

SWEDENBORG IN GERMANY[†]

I SWEDENBORG AND KANT

J. Durban Odhner

In beginning this presentation on Swedenborg in Germany, it is appropriate that we should draw attention to the age-old and continuing discussion of Swedenborg's impact on the renowned German philosopher, Immanuel Kant.

The most recent contribution to that discussion comes from the pen of Dr. Gottlieb Florschütz whom I had the pleasure of meeting at the Wolfenbüttel Swedenborg Symposium in 1988. It was there that I introduced him to the Swedenborg Scientific Association which subsequently sponsored the translation of *Swedenborgs verborgene Wirkung auf Kant* (Swedenborg's Hidden Influence on Kant) published by Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, in 1992. This task I have the privilege of sharing with Rev. Kurt Nemitz.

In section 1.2 of this work, Florschütz presents "Parallels between Kant and Swedenborg," as follows:

1. *There exists another world than that which is apparent to the senses.*
2. *There exists a transcendental being.*
3. *This being exists simultaneously with the earthly person.*

These points logically entail:

- a) *The inadequacy of self-awareness for the knowledge of our being.*
- b) *The only partial involvement of our being in the material world.*
4. *The pre-existence of the soul.*
5. *The immortality of the soul.*
6. *Birth as the incarnation of a transcendental being.*

[†] The following papers were presented at the ninety-seventh Annual Meeting of the association on April 25, 1994.

7. *Material existence as the exception, transcendental existence as the rule.*
8. *The need for a rational psychology for the proving of the soul's existence.*
9. *The voice of conscience as the voice of the transcendental being.*
10. *The "beyond" as simply what lies on the other side of the threshold of perception.*

Dr. Florschütz emphasizes that Kant had long been preoccupied with the concept and intrigued by the possibility of human glimpses into the world of the mind. Perhaps the current wide interest in Near Death Experiences and in angels points to a growing interest with people in general in the nature of this transcendental realm.

II SWEDENBORG AND THE MINING INDUSTRY

Erland J. Brock

A few years ago my curiosity was aroused regarding possible connections between Swedenborg and the German geologist Werner (1749 - 1817) because Swedenborg's theory that salt was generated under high pressure conditions in ocean deeps reminded me of Werner's "Neptunist" theory for the origin of all rocks and minerals from the primordial ocean.

I wrote to the Director of the Library of the Freiberg School of Mines where Werner taught for many years, to inquire if Swedenborg's works were in their archival collection of Werner's personal library and papers. Swedenborg's *Miscellaneous Observations, Principia* and works on iron and copper were, indeed, in the collection.

In August of 1992 my wife June, Dr. Eberhard Zwink and I set off for Freiberg in Saxony, Dr. Zwink kindly agreeing to come as translator and guide. We had previously arranged to meet with the Director I had written to, only to find that he, as a former member of the East German secret police, had been fired soon after the wall came down and the files in Berlin on these police had been opened. The new Director, Dr. Peter Schmidt, cordially greeted us and provided us with the books we needed.

Examination of Swedenborg's works revealed no marginalia or other marks that could be significant in this kind of research. But Werner's copious notes included lists of authors that he intended to consult, and Swedenborg was among them. In addition, he had reserved several pages headed "Swedenborg," (as he had done for other authors) but they were blank. There was evidence that Werner could indeed read Latin as one would expect, although as a late-18th century man of practical bent—known mostly for his widely-acclaimed lectures, since he actually published very little—it may be that he was not competent to read Latin texts with ease. So in terms of Swedenborgiana research, the excursion to Freiberg essentially drew a blank.

However, recently published works include interesting commentary on the period from the 17th to the 19th century, so let me speak to this for a moment. In Europe, the democratic, agricultural and industrial-technological revolutions instigated great change, including population growth and an increasing demand on resources. Mining was thus becoming an even more important industry, and Swedenborg's work on the Swedish Board of Mines needs to be seen in this context; and there is here a connection with Germany. Saxony had access to rich ore deposits in the Erz mountains. In the late 15th and early 16th centuries the explosive growth of silver mining (for coinage) led to the development of Joachimstahl (north of Berlin), and of Chemnitz and Freiberg near the Erz mountains. Freiberg was actually founded in the 12th century, close to the mining districts of the region. It was in this time of growth that the bureaucratization of mining began in Germany.

But Sweden was a leader in this too, and so of Swedenborg and Sweden Rachel Laudan says this. "Emanuel Swedenborg, who was a serious mineralogist before turning to more mystical pursuits, and Axel Cronstedt (1722-1765) both worked for the Swedish Bergskollegium or Board of Mines. This had been founded in the mid-seventeenth century to administer the mining industry, but it also came to sponsor research in mineralogy and metallurgy."¹ This is the background to Swedenborg's early professional work that resulted in publications about mine machinery,

¹ Rachel Laudan, *From Mineralogy to Geology. The Foundations of a Science. 1650-1830.* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 49.

on origins of minerals and of the geological formations in which they occur; on the metallurgy of iron, copper and silver; and about various aspects of the salt industry. The significance of the salt business in Europe can be seen in names such as Salzburg and Halle, as well as in the fact that many of the German Federal roads were begun as salt roads dating back to Roman times. All these mining and metallurgical concerns were very much in the air in 18th century Europe, and Germany and Sweden lead the way in research and administration of mining and related activities. It is not surprising therefore, that Swedenborg's *Miscellaneous Observations* and the three volume series that included *Principia* and metallurgical works on iron and copper were published in Leipzig not far from the center of mining activity and training at Freiberg.

Beneath this superficial overview lie currents of evolving thought at that time on cosmogony, chemistry and geology out of which emerged the modern versions of these sciences. Swedenborg was an active participant in this; and for interested scholars there is a wealth of material awaiting exploration.

We now turn to other aspects of Swedenborg's role in the cultural history of Europe. In asking the Reverend Kurt Nemitz to continue this presentation, I note that we are fortunate indeed to have him in our midst, for not only does he have experience of life in Europe through his pastoral work there, but he is also multi-lingual, and a Latin consultant with the General Church Translation Committee working on *Experientiae Spirituales*. As Dr. Odhner has said, Rev. Nemitz translated Gottlieb Florschütz's *Swedenborg's Hidden Influence on Kant* now being serially published in *The New Philosophy*, and as well, he has published a significant study of Leibnitz in relation to Swedenborg, and is currently engaged in research on Christian Wolff and Swedenborg. It is a privilege to invite the Reverend Nemitz to address us on "The German Philosophers Leibnitz and Wolff in Swedenborg's Philosophical Development."

III

THE GERMAN PHILOSOPHERS LEIBNIZ AND WOLFF IN
SWEDENBORG'S PHILOSOPHIC DEVELOPMENTKurt P. Nemitz[†]

In examining the role the two great German philosophers Leibniz and Wolff had in Swedenborg's development as a philosopher, i.e., up to the time of his Divine call in 1745, in the venerable tradition of philosophy let me proceed as Socrates was wont and begin with a question.

What is the subject of the *first* part of the *first* chapter of the *first* book of the New Testament?

Is it not a genealogy? This list of names contains many mysteries, but taken as a whole is it not a symbolic record of preparation, just as are the Seven Days of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis? Matthew's genealogy is the history of the preparation for the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the full and immediate presence of the Divine Truth with man. And Matthew's genealogy is a reminder to us that it was a Divine preparation made through mortal human beings.

Of course we all know that every accomplishment involves preparation. But since in Swedenborg's case, it is my conviction, there was likewise a presence of what is immediately from the Lord with man, it is important for me to keep in mind that an advent of the Lord always is preceded by preparation, a Divine preparation made through mortal human beings.

In other words, in looking at Swedenborg's life I believe we may see the marvelous work of our Lord in preparing a philosopher through whom He would reveal the Divine Truth anew.

When I was a younger man, I simply thought that virtually all of the details of Swedenborg's philosophy were original with him. After all, since I had first heard conceptual terms like *successive* and *simultaneous degrees* in connection with Swedenborg, why should I think otherwise than that they originated with him? But as we shall see, many—perhaps

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we might even say most—of the elements in his philosophy were actually expressed by the philosophers preceding him.

Having begun with this prologue, let me come specifically to my topic and ask a second question. What were the *three* European nations that *most* influenced the development of Swedenborg's philosophic thought?

From a chronological viewpoint one would of course for the first, answer, *France*. For that was the provenance of René Descartes, the philosophical dualist whose mathematically rigorous efforts to reconcile the mechanism of nature with the freedom of God and the human soul set the tone at Uppsala University where Swedenborg studied as a youth. And, as the Swedish scholar Inge Jonsson notes: "[In his cosmology] Swedenborg remained faithful to Descartes and took the three main themes of his philosophy of nature from the French rationalist's [book] *Principia Philosophiae* (*Principles of Philosophy*); namely, 1) that matter consists of particles which are indefinitely divisible, 2) that these particles are in constant vortical motion, and 3) that the earth and the planets sprang from the solar mass."¹

Second on the list of nations that significantly affected Swedenborg's thinking would be *England*—his first "home away from home" on his extensive post-graduation European study-tour. Although perhaps England should actually be *first* on this list of the nations significantly influencing Swedenborg, because it made such a strong impression on him. Here in England, in the milieu of unfettered great scientific explorers like Flamsteed and Halley, Newton and Sloan, Boyle and Locke, his young mind—he came to England for three years when he was but twenty-two—cannot but have breathed deeply of that nation's atmosphere of truth-seeking inquiry that is the life of philosophic development. Years later he observes in his journal that "Englishmen are of such a character that when they hear truths they see them, and then follow after them and readily bring themselves in line with them."²

And thirdly, and very importantly, we would list *Germany*, where, after a year in Paris, Swedenborg spent the final two years of his post-

¹Inge Jonsson, *Emanuel Swedenborg*, (New York: Twayne, 1971), p. 32.

²Emanuel Swedenborg, *Experientia Spirituales* (ed. J. D. Odhner; Bryn Athyn), (Academy of the New Church, 1993).

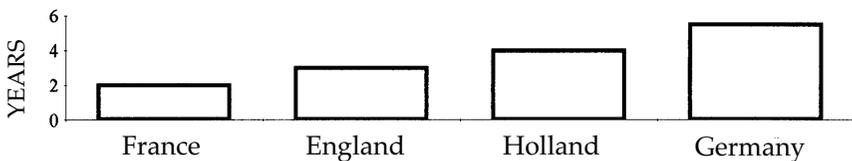
graduate study tour abroad. (Although since Germany at this period in time was not yet again a political unity, by Germany we mean the nation of German speaking people.)

Yet here we might have wanted to say Holland instead, for Holland was a major “birthplace” of his philosophical works. Many, many of them came into the sight of the world through the printing presses in Amsterdam. However, we cannot validly include Holland in our present list because aside from the anatomical information Swedenborg gathered from such eminent Dutch researchers as Leeuwenhoek, Swammerdam and Boerhaave, he seems to have drawn relatively little from Holland that contributed to his conceptual thought.

Germany, on the other hand, played a very significant role in Swedenborg’s philosophy, and this for two reasons: one that we might call *physical*, the other *mental*.

Physically Swedenborg spent more of his years abroad in Germany than in any other country—as one can see from the following bar chart of the years he spent in various European countries from the time of his first trip abroad in 1709, up to 1745, when he returned to Sweden from England after publishing the last of his philosophical works, *Regnum Animale* (which we know as *The Animal Kingdom*).

SWEDENBORG'S YEARS ABROAD



Besides, as a major Swedenborg scholar of this century Dr. Ernst Benz observes, our philosopher was also very productive while in Germany. Benz writes:

On his travels Swedenborg did not simply learn, his active spirit transformed all impressions and events that streamed into him into productive concepts. What was new that he saw pushed

him to making new combinations, encouraged him to discover previously unknown connections, and to join the great diversity of all things into a higher unity. During his travels he was extraordinarily productive as a writer. From his thousands of notes grew not only collections of pieces like “Miscellaneous Observations on the Things of Nature”—essays on specific individual scientific questions—but also his great systematic works. Their most important chapters came into being while he was relaxing and during the longer in-between stops in the inns in German cities. This writing he fitted in as mental relief and relaxation on his arduous stagecoach trips over the bumpy roads of the provincial towns. The particular details of his lodgings—in Hamburg, for example, in the “Schwarzen Adler” (The Black Eagle), in Halle at the “Goldenen Stern” (The Golden Star), allow our historical fantasy to picture the life of the researcher all the way down to its charming details.³

Dr. Benz goes on to note that the major portion of Swedenborg’s scientific works, all of which were printed outside of Sweden, were printed in Germany. The *Principia* and *De Infinito* came before the world from presses in Dresden and Leipzig. The other two centers for his publication were Amsterdam and London.

Swedenborg’s practice of overseeing the typesetting of his books on location at the press gave him a personal acquaintance with the great publishers of his time. As Dr. Jonathan Rose so delightfully pointed out in a talk at the seminar for Swedenborg translators, Swedenborg clearly took pride in having his books carefully and beautifully published. And, incidentally, when it came to his theological works, he sold them at such a reasonable cost that one of his acquaintances chided him for being too generous when it came to setting a price on his books.

What I have pointed out about the time Swedenborg spent in Germany and about the writing and publishing work he did there testifies to that nation’s so to speak physical significance in his philosophical life.

³Ernst Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg, Naturforscher und Seher* (Zurich: Swedenborg Verlag, 1969), p. 108.

Now let me present the following thesis about Germany’s “mental” significance for him.

At the beginning of our brief Socratic dialogue it was observed that we know that France played a role in the early stages of the development of Swedenborg’s thinking, by virtue of fact that the Frenchman Descartes’ philosophy influenced Swedenborg’s university education at Uppsala. How can we know what other philosophers also affected his thinking?

This can be learned in part by noting who the philosophers are whose views Swedenborg thought worthy of compiling in 1740 and early 1741, apparently as background for writing the chapters on the brain that were to form Transactions III and IV of his series titled *Oeconomia Regni Animalis*. This collection of the thoughts of various philosophers he then made we now have readily at hand thanks to its posthumous publication—translated and edited by that Hercules of Swedenborg scholarship Dr. Alfred Acton, under the title *Philosopher’s Notebook*. From a page in this notebook here is Swedenborg’s list of the authorities whose views he valued and thought worth writing down.

Rydellius ca. 1700	Swedish	Wolff 1679-1754 AD	German
Plato 427-347 BC	Greek	Malebranche 1638-1715 AD	French
Aristotle 384-322 BC	Greek	Descartes 1596-1650 AD	French
Augustine 353-430 AD	N. African	Bilfinger 1693-1750 AD	German
Grotius 1583-1645 AD	Dutch	Sacred Scripture	
Leibniz 1646-1715 AD	German		

These are the philosophers whom Swedenborg regarded as of major importance to the subject with which he was concerned—which was, as it had been from his earliest enquiries, the relation of the spiritual, eternal element in man to his temporal, physical being. i.e., of the mind to the body.

One recognizes, of course, the classical names. Of the remainder, of those who were contemporaneous with Swedenborg (in boldface), *three* were German. And not only that, they were members of the same concep-

tual family, the philosophical family fathered by Leibniz. Both Wolff and his student Bilfinger were basically Leibnizians.

LEIBNIZ

Many will recall Leibniz in connection with mathematics, because with Newton he shares the honors for having developed the system we call *integral calculus*.

However, Leibniz also played a major part in shaping the philosophical world of the 18th Century. It seems that his concepts produced such a great interest because, although aside from shorter essays and private letters, he published but *one* full book on his philosophy—in 1710, the year after Swedenborg graduated from Uppsala—in this treatise he proposed carefully reasoned answers to two basic human questions. His sole book, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme, et l'origine du mal* (Essays on the justice of God's goodness, human freedom, and the origin of evil) offered explanations to the fundamental questions: How does God govern the universe for the bringing forth of what is perfect and good—in spite of the reality of evil? and, What is the Divinely ordered relation between the mind and the body? Many readers of Swedenborg will doubtless be as surprised as I was to learn that here Leibniz himself spoke explicitly of the "permission of evil, a concept that Swedenborg later dealt with so extensively that one could understandably think it originated with him. Everyone read Leibniz. With his legally trained, mathematically precise mind Leibniz argued that while God did reluctantly permit evil, nevertheless because everything was in God's benevolent hands, this was still "the best of all possible worlds." His philosophical-theological views had a wide reaching effect. He is credited with contributing to a mood of philosophical optimism in his era. Indeed, it has been said that in Swedenborg's day Leibniz's *Théodicée* was "virtually a complement to the Sacred Scriptures."⁴

Because of the vital spiritual issues Leibniz reverently raised, the thought has occurred to me that in respect to the Divine preparation for the Lord's Second Coming, he unwittingly acted as a kind of latter-day

⁴Inge Jonsson, *Swedenborgs Skapelsedrama* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1961), p. 118.

John the Baptist. And one wonders too if Swedenborg may not have personally conceived of the book he himself was later inspired to write and publish, *The Divine Providence*, as being the truly Divine successor to Leibniz's rough formulation of truth on this subject in his *Théodicée*.

Swedenborg certainly had a copy of the 1739 Latin translation of *Théodicée* in his own library, having in all likelihood first heard of Leibniz long before as an adolescent, while living with his learned brother-in-law, Eric Benzelius, Jr., who had met him personally. But I suspect that what really fired Swedenborg's interest in Leibniz was being in England on his post-graduation European tour at the time when the Royal Society was arbitrating the ongoing public feud between Leibniz and Newton over who had actually been the first to develop the *calculus of fluxions*, as Newton had termed it. In the year Emanuel spent in Paris after leaving London in 1713 he may, then, have read this popular book of Leibniz in its original 1710 French edition. Whatever the case was, we do know that while enroute back to Sweden through Germany he tried to visit this great thinker in Germany. "I should have liked to meet Leibniz," he wrote his brother-in-law as he left Germany for home. Alas, Leibniz was out of town when Swedenborg had come knocking on Leibniz's door, and by November of the following year the great *philosophe* had left this earth entirely.

If it seems a bit presumptuous for a chap almost fresh out of college to think he could just drop in on one of his time's great men whom he had never met before, we must realize that young Herr Emanuel was accustomed to moving in higher circles. Even though he did not yet bear the impressive credentials of nobility, which came with the ennoblement of his father five years later in 1719, through his father and his widely known university librarian brother-in-law Eric Benzelius and his own personal friendship with King Charles XII he was well-connected and carried letters of introduction that opened the doors to the company of leading personages of European society. Besides, although he may have stuttered slightly when excited, one doubts there were many moments in the presence of anyone when his well-educated, penetrating mind was embarrassed by a loss for the proper gracious words.

Leibniz himself was as creative a philosopher as he was mathematician. The Swedish scholar Martin Lamn summarizes the essence of Leibniz's philosophical view as follows:

Leibniz's philosophy had in view the reconciliation of the Cartesian with the Aristotelian theological concept of nature; it sought to bring about the combination of a mechanical and an organic explanation of the world. Leibniz accomplished this by conceiving of bodies as phenomena of an inner, immaterial power. By retaining a mechanical explanation for physical processes, his monadology gave an explanation of the nature of things which transformed the universe into a *living* unity composed of *animated* substances.⁵

Here in the intellectual atmosphere surrounding Swedenborg do we not have a precursor to his own concept of the universe as a dynamically interrelated whole?

But Swedenborg had a serious reservation with a central element of the Leibnizian *Weltanschauung*.

Leibniz's multi-various *monads*, which as they unfolded themselves composed all existing entities, were infinitesimal units which contained each within itself both a living force he termed *conatus* (yes, neither was the term *conatus*, which is so basic to Swedenborg's philosophy, a term original with him), and a representation, an unconscious knowledge, mirroring the whole universe in its entirety. It was a good thing these *monads* contained this universal knowledge of all things, for according to Leibniz, a monad is "windowless" and incapable of exchanging any information whatsoever; consequently your or my monad would simply have to inwardly "know it all" to have any conscious existence. This characteristic of "windowless" incommunicability meant, as our Dr. Hugo Odhner, observed, that what Leibniz postulated was what "we would describe as a purely spiritual universe [without] any mechanical universe except in appearance."⁶

A human being, according to Leibniz, was simply an expanded monad. And this is where Swedenborg's chief problem with Leibniz's philosophy arose. Because according to this theory of mind and body, monads are "windowless" and thus incapable of any conscious communication whatsoever, even between their own various levels, Leibniz had to resort to

⁵Martin Lamn, *Swedenborg* (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers, 1915), p. 51; emphasis added.

⁶Hugo Odhner, "Christian Wolff and Swedenborg," *The New Philosophy* (Oct., 1951), p. 239.

postulating a Divinely ordained “Pre-established Harmony” between the mind and the body—just as if they were two clocks wound up and set to tick and sound the hour at the same instant. This did not make even common sense to Swedenborg, either philosophically or theologically. He saw the mind’s intentions and thoughts to be related to the body’s actions as *end* and *cause* to *effect*.⁷ And as well-read readers of Swedenborg know, he wrote extensively to correct mistaken views like Leibniz’s on this subject.

WOLFF

Since Leibniz published so little of his own philosophy, it might be wondered why and whence Swedenborg got as much involved in its ramifications as he did. The answer is in part that this was due to the influence on him and his whole era of the second German on whose philosophy he made extensive notes, Christian Wolff, for Wolff had corresponded with and was a disciple of Leibniz, although he furthered Leibniz’s doctrines in modified forms, such as by replacing Leibniz’s *monads* with his own concept of *simple substances*. (A term, it is to be noted, that Swedenborg may have picked up from reading Wolff.)

Wolff—a man eleven years older than Swedenborg—was “Mr. Philosophy” of his day. Of him the great wit living across the border in France, Voltaire, wrote, “Frederico regnante, Wolfio docente,” that is, “Frederick ruling, Wolff teaching.” By the time Wolff was sixty not only had several of his works gone into third editions and his book *the Fundamental Principles of Philosophy* become the most popular textbook in Germany, for there were Wolffians in most of the German universities, but also Wolffian societies, such as the *Gesellschaft der Wahrheitsfreunde* (“Society of the Friends of Truth”), founded already in 1736, had been established to carry his popular philosophy beyond university circles. Biographies were written about him while he was still living. The German moral weeklies, following English models such as *The Spectator*, were filled with Wolffian doctrines. Books were even written presenting the Wolffian philosophy for the ladies.⁸

⁷ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Intercourse of the Soul and Body* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1947).

⁸ Lewis Beck White, *Early German Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard, 1969), p. 260.

In Swedenborg's library when his estate was settled we find no less than five works by Wolff and two about him; and Swedenborg explicitly acknowledged Wolff's significance in the conclusion he wrote to his *Principia*, which he published in 1733, eight years before his notebook on various key philosophers, one of whom was Wolff. But he also notes his fundamental independence from Wolff, saying that he had worked out his own basic principles *two years* before reading Wolff's *Ontology* and *Cosmology*. In the final pages of the *Principia* he says:

I cannot conclude, however, without referring to the name of Christian von Wolff of our age, who has given so much attention to the cultivation of his intellectual powers, and who has so much contributed to the advance of true philosophy by his various scientific and experimental researches. I refer more particularly to his *Philosophia Prima sive Ontologia* [1730] as also to his *Cosmologia Generalis* [1731], in which he has formulated various rules and axioms to guide us in our progress to the attainment of first principles, perusal of which has served very considerably to confirm my views; although the principles laid down in the present work had been worked out and committed to paper *two years* before I had an opportunity of consulting his works. In the revision of the present volume I acknowledge myself much indebted to his publications; so much so, that if anyone will take the trouble to compare the two, he will find that the principles I have here advanced and applied to the world and its series, almost exactly coincide with the metaphysical and general axioms of this illustrious author.⁹

Swedenborg had actually been aware of Wolff long before this time when, at the age of forty-five, as he published *The Principia* he studied those virtually fresh-off-the-press books of Wolff on ontology and cosmology. Swedenborg's first mention of Wolff goes back eighteen years, to 1715 in Germany, where he was ending his long post-graduation European tour. In the same letter to his brother-in-law in which he expresses regret at

⁹Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Principia* (trans. James R. Rendell & Isaiah Tansley) (London: Turnbull & Spears, 1912), p. 292; emphasis mine.

having missed seeing Leibniz he mentions that Wolff’s mathematics textbook “is reported to be in Sweden—a very useful book, and clearly written.”¹⁰ Then in 1724 he refers to Wolff twice in a manuscript he left on the subject of common salt (which Michael David has just translated).¹¹ And Swedenborg was concerned enough about Wolff’s opinion of him that same year that when a critical review of his “hydrostatic law” theory appeared in German, he wrote and asked Benzelius to send a copy of his response to Wolff—but there is no evidence he ever did write this validation.

Swedenborg knew that Wolff was aware of him too. He had seen that Wolff had mentioned him in his 1732 book on mathematics, as the source of the information that Sweden’s King Charles XII had developed a number system based on six (a reference I again thank the Academy’s director of Swedenborgiana, Dr. Jonathan Rose, for helping me find). And Swedenborg thought he saw a reference to himself in Wolff’s 1728 book *Natuural Theology*. It is even possible that he and Wolff exchanged letters, but it is less certain that they ever met personally.

With all this, is it surprising that Swedenborg gave his careful attention to every new book of Wolff’s he came across?

The following table of selected years of Swedenborg’s life as philosopher, makes evident how much attention he gave to Wolff.

YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG'S WRITING AND PUBLICATIONS RELATING TO CHRISTIAN WOLFF
1679	Wolff born—Jan. 24, Breslau, Germany
1688	Swedenborg born—Jan. 29, Stockholm, Sweden
1715 (27)	April 4. Letter to E. Benzelius recommending Wolff's book on mathematics
1722 (34)	Writes <i>De Magnete</i>—Extensive refs. to Wolff & his data Publishes <i>Miscellanea Observata</i> (<i>Miscellaneous Observations</i>) • Wolff writes of having learned of Ch. XII's “<i>calculus sexagenarum</i>” from this book

¹⁰ Alfred Acton, *The Letters and Memorials of Emanuel Swedenborg* (trans. & ed. Alfred Acton) (Bryn Athyn: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1948), p. 62.

¹¹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *De sale communi* (ed. A. Acton) (Bryn Athyn: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1910), pp. 135, 137.

<p>1724 (36)</p>	<p>Writes <i>De sale communi</i>—refers to Wolff</p> <hr/> <p>In letter asks E. Benzelius to send Wolff copy of his response to the criticism of his “Hydrostatic Law” article</p> <hr/> <p>At meeting of Literary Guild suggests referring controversy over his Hydrostatic Law to “decision of Prof. Wolff”</p>
<p>1733 (45)</p>	<p>First sees Wolff's <i>Cosmologia</i>¹²</p> <hr/> <p>Begins notes for “My Preface to the Principia”—among them is citation from Wolff</p> <hr/> <p>Makes excerpts from Wolff's <i>Cosmologia</i> and <i>Ontologia</i>¹³</p> <hr/> <p>Quotes in diary from Wolff's <i>Logical Philosophy</i></p> <hr/> <p>Publishes <i>Principia</i>—refers to Wolff</p> <hr/> <p>Writes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Mechanism of the Soul and Body</i> 2. <i>Notes on Wolff's Psychologica Empirica</i> [Empirical Psychology] 3. <i>Comparison of Christian Wolff's Ontology and Cosmology with our Principles of Natural Things (Psychologica)</i>
<p>1736 (48)</p>	<p>In Copenhagen sees and skims Wolff's <i>Theologia naturalis</i>, “where, without mentioning my name, he seems to refer to me”¹⁴</p> <hr/> <p>Copies from Wolff's <i>Ontologia</i> and <i>Cosmologia</i>, which he apparently carried with him</p>
<p>1740 (52)</p>	<p>Publishes <i>Oeconomia Regni Animalis</i>, vol. I (<i>The Economy of the Animal Kingdom</i>)—refers to Wolff</p> <hr/> <p>Writes <i>Philosophia Universalium Characteristica et Mathematica</i>—a subject discussed by Wolff</p>
<p>1741-1744 (53-56)</p>	<p><i>A Philosopher's Notebook</i>—includes many extracts from Wolff</p>

¹² R. L. Tafel, *Documents Concerning the Life and Character of Emanuel Swedenborg*, 2 vols. (London: Swedenborg Society, 1877) II, 1. 78.

¹³ *Documents*, *ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

1742	<p>Writes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Transactia prima de anima et ejus et corporis harmonia in genere (Harmony of the Soul and Body)</i>—refers to Wolff 2. <i>Psychologia rationalis (Rational Psychology)</i>—same title as Wolff's 1734 book 3. <i>Ontologia</i>—Wolff is one of the three authorities from which Swedenborg derives philosophic definitions <hr/> <p>Publishes <i>Oeconomia Regni Animalis</i>, vol. II—refers to Wolff</p>
1744 (56)	<p>April 6, 7—The Lord manifests Himself to Swedenborg</p> <p>Writes <i>Clavis hieroglyphica (Hieroglyphic Key)</i>—refers to Wolff</p>
1754-1764 (66-68)	<p>Writes <i>Spiritual Diary</i>—refers to Wolff in ns. 4727, 4728, 4744, 4757, 4851, 6018, 6049</p>
1758 (60)	<p>Publishes <i>Earths in the Universe</i>—refers to Wolff in n. 38</p>
1759-1763? (71-75?)	<p>Writes <i>The Last Judgment (posthumous)</i>—refers to Wolff in ns. 262, 263</p>
1769 (81)	<p>Publishes <i>Intercourse of the Soul and Body</i>—refers to Wolff in ns. 17, 19</p>
1770 (82)	<p>Publishes <i>The True Christian Religion</i>—refers to Wolff in ns. 90, 335, 696</p>

Now, the final question is, With all this contact Swedenborg had with Wolff, just what did he take and make his own from him? First let me say that this is a question that I am still involved in studying and that so far I have learned enough to realize that it is quite more complex than I had realized. For while Swedenborg was unquestionably an innovative thinker, he was of course still a citizen of his times, and one keenly aware of the profound philosophic questions that agitated it. In his attempt to solve them I am seeing him beginning by wisely seeking to analyze the best thought of those around him, gladly assimilating what proved true, critically rejecting what did not.

One of the things he unquestionably picked up from Wolff was *terminology*. Wolff may not have been a very original philosophic thinker, but he was unquestionably an accomplished “definer.” With rigorous Germanic thoroughness he methodically and meticulously defined and redefined and redefined both the Latin *and* the German terms of his philosophical discourse. (He is said, incidentally, to be the one who “taught philosophy to speak German.”) I have already suggested that Swedenborg may have got the term for his concept of the *simple* from Wolff. Perhaps my readers will be as surprised as I was to learn that Wolff also defined and used the conceptual terms *successivus* and *simultaneus*¹⁵ years before Swedenborg was to use them in the same sense when articulating his doctrine of Series and Order, or, as it is commonly known, of Degrees. When Swedenborg set about defining philosophic concepts as he thought they should be understood, which he did in 1742, in a small work posthumously published under the title *Ontology*,¹⁶ Wolff is one of the three authorities from whose definitions he begins.

Then going up from the level of terms to concepts: here part of Wolff’s influence on Swedenborg may have been mainly a negative one, in a positive sense. By this I mean that Swedenborg’s notes clearly show that his meeting with Wolff’s definitions and concepts caused him to rethink and refine some of his own, particularly in regard to the nature of substance and of mental functions. Again and again Swedenborg takes up and points out the flaws in Wolff’s Leibnizian concept of there being a *pre-established harmony* between the mind and body.

And in the normal sense of “positive influence” as well, Swedenborg’s thought—and 18th Century thought in general—may have been pointed in an upward direction by Wolff’s strong emphasis on *absicht* and *Nutze*, i.e., on the distinct “purpose” and “use” that each and every thing serves for mankind. Speaking of Kant’s, and thus of Kant’s contemporary Swedenborg’s era, Ernst Cassirer says:

The profounder elements of the Leibnizian concept of purpose were degraded by Wolff into an insipid utilitarian outlook

¹⁵ Johan Christian Wolff, *Ontologia* (Frankfurt & Leipzig: 1730), p. 441.

¹⁶ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Ontology* (trans. & ed. Alfred Acton) (Boston: Massachusetts New-Church Union, 1901).

and calculation. The universal metaphysical ideas of theodicy had here become lost in a narrow and pedantic pettiness, which sought to detect in every single feature of the course of the universe the advantage of mankind and hence the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Wolff even bestows on sunlight a teleological justification of this kind: "The light of day," he once remarked, "is very useful for us, for with it we can conveniently carry on our duties, which cannot be done in the evening at all, or at least not so handily and with difficulties."¹⁷

Cassirer may mock Wolff's thoroughgoing utilitarian outlook, but cannot we see in it a Divine preparation for Swedenborg's grasp and true formulation of the thoroughly valid doctrine of Use, which explains that all of creation is a structure of mutually supportive functions?

So must it also be with many other true concepts that gradually took form in Swedenborg's understanding. They all had—to return to the subject with which we began our consideration—a long genealogy. They were constructs put together by the Divine Architect with the philosophical building materials provided through many many minds, some of the more significant of them from the German nation.

How very significant Leibniz and Wolff were in the grand Divine plan is further evident from the fact that their theories of the mind-body relationship are the subject of several discussions in Swedenborg's theological works, where he reports having met these philosophers in the spiritual world. But this is a subject unto itself. □

¹⁷Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought* (trans. James Haden) (New Haven & London: Yale University, 1865), pp. 338, 339.

