THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT OF SWEDENBORG THE PHILOSOPHER—REASON AND FAITH, FAITH AND REASON—A HUMAN PROJECT*

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PART TWO

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) life and work

The man who is often referred to as the last "universal genius" was born in Leipzig on July 1, 1646. The devastating Thirty Years War would not be over for two more years. It is said that Leibniz's spirit of reconciliation and synthesis can be traced, in part, to his sense of horror over the slaughter visited on the innocent, whether Protestant or Catholic, due to the doctrinal or ideological intransigence of the protagonists. His irenic vision was life-long; while it is generally associated with his "peace plans," it may have contributed to his urge to explore almost every field of human endeavor. He was always making/seeing connections. Even today, the extent of his achievements in philosophy, mathematics, optics, physics, geology, jurisprudence, and history are still being discovered, due in part to the fact that only half of his corpus has been published to date (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz/). His output was prodigious. The size of his archive, 120 volumes, is testimony to that (Stewart, 2011, 91).[1] In addition he was a correspondent with 1,100 individuals during his life-time (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz/).

Gottfried W. Leibniz was born into Leipzig's Lutheran educational elite. His father, Fredrich, was a professor of Moral philosophy at the University of Leipzig, as well as a lawyer. His mother, Catharina Schmuck,

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[1] According to Stewart, Leibniz wrote 150,000 pages of material (Stewart, 2011, 149). Given the number of his volumes (120), they each must be approximately 1250 pages in length. Truly astounding. Emanuel Swedenborg published 128 items in his life and left an additional 182 in manuscript, for a total of 310 items altogether. The published material contains 13,924 pages and the unpublished 28,000 for a total of over 42,000 pages (Rose et. al., 2005, 387–88). This is about 1/3 of the output of Leibniz.

was the daughter of a Law professor. Leibniz's father died in 1652, when he was only six years old. After his father's death, his education was supervised by his mother and uncle. However, the record suggests that it was primarily self-directed. The young genius was given access to his father's extensive library, and Leibniz appears to have dug in, reading ancient history, philosophy, and theology (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz/). Self taught, he quickly became proficient in Latin and competent in Greek.

At the age of fourteen, Leibniz began his university education at Leipzig. With a deep interest in philosophy he came under the influence of Professor Jakob Thomasius (1622–1684). Thomasius was a Lutheran, a philosopher, and a lawyer. He taught Rhetoric, Dialectics, and Moral Philosophy. He had an interest in the history of philosophy and had strong Aristotelian views. He adhered to the position that philosophy should retain Christian Aristotelianism as it foundation, in order to maintain the necessary separation between the Creator and creation, and God and nature. He became Leibniz's mentor. Leibniz's desire to reconcile ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotle, and the Scholastics with modern philosophy can be traced to Thomasius. He remained a friend to Leibniz and a sounding board for his ideas (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz/).

Leibniz presented his thesis *On the Principle of Individuation* to the faculty at the age of seventeen (Stewart, 2011, 43). Having completed his first course of study, Leibniz then had to select a profession. He chose jurisprudence. The next year he matriculates at the University of Jena, and in 1664 was awarded a Master's degree. In the short run, jurisprudence did not gain him much, having lost the legal contest over his mother's will with a maternal uncle the same year he received his M.A. In the long run it was to serve him well not only in his political career, but in his philosophy also. Stewart calls him "God's attorney" in his metaphysical defense of God's goodness (Stewart, 2011, 44).

It is in this same timeframe (1666) that Leibniz published an exceptionally original work entitled *Dissertation on the Art of Combinations*. It laid out the possibility of a method with a "universal characteristic" and a logical calculus. He points to this essay later in life in order to demonstrate how early thoughts about calculus had come to him.

After receiving his baccalaureate in Leipzig, and M.A. in Jenna, Leibniz continued his juridical studies at the University of Altdorf, near Nuremberg, where he received a Doctorate of Law in 1667. Upon completion, he was offered a professorship at the university, but declined. At that time, universities were fairly conservative strongholds, and becoming a professor was not necessarily a good fit for Leibniz and his energetic and multifaceted mind. His thoughts became focused in a very different direction (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz/ & Stewart, 2011, 45–48). Leibniz aspired to be a man of the world. He wanted to be needed, to be center stage—where things were happening.

The same year he received his doctorate, he became acquainted with Baron Johann Christian von Boineberg (1622–1672), a member of the court of the Elector of Mainz, and from time to time first minister. Boineberg immediately saw Leibniz's talent: his learning, his judgment, his extraordinary capacity to work, and his stamina. By year's end Boineberg had hired Leibniz to be his secretary, librarian, and advisor (Stewart, 2011, 49).

In 1672, with Boineberg's influence, Leibniz was able to persuade the Elector of Mainz to send him on a diplomatic mission to the French government in Paris, ostensibly bringing a "peace plan" to counter the expansionist aims of Louis XIV. While there is some question whether Leibniz presented his plan, he certainly took advantage of the intellectual environment of the French capital.[2] In Paris he made contacts with people and ideas that were vital to the development of his philosophy, his mathematics, his physics, and his calculating machine. It is clear that the time Leibniz spent in Paris was transformational. Not only did he have the opportunity to engage in conversation with some of the best minds of the century, but he also was able to see unpublished papers and manuscripts of both Descartes and Pascal (1623–1662) (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz/). The papers of Descartes influence his philosophy, and Leibniz himself notes that Pascal's work was seminal for his mathematics, both the calculus and his work on infinite series (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/leibniz/).

[2] The peace plan for Europe was to have France engage in a holy war against the infidels in Egypt (Stewart, 2011, 135).

He met with Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694), Nicholas Malabranche (1638–1715), and Christian Huygens (1625–ly1695). Arnauld introduced Leibniz to Paris, opening many door for him. Leibniz was able to develop a strong relationship with Arnauld that was continued via correspondence for many years, after his departure from Paris. He frequently debated with Malabranche; and Huygens, impressed with Leibniz's scientific talent, was able, as leader of the Paris Royal Academy of Science, to provide Leibniz entree to the members, but not membership in the Academy. On a more personal level, he provided useful insights to the mathematical musings of Leibniz.

The death of his employer, not long after his arrival in Paris, put Leibniz in a difficult financial situation. Although he took charge of the education of Boineberg's teenage son, by request of Boineberg, both the son and his mother were not pleased with the rigor demanded by Leibniz and he was fired in 1674 (Stewart, 2011, 144). In addition, the Elector of Mainz no longer felt the need to support Leibniz, although he was happy enough to grant him leave to stay.

In 1673, Leibniz received an offer of employment in his court from Johann Frederick, the Duke of Hanover (1625–1679). To accept the offer Leibniz would be require to leave Paris, something he was loath to do (except for a brief trip to London that same year, to present his calculating machine to the British Royal Society). The trip to London and a visit to Oldenburg garnered Leibniz access to the society which resulted in a coveted offer of membership, and through Oldenburg a friendship with Walter Ehrenfried von Tschirnhaus (1651–1708), a bright young German and a trusted member of Spinoza's circle.

For three years, Leibniz was able to string the Duke along, until finally in January of 1676, with no other options available, he was constrained to accept the offer. Nonetheless, it took almost a full year for Leibniz to make the move and, as has been noted, in November on his way to Hanover he stopped in The Hague to visit Spinoza (Stewart, 2011, 154).

During his sojourn in Paris, Leibniz broke new ground in almost every area of his intellectual life, most particularly in the area of mathematics. The arrival of Tschirnhaus, in the late summer of 1675 with a letter of introduction from Oldenburg, led to many lively exchanges about mathematics and on "October 29, 1675, . . . Leibniz used the symbol ∫ to stand for

integration, replacing the earlier "oms" (for "omnes"). Two weeks later, on November 11, he used *dx* for the first time to represent the differential of x" (Stewart, 2011, 151). By the spring of 1676, his calculus was complete. He finally published it in 1684 in the learned journal *Acta Euriditorum*.

Tschirnhaus brought not only a mind interested in mathematics with him when he came to Paris, but devotion to the philosophy of Spinoza. This, too, stimulated Leibniz and, in early February 1676, he wrote, "'Tschirnhaus has told me many things about the book of M. de Spinoza'" (Stewart, 2011, 155). The book he was referring to was the *Ethics*. It is plausible that the discussions with Tschirnhaus about the *Ethics* stimulated the visit to Spinoza later that year. While, the impact of Spinoza on Leibniz was raised earlier in this chapter, the significance of this will be discussed later.

Toward the end of 1676, Leibniz finally arrived in Hanover to take up his duties at the Court. They were important and wide-ranging. Leibniz would work for Johann Friedrich until the death of the Duke in 1679. He would also work for the Duke's brother, Ernst August (1629–1698), and his son, Georg Ludwig (1660–1727), George I of England, until his own death in 1716. While he traveled some during this forty-year period, for the most part he was resident in Hanover, and kept in touch with the life of the mind he loved so much, mostly through correspondence. His relations with his employers during this period was often strained. In 1710, he published his *Theodicy*, and, except for some of his mathematics, much of the rest of his voluminous writings remained in manuscript.[3]

The final years of Leibniz were, in fact, bleak. He was engaged in an acrimonious struggle with Newton and his followers over the discovery of the calculus.

The battle was so intense that Leibniz could not follow his employer to England when Georg Ludwig became King George I. Leibniz, toward the end of his life, was mocked and ridiculed, and after his death, on November 14, 1716 his funeral was totally ignored by the house of Hanover. Philosophically, almost immediately after his death, his insights were to be taken up by Christian Wolff (1679–1754). Today, although Wolff is

[3] He sent a substantial portion of his *Discourse on Metaphysics* to Antoine Arnauld in 1686, but the work itself was not published until the 19th century.

essentially ignored, interest in Leibniz remains strong. In part, this is because of his contribution to mathematics, but his metaphysics also provide an antidote to Spinoza, now just as they did then.

Leibniz's philosophical project

While the problem of the early modern contest between faith and reason is the focus of this chapter, the roles played by the various philosophers under examination have not yet been explicitly discussed. However, as shall be seen, the very nature of Leibniz's philosophical project demands an accounting of who was defending what position or what barricade in this struggle.

Jonathan Israel, in his book, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (2001) states: "To many a courtier, official, teacher, lawyer, physician, and churchman, philosophy and philosophers seemed to burst upon the European scene with terrifying force. Countless books reflect the unprecedented and, for some, intoxicating, intellectual and spiritual upheaval of those decades, a vast turbulence in every sphere of knowledge and belief which shook European civilization to its foundations. A sense of shock and acute danger penetrated even the most remote and best defended fastnesses of the west" (Israel, 2001, 3). He continues: ". . . everything no matter how fundamental or deeply rooted, was questioned in the light of philosophical reason and frequently challenged or replaced by startling different concepts generated by the New Philosophy and what may be usefully termed the Scientific Revolution" (Israel, 2001, 3,4).

The princes, the churchmen, regardless of confession, and the establishment in general formed the core of the conservatives. They were supported by philosophers such as Boussuet, Malebranche, Lamy, Régis and countless others. The radicals they identified were Descartes and Cartesians, Spinoza and his circle, and Bayle. Leibniz's irenic character and passion informed his philosophical project. He wanted to provide a "cogent, viable, and comprehensive new framework" that would overcome the differences between the world of faith and the way of reason (Israel, 2001, 502).

Leibniz's theodicy

In fact, the opening section of his *Theodicy* which is titled, "Preliminary Dissertation on the Conformity of Faith with Reason" clearly set forth this view. Thus, what follows will focus primarily on an examination of Liebniz's *Theodicy*.[4]

While all of his philosophical writing had this resolution in view, it is only possible to place his solution in the context of his age through an examination of his *Theodicy* (1710); because, as Austin Farrer (1904–1968), editor of a 1951 edition of the *Theodicy*, wrote: "Leibniz wrote two books, . . . Of the two books, one was published, and the other never was. The *New Essays* remained in Leibniz's desk, the *Theodicy* saw the light. And so, to his own and the succeeding generation, Leibniz was know as the author of the *Theodicy*" (Leibniz, 1985, 33).

According to Michael Murray in his article on "Leibniz on the Problem of Evil" (http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/leibniz-evil/), Leibniz was troubled by this issue throughout his career. Educated in the Scholastic tradition, he wanted to reform scholasticism in order to take into account the new science. As Farrer suggests, Descartes, had similar aims. Thus, one might have expected Leibniz to start on the "shoulders" of Descartes and climb higher (Leibniz, 1985, 12). This he did not do; in part, because he was not well acquainted with Descartes' work, and in part, because of what he did know about it, he found inadequate. Thus, Farrer views Leibniz as a scholastic bent on modernizing or revolutionizing that tradition.

Even though it was Leibniz who coined the word, "theodicy," from the Greek words for "God" and "justice," philosophers, almost from the beginning, have reflected upon the relationship between God, justice, and the existence of evil. Christians, however, prior to the seventeenth century, did not attempt to resolve the matter "naturally without being aided by

[4] In the centuries since his death much more has become known of about Leibniz's project, but his immediate legacy in the 18th century was, in fact, his *Theodicy*. The Latin edition of his *Monodology* appeared in 1721. Leibniz consider it "the best summary of his philosophy." See Catherine Wilson's essay in Jolley 1995, 443. It was, nonetheless, not a good general introduction. In 1737, C. G. Ludovici (no dates) published a bibliography of Leibniz's works listing about 294 that were both published and unpublished, as well as some of his correspondence. It is also true that Swedenborg took extensive notes from the *Theodicy* in *A Philosopher's Notebook*, Alfred Acton, ed. 1931.

the light of faith" (Leibniz, 1985, 73). Leibniz did because he defined "reason as the linking together of truths . . . without being aided by the light of faith" (ibid.); while Saine writes: ". . . that there is no ready explanation for the special tenacity with which the Enlightenment mind pursued the problem of justifying God" (Saine, 1997, 87). In the case of Leibniz, who was born during the Thirty Years War, it may be that he felt compelled to prove the goodness and justice of God only in the light of natural reason because of the enormous evil recently manifest in the German world by men of faith. For Leibniz, perhaps demonstrating God's justice by means of natural reason was the safest path to "awaken piety" "in men who love truth and search after it" (Leibniz, 1985, 62–63).

In order to awaken that piety, Leibniz organized his discussion of the problem of theodicy in the following manner: Preface; The conformity of Faith with Reason; The Justice of God; The Freedom of Man; and The Origin of Evil. He hoped for success in his endeavor, "because it is the cause of God he pleads" (Leibniz, 1985, 62).

According to Saine, Leibniz pleads for God, because "the chief subject of theodicy" is not man's happiness on earth or the evils to which he is subjected but " . . . [it] is the question whether or not man's will is free and whether, as a consequence, God's rewards and punishments are arbitrary or just" (Saine, 1997, 99). If man's will is free, then God's sanctions are just. So we must learn the nature of God, the nature of man, and the origin of evil. Essential to Leibniz's solution is his concept of Pre-established harmony; it is foundational to his theodicy.

The nature of Leibniz's God differs radically from the Protestant God of either Luther or Calvin, who was vengeful and unpredictable. The God for whom Leibniz pleads is good, just, and is one that can be understood:

> Our end is to banish from men the false ideas that represent God to them as an absolute prince employing a despotic power, unfitted to be loved and unworthy of being loved. These notions are the more evil in relation to God inasmuch as the essence of piety is not only to fear him but also to love him above all things: and that cannot come about unless there be knowledge of his perfections capable of arousing love which he deserves, and which makes the felicity of those that love him. Feeling ourselves animated by a zeal such as cannot fail to please him, we have cause to

> hope that he will enlighten us in the execution of a project undertaken for his glory and for the good of men. (Leibniz, 1985, 127)

In order to complete his project successfully, Leibniz must demonstrate the coexistence of human freedom with God's omnipotence and foreknowledge. The path he takes is to demonstrate God's freedom, because if God is not free, of course neither is humankind. In order to do this Leibniz presents the idea of "possible worlds" (Saine, 1997, 93–94).

Leibniz endowed God with all the faculties of human beings. He possesses "Goodness," "Wisdom," and "Power." As Leibniz wrote:

> Nevertheless, when one says that *goodness* alone determined God to create the universe, it is well to add that his GOODNESS prompted him *antecedently* to create and produce all possible good; but that his WISDOM made the choice and cause him to select the best *consequently*; and that his POWER gave him the means to carry out *actually* the great design which he had formed. (Liebniz, 1985, 187)

Thus, the goodness of God caused him to think and reflect; that is, to weigh all possible worlds, and then choose a "compossible" world, which is a world that is complete and where everything that exists fits together and would be logically connected to everything else. This is not a necessary world, but a contingent world. It could not have come into existence, like the countless other "possible" worlds that God had reflected upon, unless he had sufficient reason to create this particular one. For Leibniz, as we see above, the reason was, his "wisdom" had him select the best.

According to Saine's reading of Leibniz, God does not choose an absolute solution, but an optimal one (Saine, 1997, 95). Clearly, the God of Leibniz is a mathematician, calculating and choosing the best solution for the metaphysical problem Leibniz attempted to solve. Of all the possible things God could create, he eliminated prior to creating all those things that would not fit together harmoniously in the universe.

In this rational framework, constructed by Leibniz, both God and his human creatures are free. While there is evil in this world, God is not its source, but it is the result of creating a world in which there is as much good as possible. Therefore it is the best of all possible worlds. Why?

Because any other world would be contrary to God's goodness and wisdom. Because God is all good and all wise, he would not create anything but the best, even though he could have. This, of course, is circular reasoning.

Leibniz acknowledged that there is indeed evil in the world, but God permits it, he does not create it. When he created the world he set it up to operate according to the most rational rules possible, and he gave human being's the freedom to choose. Each and every human being has the capacity to choose, and to choose the good. However, no human being has the capacity to see the total picture that God sees. Therefore, as people choose the good for themselves from their own limited view, they are doing so in a detached and separate manner. This Leibniz called the *antecedent* will.[5] God, too, has an *antecedent* will. However, his antecedent will tend to all good, and "He is earnestly disposed to sanctify and to save all men to exclude sin, and to prevent damnation" (Leibniz, 1985, 136). God's antecedent will would come into effect "if there were not some stronger reason to prevent it" (ibid). The stronger reason (which is infallible) results from "the conflict of all the antecedent wills" that God must take into account in the *consequent will* (137).

Evil exists due to the conflict of antecedent wills. But this is only because God wanted to accomplish as much good as possible. This is summed up in Leibniz's statement that: "God wills *antecedently* the good, and *consequently* the best" (Leibniz, 1985, 137). Saine comments on this: "This is a curious phenomenon indeed: In Leibniz's theodicy the positive degree "the Good," is better and ranks higher than "the Best," which functions relatively instead of absolutely" (Saine, 1997, 97)!

The existence of evil is bound up with the freedom of humanity and the foresight of God. To resolve this, Leibniz turns to his monadology and the concept of Pre-established harmony. For Leibniz it is the spontaneity of the soul, in contrast to the mechanical laws of the created world and the

[5] In the translation by Acton of § 22 in the *Theodicy* of Libniz in *A Philosopher's Notebook* (Philadelphia: The Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1951) it states: "in a general sense it may be said that the Will consists in the inclination to do something because of the measure of good which it contains. This Will is called *antecedent* when it regards individual goods separately, as to how far they are good. . . . An entire and infallible event therefore belongs only to consequent will, as it is called."

body, which is the source of human freedom. The constraint of humans is only an appearance. That is, human beings are not compelled to do evil; they could, due to the spontaneity of the soul, choose good. Thus, the responsibility of evil is laid at the doorstep of humanity not God. However, the appearance of constraint is also tied up with the imperfection of the world of matter for eternal beings. As Leibniz wrote: ". . . The imperfections, on the other hand, and the defects in operations spring from the original limitation that the creature could not but receive with the first beginnings of its being, through the ideal reasons which restrict it" Leibniz, 1985, 141-42). These limits, according to Leibniz, come from the reality that God could not give creatures all of his perfections without thus making them Gods. (ibid.)

With regard to the matter of God's foresight, Leibniz wrote:

> . . . Therein God has ordered all things beforehand once for all, having foreseen prayers, good and bad actions, and all the rest; and each thing *as an idea* has contributed, before its existence to the resolution that has been made upon the existence of all things; so that nothing can be changed in the universe (any more than in a number) save its essence or, if you will save its *numerical individuality*. Thus, if the smallest evil that comes to pass in the world were missing in it, it would no longer be this world; which with nothing omitted and all allowance made, was found the best by the Creator who chose it. (Leibniz, 1985, 128-29).

It is possible to ask if mathematics is really a valid parallel to God's choosing the best world from all the worlds mathematically possible. According to Saine, "Leibniz actually draws his conclusion the other way around, *a posteriori*: if there had not been a best of all possible worlds, God would have not created any. But is not the 'best,' 'the optimum,' really still a relative value in comparison with the theoretical maximum or minimum" (Saine, 1985, 103)? Thus, at the end of the *Theodicy*, one still wonders whether or not there is a better world. And it is possible to say that Leibniz, in the final analysis, failed in his natural demonstration to prove the justice of God.

Leibnitz's general legacy

Although careful scrutiny of the *Theodicy* show it to be naive in certain respects, nonetheless, it provided a welcome picture of God to many seeking to understand God's right ways, in an increasingly scientific and naturalistic world. While the Lisbon Earthquake in 1755 gave men pause regarding God's justice, the desire to know and comprehend God persisted. As Saine writes: "Everyone knew what had to be proven in order to feel at home in the world. People wanted to believe in God's goodness and justice, in his love for men (and for all rational creatures), in the beauty and order of nature, in the freedom of man and the immortality of the soul, and [importantly] in the possibility of proving all these postulates by means of rational arguments" (Saine, 1997, 103–04).

Nonetheless, Leibniz failed in his ability to absolutely prove the conformity of faith and reason. This is plainly evident in Voltaire's *Candide* (1762), which is a not so well disguised critique (as Voltaire intended it) of the optimism of Leibniz and his "best of all possible worlds." Its secret publication was both a tremendous success and a scandal. Today, it is considered a classic and it continues to be widely read.

Leibnitz and Wolff

The relationship between Leibniz and Wolff was professional and collegial. It began in 1703 and continued until Leibniz's death in 1716. It appears that they actually met in Halle, when Leibniz was passing through on his way back to Hanover, shortly before he died. After his passing, Wolff honored the life and work of Leibniz on two separate occasions, first, in a commemorative article in *Acta Eruditorum* in 1717; and second, in a Forward to the German edition of Leibniz's correspondence with Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), the man who defended Newton in the public debate over the creation of the calculus.

Wolff, as a mathematician and a German, would have had a stake in adding his voice to the public record. While Wolff is often called a disciple of Leibniz's philosophy, their relationship began within the discipline of mathematics, when in Wolff's Latin dissertation he developed a mathematical method for practical use in philosophy. They corresponded for

almost thirteen years primarily about issues related to mathematics. Leibniz recommended Wolff for the professorship he obtained in Halle in 1706; and in 1711, he also sponsored Wolff for membership in the Berlin Academy.

According the Hettche, there are three areas where the two philosophers shared a perspective. They both: 1) had a commitment to metaphysics as an *a priori* science that can be demonstrated; 2) emphasized the necessity of definitional rigor; and 3) stressed the importance of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Wolff not only shared these fundamentals with Leibniz, but he also identified the same opponents to his own system that Leibniz did—Descartes, Spinoza, and the supporters of Atomism. (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/).

Despite the fact that Wolff was called a disciple of Leibniz during his life-time, he vigorously rejected the accusation; in part, because it was applied with derision by his opponents. While Wolff's rejection of the title is not a sufficient reason to call it into question, other factors are. First, during the early part of Wolff's career from 1706 through 1716, he was almost exclusively involved in writing about mathematics, with one volume of logic the exception. In addition, he was also very involved in teaching, the neglected discipline, mathematics in Halle. In fact, he is reported to have been "the" professor of the calculus in Germany.

Second, is the paucity of published philosophical works by Leibniz during his life time. Apart from a few small articles, the *Theodicy* (1710) is the only major work of his corpus to appear prior to his death. His mature philosophy was only published posthumously (and, in fact, today, some still remains unpublished). Quite simply, Wolff did not have access to some of the texts that could have shaped his thinking, and thus making him a disciple.

And finally, as Saine points out, the tremendous scope of Wolff's project to relate all the disciplines of philosophy to each other, does not mimic Leibniz but goes far beyond him (Saine, 1987, 103).

It is true that Leibniz's work began to be discovered and published after his death, but it was not until 1768 that the first collected edition of his works had appeared, fourteen years after Wolff's own death. When that fact is added to the realization that Wolff had published most of his philosophy by 1740, Hettche, suggests that it is possible to interpret the

expression "Leibnizian-Wolffian philosophy" in the following way: "Wolff's Dogmatic Rationalism, corrected and improved by the posthumously discovered views by Leibniz." He continues: "For the early Kant (1724–1804) and his contemporaries, Wolff provided a far more systematic and much more thorough presentation of rationalist philosophy than Leibniz" (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/).

One area of commonality between Leibniz and Wolff that is important to mention in the context of Emanuel Swedenborg's biography is the mind-body problem. The three possible relationships are: Physical influx, Spiritual influx, and Pre-established harmony. Both Leibniz and Wolff opt for the solution of Pre-established harmony. However, it should be pointed out that their solutions are not identical. It is interesting to note that in Swedenborg's first extended discussion of the soul in *The Infinite: the final Cause of Creation also the Mechanism of the Operation of The Soul and Body*, written in 1734, he chose the solution of Physical Influx. He does not compare this to the other possibilities in this work; however, he does in his 1769 work, *The Intercourse between the Soul and the Body*. In this later work, he specifically mentions both Leibniz and Wolff.

Leibniz believed he was forced into his system of Pre-established Harmony in order to deal with problems inherent in Cartesianism. He feared that, in the final analysis, Descartes reduced human beings to automatons, making freedom of the will a mere abstraction. He determined that the only way to ensure freedom was to make the soul independent of the world and existing for itself in its self-directed windowless world. Souls have no effect on the body or on other souls outside of the all-encompassing framework of God. This system may have worked within a Cartesian notion of a full universe, but broke down within the Newtonian idea of empty space. This problem with Cartesian physics led Wolff to reject Leibniz's monadology as such, while actually keeping many of the characteristics of the monad and applying them to his idea of the soul. (Saine, 1997, 70–74).

Some of the ideas of Leibniz were useful to Wolff as he worked out his philosophical system, but scientific assumptions about the world were changing, and he needed to keep them in mind as he went forward, incorporating Leibniz where it was appropriate and reasonable, and dis-

carding or changing various elements to suit his own ends and the temper of the times.

As this chapter shifts to a more detailed examination of Wolff, and his own philosophy and legacy, it is useful to wonder, about Wolff's role in encouraging an on-going engagement with Leibniz's contribution to the philosophic world. Would the understanding and appreciation of Leibniz have been the same without the role played by Wolff, the preeminent philosopher of the eighteenth century before his death?

Christian Wolff (1679–1754) life and work

Christian Wolff was born in Breslau in Silesia (part of Poland since 1945) on January 24, 1679. He came from a Lutheran family of modest means. He was educated in the Scholastic traditions of both Catholics and Protestants, because the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* reaffirmed by the treaties of Westphalia (1648) could not be enforced due to the large Lutheran minority in the region. It is reported that one of the great sports of students in Breslau during Wolff's student days was to have theological debates between the Protestants and the Catholics (Seine, 1987, 128). Experiencing this atmosphere in his youth may have encouraged Wolff's own philosophical spirit of toleration later in life.

In 1699, Wolff enrolled at the University of Jena and he pursued his interests in theology, mathematics, and natural science. His love of mathematics led him to work under the supervision of Ehrenfried W. von Tschirnhaus (1651–1708), a minor mathematician, and the author of *Medicina Mentis* (1687), a book that provided a method for a happy life using rational truth. This work was praised by Leibniz and attracted Wolff.[6] In 1703 Wolff produced a dissertation for the University of Leipzig, with the title: *Philosophicia practica universalis, methodo matematica conscripta* (On Universal Practical Philosophy, Composed from the Mathematical Method). His work was clearly related to the interests of Tschirnhaus.

[6] Tschirnhaus also wrote another work in 1700 called *Gründliche Anleitung zu den nützichen Wissenschaften* which roughly translated means "thorough instructions to useful science peculiar to Mathesis and Physics." This work, too, was of interest to Wolff and was a spring board for his own work.

Doctorate in hand, Wolff was employed in a variety of short-term teaching positions at Gdansk, Weimar, and Giessen. In 1707, he took a full-time position at the relatively new University of Halle (1694) teaching mathematics and natural philosophy. Halle at this time was a very strong center of Pietism. Gradually Wolff also began to teach courses in philosophy, and he very quickly became a popular professor.

Over the next fifteen years, Wolff worked prodigiously and developed both his mathematics and his rational philosophy. During this time he engaged in a correspondence with Leibniz focused on mathematical questions and issues. In this formative part of his career, he wrote his works in German. He produced his *Logic* in 1712 and his *Metaphysics* in 1719. As Matt Hettche states in his essay on "Christian Wolff" for the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "[Wolff's] reasons for choosing German were both tactical and theoretical" (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/). Tactically his work filled a hole in the German philosophy curriculum, and by publishing in German he also was able to promote his own thought. Theoretically, one of the ends of his philosophy was, in fact, to make it useful and not just a source of academic banter. He wanted to rescue German philosophy from its traditional narrow focus and its Scholastic formalism.

Hettche states that the starting point of Wolff's philosophy was "'the fact of human consciousness'" (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/). While this is certainly true, it is the human capacity to understand or to reason that was key to Wolff. As he wrote:

> Science is the capacity to prove from indisputable grounds everything one asserts or, in a word, the capacity of demonstrate; and in demonstration truths are connected together; therefore through science one knows the connection of truths, and thus science comes from reason. (§ 383 of the *German Metaphysics* http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian)

Wolff's philosophy was rationalist, systematic and was based on a mechanistic view of causality. Needless to say, these characteristics created dis-ease among his pietistical and Lutheran colleagues at Halle. They were also disturbed by Wolff's desire to enlarge the role of philosophy in university education. Traditionally, students took some philosophy in

order to train the mind prior to entering vocational training in law, medicine, or theology. Wolff saw philosophy as a discipline in its own right, and not just a prerequisite for further study, particularly theology. He called philosophy "Weltweisheit" or the "science of all possible things" (Saine, 1987, 104). He was clear in thinking that philosophy had a sphere that was distinct and separate from theology. And while he wrote that philosophy and theology operated in different domains, should theology move outside of the realm of transcendent truths and the mysteries of faith, it "must adhere to the rules of [natural or rational] philosophy. … [in fact] all controversies between philosophers and theologians must be on the philosopher's home ground" (Saine, 1987, 104–05).

Over time Wolff's rationalism, his tolerance, even of atheists, and his popularity among the students caused a reaction among the faculty in Halle. In 1721, he gave a lecture in which he praised Confucian morality. The standard Christian doctrine of original sin put the Chinese outside of the pale. They were considered heathen atheists, and thus, for Wolff to even intimate that they, nonetheless, could be viewed as moral generated not just disbelief but hostility among his colleagues.

Wolff defined morality, or "the highest good of men" to consist in "daily unimpeded progress toward greater perfection" (Saine, 1987, 118). Since the Chinese believe in the unending pursuit of virtue, it was his opinion that they surly fit within the category of morality as he defined it. However, as Saine points out, Wolff's definition of the highest good moved beyond Christian ethics which defined the highest good as either God himself, or the human relationship to God. Wolff's philosophy, in effect, naturalized the transcendent (ibid.).

Despite the provocative nature of this lecture, it was not the source of Wolff's expulsion from Halle. Rather it was the belief that he was a determinist. His alleged determinism is intimately connected with his interpretation of Pre-established harmony between the soul and the body. For Wolff, soul and body are completely distinct from one another; so much so that the one can exist independently of the other. Not only can they exist separate from one another, and can operate separately the one from the other, but they are both "mere machines." The body is a machine that reacts to the forces in the world, and the soul is a "'sensation machine'" (Saine, 1987, 122). As machines, they are determined by the condi-

tions of the world, as in the body; and by the events that follow one after the other with the same degree of necessity, and with the same consequences, as in the soul. Wolff was certain that he was rationally describing the truth of the two realms; and thus, even though they are not bound together by necessity, the fact that they can operate in total harmony can only be due to the existence of God, who is not part of the world, and who has nonetheless brought them together (Saine, 1987, 123).

While Wolff saw his philosophy as a celebration of the greatness of God's wisdom, the theologians in Halle saw only an unholy determinism. Initially, Wolff was able to hold off his opponents at the University by appeals to the statues governing professional conduct at Halle. However, in 1723, his opponents, concerned and exasperated and not to be thwarted, informed the King, Frederick William I, that Wolff's philosophy would not permit him to punish deserting soldiers, because according to his philosophy, they would only have acted from necessity, not choice. His opponents chose precisely the right the right weapon, and immediately the King had his cabinet issue an order that gave Wolff only twenty-four hours to leave Halle and forty-eight to depart from Prussia or be hanged.

Well-connected friends enabled Wolff to be honored almost immediately with a new position at the University of Marburg in Hesse-Cassel. It soon became the center for what Wolff's former student and disciple, Georg Bernhard Bilfinger (1693–1750), called the "Leibnitzian-Wolffian system."

With Wolff's dismissal from Halle, he became a "cause celebre" first in Germany and then throughout much of Europe. He began to write in Latin, in a conscious effort to have his works circulate more widely, and thus draw more participants into the fray. As Jonathan Israel writes: "The conflict which began in 1723 developed into one of the most formative cultural encounters of the eighteenth century and was, arguably, the most important of the age of Enlightenment in Central Europe and the Baltic before the French Revolution" (Israel, 2001, 544). The Wolffian controversy revealed the fissures that existed on both sides of the "Enlightenment" debate between the forces of modernization and those of tradition. On the side of the "Enlightenment" it became clear that there was no overarching synthesis, and on the side of tradition, there were no common weapons with which fight Spinozism and Deism. The many skirmishes

that ensued, however, resulted in the toppling of theological dominance throughout much of Europe, and the raising the banners of secular philosophy and science in the wake of its fall (Israel, 2001, 544).

Countless judgments against Wolff were issued in nine different universities in Germany. Bilfinger was forced to resign in Tubingen. He travelled to St. Petersburg by way of invitation, and after five years had managed to lead the Wolffian position to triumph over the traditionalist and the Newtonians. The well-known philosopher and theologian, Johann Franz Buddeus (1667–1729) wrote a critique of Wolff from Jena that he thought was a private correspondence to his colleagues in Halle, where he once taught. In it he complained that the most damaging impact of his philosophy was that it undermined a belief in Providence. It denied free will, and made a sham of reward or punishment in the afterlife.[7] Based on a mathematical model, Wolff's philosophy mechanized the human world which, while not necessarily Spinozism in the strict sense, nonetheless could lead to atheism. His critique became public and Wolff immediately wrote a devastating reply. Two more traditionalists, Johan Georg Walch (1693–1775) of Jena and Johan Joachim Lange (1670-1744) of Halle felt compelled to respond. Walch was the son-in-law of Buddeus, and Lange was Wolff's chief opponent in Halle and quite possible the one who had informed the King.

Both men saw in Wolff's philosophy an opening for Spinoza's worldview: fatalism, naturalism, deism, and atheism. In addition, Lange was convinced that Spinoza had "openly denied freedom of the will, and taught the unalterable necessity of all cause and effect" (Israel, 2001, 547). While Wolff did not openly espouse the teachings of Spinoza, clearly his rational philosophy with its mechanistic and materialistic approach opened the way to Spinoza's view of God, man, and the universe. Lange acknowledged that Wolff differed in some important ways from Spinoza, but he was troubled nonetheless that Wolff hid his Spinozian ethics in his use of Christian language.

[7] Israel quotes the following thought of Lange: "for it would be as senseless were god to punish and reward people who do nothing themselves but merely let happen what the nexus of causes, and pre-established harmony bring about, as it would were I to punish a clock or machine." (2001, 546). It seems a bit ironic for a Lutheran who sees salvation as a matter of faith alone, and not works, to hold this view.

Wolff was a formidable opponent and he had a vast network of supporters and former students in many places. He was also incredibly productive. From the time he left Halle until the mid 1730s he had laid out the broad sweep of his philosophical system: *Philosophia rationalis sive Logica* (1728); *Philosophia prima sive ontologia* (1730); *Cosmologia generalis* (1731); *Psychologia empirica* (1732); *Psychologia rationalais* (1734); *Theologia naturalis* (1736–1737)[8] (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/). In all these works he stressed the differences between his philosophy or the Leibnizian-Wolffian system and Spinoza. He agreed that Spinoza denied miracles, Providence, and free will. He wrote that "'his unalterable necessity' destroys all religion and morality" (Israel, 2001, 549). At the same time, he assured his audience that his own philosophy is the sure defense against Spinoza.

Wolff's campaign of self-defense was remarkably successful. By 1734 he had become the only foreign member of the French Academy of Science; he had been honored by the Swedish Court that had issued a commemorative medal in his honor; and Prussia had lifted the ban on the sale of his books, and giving disputations on his philosophy. But the victory was not yet won. A side issue, the matter of the Wertheim Bible, compiled by Johann Lorenz Schmidt (1702–1749), almost erased the gains the Wolffian philosophy had made. The "Wertheim Bible" was seen as a direct legacy of Wolff's philosophy, and the tone of the Preface, according to critics, made it appear almost to have been written by Wolff himself (Israel, 2001, 552). In fact, in it, Schmidt mentioned his indebtedness to Wolff.

Schmidt's compilation included the first Five Books of the Old Testament. He had translated it himself from the Hebrew, and had specifically left out any miracles or Messianic references. It also denigrated the doctrine of the Trinity. The publication of this Bible led to a struggle within all the dominated Christian areas in Germany: Lutheran, Catholics, and Calvinists between the traditionalists, the moderate adherents of the Enlightenment and the radicals. The Bible was suppressed by Imperial decree and

[8] Translations of Latin titles: Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy in General; First Philosophy or Ontology; Universal Cosmology; Empirical Psychology; Rational Psychology; and Natural Theology.

Schmidt was arrested (although he was soon released by local officials, and escaped beyond any legal jurisdiction). Wolff, of course, attempted to put distance between himself and Schmidt, but it was clear that the naturalist, blasphemer, and free-thinker had been tutored by Wolff and his philosophy (Israel, 2001, 555).

Wolff's fortunes changed in 1740 when Prince Frederick (1712–1786) came to the throne in Prussia. Later known as Frederick the Great, he considered himself modern and a *philosophe*. One of the first acts of his reign was to bring Wolff back to Halle, where he became Chancellor in 1743. He was also ennobled by the Elector of Bavaria. There were still battles to be fought with the Newtonians in the Berlin Academy, but as Wolff surveyed his world in the mid-1740s, he could feel a sense of accomplishment, because the Leibnizian-Wolffian system held its own or held sway in the rest of Germany, Russia, and Sweden. And there were strong supporters of Wolffianism in Holland and France. As Chancellor, Wolff continued to write and lecture. When he died in 1754, he was a wealthy man, who had "taught Philosophy to speak German," and had been "hailed as the light of Europe," but who according to Hegel "had outlived his repute, and his lectures at the end were very poorly attended"(http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/texts/Hegel%20-%20Hist%20Phil/wolff.htm).

Wolff's philosophical project[9]

Wolff's philosophical project was enormous in scope. There was almost no area of human knowledge that he did not mention or touch in

[9] It should be noted that very little of Christian Wolff's philosophy has been translated into English. The reasons for this are somewhat complex. While his philosophy spread throughout Europe from Italy to Sweden and from France to Russia (as noted above), it was totally absent from and therefore ignored in Great Britain. This, is in part due to his anti-Newtonian outlook, among other factors. And while, his philosophy had tremendous impact in Germany and on German philosophers, at least through Kant, and some of the Romantics, it soon died out. Why this happened will be touch on in the section on Wolff's legacy. I am writing this footnote to explain why I am relying essentially on two sources to give a brief overview of Wolff's philosophy: Matt Hetteche's article found in *Stanford's Philosophical Encyclopedia* on the Internet, and Thomas P. Saine's 1987 article "Who is Afraid of Christian Wolff" In *Anticipations of the Enlightenment in England, France, and Germany*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, pp. 102–133). Hetteche provides a broad overview of Wolff's philosophy, and Saine focuses on his negative reception among theologians.

some way. During his life-time he wrote eight separate works with German titles, and twenty-three in Latin. Hegel, in his lecture on Wolff during the academic year 1805–06, mentioned that altogether Wolff probably produced over forty *quarto* volumes, if his mathematics were included. To review his entire corpus would be impossible and actually is not necessary for the purposes of this chapter. What will be useful, however, is to understand the goal of his project, something of his method, and then highlight areas where his interests coincided with Swedenborg's, as well as point out some of his philosophical positions that are controversial.

Wolff's goal

Wolff was a rationalist and a systematizer. His philosophy is perhaps both the highest expression of rationalism and its most extreme example. He was convinced that philosophy was the means whereby human beings could pursue "knowledge of the truth" both for its own sake, as well as to use it. He believed that philosophy was both theoretical and practical, and he attempted to develop both sides of the discipline, or as he said, science. He wrote books on ontology and economics. He also believed that our ability to philosophize was innate, rooted as it was in human consciousness. That is, both the principles of logic and explanation are built into the human mind. Human beings are conscious, reflective thinkers who would seek knowledge—both common and scientific. Thus, there are two sorts of philosophizing: common and scientific.

According to Matt Hettche, in his article "Christian Wolff," intuition provides human beings with three basic facts: 1) the existence of the self; 2) the existence of other (material) things outside of self; 3) certainty about the existence of the self and the existence of other things (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/).

Wolff's goal in all of this was to extend the reach of human knowledge as far as possible, based on the conviction that, in principle, there is nothing that cannot be known or explained with the philosophical tools of science, as he understood them.

Wolff's method

This is the starting point for Wolff in several of his works. For example, he wrote in the first paragraph of the *Preliminary Discourse* (1728):

> By means of the senses we know things which are and occur in the material world. And the mind is conscious of the changes which occur within itself. No one is ignorant of this. Let one merely direct one's attention to one's self . . . [for] knowledge acquired by the senses and by attention to ourselves cannot be called into doubt. (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/)

Two things are clear from the above quote; first, Wolff does not attempt to prove these assertions, because it is not necessary. This is due to the second fact, Wolff uses the common sense of the reader to make his point, by employing the personal pronoun "we." The human ability to reflect provides both knowledge and certitude. The quest for certainty, according to Wolff, is the motivation that encourages a person to seek the kind of knowledge made possible by science. As Wolff wrote in his article on "Demonstration" in the *Mathematical Lexicon* (1716):

> . . . From which I learned two things: (1) that the artificial logic differs not from the natural, but rather is a *distinct* explanation thereof . . . [and] (2) [t]hat when we consider the demonstrations in mathematics, we still proceed in the natural manner of thinking. (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/)

That these two modes of thinking do not differ fundamentally but only artificially, given the greater level of technical precision of scientific demonstration, indicated to Wolff that the essential principles of sound reasoning are, in fact, build into the very structure of the human mind. Thus, the fundamental tools of scientific inquiry—the principles of contradiction, sufficient reason, and syllogism—are innate. What science provides or adds is a consistent and reliable method with which to explore all possible things. Wolff was convinced that this method could guarantee the same level of demonstrable certainty in all scientific disciplines and that

ultimately they could be "rationally ordered into a systematic and unified whole" (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/).

Underlying the architecture of Wolff's system of Human Science is his *a priori* assumption that the universe is a harmonious rational order. While Hettche suggests that this could be viewed simply as metaphysical dogmatism (a critique for which there is some basis in fact), he also points out that Wolff attempted to substantiate his belief empirically with reference to the interconnections between such disciplines as mathematics, physics, and astronomy. Which again was essentially a taken-for-granted truth by the natural philosophers of his day. (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/).

Of all the sciences, Wolff believed that philosophy was the most fundamental because of its broad purview. In his work *Preliminary Discourse*, he divided philosophy into two spheres—practical and theoretical:

> Practical philosophy deals (in general) with human actions and includes morality, politics, jurisprudence and economics. Theoretical Philosophy, in contrast, deals with sets of possible and actual objects and is (itself) divided into three separate branches: (1) ontology, or metaphysics proper, (2) "special" metaphysics, which includes general cosmology, psychology, and natural theology, and (3) physics. (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/)

Reason

Wolff's philosophy is based on two principles of human thought: the most basic, and the very first, is the "Principle of Contradiction." Something simply cannot simultaneously "be" and "not be." It is impossible. According to Wolff this is the basis of all certainty. Wolff defined "impossibility [as] that which involves a contradiction" (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/). Hettche states that this principle is the basic concept of his ontology. And he continues, "crucial to Wolff's understanding of ontology is the distinction between something and nothing. Whereas something is that which is intrinsically possible and corresponds to a possible object, nothing is an empty term . . ." (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/).

The second principle of Wolff's philosophy is that of "Sufficient Reason." Since Wolff claims that philosophy is "the science of all possible things, and the manner and reason of their possibility" it is important to explain the concept of reason and its importance to Wolff. In his *Ontologia*, Wolff wrote: "By sufficient reason we understand that, from which is understood that something is [or can be]" (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/). Wolff provides two different origins for this principle. One is derived from the Principle of Contradiction, and the other is his claim that the principle is, in fact, an innate quality of the human mind and thus is logically self-evident.[10] This principle is not only crucial to Wolff's metaphysics but it is a key tool in all of his philosophy. Wolff's use of and commitment to this principle is at the heart of his rationalism; because more than for other philosophers of the rationalist school, even more than Leibniz, for Wolff, reason is the sole means for acquiring and judging human knowledge.

Empirical reality

With his tremendous emphasis on understanding and reason, it is useful to ask what role the empirical realm played, if any, in Wolff's philosophical system. This is particularly important given the increasing empiricism of the scientific world. Whereas Wolff wanted to expand the world of human understanding, other philosophers wanted to identify "the limits of human understanding." Writing in the eighteenth century, Wolff's rationalism often met with hostility and criticism. Undaunted, Wolff's Human Science left room for empiricism. It was the world of history or what he called the "bare facts" of experience. Experiences are gained through the human faculty of sensing, and they can only report that something is but not report on any of the qualities or properties of that thing. To learn those additional facts requires the use of reason. The senses guarantee that experiences are real and reason explains them, while the science of mathematics has the capacity to measure real things through

[10] Wolff identifies five innate qualities of the human mind: The Principle of Contradiction, The Principle of Sufficient Reason, The Principle of the Excluded Middle, The Principle of Certitude, and The Principle of the Syllogism.

sense experience and relate them to each other by means of reason. Wolf made the relative relationship between experience and reason clear in the following quote from his *German Metaphysics* (1719):

> Because of that which one knows only by experience, one can know only that it *is* but does not see how it is connected with other truths; in knowledge from experience there is no reason. Hence experience is opposed to reason . . . We have then two ways by which we can reach knowledge of the truth: experience and reason. The former is based on the senses, and the latter is on the understanding. (Hettche, 2006, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/)

Thus, the senses can only address two sorts of knowledge claims; that something is real, and claims about the quantity of things. These knowledge claims are limited. As James Collins has written: "Experiential certainty concerns the bare fact (real or ideal) and does not extend to the sufficient reason for the fact. Hence philosophical certainty must be non-experiential in its own proper form. Every ounce of it (to use Wolff's own emphatic phrase) derives from the use of the mathematical method, which risks nothing on the real existent but concentrates upon the determinate quantity of possible objects and essential relations" (Collins, 1959, 134).

Psychology

While Wolff was not the first person to use the term "psychology," he brought the term into modern usage in the eighteenth century, and both his works on psychology were read by Swedenborg. They were *Empirical Psychology* (1732) and *Rational Psychology* (1734). Wolff was the first person to make a distinction between empirical and rational psychology.

The primary focus of Wolff's empirical psychology was to explore how the mind studies its own processes, either by observing its normal activities or through experiments designed to observe the mind in action. To do this, Wolff developed assumptions about the nature of perception and the nature of the certitude of the mind. Wolff defined perception as "an act of mind by which it represents to itself something occurring either outside or within itself" (Richards, 1980, 228). For Wolff perception serves

two different functions: it represents content, as well as the fact of representing. Wolff also identified an addition feature of the mind, apperception, which was also identified by Leibniz. This is the way in which both types of perception become consciously present in the mind. It is also the principle means of investigation in empirical psychology. As Richards notes, it requires an act of will, and it is capable of bringing obscure processes and thoughts into greater clarity (Richards, 1980, 228).

Rational psychology is, on the other hand, *a priori* and deductive. Because of this it can probe more deeply into the mind. However, because such probes may involve a long chain of deductions, or reasonings, it can not always hit the mark with certainty and thus, coming to false conclusions. Because of this, empirical psychology has more to offer the scientist. Nonetheless, Wolff saw these two modes of psychology complementary. Empirical psychology provides the particulars, and rational psychology the generals. With the perspective given by generals it is possible to order and arrange the empirical facts and understand relationships (Richards, 1980, 228). In many respects, therefore, one can say that Wolff's view of psychology does not differ radically from modern practice with psychological theories being tested by experiment and experience.

One further aspect of Wolff's psychology that needs to addressed is his discussion of the mind-body problem. (This issue emerges in Section III of the *Rational Psychology* and is a subject about which Swedenborg fundamentally disagreed with Wolff.) On the one hand, Wolff expressed dissatisfaction with the possibility of being able to come to a clear understanding about the precise nature of the relationship between body and soul; but on the other hand, since he has observed scientifically a harmony between them, upon reflection he opted for the Leibnizian explanation of Pre-established harmony. He rejected both the Aristotelian view and the Cartesian explanation because they required either "occult" forces, as in the case of Aristotle, or continual divine intervention in nature from the Cartesian perspective. In either case, the natural scientist is left with no rational explanation or sufficient reason for natural phenomena. Pre-established harmony assumes no interaction between the body and the mind. The mind does what it does based on the rules of logic, and the body acts based on the principles of the natural sciences, but each sphere operates independently of the other. They cooperate and work together

harmoniously because God, from the beginning, pre-established the two to be continually coordinated in this way. This theory appealed to Wolff, according to Richards, because "it offered the natural scientist the means to discover the sufficient reason for change in one order by observations and analysis of events in the other" (Richards, 1980, 236).

It actually seems problematic whether a theory such as pre-established harmony could actually assist the natural scientist to discover sufficient reasons for the changes observed, because blind harmony (each sphere operating totally independently) cannot reveal reasons or causes; and if it could, the specter of determinism is raised. If there is a natural sufficient reason for all human actions, then where is the place for the freedom for which Wolff so passionately argued in his Detailed Report about his own Writings, written in 1726 and published in Frankfurt am Main (Saine, 1987, 129).

Natural theology

Wolff wrote a two-volume work on *Natural Theology* (1736–37), a subject he defined as "the science of those things that are possible through God" (Hettche, 2006 http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/). Wolff spelled out the purposes of a natural theology in his Prologue to both volumes. They are: "(1) to prove the existence of God; (2) to determine the essential attributes of God; finally (3) to determine the things that are possible given these essential attributes of God" (Hettche, 2006 http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/). Wolff then proceeded to provide both an a posteriori and an a priori proof for God's existence. Swedenborg is known to have read at least the first volume of the *Natural Theology* when he was in Copenhagen in 1736. In fact, he believed he found a reference to himself in the work (Odhner, 1951, 246).

As noted earlier, Wolff made a distinction between philosophy and theology. Philosophy is the "science of possibles" and theology is the science of the supra-rational or divine revelation. And he asserts that they each have their own particular domain. However, once God's existence has been satisfactorily demonstrated, then his attributes can be studied through the rational methods of natural theology. While Wolff aspired not to invade the realm of theology, the broad scope of his *Natural Theology* left

very little standing regarding the claims of traditional Christian (Lutheran) theology. Wolff's natural theology raised doubts about the role of God's revealed truths needed to achieve salvation and the place of miracles deemed so necessary to faith. In fact, Wolff made almost all but the miracle of creation suspect. As Saine writes: For Wolff, ". . . the creation miracle is, in fact the only miracle that *cannot* be fully subjected to the critique of reason . . ." Once created the world, operates in all essential details according to "the laws of nature instituted by God at the time of Creation" (Saine, 1997, 138).

Removing or challenging the miracles which set Christianity apart from competing religions such as Judaism and Islam, delegitimizes its truth claims and down plays its uniqueness. Wolff's natural theology equalized the world's religions and their revelations. All their truth claims can be subject to the principle of sufficient reason.

Ethics and practical philosophy

When Wolff turned to his ethics and practical theology, matters which deals with human actions, this line of reasoning was taken one step farther. Wolff intellectualized the will, thus making good and evil no longer absolute moral concepts. Good and evil are no longer connected to God's commands, but are to be evaluated in relation to their impact on humans and in the human world. Thus, human actions are either good or evil in and of themselves. In the final analysis, this leads to Wolff's claim that: "'Therefore even if it were possible that there were no God, and the present state of things could exist without him, the free actions of men would still remain good or evil'" (Saine, 1997, 143).

Wolff took this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion: It is nature not God that encourages humanity to do good and not evil. This is because "the divine law is *nothing other than* the 'Law of Nature' and can thus in no way contradict it" (Saine, 1997, 143).

Such statements would of course, be unsettling to orthodox Lutheran theologians who believed that "original sin" had so corrupted humanity that natural reason could not appropriately guide them, let alone instruct them in the truths concerning the laws of nature. But Wolff went even farther, convinced that natural reason can guide the will, that is, it can aid

in the discernment between good and evil, apart from revelation from God, then it can guide the atheist as well as the believer. A free and rational atheist has as much possibility of making good or evil choices as a Christian (Seine, 1997, 144–145).

Wolff, defended himself from the negative reactions and criticism he received by stating: "Perish the thought that I should want to speak for atheists. But I cannot speak against the truth" (Saine, 1997, 145). However, he pushed his detractors over the edge with his view of the possible perfectionism of the Chinese, as previously mentioned. According to Wolff, the goal of human action is to attain the highest degree of perfection possible, and this end is alive in the core or essence of everyone. Hettche in his rendering of Wolff goes so far as to say, "in a strict sense each person is obligated by the law of nature to instantiate perfection in his or her life" (Hettche, 2006 http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/).

Legacy

Wolff's philosophical project had a profound impact both on Germany and on Western thought. In Germany, because he was the first German philosopher to use German as the language of his system, he created the philosophical language used by Germans for almost two hundred years. He also brought rigor, order, discipline, and clarity to the German philosophical enterprise. With the structure and tools Wolff's system provided, philosophy in Germany was transformed into a strong and independent discipline. In his own personal struggles to freely philosophize he became a spokesperson for freedom of thought and a public icon that inspired German youth to make similar demands. These struggles and his focus on the place and power of natural reason in philosophy challenged the entrenched powers of the state church and the theological faculties of the universities. He helped to overturn the theology of original sin, and in the process gave German youth a sense of personal efficacy in making moral choices. He also redefined concept of perfection, from the Aristotelian notion of "lacking nothing" to his view of "manifold unity," giving perfections an analytical component. Needless to say, some of these contributions to the German world also made an impact on the broader world of Western thought.

His legacy with regard to Western thought was to provide tools for "the moderns" to challenge atheists on the new and firmer ground of natural reason. His philosophy also helped establish a foundation of rational morality. The separation of philosophy and religion is a thread that runs through the whole of Wolff's philosophical enterprise. Its consequences are equally apparent in his metaphysics. and in his ethics and practical philosophy. His emphasis on natural reason challenged both miracles and revelations, thereby opening the door to relativizing all faiths, and minimizing distinctions between Christians, pagans, and unbelievers. The Wolffian controversy paved the way to modernity, and it soon became the new orthodoxy. The fact is that Wolff and his followers won; they broke the power of the church, and overthrew the religious domination of the other major social institutions—politics, economics, and education—resulting in the secularization of the world. In the end, according to Saine, even the theologians had to accommodate to the Wolffian system if they wanted to remain figures to be reckoned with (Saine, 1997, 152). Nonetheless, along with modernity came Deism, skepticism, and atheism forces that were also heirs of Wolff's project.

Preliminary conclusion

The four philosophers just examined shaped the intellectual world of Emanuel Swedenborg, and each in their own way attempted and failed to demonstrate the conformity of faith and reason. Swedenborg in his philosophical period enthusiastically took up the same problem. He also failed to resolve the issue in the domain of natural reason. However, he was led on another path by the Lord. The second portion of this project will examine this matter in his philosophy and his theology.

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