

LEŚNIEWSKI'S ONTOLOGY AND SOME MEDIEVAL LOGICIANS

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In a recent issue of this journal (Oct., 1964) Professor Desmond Paul Henry has shown that, although it may be the case that Ockham's *descensus* in his supposition theory cannot be adequately rendered in the lower functional calculus (Cf. [7]), it can be adequately rendered in the Ontology of S. Leśniewski. Professor Henry, furthermore, suggests that Ontology would be an appropriate tool for analyzing other medieval logical theories, claiming, "It is not difficult to multiply examples of the facility and directness with which Ontology can furnish formal analyses of medieval logical theories, including those cases which are despaired of in the histories." (P. 292)

In this note I wish to suggest an important limitation upon this claim. For a very fundamental reason Ontology is not an appropriate tool for analyzing a certain class of fourteenth-century logical theories. One can best make this point, however, by emphasizing its usefulness for explicating Ockham's doctrines. Not only will it allow one to express the *descensus*; it also provides a very close and illuminating explication of Ockham's doctrine of predication, and this is the matter that most concerns me in this note.

As Henry points out, the primitive term of the original axiom of Ontology is " ϵ ", which is a proposition forming functor having as arguments two names. A proposition of the form " $a\epsilon b$ " is true iff either " a " and " b " each name the same individual object and no other, or " a " names only one individual object while " b " names many such individuals, of which the individual named by " a " is one. " ϵ " may be expressed in English as "is" or "is a"; it corresponds to "est" in Latin used as the copula. Henry also emphasizes that the arguments taken by " ϵ " are of the same semantic category.

Ockham's doctrine of predication can easily be clearly expressed in terms of the basic concepts of Ontology. Ockham regards the copula as "the verb joining the predicate with the subject." (*Copula autem vocatur verbum copulans praedicatum cum subiecto.* [8] I, c. 33) He regards the predicate and subject as being alike names of the same semantic category, and in a well-formed proposition he thinks the copula joins a subject with a