### On Founding Ontology as an Academic Discipline

### The Case of Buffalo

**Barry Smith** 



# 1879

### Wilhelm Wundt establishes the world's first psychological laboratory at the University of Leipzig

### 1883

The first laboratory of psychology in America established at Johns Hopkins

## 1892

# The American Psychological Association founded, with 42 members

## 1894

Carl Stumpf called to serve as professor of philosophy in Berlin with the explicit task of establishing there an institute of psychology Typical reasons for founding a new discipline (in accordance with the catherine-wheel effect)

feelings of chaos, deadendedness, triviality (postmodernism ...) inside philosophy new methods for tackling philosophical problems

empirical results

increasing intersection with other disciplines

increasing need for cross-disciplinary collaboration

## Typical reactions to the founding of a new discipline

fearful / disdainfull reaction from within philosophy

struggle for resources

1913 "Erklärung von Dozenten der Philosophie in Deutschland gegen die Besetzung Philosophischer Lehrstühle mit Vertretern der experimentellen Psychologie"

# Carnap:

If one is interested in the relations between fields which, according to customary academic divisions, belong to different departments, then he will not be welcomed as a builder of bridges, as he might have expected, but will rather be regarded by both sides as an outsider and troublesome intruder.

"My Work in Philosophy Begins" (in the Carnap Schilpp volume).

# Metaphysics (phil.)

# The science of being **Ontology** (*phil.*)

A theory of the types of entities existing in reality, and of the relations between these types

# **Ontologies** (tech.)

Standardized classification systems which enable data from different sources to be combined

Ontology (*tech.*) often marked by intellectual confusions – above all by the confusion of use and mention

Gruber: 'For AI systems what "exists" is what can be represented'

Microsoft Healthvault: 'An allergy episode is ... a single unit of data that is recorded in Microsoft Healthvault'

# Ontology (science)

is not a job for software engineers but it is not a job for philosophers, either, e.g. where ontology is playing an increasing role in supporting interdisciplinary communication between human beings – for example in improving communication between Federal government departments

# what is needed to found a new discipline

journals conferences institutes societies industrial applications subject-matter methods cumulative results teaching career path (inside and outside the university)

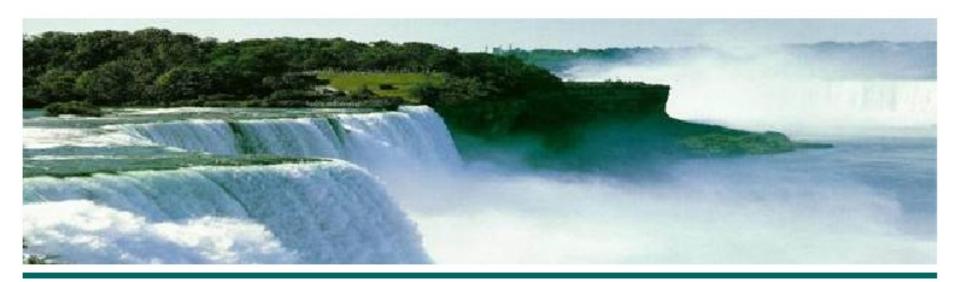
# Further details under each of these subheadings

http://tinyurl.com/yhygeke

See also:

#### An Introduction to Ontology: From Aristotle to the Universal Core – Training course in eight lectures

at http://ontologist.com



#### International Conference on Biomedical Ontology

University at Buffalo, NY Tutorials and Classes: July 25-28,2011 Conference: July 29-31, 2011

http://icbo.buffalo.edu

### typical reactions to the founding of a new discipline

struggle for resources resistance from within philosophy [▶ Select 📷 🔍 - 📄 🚺 🛶 😁 118% - 🛞 🏳 - 🍸 🕜 Help -

# Department of PHILOSOPHY

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Ontology at Buffalo

#### JOB POSTING

Assistant/Associate Professor in Social and Political Philosophy

JOB POSTING

Romanell Chair in Philosophy Search

Course Sched

• Fall 2006

News

October 2006: The Philosophy of

September-October 2 Ontology, Informa Life Sciences

June 2006 : NEH Summer Se

June 2006: Jason Paget rece Mary C. Whitma

# BS teaching (examples)

- Formal Ontology, 1991–92.
- Metaphysics, 1992
- Cognitive Metaphysics, 1995.
- Law and Ontology, 1997
- Problems in Ontology, 1999
- Geographic Ontology, 2001 and 2002
- Philosophy of Social Reality, 2001
- Formal Ontology, 2002
- Ontology, Bioinformatics and Life Sciences, 2006

# Masters Degree (since 2000)

MA in Philosophy with a special focus on Ontology

1 student completed the program (hired by industry)

# Doctoral Degree (since 2000)

PhD in Philosophy with a special focus on Ontology

Multiple students completed PhDs – LTC Bill Mandrick, *The Ontology of War* 

# Faculty recruiting

Neil Williams Maureen Donnelly Thomas Bittner (Philosophy and Geography)

The perils of the tenure process

# An Experimental Antidote

Center for Brain and Behavior Informatics (http://cbbi.buffalo.edu)

will be recruiting for an ontologist with philosophy as tenuring department, but using the clinical model of faculty tenure