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Giovanni Gellera

The German philosopher Johannes Clauberg (1622—1665) argued that German is superior to Latin on account of its grammar and semantics and that it is, in fact, the best philosophical language. If all languages are not equivalent, it becomes relevant in which language one philosophises. This controversial position sets him apart from common early modern philosophical assumptions about language. Clauberg was also motivated by his German national sentiment. The paper suggests that Clauberg's tentative 'philosophy of German language' is conceptually and historically important, at a time when philosophy in Latin was giving way to national vernacular traditions.

Introduction[1]

Sometimes prefatory letters are as interesting as the philosophical works which they introduce. In the final edition of his *Ontosophia* project, entitled *Metaphysica de Ente* (1664, henceforth *MdE*), the German Reformed philosopher Johannes Clauberg (1622—1665) wrote:

> In the previous edition I tried, as a German, to shed new light on the subject matter of *Ontosophia*, for the benefit of the general public, by recurring to the German tongue. But because I understood that this was received less well in foreign countries, I was thinking to delete all the German stuff from this third edition, if the most erudite of friends had not held me back with these words: I would be unwilling to delete German, German words are in fact extremely appropriate and once they are begotten they shed great light for the Germans. The foreigners shall be content with the examples in Latin.[2]

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2   Johannes Clauberg: Metaphysica de Ente, Quae rectius Ontosophia, Aliarum Disciplinarum, ipsius quoque Iurisprudentiae et Literarum, studiosis accommodata (Amsterdam: Daniel Elzevir, 1664) 1—2: «Germanus in gratiam popularium e lingua Germanica novam quandam lucem rebus, quas Ontosophia tractat, fenerari conatus eram editione praecedente. Sed quia id minus acceptum fuisse exteris nationibus intellexi, animus erat in editione tertia cuncta ista Teutonica expungere, nisi doctissimus amicus his verbis prohibuisset: Germanica resecari nollem, sunt enim perquam apposita, et Germanis magnam lucem praebere nata. Exteri acquiescant exemplis latinis». All translations are my own. Italics is original. German Gothic characters are translitterated into Latin characters.

In the second edition, entitled *Ontosophia nova* (1660), Clauberg declared: «In this *Ontosophia* I have tried to shed new light on its subject matter through the German language, since I saw that many things can be uncovered so clearly, [things] which otherwise beget difficulties for beginners when they are expressed with barbaric words in Latin».[3] Like others, most notably Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Clauberg sought to develop German as a philosophical language.[4] But, against the prevailing attitude, he did not think it enough to legitimise German as equal to Latin: he wanted to show that German was superior to «barbaric» Latin. How so? Clauberg gives us an example in *MdE* 22: «*Cogitatio in rebus nihil mutat*, quod scholastice, hoc est barbare sic dicere alius: esse rei objectivum neque dat neque adimit ullam ipsi realitatem». This passage is, admittedly, in technical Latin but the humanist topos of a barbaric, especially scholastic, Latin is used to argue that such a distance from common language is unnecessary and detrimental, in contrast with Clauberg's own rewording of the same meta-physical view in 'straightforward' German: «Man denke oder man denke nicht an ein ding / bleibt es darumb eben das was es ist».[5] One might be tempted to say German 'translation' but it would beg the controversial question raised by Clauberg: if German expresses a metaphysics more accurately than Latin, then Latin cannot be translated equivalently into German.

Scholars have usually regarded the synthesis of *Schulmetaphysik* and Carte-sianism as the most important conceptual acquisition of the *Ontosophia* editions of 1660 and 1664. Interestingly, Clauberg does not mention this in the prefatory letters, and focuses on language and on philosophy's relation with theology. This does not suggest that Cartesianism is less important than previously thought but, rather, that Clauberg displays an additional, overarching interest in language, which went hand-in-hand with his sentiment for German identity. Unlike his view of language, Clauberg's 'nationalism' has received very little attention in the literature.[6] Waterman dismissed Clauberg's «chauvinistic sophistry» and

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[3]   Johannes Clauberg: Ontosophia nova, quae vulgo Metaphysica, Theologiae, Jurisprudentiae et Philosophiae, praesertim Germanicae, Studiosis accomodata (Duisburg: Adrian Wyngaerden, 1660) 2: «[I]n hac Ontosophia e lingua Germanica novam lucem materiae, de qua agitur, fenerari conatus sum: cum viderim, clare sic posse multa efferri, quae Latino barbaris expressa vocibus difficultatem tironibus pariunt». Notice the «praesertim Germanicae» missing from the 1664 title.

[4]   Leibniz published mostly in French and (like Clauberg) in Latin because those were the «inter-national languages of philosophy at the time», and kept separate the issue of the development of a German philosophical language: see Daniel J. Cook: Leibniz and Hegel on Language, in: Hegel and the History of Philosophy, ed. by Joseph J. O'Malley, K.W. Algozin, Frederick G. Weiss (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974) 95—108, 95.

[5]   Ibid., «Whether or not one thinks of a thing, it remains precisely what it is».

[6]   Alice Ragni: Bibliographia Claubergiana (Nineteenth–Twenty-First Centuries): Tracking a Crossroads in the History of Philosophy, in: Journal of the History of Philosophy 57 (2019) 731—748. See especially Massimiliano Savini: Johannes Clauberg. Methodus Cartesiana et Ontologie (Paris: Vrin, 2011).

«barefaced chauvinism»,[7] whereas Weber took note of Clauberg's «souci patriotique».[8] In this paper, I wish to investigate Clauberg's philosophy of German language and its relevance for the origins of a German philosophical tradition. I will focus on a short treatise published in 1663, the *Ars Etymologica Teutonum E Philosophiae fontibus derivata* (Duisburg: Daniel Asendorf, 1663. Henceforth *AET*), and on its relation with *MdE.* On several occasions *AET* refers to the chronologically close *MdE* to clarify the logical and metaphysical implications of German etymology.

The paper is divided into three parts. Part 1 expounds Clauberg's arguments in *AET* for the superiority of the German language. Part 2 investigates the philosophical consequences of Clauberg's «German from German» etymology. Part 3 discusses the relations between language, confessions and national philosophical traditions in early modern Germany.

1. «Vocabulorum Teutonicorum major est bonitas quam Latinorum»

In *AET* Clauberg formulates several 'rules' of German etymology. 'Rule G' states that German words are better than words in all the other languages, especially Greek and Latin.[9] The rule follows from principles established earlier, such as 'Rule A' of a «Deutsch vom Deutschem» («German from German») etymology, that analogy is the key analytic method (*AET* 4) and that German etymology is derived «from philosophy» («E Philosophiae fontibus»), as *AET*'s title says. Other principles are from logic, such as that one should proceed from what is known to what is less known, and that a known cause is a better explanation than an unknown cause (*AET* 4).

Clauberg discusses three words as representative of the variety of German language: *Vernunft, suchen* and *Ausspruch*, respectively a noun, a verb and a noun derived from a verb. They translate as *ratio, quaerere* and *discursus* in Latin ('reason', 'to search' and 'discourse'). Clauberg derives *Vernunft* from *vernehmen / vernommen*, in Latin «percipere, intelligere, animadvertere» (*AET* 6). *Vernunft* is «what each person experiences in their mind every day, by which we are human beings and different from non-speaking animals».[10] With the expres-

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7   John T. Waterman: Johann Clauberg's «Ars etymologica Teutonum» (1663), in: The Journal of English and Germanic Philology 72 (1973) 390–402, 393, 401.

8   Claude Weber: Clauberg et les origines de la langue philosophique allemande, in: Johannes Clauberg (1622–1665) and Cartesian Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century, ed. by Theo Verbeek (Dordrecht: Springer, 1999) 95–112, 97.

9   AET 10: «Vocabulorum Teutonicorum major est quandoque bonitas quam Graecorum, Latinorum aliorumve peregrinorum».

10   AET 5: «quod homo quilibet in animo suo quotidie experitur, per quod homines sumus et a mutis distamus animantibus».

sion 'non speaking' instead of 'non rational', Clauberg underlines, like Descartes, that language is distinctive of human beings. *Dicibile* is elevated to the same transcendental level as *intelligibile* and *cogitabile*: «Being is that which can be thought of and said, in whatever way it is»,[11] bespeaking a correspondence of *ens*, *intelligibile* and *dicibile*.[12] Clauberg argues for it by deriving *Sache* (*res*, 'thing') from *sagen* (*dicere*, 'to say') — although he concedes that *res* too comes from ῥέω if not directly from *reor* ('I say', *MdE* 7) — and *Ding* ('thing') from *denken* ('to think', *MdE* 8). Clauberg's linguistic horizon is very much that of the German Roman Empire, for he compares German etymology to Latin, Greek, French and Belgian (that is, Dutch) and only occasionally to Spanish and Italian. French was on course to replace Latin as the language of high culture while English was far from its current heyday, when it gives the largest potential readership to a paper on the history of philosophy in Latin and German.

Unlike in *MdE* 7, in *AET* 9 *ratio* is derived from *reor* that is, *opinor*, *existimo* ('I believe') and λόγος from λέγω, *dico* ('I say'). This shift in emphasis might be explained by the fact that in *MdE* Clauberg makes a metaphysical claim about an etymology shared by many languages ('thing' from 'to think / say'), while in *AET* he argues that German language is superior. Therefore, *Vernunft* has a much more distinguished meaning, and Latin and Greek words are very ambiguous.[13] *AET* is an «agile but not too convincing exercise in comparative semantics», «amusingly naïve», but some observations are «remarkably keen» and acceptable to contemporary scholars,[14] especially when empirically oriented, as in the case of *Vernunft* and the prefix *ver-*.[15] Clauberg believed that *ver-* illustrates the preeminence («praecellentia») of German language especially well, since Latin has to express with many words what German can express with the prefix *ver-* in one word.[16] 'Rule F' states that many words are typically transferred from an empirical to an immaterial sense,[17] because our cognitive life begins with material things (*MdE* 50). This truth is, once more, reflected in German: just as eyesight is the main instrument of enquiry, *suchen* derives from *sehen* and properly means *videre cupio* ('I desire to see'). This is more accurate than the French *chercher* and Italian *cercare*, for the Latin *circa* (to be 'around' or 'about' something) indicates only an accidental aspect of 'searching'.

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[11]   MdE 6: «Ens est quicquid quovis modo est, cogitari ac dici potest».
[12]   Cf. M. Savini: Methodus, op. cit., 246—247, 300—301: this correspondence is reinforced by Clauberg's Cartesianism and is central to his thought.
[13]   AET 9: «ambigua valde sunt, cum e contrario nostrum *Vernunft* longe distinctiorem habeat significationem».
[14]   J. Waterman: Ars, op. cit., 393, 397.
[15]   Ibid., 401.
[16]   AET 21: «a Latinis non una voce, sed pluribus reddi debeant».
[17]   AET 9: «*A sensilibus ad intelligibilia quam plurima vocabula sunt traducta*».

These examples convey a good idea of how Clauberg proceeds. He claims that three features (which are also discussed by Weber) make German superior, as stated in Rule G:

1) «[V]ery often German names are the integral definition [of things]» because German words are made through the combination of genus and difference.[18] *MdE* 64 corroborates this with the following examples: *Haupstadt* is better than *metropolis*, *Sprachkunst* than grammatica, *Vernunfkunst* than *logica*, *Deutschland* than *Germania*, *apfelbaum* than *malus*, *weinfaß* than *dolium*. In *MdE* 190 the German *vollkommen* («quod quasi ad plenitudinem venit») conveys the meaning of perfection better than *perfectio*, and the prefixes *um-* and *über-,* as in *unmuht* and *übermuht*, are superior to the Latin *de-* and *ex-,* as in *defectus* and *excessus.*

2) «[M]any German composite words take on different meaning when they are in inversed order», thus allowing for a great(er) variety and fecundity in the composition of nouns.[19] *AET* refers to *MdE* 286, where a parallel is established between the natural philosophical principle 'unius corruptio est alterius generatio' and the composition of nouns in German. So, *weinfaß* is not *faßwein* and *rahthaus* is not *hausraht.* Most aptly «*vorhin* indicates the past, *hinvor* the future».[20] In these cases Latin has different words with different roots, which makes the onto-logical connections between the things signified by these words harder to recognise.

3) German favours verbs, which «make better roots than nouns» because verbal forms are more numerous and fecund than nominal ones.[21] Also, «physics instructs us that all things, such as we experience them, are brought about by way of movement»,[22] which is best expressed by verbs. Like nature, grammar should follow the quickest path to its end.[23] The recurrent parallel between natural philosophy and German grammar is «not surprising» because «words are signs of things and of thoughts».[24]

Greater internal consistency and fecundity bespeak the superiority of German, which is manifest in both grammar (how words combine together) and semantics (what words mean). «German from German» etymology indicates that the origin and meaning of German words should be found in the culture and history, as well as in the everyday uses and experience, of German speakers, without the interposition of the mental categories expressed by foreign languag-

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18   AET 23: «nomina Germanica persaepe sunt integrae definitiones». It follows that Adam's descendants should have assigned German names to things (Ibid.).

19   AET 47: «*Plurima Teutonum vocabula composita, ubi inversa fuerint, novas accipiunt significationes*» and 45–46.

20   MdE 286: «*Vorhin* praeteritum, *hinvor* notat futurum».

21   AET 28: «*verba potius esse radices quam nomina*».

22   AET 28: «Adde quod Physica docet, per motum omnia talia facta, qualia esse experimur».

23   AET 5; C. Weber: Origines, op. cit., 100–101.

24   AET 28: «non mirum si etiam reperiatur in vocabulis, quae rerum et cogitationum signa».

es, typically Greek or Latin. Because of their free and unmediated historical origin, German words express better the relations of the things and ideas which they indicate.[25]

2. Philosophy *in German*, or *German* philosophy?

Clauberg's comparative semantics establishes that German is the best philosophical language. It follows that German must have also a special affinity with the best philosophy available: Cartesianism.[26] Clauberg argues that Cartesianism and German language share some fundamental truths. He praises Descartes for describing reason as «*perceptio mentis*»:[27] «In *Principles* I.32, Descartes locates the operations of the human mind in the perception of the intellect and in the determination of the will».[28] Perception is the essential cognitive activity of human beings: «when something is doubted, affirmed, negated, or demonstrated about being, being is thought of or perceived by the mind».[29] *Vernunft* derives from *vernehmen / nehmen* just as *perceptio* and *percipere* derive from *capio*, whence *concipere* and *conceptus*. As Descartes's *pensée* or *cogitatio* is an active, rather than a static, essence (which in *Meditation II* is said to understand, perceive, doubt, affirm, deny, want), another affinity lies in the fact that German is best suited to express active essences because of its emphasis on verbal forms. So, the etymology of *Vernunft* and the emphasis on verbs exemplify how the couple German / Cartesianim is superior to Latin / scholasticism.

The scope of *AET* and the references to *MdE* invite a philosophical examination which, regrettably, Clauberg did not pursue.[30] Commentators have assumed, in line with general trends in early modern philosophy, that what Clauberg has to say in philosophy of language applies to all languages − or to no specific language. So, for Clauberg «*il n'y a pas de hiérarchie des langues* […] L'hébreu, le grec, le latin ne sont pas plus «philosophiques» que l'allemand».[31] Quite the contrary, if my interpretation is correct, Clauberg believed that there is a hierarchy of languages, and that German takes the top spot. We have seen that Clauberg argues that German is most relevant and suitable for philosophy on

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25   C. Weber: Origines, op. cit., 103: «c'est parce que les mots allemands reflètent mieux par leur propre parenté la parenté des idées et des choses qu'ils designent que l'allemand est une langue privilégiée».

26   Ibid., 106.

27   Cf. M. Savini: Methodus, op. cit., 259: «la cogitatio, c'est-à-dire la *perceptio*».

28   AET 7: «Functiones mentis humanae Cartesius Princ. I. 32. revocat ad perceptionem intellectus ac determinationem voluntatis».

29   MdE 9: «Cogitatur autem Ens, cum animo percipitur, cum de eo dubitatur, vel affirmatur, vel negatur, vel probatur aliquid».

30   C. Weber: Origines, op. cit., 103−104 asks whether undermining the priority of nouns, traditional from Aristotle to Hobbes, is potentially problematic for the validity of syllogistic logic.

31   Ibid., 106.

account of its perceived characteristics *qua* German, and not simply *qua* vernacular, that is, as alternative to Latin. There are two dimensions to this shift in perspective: in this section I discuss some implications, arguably overlooked by Clauberg, of chipping away at the traditional views on language, thought and the world. In the next section I discuss the important non-philosophical motivations behind Clauberg's praise of German.

Weber noted that in *AET* Clauberg abandoned his own earlier view that «vestigia» of things are in the words, and came to regard essentialism as the cause of the demise of scholasticism.[32] Clauberg was not, however, dismissive of scholasticism, and his philosophy of language develops in dialogue with Cartesianism and scholasticism. In different ways, the scholastics subscribed to what has been described as the «old sense of an identity between language and thought» and of the «assumption of [grammatical] universality […] which underpins language».[33] The correspondence theory of truth, the *species intelligibiles* and the virtually monolingual Latin academic setting of scholasticism all served this assumption. On this view, the *species intelligibilis* theory can be seen as entailing a 'quasi-deterministic' epistemology in which truth consists in the formal or virtual identity of a knowing mind and a known object in the act of knowing. The exclusive use of Latin suggested (although it does not imply it) that Latin words were the best to signify concepts and things, in a fixed correspondence. The main victim of the consequential Cartesian rejection of the *species* was the implication of causality and meaning: «avec Clauberg (à la suite de Descartes) le dernier fil qui unissait la signification à la causalité en vertu de l'espèce est rompu».[34] For Clauberg, ideas are the first object of cognition through which external things are known, and depend on external things for their meaning. But the relation between thought and language is now, in some sense, 'arbitrary' or 'free', and constitutes the linguistic counterpart of the Cartesian independence of mind from body.[35] Thus, for Clauberg «the mind is the efficient cause of perceptual ideas» and «the extramental object has no causal effect on the soul».[36] As Weber wrote, «les mots ne reflètent pas l'essence des choses, mais ils sont bien imposés par l'homme aux choses, ou plutôt aux idées»: names are «tributaires de la manière dont les choses sont connues».[37] The prefatory letter says, in fact, that the main goal of *MdE* is to show that transcendentals

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[32]   Ibid., 109, fn. 34.

[33]   Hannah Dawson: Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 23, 58.

[34]   M. Savini: Methodus, op. cit., 255–256.

[35]   Ibid., 260–261.

[36]   Leen Spruit: Johannes Clauberg on Perceptual Knowledge, in: Johannes Clauberg (1622–1665) and Cartesian Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century, ed. by Theo Verbeek (Dordrecht: Springer, 1999) 75–93, 84–85. Clauberg is not a «classical occasionalist» because he did not endorse the causal inefficacy of the human mind or divine intervention (Ibid., 79).

[37]   C. Weber: Origines, op. cit., 105.

are «nothing other than the *ways in which the mind thinks*».[38] By breaking away with the intelligible species «la réflexion cartésienne […] fournit ainsi un cadre privilégié pour concevoir la signification comme un processus entièrement interne à la *cogitatio*».[39]

Now, which language stands to express this *cogitatio?* This is were the differences between Clauberg and Descartes become apparent. Savini discusses Clauberg's hermeneutics in Cartesian terms without mentioning German. The aim of hermeneutics is «de faire comprendre aux autres ses propres pensées […] et comprendre la pensée des autres».[40] This comprehension rests on the belief, held by Descartes, that language is a set of neutral signs and that, once the concepts are understood clearly and distinctly, all languages can translate them equivalently.[41] Or, that there is a mental language, a language of thought, which is not essentially expressed in a given natural language. *MdE* and *AET* seem to sketch a different picture. On account of the arguments that German is superior to Latin in metaphysics (prefatory letter and *MdE* 22) because of its grammar and semantics (as in *AET*) − and granting that Clauberg had more than rhetorical and nationalistic reasons in support of his views − my suggestion is that, after the discovery of German as a philosophical language, Clauberg could not anymore hold on to the view that there is a single, univocal relationship between language, thought and reality. There must be as many relationships as there are languages. Nor could he believe anymore that language (verbal discourse) was irrelevant, or accessory, to the formulation of thought (mental discourse). This was Clauberg's own «challenge from vernacular», to use Waswo's expression: that the «end of Latin» triggered the end of the «fixed meaning of things entailed by it».[42] This suggests that the discovery of German as a philosophical language is of great consequence for Clauberg's philosophy.

Let us see, first, how Clauberg understands the independence of mind which underpins language. As noted above, *dicibile* is on the same transcendental level as *ens* and *intelligibile*, which makes every being *intelligibile* and *dicibile*. In this sense, language takes place at the transcendental level. *Dicibile* also entails some degree of being: if something does not exist extra-mentally, it exists in our speech and first and foremost in our thoughts.[43] A contradiction such as 'P and ¬P', for example, does not exist extra-mentally but exists at least in speech. This

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38   MdE, prefatory letter, 2: «nihil aliud sunt, quam diversi de re eadem *cogitandi modi* […] Id quod hac editione tertia vel imprimis demonstrare studui»; and «Themata haec de Ente Metaphysica in vocabulis & loquendi modis magnam partem consistere», 3.

39   M. Savini: Methodus, op. cit., 268.

40   Ibid., 262–263.

41   Ibid., 261.

42   Richard Waswo: Language and Meaning in the Renaissance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) 136.

43   MdE 15: «si non existit extra rationem et rationem nostram in mundo, saltem est in sermone, cum dicitur, atque imprimis est in intellectu, dum cogitatur».

is a consequence of Clauberg's universal «sémiotisation [...] pour laquelle tout étant est signifiable».[44] The identity of *dicibile*, *intelligibile* and *ens* is grounded in Clauberg's understanding of the activity of a Cartesian mind. *MdE* introduces the view that 'objective being' does not signify only the way in which ideas are in the mind and their intentional being, but also a mode of being attributed by the mind to being, as being is 'objectified' or 'made an object' for and by the mind which perceives it.[45] What is knowable is knowable only *qua* objective being and not absolutely, that is, independently from a mind.[46] As Savini writes: «Le discours parlé instaure donc une double relation: d'une part avec la pensée de celui qui le prononce, de l'autre avec la chose qu'il indique [...] il signifie à la fois la pensée de l'auteur et la chose dont il parle».[47] What is missing is the awareness, ingrained in *AET*, that words are in a relation with the overall language they are parts of; that thoughts are possible only within a given language; that thoughts and speeches of different speakers are also different; and that, therefore, such relations are as numerous as there are languages. In sum, reality is *intelligibilis* and *dicibilis* differently depending on the knower's language.

Like Descartes and the scholastics, Clauberg maintains, however, that there exists an objective extra-mental world and that the mind's perception gives access to the essences of things.[48] All human beings share the same physical and cognitive processes which guarantee that they perceive the same world and engage in a mutually intelligible speech about it. Some features might be even shared by many languages, as Clauberg seemingly holds as regards the etymology of *Ding* / *res* in *MdE* 7. But in *AET* the different grammars and semantics of natural languages ground the argument for the existence of philosophically relevant differences between languages. With such an awareness of German as a philosophical language, Clauberg seems to understand, at least implicitly, language as a living, historically situated social phenomenon which receives its meaning from «grammar and historical contexts».[49] Concerning grammar, a language's rules might facilitate philosophical usages which are not available in another language. Concerning semantics, a language might produce a concept which is not present in another language. Let us consider again the passage from *MdE* 16: «Hoc esse, quod ei [enti] tribuitur, quatenus intellectui objicitur et ab eo

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44   M. Savini: Methodus, op. cit., 247.

45   MdE 16: «Hoc esse, quod ei [enti] tribuitur, quatenus intellectui objicitur et ab eo cognoscitur, vocatur *Esse objectivum* seu esse cognitum Entis».

46   On Clauberg and early modern idealism, see Jean-Christophe Bardout: Berkeley et les métaphysiques de son temps, in: Journal of the History of Philosophy 46.1 (2008) 119–139; and Giovanni Gellera: Univocity of Being, the Cogito and «Proto-Idealism» in Johannes Clauberg (1622–1665), paper given at the conference *Cognitive Issues in the Long Scotist Tradition*, organised by Daniel Heider and Claus A. Andersen, 11–13 February 2021.

47   M. Savini: Methodus, op. cit., 257.

48   L. Spruit: Perceptual, op. cit., 84, perhaps incompatibly with Weber's account.

49   R. Waswo: Language, op. cit., 112.

cognoscitur, vocatur *Esse objectivum* seu esse cognitum Entis». Concerning the following English translation: «This being, which is attributed to [a being], insofar as it is objectified and known by the intellect, is called *Objective being* or being known of a being», Clauberg could contend that English grammar does not allow for a non-contextual distinction between a verbal form used substantively or as a participle, and that, therefore, English is less accurate than Latin or German at discussing being.

This discussion evokes the view that language is a «linguistic / cognitive process»,[50] and that truth is a linguistic phenomenon. It is unclear to what extent Clauberg was aware of the implications of these views for his philosophy.[51] Clauberg can be still regarded as an 'essentialist' insofar as he maintained a version of the correspondence theory of truth,[52] stressed that language and nature behave analogously (as the simplicity of the word 'being' which bespeaks the simplicity of the concept of being demonstrates), and postulated an objective, external world precisely as the measure of the superiority of German. However, the non-philosophical equivalence between languages seems to suggest an incommunicability more profound than that in the traditional statement of the superiority of one language over another. The variety of world languages could be regarded as evidence of the non-causal cognitive processes by which the Cartesian mind attributes different meanings, in different languages, to different worlds.

3. German language and national self-identity

The admittedly high-sounding title of the previous section was meant to help us keep in mind the following, tentative question: did Clauberg (begin to) conceive of a distinctively 'German philosophy' rather than a 'philosophy in German'? Clauberg's *AET* is a chapter in the long history of the self-appreciation of German speakers. The reference to one of its defining moments, Martin Luther's own use of German, helps us bring out the cultural dimension of German language at the time of Clauberg.

According to Koryl, Luther realised that language was «a cultural phenomenon» which could mark «membership in different yet self-conscious communities».[53] «Latin was no longer a nationally indifferent tongue» because «different

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[50]   Ibid., 103.

[51]   Let alone whether his death in 1665, shortly after publishing *AET* and *MdE*, cut short his reflections on these views. R. Waswo: Language, op. cit., 110–113 suggests that not even Lorenzo Valla was entirely aware of these views because of their radicality.

[52]   MdE 153: «veritas cujusque in eo consistit, quod *cum sua convenit idea,* quam de ea format intellectus».

[53]   Jakub Koryl: Beasts at School: Luther, Language and Education for the Advancement of Germanness, in Journal of Early Modern Christianity 6 (2019) 111–134, 112.

variants of Latin were legitimizing nothing but different […] interpretations of Roman reality».[54] So German could unite a community while distancing it from Rome, and Germanness started to imply the rejection of Roman faith. However, Luther also «divide[d] the German space»,[55] and the spread of Calvinism further complicated the confessional divisions. As a Reformed, Clauberg's reference Bible was probably Johannes Piscator's rather than Luther's, which raises the difficult question of the influence of Luther's language on non-Lutheran German-speaking milieux.[56] In *AET*, Clauberg speaks of German lands as «patria mea», of German as «lingua nostra» which «we [German-speakers] have created» («fecimus»).[57] If not due to confessional unity, Clauberg's pan-German sentiment might be seen as a response to the devastating and divisive Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), which coincided with Clauberg's youth.[58]

The success or failure of a language is also dictated by what it represents, socially and culturally, for its users. For Luther, the rejection of Roman identity implied the rejection of scholastic Latin and clear, every day language should be used instead. A similar approach is in Clauberg, who was attentive to «language uses»,[59] and often construed etymologies from an empirical perspective.[60] He was also alert to Gallicisms and Germanisms in Latin, which brought Weber to suggest that seventeenth-century authors thought in the vernaculars as much as they did in Latin.[61] In the virtually monolingual high-culture milieu of the Middle Ages it was arguably easier to consider Latin as 'the' language, immutable and superior, to such an extent that, according to Waswo, the «end of Latin» brought about «the end of the fixed meanings of things entailed by it» as well.[62] Clauberg contended that scholastic Latin was almost untranslatable in German,[63] but that, whereas Latin still lacked an adequate contender and a potential replace-

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[54]   Ibid., 122.

[55]   Robert J. Evans: Confession and Nation in Early Modern Central Europe, in Central Europe 9 (2011) 2–17, 15.

[56]   Appended to *AET* is a short treatise entitled *De usu Philologiae Germ.[anicae] in Theologicis*. Clauberg argues that German is the best language for theology but he does not seem to argue along confessional lines.

[57]   AET 13, 25, 50. Regrettably, Clauberg does not investigate the relations between the individual Cartesian mind and language as a social and historical construct.

[58]   This adds a different emphasis to M. Savini: Methodus, op. cit., 193: «la situation historique, individuelle et concrète du sujet de la connaissance est toujours un point essentiel de la réflexion claubergienne».

[59]   C. Weber: Origines, op. cit., 105.

[60]   J. Waterman: Ars, op. cit., 401. Cf. Catherine König-Pralong: Entangled Philosophical Ideologies, in: Language and Method, ed. by Ueli Zahnd (Freiburg i.Br.-Berlin-Wien: Rombach Verlang, 201) 337–355, 341: «philosophies in the vernacular languages were regarded as living thought, unlike Latin scholastic philosophy which embodied a dying culture expressed in a dead language».

[61]   C. Weber: Origines, op. cit., 95.

[62]   R. Waswo: Language, op. cit., 136. See also fn. 42 above.

[63]   C. Weber: Origines, op. cit., 106. One wonders what Clauberg would have thought of the Latin translation of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* by Frederik Gottlob Born (1796).

ment, scholasticism did not. Clauberg proclaimed that Cartesianism is especially attuned to the German spirit, and did so in German.[64] While a Frenchman like Descartes philosophised in French also in order to reach a wider, non-academic audience, Clauberg appropriated Cartesian philosophy as «especially suited to the nature of the German nation», since the German spirit is one of few words, empirically-minded, and wary of verbiage.[65] Cartesian philosophy «does not contain one tenth of the words of scholastic philosophy» and «can be translated into German or into another vernacular language much more easily and accurately than scholastic philosophy», for a Latin-to-German translation inevitably makes up new words in German.[66] Luther also «grounded the difference of Latins and Germans on the foundations of cultural differences».[67] This is contentious for present-day readers but seventeenth-century thinkers agreed that languages reveal the «dispositions of peoples and nations»,[68] and so did Clauberg.[69] The German word 'Mann' is capitalised because Germans are «viri fortes», who display a unique «impetum».[70] In *AET*, Clauberg mentions Julius Caesar Scaliger, who was a typical source for literary national stereotypes: «Germans are strong, simple, self-sacrifying, true friends as well as true enemies».[71] Clauberg will be excused for perpetrating a common stereotype but, however simplistic, these views contributed to the delineation of national identities in an increasingly post-Latinised Europe.

The cultural and national dimensions of Clauberg's anti-scholasticism, Cartesianism and linguistic ideology are all too evident. The «connection between national language and true philosophy, as affirmed in German idealism» is commonly associated with German philosophy.[72] This *longue durée* perspective suggests that, along with others, «Clauberg a posé les bases de l'emploi

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64   Johannes Clauberg: Unterschied zwischen der Cartesianischer, und der sonst in Schulen gebräuchlicher Philosophie (Duisburg: A. Wyngarten, 1657).

65   Ibid., XIII.67: «Cartesianam Philosophiam Naturae Germanicae Nationis maxime accommodatam esse, siquidem Germanus genius multorum verborum profusor non est, nec gaudet garrulitate, sed potius plura in rebus ipsis praestat, quam verbis promittat».

66   I quote from the later Latin translation: Johannes Clauberg: Differentia inter Cartesianam et aliam in Scholis usitatam Philosophiam (Berlin: Rupert Wolkern, 1680) XIII.66: «ne quidem decimam omnium verborum et vocabulorum partem continet» and «Cartesiana Philosophia longe commodius in Germanicam aut quamvis vernaculam Linguam transferri potest quam altera».

67   J. Koryl: Beasts, op. cit., 112.

68   H. Dawson: Locke, op. cit., 62, citing Francis Bacon.

69   C. Weber: Origines, op. cit., 112, fn. 70: «corrélation peuple-langage».

70   AET 32, 48. Cf. Waterman: Ars, op. cit., 401: «barefaced chauvinism».

71   Julius Caesar Scaliger: Poetices Libri Septem, bk. III, ch. XVII: «Germani fortes, simplices, animarum prodigi, veri amici, verique hostes». Scaliger's national stereotypes are hardly positive, with the exception perhaps of German, French and Indian ones.

72   C. König-Pralong: Entangled Philosophical Ideologies, op. cit., 355: in nineteenth-century France too, some connected true philosophy and French, because French syntax follows the «logic of thought and is thus very close to the mental language» (347).

de l'allemand en philosophie»,[73] as well as of the high praise for German in German philosophy. This connection between language and true philosophy is not as prominent in other philosophical traditions. In Scotland for example, English replaced Latin as the philosophical language, so language did not feature in the debates about the identity of a Scottish philosophical tradition. This tradition's 'unity' is found elsewhere, in a philosophical «project […] undertaken within an institutional framework of some sort» because, for a certain time, «the church, the universities, and the wider sphere of publishing, lectures, learned societies — were a feature distinctive of Scottish social life».[74] Arguably then, the role played by language complements the more established narrative that confessionalisation, understood as «the relation between religion and state»,[75] was a driver in the creation of nation states. Bishop Morgan, the translator of the Welsh Bible of 1588, noted that while a national language is desirable «there is no doubt that similitude and harmony in matters of faith contribute more to unity than similitude and harmony in the matter of language».[76] But the German world was politically and confessionally divided and, perhaps, a sought-after national self-identity was perceived, and possible, in language more than elsewhere. Discussing the transformation of the medieval 'nations' at the Council of Constance (1414–1418) into 'national groups',[77] and the concomitant role of language, Caspar Hirschi has argued that German self-identity was made possible also because the Germans assimilated the foreigners', especially the Italians', misperception of them as speakers of one and the same incomprehensible language.[78]

Local aspects were important in the birth of 'national' philosophical traditions, especially in the ways in which universities and society were structured, and people perceived their own language, confession and relations to neighbouring countries. In time, a positive feedback loop set in between a growing incommunicability between languages, national communities of scholars, and national sentiments, which generated and sustained distinct philosophical 'projects' and schools. Arguably, the national philosophical traditions took shape counter, or at least parallel, to philosophical movements such as scholasticism or the Enlightenment, in which local and national differences were less significant. In late eighteenth-century Germany, language, universities and confessions of faith would

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[73]   Ibid., 106.

[74]   Gordon Graham: The Integrity of Scottish Philosophy and the Idea of a National Tradition, in: Scottish Philosophy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, ed. by Gordon Graham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 303–323, 315 and 317. With the Act of Union of 1707, Scotland maintained autonomy in religion, education and law.

[75]   Evans: Confession, op. cit., 3.

[76]   Ibid., 13.

[77]   Caspar Hirschi: The Origins of Nationalism. An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 81–88.

[78]   Ibid., 106–108.

give a distinctive form to the German discontent with the *République des lettres* which, as a sign of the times, was emphasised by a «great narrative of national awakening».[79]

Conclusion

Unlike most of his contemporaries including Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Clauberg was not content with legitimasing German as a philosophical language on a par with Latin. Rather, he proclaimed its superiority on account of the definition of essences, composition of nouns and prominence of verbal forms. The discovery of German as a philosophical language is an important, and neglected, aspect of Clauberg's thought. First, when philosophers overwhelmingly believed in the cosmetic or arbitrary view of language and in the superiority of Latin, Clauberg hinted at intriguing, albeit tentative, counter-views to long-held assumptions about the relation between language, concept and world. Discipline-specific assumptions and traditions made it so that philosophers, especially academic, arrived relatively late at formulating a discourse in the vernacular, and very few philosophers participated in the birth of the vernaculars.[80] If languages grasp reality differently (because of their respective grammar and semantics), then it is not irrelevant in which language one philosophises. Language would then be far from being detrimental to reason,[81] and one could only reason within a (historically defined) language.[82]

Secondly, despite their peculiarity and chauvinism, positions such as Clauberg's are historically relevant for the birth of the national philosophical traditions. On the one side, history of philosophy is, more than other disciplines, replete with national qualifications: Greek philosophy, French theory, Scottish philosophy, German idealism, British empiricism, just to name a few. On the other, most philosophers today regard philosophy as a universal science based on shareable mental content and the analytic method, irrespective of one's own language. A consequence of the increasingly international community of philosophers is the adoption of English as *lingua franca*. But many philosophers do not speak English as their first language and are familiar with it mostly as a technical jargon and not thanks to «every day uses and experience». So, Clauberg's philosophy of German language also reminds us of the benefits of paying more

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[79]   Kasper Risbjerg Eskilden: How Germany Left the Republic of Letters, in: Journal of the History of Ideas 65 (2004) 421—432, 430.

[80]   As compared to, for example, Dante Alighieri, the anonymous authors of the *chansons de geste*, Geoffrey Chaucer, or Meister Eckhart.

[81]   See Hannah Dawson: The Rebellion of Language Against Reason in Early Modern Philosophy, in: Intellectual History Review 17 (2007) 277—290.

[82]   C. Weber: Origines, op. cit., 106: the excellence of German would even make a universal philosophical language unnecessary.

attention to the origins and history of these historical-philosophical denomina-tions, to the non-philosophical factors which shaped them, such as language, and to the many ways in which they still influence philosophy today.

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