaphysica* is a *disciplina theoretica & contemplatrix*, whereas *Logica ad practicas & operatrices accedit*. Both disciplines are, indeed, *primae*, but, writes Clauberg, *inter Metaphysicae ac Logicae subjectum infinita est*

*distantia, quatenus nullum esse reale commune habent.* In short, *Meta-physica omnia scit, Logica nihil scit* (*Ontosophia*, pp. 235-311, especially p. 297). Now, most divisions are presented as branches of the "theoretical" ("real") science, which is *philosophia realis* and, at its apex, *Meta-physica*. Among other branches we find, besides *Physica*, *Medicina* and *Theologia* - clearly traditional -, *Angelosophia* (on angels), *Anthroposophia* (on man), *Aperantologia* (on the reality that is both created and infinite). The three last names were coined by Juan Caramuel de Lobkowitz (*op. cit.*, *infra*) to designate three different, and in his opinion quite important branches, of Metaphysics. J. Micraelius divided *Meta-physica* into *Gnostologia* (*omne scibile qua tale*), *Hexologia* (*habitus intellectuales exponentem*), *Technologia* (*variaturum disciplinarum naturam & ordinem inculcante*), *Archilogia* (*principia disciplinarum indagantem*), and *Didactica* (*Lexicon philosophicum terminorum philosophis usitatorum*, 1653, s.v.<sup>o</sup> "Philosophia"). He also spoke, as we shall see later, of *Ontologia* and *Pneumatologia* (this one divided into *Theologia*, *Angelo-graphia* and *Psychologia*). Understandably enough he was quite uncertain about the difference between *Gnostologia* and *Ontologia*, since both were concerned with *omne scibile qua tale* - although I assume that Micraelius, as well as Calovius, began to wonder whether it would not help to consider *ens* in general from two viewpoints: as it is, and as it is knowable. Other examples could be added. But the ones given will, I hope, suffice to make it clear that some philosophers of this period were not at a loss for new philosophical branches, and names for them. Most of the names have, of course, been forgotten, but some of them (*Psychologie*, *Gnoseology* and, of course, *Ontology*) are still in use.

Let us add that the tendency to coin new names to designate new, or supposedly new, philosophical disciplines was confined during the Seventeenth Century mostly to works written in Latin. During the Eighteenth Century, the tendency spread to works written in modern tongues, especially in German. Let us only remember Lambert (*Dianoilogie*, *Alethiologie*, *Phänomenologie*) and Crusius (*Thelematologie*).

Now, the term we are interested in, 'Ontology,' appears within the context of these attempts to classify and organize sciences and branches of knowledge. We may assume, therefore, that the new term was introduced not only to make more precise the traditional meaning of "first philosophy," but also, and sometimes above all, to "organize" knowledge in a neater, and supposedly more rational, manner. The concept of ontology will appear as designating *the* "theoretical science" in so far as it has not yet been divided into branches. Unfortunately, this does not yet sufficiently clarify the meaning of 'Ontology' as it was first introduced, for, despite the claims that the "theoretical science" in question is, as Clauberg once maintained, "at an infinite distance" from "rational [purely

rational, namely, logical] knowledge," it will be increasingly common to cram logical principles into "ontological principles." This is probably due to the fact that Ontology was also considered as purely rational, but since Ontology was to deal with reality (although with reality as such, and not any specific types or parts of it), the distinction between Ontology and Logic appeared considerably less clear than the difference between Ontology and Metaphysics proper.

The first book in which the word 'ontology' occurs is, as we said, Goclenius's *Lexicon*. But the occurrence had no consequences - indeed, no importance. After Goclenius, the word 'ontology' and the equivalent word 'ontosophy' appear in two books: Abraham Calovius' (Calov's) *Metaphysica divina, a principiis primis eruta, in abstractione Entis repraesentata, ad S.S. Theologicam applicata, monstrans, Terminorum et conclusionum transcendentium usum genuinum abusum a hereticum, constans* (1636)<sup>2</sup> and Juan Caramuel de Lobkowitz's *Rationalis et realis philosophia* (1642), eleven and five years respectively before the much more talked about Clauberg's work. By the way, none of the other philosophical, or pseudo-philosophical works of Caramuel's - *Mathesis audax*, *Mathesis biceps*, *Metalogica*, etc. - refer to ontosophy or to ontology. Unless the contrary is proved, it is safe to assume that Calovius and Caramuel de Lobkowitz (and not Clauberg) were the first authors to propose a new name for what later became a most important, and controversial, philosophical discipline. According to Calovius, the *scientia de ente* is called *Metaphysica* in respect to "the order of things," *a rerum ordine*, being called (more properly) *ὄντολογία* in respect to the object or subject matter, *ab objecto proprio*. Caramuel seems to be more explicit than Calovius about the nature and function of ontology (or, in his case, ontosophy). According to Caramuel, "*Metaphysica objectum est ENS, ideóque*" *Ὀντοσοφία* *dicitur, quae est ὄντος σοφία seu ENTIS SCIENTIA. Differt à Facultatibus alijs, quòd ipsa investiget objecti praedicata & differentias essentiales, illae non nisi proprietates, passionēs, attributa. Supponitur ab universis Artibus, nullam supponens. Exorbitantiae gravi obnoxius, qui Theologiae, Phisiologiae, aut Medicinae insudat, nō à Metaphysices eminenti notitiā manuducatur. Non potest non esse doctissimus in omnia scientia, qui exactè Ontosophiam percaller*" (*Rationalis*, etc., p. 65). This seems to be clear enough, even if *Metaphysica* is considered to be the same as *Ontosophia*; what it means is that only as Ontosophy can Metaphysics become a true *prima philosophia* - perhaps without theological commitments. And this is not a mere after-

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<sup>2</sup> This I have found confirmed in Jean École's article (see *supra*). In both cases the reference has been taken from Calovius's *Scripta philosophica* (1654).

thought (as it seemed to be in the case of Goclenius's usage), for Caramuel goes on to discuss the meaning and merits of *Ontosophia*: . . . *periculosè aedificat qui probabilia; stolidè, qui dubbia supponit. Plurimi Idèas Idèis superstruentes Ontosophiam erexête Academiam, quae vel mole suâ pôstmodùm corruit nemine arietante (op. cit., p. 66).* He does more than that - something that he seems to be the first to have done -; he lays down a set of principles that can be said to be "ontological (or "ontosophical"). We cite four of these principles: "*I. Impossibili est dari duas contradictorias simul veras. II. Impossibile est dari duas contradictorias simul falsas . . . XI. Omnia quod est, dum est necesse est esse . . . XIII. Impudenter procedit, qui multiplicat Entia absque necessitate.*" It can be seen that such principles have one common characteristic: they are "general" and at the same time "universal." But beyond that they seem to have little in common. Some principles belong to general logic (I, II); some, to modal logic (XI); some are pragmatic rules (XIII). The aim of Caramuel, and of all the first "ontologists," was apparently to list all the possible general rational principles which they thought could be applied to all reality as such.

It would seem somewhat surprising that Clauberg has been mentioned as the first one who used such words as *ontologia* and *ontosophia* with an awareness of their importance and implications, since Clauberg himself recognized in his *Elementa philosophiae sive ontosophia, scientia prima, de iis quae Deo creaturisque seu modo communiter attribuntur*, published in 1647, that he was *not* the first one to use them. Scholars who have dealt with this question have probably been quite impressed by the title of Clauberg's book, and have not bothered too much about its contents. This happens sometimes, even in highly reputable scholarship. Now, if it is true that at the beginning of the *Elementa* Clauberg describes *ontologia* - or, as he on the other hand prefers, *ontosophia* - as a *scientia prima* or a *prima philosophia*, and defines it as *scientia quae speculatur Ens, prout Ens*, without mentioning any antecedent use, at the end of the same book ("Diacritica," § 89) he writes as follows: "*Nomina atque titulos utrique disciplinae distinctos admodum iudicare Sapientes. Logicen Dialecticam, rationis artem, organum, ὄργανον, ὄργάνων, ἐκ: appellitârunt: Metaphysicam dixere primam, supremam, transnaturalem, philosophiam, divinam, catholicam, universalem scientiam: novissimè Ontosophiam Caramuel Lobkowitz, Ontologicam post alios Abr. Calovius, aptissimè uterque, nominaverunt.*"

It should be pointed out that Calovius did not confine himself to the introduction of the sole word 'ontology' to designate "the first rational (or theoretical) science" from the viewpoint of its object. He coined another name for a similar, if not identical, discipline: *Noologia*. In the *Desumpta Exercitationes . . . Editio II* (1666), published together with



Georg Gutke's *Habitus primorum principiorum seu intelligentiae* . . . , Calovius presents *Noologia* as something approaching Caramuel's onto-sophy, Clauberg's ontosophy and ontology, and Calovius own ontology. Noology as equivalent to "archeology" was used by Micraelius [*supra*], but only as one among other possible "metaphysical branches") in so far as it designates the science of the "supreme principles." Noology has the same aims as ontology in so far as it is previous to all "real sciences," including Metaphysics in the traditional sense. This is due to the fact that *de principiis agit ex quibus Metaphysicae suas deducit conclusiones* (*op. cit.*, p. 286). Indeed, noology must never be confused (*ne confunduntur*) with metaphysics. It is unfortunate, but quite in tune with the peculiar mixture of neatness and confusion characteristic of all these writers, that a little later Calovius maintains that *omne axiomata vere Metaphysicae sunt Noologiae*.

Whether Noology differs from Ontology in that the latter gathers its principles from being itself, whereas the former obtains its principles from the mind (and its rational structure) is an interesting question, but one that we cannot discuss here. It would be possible to claim that Kant's "Transcendental Analytic" was an attempt to reformulate Calovius's "Noology" (and perhaps Micraelius's "Gnostology") by purifying it of all unwarranted "ontological" assumptions, even if little justice would be done to the complexity of Kant's theory of knowledge by linking it exclusively to such attempts as those of Calovius or Micraelius.

When all is said, however, it is safe to assume that Clauberg was more aware than any of his predecessors of the importance of the new discipline - and of the new name. In his *Metaphysica de Ente, quae rectius Ontosophia* (1656; *apud Opera omnia philosophica*, 1691) Clauberg explains in some detail what Ontosophy is about. Ontosophy is *quaedam scientia, quae contemplatur ens quatenus ens est, hoc est, in quamdam intelligitur habere naturam vel naturae gradum, qui rebus corporeis & incorporeis, Deo & Creaturis, omnibusque adeo & singulis entibus suo modo inest*. To be sure, it is commonly (*vulgò*) called *Metaphysica*, but *aptius Ontologia vel scientia Catholica, eine allgemeine Wissenschaft & Philosophia universalis nominatur*. The *ens* with which ontology deals can be considered from three angles: as what can be thought (*intelligibile*), as something (*aliquid*), and as the thing (*substantia*). Emphasis on the *ens cogitabile* now seems to point to some similarity between Ontology and Noology: *Quamvis autem Ens in tertia significatione acceptum, sit potissimum illud, quod in Ontologia per sua attribua ac divisiones explicatur tamen ad meliorem hujus notitiam comparandam nonnulla de Ente in prima & secunda acceptione permittemus, inchoaturi universalem philosophiam ab Ente cogitabili, quemadmodum à singularis incipiens prima philosophia nihil prius considerat mente cogitante*. The subject

matter of ontology is everything, and/or anything (*aliquid*), and as a consequence, also nothing (*nihil*), for what matters here is not whether something really exists or not, but whether it can be thought or not, can be talked about or not. At this point Clauberg introduces a formula (in German) to define *ens* as the subject matter of Ontology: *Alles was nur gedacht und gesagt werden kann*. For *ita dico Nihil*, & *cum dico cogito*, & *cum cogito, est illud in intellectu meo*. All this is certainly going much further than Caramuel. The problem of thought and not only the problem of being - or rather, the problem of being in so far as it is, or can be, thought - now comes to the fore, and Ontology seems to be on its way to becoming a new science and not only an alternative name for *prima philosophia*. In the 1694 edition of the *Elementa*, now entitled *Ontosophia quae vulgo Metaphysica vocatur*, Clauberg reaffirms his position, claims that the term *Ontosophia* is increasingly being accepted despite the resistance of some learned men.

Micraelius probably contributed greatly to a wider acceptance of the new term, for his *Lexicon* (see *supra*), first published in 1653, with a second printing in 1662, was a relatively successful book. Micraelius did not introduce an article on Ontology in the *Lexicon*, but the term *Ontologia* (also written in Greek characters: *ὄντολογία*) was presented in the article "Philosophia" as one of the subdivisions of *Metaphysica*. He defined the term as designating a *peculiaris disciplina philosophica, quae tractat de ente*, but added *quod tamen ab aliis statuitur objectum ipsius metaphysicae*, a most unfortunate "regression" in respect to Clauberg, and even in respect to Caramuel, since it somehow presupposes that *ontologia* and *metaphysica* are largely interchangeable. A full incorporation of the terms *Ontologia* and *Ontosophia* in the *philosophic* language took place only at the very end of the Seventeenth Century and beginning of the Eighteenth Century. It was probably Étienne (Stephanus) Chauvin who did most to make these terms palatable for philosophic circles. His *Lexicon philosophicum* was published in 1692 (with the following title under cover: *Lexicon rationale sive Thesaurus philosophicus ordine alphabetico digestus*, which explains why it is quoted sometimes as *Lexicon philosophicum* and sometimes as *Lexicon rationale*). In this *Lexicon*, of which a second edition was published in 1713 (with some changes, proudly announced as *quasi novum opus in lucens prodeat*, which do not affect our question) Chauvin introduces an article on "Ontosophia," which is thus defined: *ONTOSOPHIA . . . σοφία ὄντος sapientia seu scientia entis. Aliàs Ontologia, doctrina de ente*. This says, indeed, little. But in his article on "Metaphysics" Chauvin goes much further. It is worth quoting a substantial part of the article:

*Metaphysica: si latinè interpreteris, post-naturalem, super-naturalem aut praeter-naturalem sonat; potestque citra incommodum quaelibet illarum*

*interpretationum admitti . . . vulgo spectatur tanquam catholica scientia seu universalis quaedam Philosophia, quia quae rebus omnibus, Deo & creaturis, spiritibus corporibusque communia sunt persequitur; quidni dicatur disciplina praeter-naturalis, inquantum praeter ea quae pertinent ad Physicam, quae sunt considerationis praedicamentalis, alia tractat ad humanae cognitionis perfectionem & intellectus informationem quàmplurimum facientia . . . ; super-naturalis philosophia . . . inquantum considerat ea, quae dicatur transcendentalia, generalia, quae categoriarum limitibus non clauduntur . . . etc.*

All this seems quite "traditional." Now:

*Ab aliis dicitur Ontosophia, vel Ontologia, & quidem rectius. Quandoquidem utraque illa vox integrae definitionis munere non infelicite fungitur. Est ens vulgaris Metaphysica, scientia entis, quatenus est ens: at Ontosophia, quasi dixeris, σοφία ὄντος, est sapientia seu scientia entis; adeoque genus disciplina, differentiam ex objecto sumptam innuit. Ontologia verò dicitur, quasi λογία vel λόγος ὄντος, sermo seu doctrina de ente. Quanquam hoc observandum, quòd voce Ontosophiae, commodius scientia entis; voce autem Ontologiae systema, methodicam de ente doctrina complectens significatur.*

The difference between Ontology and Ontosophy was not pursued any further. Indeed, after Chauvin practically no one ever used the term 'Ontosophy' again. Leibniz used *Ontologia* in his "Introductio ad Encyclopaediam arcanam" (apud L. Couturat, ed., *Opusculum et fragments inédits de Leibniz*, 1913, p. 512), and defined it as *scientia de aliquo et nihilo, ente et non ente, re et modo rei, substantia et accidente*, in a way similar to Clauberg's. P. Géný (*Questions d'enseignement de philosophie scolastique*, 1913, apud M. Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben*, 1926, p. 547) has pointed out that Jean Baptiste Du Hamel used the word *Ontologia* in his work, *Philosophia vetus et nova, ad usum scholae accommodatae, in regia Burgundia olim pertractata* (Editio 3 multo emendatior), 2 vols., 1684, sometimes called *Philosophia Burgundica*. This is true, but Du Hamel does not seem to be greatly concerned with ontology as a first science. The first and second editions of the *Philosophia Burgundica*, respectively entitled *De consensu veteris et novae philosophiae libri duo* (1663) and *De consensu veteris et novae philosophiae libri quatuor, seu Promotae per experimenta philosophiae pars prima* (1675), are still less concerned with "Ontology." On the other hand, Antonio Genovesi [Genovese] used the term *Ontosophia* in his work *Elementa metaphysicae mathematicum in morem adornata. Pars prior. Ontosophia* (1743), and Francis Hutcheson used the term *Ontologia* in his work *Synopsis Ontologiam et Pneumatologiam complectens* (1742, 2nd ed., 1744, 3rd ed., 1749, 4th ed., 1756, 5th ed., 1762, 6th ed., 1774). Moreover, the term *Ontologia* was introduced as a technical term

in philosophy by Jean Le Clerc or Ioannis Clericus in the Second Treatise, entitled "Ontologia sive de ente in genere" of his *Opera philosophica in quatuor volumina digesta* (5th ed., 1722). This happened eight years before Wolff finally gave his definitive, and influential, approval to the new term and to the new - although in his time already less new - discipline. So Jean École is right when he writes: "Ainsi donc, lorsque l'ouvrage de Wolff parût, l'ontologie était une conquête de la philosophie vieille déjà d'à peu près cent ans."<sup>3</sup>

The aim of these pages has been to trace the origins and early history of the word 'ontology.' This early history ends with Wolff, who, Pichler claims, was probably induced to develop his system of Ontology through the influence of Clauberg [in the *Elementa*, 1647] and of Leibniz [in *De primae philosophiae emendatione*, published in *Acta eruditorum*, 1694] As Pichler points out, Wolff himself acknowledges these *Anregungen* in *Ontologia* § 7. (Ernst Lewalter, on the other hand, assumes that Wolff's "way" was paved not only by Eighteenth-Century Jesuit philosophers, and some Seventeenth-Century French "Scholastics," but also by "German-Lutheran metaphysicians" following Suárez: Jakob Martini, Christoph Scheibler, Daniel Stahl, and others, but, of course, one thing is to pave "Wolff's way," and another is to use specifically, and technically, a given word). I will only mention that between Wolff and Kant, the first edition of whose *Critique of Pure Reason* was published in 1781, there is a curious, and rather neglected, reference to Ontology in the article "Ontologie" of the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, t. XI, N-PAR (Neufchâtel, 1765). The anonymous author writes that among the Schoolmen "ontology" was the same as *Philosophia prima*, but that it was a purely verbal "science." As a consequence, "dès que la doctrine de Descartes eut pris le dessus, l'ontologie scholastique tomba dans le mépris, devint l'objet de la risée publique . . . On n'envisagea donc plus [after Descartes] l'ontologie que comme un dictionnaire philosophique barbare, dans lequel on expliquoit des termes dont nous pouvions fort bien nous passer." But things changed: "L'ontologie . . . qui n'étoit autrefois qu'une science de mots, prit une toute autre face entre les mains des philosophes modernes, ou, pour mieux dire, de M. Volf; car le cours de cette science qu'il a publié, est le premier jusqu'à présent l'unique où elle soit proposée d'une manière vraiment philosophique." It would seem that the French philosophers (or the anonymous, Voltairian-looking author of the article "Ontologie" in the *Encyclopaedia*) were rather uncritical of Wolff's *Philosophia prima sive ontologia*, and did not bother too much about the

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<sup>3</sup> In the "Introductio" (see *supra*): "Ergo, cum Wolffii opus editum est, ontologiam philosophia fere centum ante annis sibi comparaverat."

"dogmatic way of thinking" (*K.r.V.* B xxxvii), provided it looked "rational." It would also seem that they were not impressed by Wolff's predecessors, if they had, indeed, any knowledge that such predecessors existed. We may blame the French *philosophes* for lack of historical sense, if not historical information. But it may well happen that by 1765 Calovius, Caramuel, Clauberg, Micraelius, Chauvin *et al.*, had already been forgotten, or else overshadowed by Wolff. It has been the purpose of the present article to try to recognize the history of thought, and specifically the history of philosophic concepts, as the embarrassingly complex thing it is.

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