

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF SWEDENBORG'S KNOWLEDGE OF AND CONTACT WITH WOLFF<sup>†</sup>

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Swedenborg, like many of the learned in his day,<sup>1</sup> knew Wolff's philosophic thought almost as well as Plato knew Socrates. Over a period spanning some forty or more years Swedenborg made numerous references to statements by Wolff. Earlier in this period these are statements drawn from reading Wolff's works; later they are statements Wolff has made in actual conversation—when Wolff was speaking with him in the spiritual world.

### Wolff's Works

A full five works by Wolff himself and three others about him and his philosophy by his contemporaries were found in Swedenborg's library when his estate was settled.<sup>2</sup>

The books by Wolff himself were:

1. *Elementa matheseosos universae* (Rudiments of a universal mathesis),1733 (first published, in German, 1710)
2. *Allerhand Nützliche Versuche, dadurch zu genauer Erkäntniss der Natur und Kunst der Veg gebähnet wird, den Lieberhabern der Warheit mitgetheilet* (Various useful investigations leading to a clearer understanding of nature and machines),1721
3. *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Absichten der natürlichen Dinge* (Rational thoughts on the purposes of natural things),1726 (first published 1724)
4. *Ontologia* (Ontology),1730 (first published 1729)
5. *Cosmologia*,1731

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† Continuation of "Christian Wolff and Swedenborg," January–June 1999, 391–412.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Frängsmyr. 1972. *Wolffianismens genombortt i Uppsala*, 146.

<sup>2</sup>These books were as listed in the estate disposal catalog for the auction of Swedenborg's estate held on November 28, 1772.

Two things should be noted regarding these books by Wolff himself that Swedenborg had on his shelves: First, not all of them were first editions; Swedenborg may actually have first become acquainted with an earlier edition (the dates of first publication are given in parenthesis). Second, these five books listed are by no means all the works by Wolff from which Swedenborg drew. For example, the numerous passages from Wolff he copied into his note book (posthumously published as *Philosopher's Notebook*<sup>3</sup>) were all taken from a book of Wolff's not in his library collection, *Psychologia Rationalis*. Another book not listed as being in his library but from which he cited directly in his own works was *Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genera*. And besides these there are still others works by Wolff that he does not name but clearly alludes to, such as Wolff's *Theologia Naturalis*.

The publications of other authors found in his library that deal all or in part with Wolff and his ideas are:

1. Georg Bernhard Bilfinger, *Harmonia Animi et Corporis* (Harmony of the soul and body), 1725
2. L. P. Thummig, *Institutiones Philosophiae Wolfianae* (Handbook of Wolffian philosophy), 1725
3. Andreas Rüdiger, *Herr Christian Wolffens Meinung von dem Wesen der Seele Herr Rüdigers Gegenmeinung* (Christian Wolff's view on the soul and Rüdiger's counterview), 1727

In addition to being acquainted with Wolff through the above mentioned books by and about him, Swedenborg was also well aware of Wolff through *Acta eruditorum*, a major scholarly journal of the day in which there were articles by and about Wolff.

#### POSSIBLE REFERENCE TO PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE

One of the many references Swedenborg makes to Wolff, furthermore, may be read to mean that his awareness of Wolff included even a personal

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<sup>3</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Philosopher's Notebook*. Trans. & ed. Alfred. Acton. (Philadelphia: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1931).

acquaintance with him. Writing of an experience he had when conscious in the spiritual world Swedenborg says:

From this [denial of the validity of the Word or revelation some were making], it was apparent how the case is with those who believe that it may be known from nature that the Divine is, of what quality it is, that there is a heaven and hell, that there is a life after death namely, that they believe nothing at all. The reason is, because they are in the light (lumen) of nature, and not in the light (lux) of heaven; thus with those who are hellish, not with those from heaven. Two or three of them were known to me in the world Ericus Benzelius, Anders Rüdberg, Christian Wolf (*sic*).<sup>4</sup>

Since both Benzelius and Rüdberg were unquestionably known to Swedenborg personally, perhaps this account is evidence that he had met Wolff as well personally.

That Swedenborg was acquainted with Wolff, at least by letter, was explicitly stated by Baron Sandels, who himself undoubtedly knew Swedenborg quite well, having lived for a time at the home of Swedenborg's brother-in-law Lars Benzelstierna. In his eulogium on Swedenborg to the Royal Academy of Science in Stockholm, Sandels said, "Christian Wolff, and other foreign men of learning addressed him by letter, in order to obtain his ideas on subjects that they found it difficult to fathom."<sup>5</sup> And the late German Swedenborg scholar Dr. Ernst Benz has said that it is not impossible that Swedenborg actually met Wolff in 1734 on a visit to Marburg where Wolff sat in the professorship he had been given after his expulsion from the University of Halle.<sup>6</sup>

#### SWEDENBORG'S DIRECT REFERENCES TO WOLFF

Swedenborg's very first mention of Wolff goes back to 1715 in Germany, where at the age of twenty-seven he was drawing to a close his

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<sup>4</sup> SD 4757, emphasis mine.

<sup>5</sup> R. L. Tafel, *Documents concerning the Life and Character of Swedenborg*. 3 vols. (London: Swedenborg Society, 1877), I: 22.

<sup>6</sup> Ernst Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg* (Zürich: Swedenborg Verlag, 1969), 107.

extensive, five-year long, postgraduate, North European study tour. Writing home to his brother-in-law Eric Benzelius, in the same letter in which he expresses regret at having missed seeing Leibniz (who had moved to Vienna), he mentions that “*Wolffii cursus Mathematicus translatus in lat: Serm* [Wolff’s mathematical textbook translated into Latin] “is reported to be in Sweden—a very useful book, and clearly written.”<sup>7</sup> This book had been first published five years earlier, in 1710, in German,<sup>8</sup> under the title *Anfangsgründe alle mathematicischen Wissenschaften*. Swedenborg himself seems to have seen its subsequent Latin version, *Elementa matheseos universae*, which came out 1713–1715.

He does not say what brought Wolff and his textbook to his attention. However, since he wrote from Grypswald, a German town where he said he met a professor of mathematics Prof. Papke at the Academy there,<sup>9</sup> this professor may have him introduced to Wolff’s works.

It is doubtful that Swedenborg had encountered Wolff’s works previously in his native land. A study of Wolff’s influence on the Swedish academic world of Swedenborg’s day by Frängsmyr indicates no mention of Wolff there until 1718,<sup>10</sup> which was three years after Swedenborg’s letter to Eric Benzelius from Grypswald. Consequently, it seems that Swedenborg may have been among the first to encourage the study of Wolff’s works in Sweden. At the time he wrote this letter to his learned and academically active brother-in-law, Benzelius was the University of Uppsala’s librarian and thus particularly well-situated to spread information on significant foreign thinkers to the literati in Sweden. However, since Swedenborg began his comments on Wolff without a word of introduction regarding him, Benzelius may have already become aware of Wolff, perhaps through German publications received at his library in Uppsala

Swedenborg’s next mention of Wolff is more than a mere mention. It occurs in a manuscript with the year 1722 on the title page, *De magnete et ejus qualitatibus* (The magnet and its qualities). This work is a digest of

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<sup>7</sup> Alfred Acton, *The Letters and Memorials of Emanuel Swedenborg* (hereinafter cited as *Letters and Memorials*). Trans. and ed. Alfred Acton. (Swedenborg Scientific Association: Bryn Athyn, 1948), 62

<sup>8</sup> This was also the year Wolff’s preceptor Leibniz published his *Tentamina Theodiceæ*.

<sup>9</sup> *Letters and Memorials*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Rydelius, Andreas, *Nödige Förnuftsöfningar* (Lynköping: 1718). Frängsmyr, 43.

what had been written up to the time on that subject and consists mostly of extracts from the works of Gilbert; Henkel, Bossier, Hoffman, Volkman, Valentius, Agricola, and Wolff. This data collected from Wolff and chiefly others, however, did not actually come into print in a work by Swedenborg until 1734. It was incorporated in the second of the three parts of his *Principium rerum naturalium*, where he deals with the “magnetic element.”<sup>11</sup>

What else by Wolff that Swedenborg may have read up to this point in time is unknown. As suggested above, it is likely that he had read more than a few of Wolff’s numerous articles published in what was perhaps continental Europe’s leading literary journal *Acta Eruditorum*.

Wolff’s actual book publishing activity began to be intensive in 1719, and Swedenborg very likely had some acquaintance with many of the volumes Wolff subsequently produced—pedantic and tedious as they generally were. It was in 1719 that Wolff produced the second of what was to be his series of seven “*Vernünfftige Gedanken von ...*” (Rational Thoughts concerning...) titles. The first of these very popular “philosophical handbooks for the classroom,” as they have been called, had come out in 1713: *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes* (translated into English and published in 1770 as *Rational Thoughts on the Power of Human Understanding*). The rest of the series were the following—for which I have supplied an English translation and a word describing their content:

(1719) *Vernünfftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen* (Rational thoughts on God, the world, and the human soul)—metaphysics

(1720) *Vernünfftige Gedanken von der Menschen Thun und Lassen* (Rational thoughts on man’s duties and deficiencies)—ethics

(1721) *Vernünfftige Gedanken von dem gesellschaftlichen Leben der Menschen* (Rational thoughts on man’s life as a member of society)—political science

(1723) *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Wirkungen der Natur* (Rational

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<sup>11</sup> The overwhelming bulk of the imported material dealing with the magnet, however, consists of quotations from Pieter van Musschenbroek’s *Physicae et Geometricae* (Lugduni Batavorum: 1729).

thoughts on the operations of nature)—physics

(1724) *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Absichten der natürlichen Dinge*

(Rational thoughts on the purposes of natural things)—teleology

(1725) *Vernünfftige Gedanken von dem Gebrauche der Theile in Menschen,*

*Thieren und Pflanzen* (Rational thoughts on the use of the bodily members of humans, of animals and plants)—biology

It may be wondered how accessible these tracts in German by Wolff would have been to our Swedish-speaking scholar. But the fact that in one day, as he notes in his *Itinerarium*, or travel journal, under the date June 22, 1733, he perused a 140 page book in French plus a German work of over 470 pages would indicate that he read both these languages with ease. Even if he must have been doing some speed reading as he ingested the 610 pages of these two volumes, the notes he made on their content show that he understood what he had before him. From the German book, *Compendieuse Haushaltungs Bibliothek* (Abridged library economic management), he wrote out not only the chapter headings but also some details from the chapter on mining.<sup>12</sup> But then, his facility with German should not be too surprising since it is a close relative of his native tongue, and he had probably been using German since he left Sweden.

After references to Wolff in *De magnete*, in 1724 Swedenborg again refers to him, twice, in an unpublished manuscript on the subject of common salt. Here he adduces results of experiments done by Wolff.<sup>13</sup>

On the European stage at this time Wolff was, one might say, like a Nobel-winner, Swedenborg perhaps a “would-be.” In this same year that Swedenborg was writing on the magnet and salt, so important had Wolff become to him that when a critical review of his own theory about a “hydrostatic law” appeared in a German journal, he felt a need to know what the respected Wolff thought of it. On May 26th he wrote and asked his brother-in-law Benzelius to send a copy of his forthcoming response to this critique to Wolff, but there is no evidence as to whether or not he ever followed through and wrote this answer to his critic. Meeting minutes do definitely document the fact, however, that three months later, on a Friday

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<sup>12</sup> Tafel, *Documents*, II: 1: 23, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *De salu communi*. Ed. A. Acton. (Bryn Athyn, 1910), 135, 137.

early in August at a meeting of four members of the scholarly Literary Guild at Uppsala, he still had this idea in mind. To his colleagues present there he suggested referring the scholarly controversy over his “hydrostatic law” to the “decision of Professor Wolff.”<sup>14</sup>

Such a concern for Wolff’s opinion suggests that he had had some previous personal contact with Wolff. At the very least it indicates that he and his colleagues knew and respected Wolff as an authority, and that there was sufficient collegial familiarity with Wolff that they assumed their letter-writing effort could expect a reply from him.

### Swedenborg’s Further References to Wolff

Five years later Swedenborg was still turning to Wolff for support. It was in 1729 when he began composing his *Principia*. There he refers to Wolff repeatedly, no less than eleven times. However, all but one of these references are in the section on the magnet, and they are of a scientific rather than philosophic nature. Wolff’s experimental data on magnetic phenomena are adduced in confirmation of the results of experiments by Musschenbroek. He had found all this supplemental data in one section, n. 382, of Wolff’s 1723 treatise *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Wirkungen der Natur*.<sup>15</sup> Besides this, Swedenborg incorporates a table of magnetic declination taken from Wolff’s 1721 publication *Allerhand nützliche Versuche, dadurch zu genauer erkänntniß der natur und kunst der weg gebähnet* (All manner of useful experiments paving the way to a more exact knowledge of nature and machinery).<sup>16</sup>

Indicative of Swedenborg’s respect for Wolff is his designation of him here in *Principia* as “the celebrated Wolff,” and his encomiastic observation, “as Wolff has excellently remarked.”<sup>17</sup>

His next reference to Wolff is an entry he made in the journal he kept while on his European travels in 1733, the *Itinerarium*. On July 10th, while

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<sup>14</sup> A. Acton, *Life of Swedenborg*, (Bryn Athyn), II: 286.

<sup>15</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Principia*. Trans. Isaiah Tansley. 2 vols. (London: Swedenborg Society, 1912; hereinafter *Principia*), II: 32—3.

<sup>16</sup> Christian Wolff, *Allerhand nützliche Versuche*, vol. 3, 197, 198.

<sup>17</sup> *Principia*, 1: 426, 437.

in Dresden, he writes: “At the house of Secretary Rürger I saw Wolf’s (*sic*) *Cosmologia generalis*. He endeavors to establish the nature of the elements from merely metaphysical principles; his theory is based on sound foundations.”<sup>18</sup>

At this time (or probably a little later), Swedenborg appears also to have first seen Wolff’s *Ontology*. We gather this from evidence in *Codex 86*, that manuscript where while in Stockholm he had entered so many notes pertaining to his studies, particularly on the subjects of mathematics and astronomy, and then taken them with him on his travels. There in *Codex 86* is an entry headed “*Ex Memoires de l’Academie de Sciences pro anno 1733.*” Then under this heading, after two short paragraphs from the work in question, Swedenborg enters a long quotation from Wolff’s *Ontology* on the subject of lines and curves.

Swedenborg subsequently seems to have bought a copy of each of these works by Wolff for himself—Wolff’s 1731 *Cosmologia* and its earlier, 1729, companion treatise, *Ontologia*—for he mentions both of them in his notes made later while travelling through Germany. We shall have more to say about his encounters with these two books.

The following years 1733–1736 became for Swedenborg years of major involvement with Wolff’s ideas. We see this involvement in the preface and appended conclusion to *Principia*.

The primary purpose of the foreign trip he made in 1733 to what are today Germany and Czechoslovakia was to publish his mineralogical series. He may have sent the series volumes on Iron and Copper on ahead, but when he left Stockholm he carried personally with him the manuscript of the volume on the *Principia* and the Magnet. There in Germany he not only finished readying them all for print, he also then wrote the first chapter of the *Principia*—effectively a preface to the whole work—and then a brief concluding appendix as well.

In notes he made for use in preparing this material that he added to the *Principia*, we find in a paragraph headed “A Comparison of Wolff’s *Cosmologia Generalis* with our *Principia*.” This paragraph contains the following citations from yet another of Wolff’s works, his *Discursus*

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<sup>18</sup>Tafel, *Documents*, II: I, 78.

*praeliminaris de philosophia in genere*, which had been published five years earlier in 1728:

Complete freedom of philosophizing, he (Wolff) says, must be vouchsafed to those who philosophize in a philosophical manner, and no danger is to be feared from this, either to religion, to virtue, or to the state<sup>19</sup>; again, without the freedom of philosophizing, there is no progress in science<sup>20</sup>; likewise, in philosophy a place is to be granted to philosophical hypotheses, so far as they prepare the way to evident truth<sup>21</sup>; finally, if anyone philosophizes in a philosophical manner, he has no need to refute opposite opinions.<sup>22,23</sup>

These notes took finished form in the concluding paragraph of the appendix he then wrote for his *Principia*, which came off the press in Prague in 1734. Here Swedenborg makes a point of saying that Wolff's "rules and axioms...served very considerably to confirm my views":

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.<sup>24</sup> I refer more particularly to his *Philosophia Prima sive Ontologia*, and also to his *Cosmologia Generalis*, in which he has formulated various rules and axioms to guide us in our progress to the attainment of first principles, a perusal of which has served very considerably to confirm my views; although the principles laid down in the present work had been worked

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<sup>19</sup> Christian Wolff, *Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy*. Trans. Richard J. Blackwell. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), n.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 169

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 127, cf. n.168.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, n.162.

<sup>23</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, "Some Arguments for the Principia," *Scientific and Philosophical Treatises* (hereinafter SPT). Ed. Alfred H. Stroh. (Bryn Athyn: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1908), part I, fascicle 2, 113.

<sup>24</sup> This refers to Wolff's earlier works on physical experiments, which Swedenborg had studied in writing his *Collectanea*, particularly the "Collection on the Magnet."

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 principles and general axioms of this illustrious author. We cannot but acknowledge, therefore, in the words of this learned writer, "That in philosophy we must grant a place to philosophical hypotheses, so far as they prepare the way to a clear discovery of the truth." Again: "Science can make no progress without freedom to philosophize." Again: "Full liberty must be granted to all who philosophize in a philosophical manner, nor have we any reason to apprehend from such a liberty any danger either to religion, to virtue, or to the State."<sup>25</sup>

Some scholars have claimed that Swedenborg actually got much of his system in the *Principia* from Wolff, but they have apparently not taken into consideration two facts that controvert this claim. The first fact is that Swedenborg explicitly states above, in his notes on Wolff's *Cosmologia Generalis*, that his *Principia* was written<sup>26</sup> "two years" before he saw Wolff's *Cosmologia*.<sup>27</sup> The day he had this first look at this work of Wolff was, as noted above, in Dresden, July 10, 1733. At that point his work on his *Principia* was to all intents complete: he had in fact arrived there in Dresden with its manuscript in hand. He had taken the manuscript with him from Stockholm. The second fact is that it is first in the post-*Principia* notes (referred to above) that Swedenborg displays a specific awareness of Wolff's own cosmology and tries to take him into consideration. This comes out further in the post-*Principia* notes where he puts down a series of comments dealing with the "natural point" as Wolff had described it in his *Cosmologia*, and where in subsequent comments he now strives to adapt his terms and system to Wolff's formulation, resulting in the divi-

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<sup>25</sup> *Principia*. II: 292; emphasis added.

<sup>26</sup> We take this to mean the writing of the *Principia* was "completed" at this time, which would have been in 1731. Writing of the *Principia* was begun in 1729.

<sup>27</sup> *Principia*. II: 531.

sion of his own proposed particle chain into a series made up of active and passive finite entities.<sup>28</sup>

Late in the same year, 1733, he begins writing down further ideas that had come to his mind as a result of reading Wolff's two works just mentioned and yet a third. This third work, at that time Wolff's most recent, published in late 1732, was *Psychologia Empirica* (Empirical psychology). He himself had just attempted to sketch out a scientific doctrine of the soul's operation in the body in his "Mechanism of the Soul and Body."<sup>29</sup> Upon discovering that the renowned Wolff had just done so, he does not merely copy parts of Wolff's *Psychologia Empirica* into his journal but also makes extensive comments on them.<sup>30</sup> He explains that he wants to undertake a comparison of his own principles and metaphysical rules with Wolff's, so that whoever is interested can determine their basis and whether they are geometrically and metaphysically true. To accomplish this, he says, he cannot find any better method than using the axioms and rules given in Wolff's *Cosmology*. However, he was content with simply citing four of Wolff's axioms, which actually were not taken from Wolff's *Cosmologia*, but from his *Discursus praeliminare de philosophia in genere*.

Although the comments Swedenborg writes are so extended that, as Acton says, they practically constitute a psychological essay in itself,<sup>31</sup> Swedenborg did not publish them; they are but notes and in very rough form. Acton observes that Swedenborg is here entering upon some preparatory studies with a view to the writing of a philosophical work on the Final Cause of Creation as seen in the Human Soul, and on the Commerce of that Soul with the Body. This work was to be the continuation of the *Principia*, where he had philosophized concerning the mode of creation.<sup>32</sup>

One of the comments Swedenborg makes here in his work titled almost similarly to Wolff's, *Psychologica*, is particularly significant in our analysis. It again indicates that he was not under any direct influence from Wolff when he wrote his *Principia*. In *Psychologica* Swedenborg explicitly

<sup>28</sup> Jonsson, *Korrespondenslära*, 48.

<sup>29</sup> Swedenborg, STP, "On the Mechanism of the Soul and Body." II: 2, 13.

<sup>30</sup> The Latin text with English translation published under the title *Psychologica*, (Philadelphia: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1923).

<sup>31</sup> Swedenborg, in *Psychologica*. Trans. A. Acton. (Philadelphia: 1931), 23

<sup>32</sup> Acton, *Life of Swedenborg*, 2: 404

states that points about the analogical nature of reason were being first now being made by Wolff that he himself had already made in his *Principia*. In *Psychologica* he writes:

[Wolff is saying in his *Psychologia Empirica* that] all that is gathered by legitimate reasoning from the things observed to be in our mind, and all that is then inferred therefrom, is agreeable also to the mind. The same holds good of every other entity [n. 27]. This agrees exactly with the definition of reason that I have [already] given in my *Principia*, namely that it is something analogical. The only difference is, that whereas Wolff says the things observed to be in our mind, I can state it in this way: “the things which may be in the organs of the body and of the senses, or of the soul,” for they are in organs.

[Wolff says further that] we come to a knowledge of the mind, if we pay attention to our thoughts; and if we go further, we attribute to the mind all that has been gathered from the thoughts by legitimate reasoning [n. 28]. This also coincides with the definition in our *Principia*. For if we pay attention to our thoughts, there is at once something else at hand which reasons, distinguishes, collates; or, there is an analogy or rational.<sup>33</sup>

#### DIRECT AND INDIRECT MUTUAL ACQUAINTANCES

Swedenborg’s positive opinion about Wolff did not last. One can speculate that he may have begun to see Wolff in a new light after conversations he had with three scholars in Germany in the early part of 1734. While passing through Halle he stopped and visited with several professors at the university there, some ten years after Wolff had lectured at Halle (1710–1723); and while life’s flow had carried his many admiring students downstream to various other settlements, a number of the enemies he had made on the faculty were still pooled in the waters at the university. The professors Swedenborg met with now, whether by design or not we do not know, happened all to have been personally acquainted with Wolff—and *all* happened to be opposed to his humanistic viewpoint. One

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<sup>33</sup> Swedenborg, *Psychologica*, (1923), 10.

of them had actually been one of Wolff's pupils, but since had become an outspoken opponent of his renowned master's philosophy. We find the following in Swedenborg's journal regarding a travel stop in March. It is noteworthy that of the professors he here names, the only one he apparently did not meet, Hoffman—whom he mentions simply as being “still alive”—was too, like the other three listed, an active opponent of Wolff.

March 3. [Halle.] I visited Prof. Herman Lange, who is the professor of physics and mathematics, and who extended to me every civility...

March 4. [Halle.]...Fred. Hoffman is still alive. Thomasius I saw, and also Rüdiger...<sup>34</sup>

*Herman Lange.* Lange was a Professor of Physics and Mathematics at Halle. The son of the well-known theologian Joachim Lange, Professor of Theology, the younger Lange was distinguished for his pietism and his opposition to the widely popular Wolffian philosophy. He could scarcely have been other than opposed to Wolff's viewpoint. His own father had actually been one of those who had led the attack on Wolff that brought about his expulsion from the Halle faculty eleven years before this visit of Swedenborg's. His father had spearheaded this forceful action because as he read it, Wolff's natural philosophy and determinism were fundamentally atheistic. (An interpretation concerning which, as we shall see, Swedenborg would decades later receive a supernatural confirmation.)

*Fred. Hoffman* [Adolph Frederich Hoffman]. Given the *primarius* chair of medicine at the university's founding in 1693, Hoffman also filled its chair of natural philosophy. With the exception of the years 1708—1712 when he was in Berlin as the royal physician, he stayed on and served at Halle. Thus, he was at Halle for all but the first two years of Wolff's thirteen-year tenure, which began in 1710. Hoffman too apparently found Wolff's views unforgivably, and unforgettably, irrational. In 1729 his zeal unabated even six years after Wolff had been driven out of Halle, he took part in the renewed academic attack being made against Wolff, publishing his own criticism of Wolff's logic and philosophical method; and then in

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<sup>34</sup>Tafel, *Documents*, II: 1, 73.

1736 he went into print again, coming to Lange's side with a scathing review of Wolff's views on religion and morals.<sup>35</sup>

*Christian Thomasius.* Thomasius, too, was one of those many at the university whose outrage Wolff's fundamentally godless ideas had raised to the flashpoint and then touched off by a particularly heinous lecture Wolff gave. This lecture that almost instantly exploded him from the university and its environs, was the one in which Wolff had proposed that the Chinese, that is, the Confucians, had arrived at a practicable philosophy of life without the aid of any revealed religion. Thomasius had himself been a teacher of the third person Swedenborg notes he saw at Halle, Rüdiger.

*Andreas Rüdiger.* Greatly influenced by his teacher Thomasius, Rüdiger likewise had become an outspoken opponent of the philosophy of the now renowned professor Wolff. Swedenborg in turn may have been influenced in this, and other matters, by Rüdiger. According to Prof. Ernst Benz—although he gives no proof, nor are other scholars known to share his conclusion—it was the pietist Rüdiger's widely read 1716 book *Göttliche Physik* [Divine physics]<sup>36</sup> that “served to lead the development of Swedenborg's originally mechanical—materialistic thought to his later organic—vitalistic view.”<sup>37</sup> Whether this be so or not, it is a fact, as noted above, that among the literature found in Swedenborg's library was Rüdiger's 1727 pamphlet *Herr Christian Wolffens ...Meinung von dem Wesen der Seele...und Herr Rüdigers Gegenmeinung* (Christian Wolff's...View of the Nature of the Soul...and Rüdiger's Contrary View). It seems not improbable that Wolff's views came up for discussion when Rüdiger and Swedenborg visited together.

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<sup>35</sup> Hoffman, *Gedanken über Christian Wolffens logik* (Thoughts on Christian Wolff's logic) (1729); and *Beweistümer derjenigen Grundwahrheiten aller Religion und Moralität, welche durch die in der Wolfischen Philosophie befindlichen Gegensätze habe geleugnet und über den Haufen geworfen sollen* (Demonstrations of the fundamental truths of all religion and morality which the opposing views found in Christian Wolff's philosophy denies and would trash), 1736. See Wundt, Max, *Die deutsche Schulphilosophie im Zeitalter der aufklärung* (Hildesheim, 1964)

<sup>36</sup> This work, *Göttliche Physik, ein rechter Mittelweg zwischen dem Aberglauben und dem Atheismus, der zu der natürlichen und sittlichen Seligkeit des Menschen führt* (Frankfurt a.M., 1716), seems to be a German version of Rüdiger's *Physica Divina Recta Ira ad Ultranque Hominis Felicitatem Naturalem Atque Moralem Ducens* published in Frankfurt in the same year.

<sup>37</sup> Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg*, 134.

Here we interject, for the sake of a yet fuller appreciation of Wolff's ubiquity, a mention of three others who were acquainted with both Swedenborg and Wolff: John Christian Cuno, Samuel Klingenstierna and Anders Celsius.

*Cuno.* Cuno was a talented German ex-patriot who came to reside in Holland. After having been pressed into the army in his youth, he had re-enlisted for a number of years until at the age of thirty he tired of this career. Then, hoping to utilize his talents as a writer or an artist, he sought for a position both at the university in Tübingen and at the university in Marburg. When his attempts at this failed, Wolff, who was at that point a professor at the University of Marburg, advised him to try his fortunes in Holland. This he did, with success, marrying the wealthy widow of a merchant in Amsterdam. It was there in a bookstore on November 4, 1768, he writes in his autobiography, that he met Swedenborg. Swedenborg was at this time eighty-one; Wolff had passed on fourteen years earlier in 1754. Cuno cultivated Swedenborg's acquaintance and describes entertaining him at social dinners at his home.

Cuno's reference to these two men in his autobiography is in the form of an affirmative comment he makes on Swedenborg's use of a quotation from Wolff in his *Principia*. He likes Swedenborg's citation of Wolff's words on the necessity of philosophers being left in freedom to philosophize, although he criticizes Swedenborg for having misused this freedom.<sup>38</sup>

He [Swedenborg] concludes his first part [of his *Principia*] with the following words of the great philosopher Wolf, "Full liberty must be granted to all who philosophize in a philosophical manner, nor have we any reason to apprehend from such a liberty any danger either to religion, to virtue, or to the state." I accept this sentiment of the late Christopher von Wolf without hesitation; yet I should like to submit this point for consideration, whether it is not a great offence that the description of the creation should be quite different with the philosophers from what it is in Moses...What Swedenborg in his chapter xii says about the earthly para-

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<sup>38</sup> Tafel, *Documents*, II, 2: 478.

dise and the first man, methinks is out of place in a work on philosophy, just as much as where he supports this saying of Wolf, that no danger accrues thence to religion.<sup>39</sup>

*Klingenstierna*. Another man personally acquainted with both Wolff and Swedenborg, whose Wolffian connection was probably more significant than Cuno's, was the Swedish mathematician Samuel Klingenstierna. He and Swedenborg corresponded with each other. Klingenstierna enrolled in Uppsala University in 1717, at the age of nineteen (eight years after Swedenborg had graduated and left the school). His first course of study was law, but his interests soon drew him more to mathematics. Here his professor was Anders Gabriel Duhre, who told his students that Euclid's *Elements* was inadequate and recommended Wolff's *Anfangsgründe aller mathematischen Wissenschaften* (First principles of all mathematical knowledge). Some years later, in 1727 when Klingenstierna was a member of the Academy of Science and was given a travel grant, he made his first call at Marburg to meet and study under the highly admired Wolff. It is reported that the teacher was highly impressed with his Swedish student. In fact, when Klingenstierna later heard the professorship in mathematics at Uppsala was open and applied for this position, Wolff wrote a strong letter of recommendation for him to the King of Sweden, Frederik I, who had himself come from the German principality of Hesse-Kassel, where Marburg lay.

Klingenstierna clearly picked up more than mathematics from Wolff. A student of Klingenstierna, Mårten Strömmer, said in a commemorative speech (1768) that Klingenstierna "had also gotten a taste for abstract philosophy and longed for a fuller more complete knowledge of it, for what the light of Nature teaches about God, the world, and man's soul; subjects in which Baron Wolff particularly shone and had disputed most strongly."<sup>40</sup> However, Strömmer went on to state that Klingenstierna soon left speculative philosophy.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, II:1: 479; II: 2: 1159–61.

<sup>40</sup> Frängsmyr, 82, 83.

Perhaps it was on just these subjects that Klingenstierna, reacting to Wolff, corresponded with Swedenborg. But we can only speculate about this because Klingenstierna's correspondence with him was lost at some point after having been found and listed as being among the effects in Swedenborg's estate.<sup>41</sup>

*Celsius.* A third person acquainted with Swedenborg and Wolff, but like Cuno only through the latter's writings, was the learned Swede Anders Celsius, whom we associate with the centigrade temperature scale. But for our concerns Celsius is noteworthy as one of the advocates of Wolffianism in Sweden, particularly as regards methodology. In fact, Celsius was the one who published Wolffianism as such at Uppsala University. In his dissertation *De existentia mentis* (The existence of the mind) (1728), which was entirely Wolffian in its formulation, he speaks of Wolff as "the greatest philosopher of our time."<sup>42</sup> He was subsequently appointed professor of mathematics at Uppsala in 1730. Consequently all the students who studied mathematics at Uppsala University at this time came into contact with Celsius, and were undoubtedly introduced through him to Wolff and his methodology.

Celsius's interaction with Swedenborg, however, was in regard to a matter related to mathematics rather than philosophy. He began a controversy with him in a paper to the Academy of Science in Stockholm. In this paper he criticized Swedenborg's determinations of the declination of the magnetic needle at Uppsala and Torneå. Swedenborg had computed these by taking known declinations of the needle in all parts of the globe and analysing them in accord with the principles he had laid down in his *Principia*.<sup>43</sup> There nevertheless may have been an underlying connection with Wolff in this matter, since Swedenborg had supported the hypotheses on magnetic phenomena he had published in his *Principia* with data collected by Wolff.

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<sup>41</sup> Tafel, *Documents* II: 2: 786, 883.

<sup>42</sup> Frängsmyr, 222.

<sup>43</sup> *Documents*, I: 565ff.

SWEDENBORG'S FURTHER REFERENCES TO WOLFF, CONTINUED

It is two years after Swedenborg had first noted that he had seen Wolff's *Cosmologia Generalis* that he makes his next notes about books by Wolff. These notes are two concurrent journal entries he made in 1736 in Copenhagen:

July 20 [1736]. From noon till evening I was at the house of Mr. Schutenhjelm. I learned that among those most celebrated for their learning in Copenhagen are Kramer, the Councilor of Justice and Librarian, who is distinguished for history and philology; Prof. Holberg who has written Danish comedies and a history of Norway; and Rosencrantz, the privy councilor and prime-minister. The learned have spoken favorably of my work.<sup>44</sup> The same day I saw Wolf's *Natural Theology* where, without mentioning my name, he seems to refer to me.

July 21. I made excerpts from Wolf's *Ontologia* and *Cosmologia* of those parts, which I shall need, on the way, in order to examine more thoroughly his first principles of philosophy.

Wolff's book on natural theology was then fresh off the press, having been published just that year, 1736. Swedenborg does not mention where he saw this book, whether at his host's or another's home, or somewhere else, such as a bookstore; but the presence of this latest production of Wolff in Denmark and Swedenborg's interest in it are further testification to Wolff's international renown. The fact that Swedenborg thought he found a reference to himself in it could not but further have stimulated his interest in Wolff. (On first opening it, one wonders, did Swedenborg quickly thumb through it to see if his name appeared on any of its pages?) It is consequently not too surprising that the day after coming upon this probable reference to himself by Wolff he gave further close attention to two other of Wolff's works, *Ontologia* and *Cosmologia*, which as noted he had initially seen three years earlier in Copenhagen. These apparently now became very important to Swedenborg, for an examination of the

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<sup>44</sup>Probably the *Principia*.

codex containing them shows that he filled a full ninety-three pages in his journal book with excerpts from them.

Four years then pass, until in 1740, Wolff comes up again in Swedenborg's writing. But we shall speak of this further on, after we show that Wolff himself was aware of Swedenborg.

### WOLFF'S AWARENESS OF SWEDENBORG

When Swedenborg thought he saw the popular Wolff allude to him in his latest book, he was probably not greatly surprised. He could have reason to think Wolff might refer to some of his ideas, for not only was he himself very much aware of Wolff, he knew that Wolff had been aware of him too. He knew this because he had already seen references to himself in several of Wolff's works. Swedenborg himself was a known figure in German-speaking scientific circles.

#### Wolff's First Reference to Swedenborg

Wolff first mentioned Swedenborg, as noted above, in his 1728 book *Discursus praeliminaris de philosophica practica*. There he referred to two of Swedenborg's practical treatises: *Nova observata circa ferrum et ignem*<sup>45</sup> and *Observationes miscellaneae circa res naturales*.<sup>46</sup>

But Wolff actually may have become aware of Swedenborg six or seven years before he wrote this 1728 book where he mentions Swedenborg, for Swedenborg had published *Nova observata* in 1721 and his *Observationes miscellaneae* in 1722. However, since he first published *Nova Observata* anonymously, it seems questionable that Wolff became aware of Swedenborg as early as the year when *Nova Observata* was first published. Swedenborg's name as author of *Nova Observata* was not published until

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<sup>45</sup> *Nova observata et inventa circa ferrum et ignem, et praecipue circa naturam ignis ementiarum, una cum nova camini inventionione, Amstelodami, apud Joannem Oosterwyk, 1721.*

<sup>46</sup> *Eman. Swedenborgii Assess. Coll. Metall. In Suecia, Miscellanea observata circa mineralia, ignem et montium strata. Pars I-III, Lipsae, 1722. Pars quarta miscellaneorum observationum circa naturales, et praecipue circa mineralia, ferrum, et stallactitas in cavernis Baummannianis, etc. Naepotami vulgo Schiffbeck bey Hamburg, typis Herm. Hollii, 1722.*

1727 when that work was reprinted with a new title page that gave his name as author.

There is no clue as to which of the editions of these works Wolff had in hand when in 1728 he wrote the following words expressing appreciation for Swedenborg's use of what we today would call the "scientific method":

Technical art often reduces secret historical knowledge to common historical knowledge. The use of techniques and experiments often brings to light facts of nature which otherwise would be hidden. Hence it makes no difference to the knower whether nature presents things to the senses or whether art provides the senses with things which otherwise would escape their notice. With the help of technical art, only attention and acumen are needed to arrive at the contents of both secret and common historical knowledge. Therefore, by means of art, secret knowledge is reduced to common knowledge.

For example, the art of fusing metals exhibits to the observer the hidden properties and effects of fire. Experiments using pneumatic pumps reveal the hidden properties and effects of air. Examples are given by Emanuel Swedenborg, assessor of the metallurgical faculty in Sweden, in his *Nova observata circa ferrum et ignem* and *Observationes miscellaneae circa res naturales*, IV, 36 ff. In the former work, pages 8-10, he relates how heat was applied to carbon for ten or twelve days after the carbon had been shielded on every side. Although no spark of fire appeared in the carbon, the mass of the carbon was decreased to one-tenth its original size by the heat. However, over an open forge after about a quarter or half-hour, fire and flames erupted spontaneously, as it were, and covered the surface.<sup>47</sup>

#### Wolff's SECOND Mention of Swedenborg

Wolff's second specific mention of Swedenborg was in his 1732 book on mathematics where he writes of Swedenborg as being the source of his information that Sweden's King Charles XII had developed a number

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<sup>47</sup> Christian Wolff, *Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy in General*. (Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963). Trans. revised by Kurt P. Nemetz. 13, 14.

system based on six. (We say “specific mention” because there is yet another general reference Wolff may have made to Swedenborg’s ideas without mentioning him by name. We will be treating of this next.)

Swedenborg himself tells of this specific, 1732 reference to himself by Wolff. We find his notice in his response to an inquiry from the Rev. Dr. Nordberg. Nordberg had written to him asking for information that would be of help to him in putting together a biography of the late Charles XII, whom he had served as confessor. Swedenborg, in recounting the king’s mathematical interests, speaks of the fact that in his own 1722 tract *Miscellaneous Observations*<sup>48</sup> he had already reported that the king had devised a new, “sexagenary calculus.” And he adds: “Subsequently Professor Christian Wolff has spoken of this in his *Geometry*, referring to [my book as the source of his information about it].”<sup>49</sup>

Since a description of the life of King Charles XII is now being written by the Herr Doctor, I find myself impelled to contribute something which may not be known to the Herr Doctor, and which may deserve of being made known to the after world through the Herr Doctor. I have given an account of it elsewhere, as it occurs in my *Miscellanea* [*Miscellaneous Observations*], Part 4, chap. I, which treats de calculo novo sexagenario qui a Beatae Memoriae Rege Sueciae Carolo XII adinventus est. In consequence thereof, Herr Court Councillor and Professor Christian Wolf has referred to it in his *Geometrie*, and made it somewhat known to the learned world.<sup>50</sup>

Swedenborg is here referring to Wolff’s 1732 *Elementa Matheseos* where in a scholium, on p. 257 of Volume I, Wolff says: “And, as noted by Emanuel Swedenborg, Charles XII King of Sweden has thought out a sexagenarian numeration, with the use of new characters, and numbers with new names.” Wolff’s actual words as printed, with footnote, were:

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<sup>48</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *Miscellanea observata* (Schiffbeck bey Hamburg: H. H. Hollii, 1722).

<sup>49</sup> Tafel, *Documents*, I, 559.

<sup>50</sup> Acton, *Letters*, 458, 459.

Et Carolus XII, Rex Sueciae, calculum sexagenarium excogitavit, referente Emanuele Suedenborgio [sic] (h), novis characteribus & numeris novisque denominationibus adinventis.

(h) Observat. miscell. part. 4, p. 1. & seq.<sup>51</sup>

Acton reasoned that since Dr. Nordberg received his commission to do a book on King Charles in 1731, then, presuming Swedenborg wrote this letter while in Sweden, he could only have written it between: (a) 1731 and May 1733; (b) July 1734 and July 1736; or (c) Oct. 25 and Dec., 1740, in which latter month Nordberg's second volume was published. Acton believed it was written in 1734.<sup>52</sup>

### Wolff's Third—Presumed—Reference To Swedenborg.

There is a third reference Wolff seems to have made to Swedenborg. Swedenborg thought he saw it, as we have noted above, when on a day in 1736, he happened to see Wolff's *Theologia Naturalis*. As he perused its pages, he thought he saw a place where, he said, "without mentioning my name, he seems to refer to me."<sup>53</sup>

Wolff's *Theologia Naturalis* had been published the preceding spring. What could be this apparent reference to himself that Swedenborg thought he saw in it as he skimmed through Wolff's thousand-page treatise that afternoon? Just where and what is not certain, but one possibility is that that he had in mind Wolff's notes to no. 761 of *Theologia naturalis* where Wolff says:

God produced simple substances which are active and within which are forces modifiable in one way and not another, and which are modifiable in another way and now in this, when other simple substances of the like kind might be produced...

Hence can be understood the mode of demonstrating a priori the contingency of the order of nature arising from the nature of the ele-

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<sup>51</sup> Christian Wolff, *Elementa Matheseos Universae* (Genevae: Marcum-Micahaelem Bousquet, 1732), 21. A. A.

<sup>52</sup> Acton, *Letters*, 458.

<sup>53</sup> Tafel, *Documents*, II: 1: 78.

ments—though it may not yet be fully grasped—if we would inspect a little more deeply the rise of the phenomena in the material world from simple substances as from their font, before demonstration can come in to harmonize [them].

In Acton's view, however, it is more probable that Swedenborg was referring to Wolff's note to no. 787, where in refuting the hypothesis that God first produced a chaos, and then created the world by reducing this chaos into order, Wolff says:

In the philosophers' doctrine of creation, it is usual for them to adapt an interpretation of the Scriptures to the hypotheses they themselves adopt. Hence we see some to whom the hypothesis of a chaos is pleasing, and in defense of it they say that God first produced a chaos and then formed the world by reducing this chaos to order, according to the words of Moses.

Both these passages, Acton observes, occur in the chapter on Divine Creation and Providence, which would certainly have been a chapter to attract Swedenborg's interest.<sup>54</sup>

#### A CORRELATION OF WOLFF'S AND SWEDENBORG'S SCHOLARLY CAREERS

How much attention Swedenborg gave to Wolff becomes strikingly evident when the careers of Wolff and Swedenborg are tracked side by side. The following table chronicles the major aspects of Swedenborg's life as philosopher and theologian in correlation with the life and publications of his fellow philosopher Christian Wolff. The age of each man at a stated time is given year is in parenthesis below the year number. The publications in which one mentions the other are in boldface type.

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<sup>54</sup> Acton, *Life of Swedenborg*, 448.

CORRELATION OF WOLFF & SWEDENBORG\*

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1679	b. Jan. 24. Breslau. Son of tanner (Practical background).		
		1688	b. Jan. 29, Stockholm. Son of clergyman. (Spirit oriented background).
1703 (24)	Qualifies as Privat Dozent at Univ. of Leipzig, where he lectured until 1707.	(15)	Moves to home of brother-in-law Eric Benzelius and enrolls in Upsala University.
1706 (27)	Prof. Mathematics & Natural Philosophy.		
1707 (28)	Begins teaching at Univ. of Halle.		
		1709 (21)	Graduates from Uppsala.
1710	[LEIBNIZ published. <i>Tentamina theodiceé.</i> ]		
1710 (31)	Publishes: <i>Anfangsgründe alle mathematischen Wissenschaften.</i>	(22)	Sept: travels to London, England.
1711		(23)	In England.
1712 (33)	<i>Vern. Ged. von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes</i> ...		Fall: to Holland.
1713 (34)	<i>Elementa matheseos universae.</i> (Latin version of 1710 <i>Anf.</i> )	1713 (25)	Jan.-June: Holland. July: Paris.
1714		1714 (26)	June: to Hamburg from Paris, and so to Pomerania for a year. <b>(Does Sw. now begin to read Wolff., in German?)</b> Sept. Settled in Rostock. Sept./Nov.: Begins stay in Greifswalde.

\* Swedenborg's references to Wolff and vice versa are noted in boldface.

N.B. This table is not all-inclusive; both men produced much more.

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1715		1715 (27)	April 4: letter to E. Benzelius recommending W.'s book on mathematics. Aug. to Brunsbo, Sweden.
1716	[LEIBNIZ dies (b. 1646).]	1716 (28)	Publishes: first number of <i>Daedalus</i> . Appointed Assessor of Mines.
1718 (39)	Publishes: <i>Ratio Praelectionum Wolfaniarum in Mathesin et Philosophiam a Universum.</i>	(30)	Publishes: <i>Regelkonsten, författad i tio Böcker.</i>
1719 (40)	Publishes: <i>Vernünftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt</i>	1719 (31)	Bishop Svedberg ennobled by Queen Louisa Ulrica Eleonora. Writes: "Tremulation."
1720 (41)	Publishes: <i>Vern. Ged. von der Menschen Thun und Lassen</i> – the "German Ethics." (In 1736 & 1737 he takes up this topic again.)	(32)	
1721 (42)	On the occasion of laying down the office of pro-rector, delivers an oration "On the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese." Publishes: 1. <i>Vern. Ged. von dem gesellschaftlichen Leben der Menschen und insonderheit dem gemeinen wesen zu Beförderung der Glückseligkeit des menschlichen Geschlechts</i> – the "German Politics." 2. <i>Allerhand nützliche Versuche, dadurch zu genauer erkäntrniss der natur und kunst der weg gebähnet.</i>	(33)	July – leaves Sweden. Via Copenhagen & Hamburg to – Oct., Amsterdam. Where he publishes: 1. <i>Prodromus Rerum Naturalium ...</i> 2. <i>Nova Observata et Inventa circa Ferrum et Ignem ...</i> 3. <i>Methodus Novo Inveniendi Longitudines ...</i> 4. <i>Artificia nova mechanica Receptacula Navalia et aggeres Aquaticos construendi.</i> Dec. 16, travels to Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne.

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1722 (43)		1722 (34)	Jan. Mar. Cologne to Leipzig. Writes: <i>De Magnete</i> – contains data from W.'s <i>Allerhand nützliche Versuch</i> (later re-used in <i>Principia</i> ). Publishes: 1. <i>Miscellanea Observata</i> (Leipzig). W. writes of having learned of Ch. XII's " <i>calculus sexagenarum</i> " from this book. 2. " <i>Expositio Legis Hydrostaticae.</i> " Visits all mines in Saxony, and thence to Hamburg where he publishes: 3. Part IV of <i>Miscellanea Observata</i> (Schiffbeck, nr. Hamburg). On to Brunswick and Gosslar. In this region is introduced to Duke Rudolph of Brunswick, who becomes great friend and patron. July. returns to Stockholm.
1723 (44)	Deprived of office and ordered to leave Prussia. To Marburg. Publishes: <i>Vern. Ged. von den Wirkungen der Natur</i> – the "German Cosmology."		Writes: <i>De genuina metallorum tractatione.</i>
1724 (45)	Publishes: 1. <i>Anmerkungen zu der Vernünftige. Gedanken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt zu besserem Verstande und bequemerem Gebrauche derselben.</i>	1724 (36)	Writes: <i>De secretione argenti et cupro ..</i> <i>De vitriolo.</i> <i>De sulphure et pyrite.</i> <i>De sale communi</i> – refers to W.

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1724 cont. (45)	<p>Publishes: <i>Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Absichten</i> [<i>finium</i>,/ purposes] <i>der natürlichen Dinge</i> – the “German Natural Theology,” or “German Teleology.”</p>	1724 cont. (36)	<p>May 26. Asks Benzelius to send W. a copy of his response to the criticism of his “Hydrostatic Law” article. Aug. [15?]. Suggests Literary Guild refer controversy over his Hydrostatic Law to “decision of Prof. W.”</p>
1725 (46)	<p>Publishes: <i>Vern. Ged. von dem Gebrauche der Theile des menschlichen Liebes der Tiere und Planzen.</i></p>	1725 (37)	<p>In Stockholm. Begins to write: 1. <i>Adversaria in Principia Rerum Naturalium</i>; 2. <i>Observata in corpore humano.</i></p>
1726 (47)	<p>Publishes: 1. <i>Ausfürliche Nachricht von seinen eigenen Skriften.</i> 2. <i>Oratio de Sinarum philosophica practica.</i></p>	(38)	<p>In Stockholm. Writes: “On Gold and Silver” (ms. now lost).</p>
1727 (48)		(39)	<p>Writes: “On the Secretion or Separation of Silver from Copper.” 2<sup>nd</sup> eds. published in Amsterdam of: 1. <i>Prodromus Rerum Naturalium.</i> 2. <i>Nova Observata et Inventa circa Ferrum et Ignem ...</i> 3. <i>Methodus Novo Inveniendi Longitudines ...</i></p>
1728 (49)	<p>Publishes: 1. <i>Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genera</i> – refs. two of Sw.'s works: <i>Nova observata circa ferrum et ignem</i>, and <i>Observationes miscellaneae circa res naturales.</i> 2. <i>Philosophia rationalis sive logica.</i></p>	(40)	<p>In Sweden.</p>

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1729 (50)	Publishes: <i>Philosophia prima sive Ontologia.</i>	(41)	Begins writing <i>Principia Rerum Naturalium ab experimentis et geometrica educata</i> (Minor Principia).
1731 (52)	Publishes: <i>Cosmologia generalis.</i>		
1732 (53)	Publishes: 1. <i>Psychologia empirica.</i> 2. <i>Elementa Arithmeticae</i> – refs. Sw.'s acct of Ch.XII sexag. calculus. In <i>Obser- vationes Miscellanæ.</i>		
1733 (54)			April, Stockholm. Writes: <i>Generaliter de Motu Elementorum.</i> May 10 to Germany primarily to publish <i>Opera Mineralogica</i> , of which <i>Principia</i> is first vol.. During journey. Probably writes <i>de Infinito.</i> June 7 <sup>th</sup> . Arrives Dresden. July 10. First sees W.'s <i>Cosmologia.</i> June 14-19, reads & corrects <i>Principia</i> July 15. Begins notes in diary for "My Preface to the <i>Principia.</i> " Among notes are citations from W.'s <i>Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genera</i> (published 1728). Begins " <i>Comparatio Ontologiae...</i> " (see below). July 23. Arrives Prague. Sept. 4. Arrives Leipzig.

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1733 cont. (54)		1733 cont. (45)	<p>Oct. 5. Publishes:  <i>Principia</i> – refs. to W.:  includes .W's. magnetic  experiments and tables  from <i>Allerh. Nützl. Versuch</i>;  cites from W's. <i>Discursus  praeliminaris de  philosophia ...</i>  Late in year begins writing:  1. <i>De Mechanismo animae et  corporis.</i>  2. <i>Psychologica – Notae ex  Wolfii Psychologia  Empirica</i> (Notes on W.'s  Empirical Psychology).  "Some Arguments for the  <i>Principia</i>," which included  3. <i>Comparatio Ontologiae et  Cosmologiae generalis Dom.  Christiani Wolfii, cum  Principiis nostris rerum  naturalium</i> (Comparison of  Christian W.'s <i>Ontology  and Cosmology</i> with our  <i>Principia</i> ). Cites from W's.  <i>Discursus praeliminaris de  philosophia ...</i></p>
1734 (55)	Publishes: <i>Psychologia rationalis.</i>	(46)	<p>Jan. Father dies.  Jan.-Feb, Leipzig.  Completes writing:  1. <i>Psychologica.</i>  2. <i>Comparatio Ontologiae et  Cosmologiae</i>  3. <i>De Infinito.</i>  Writes:  <i>Ex Principiis rerum  naturalium meis</i> [Summary of  the <i>Principia</i>].</p>

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1734 cont. (55)		1734 (46)	Jan.-Feb, Leipzig (cont.). Probable date of letter to Nordberg noting W.'s ref. to Sw.'s report of Ch.XII <i>calcula novo sexagenario</i> – refers to W.. Publishes: 1. <i>Opera Mineralia</i> (Vol. I = <i>Principia</i> ). 2. <i>Prodromus...de Infinito...; deque mechanismo operationis animae et corporis</i> . March 1. To Halle <i>et alias</i> . July. Arrives Stockholm.
1736 - 37 (57-58)	Publishes: <i>Theologia naturalis ... pars prior</i>	1736 (48)	July. To Germany <i>via</i> Copenhagen. In Copenhagen skims W's <i>Theologia naturalis</i> , noting "without mentioning my name, he seems to refer to me"; copies 93 pages from W's <i>Ontologia</i> and <i>Cosmologia</i> . Aug 17 Amsterdam, Holland Sept. in Paris.
1737 (58)	By this time over 200 books and pamphlets have appeared for or against Wolff's doctrine. <i>Theologia naturalis ... pars posterior</i>	1737 (49)	Apparently in Paris for the year, studying anatomy.
1738-39 (59)	Publishes: <i>Philosophia practica universalis ... pars prima</i> .	1738 (49)	March. To Italy. Writes: <i>De Cerebro</i> 1. Begins: <i>Oeconomia Regni Animalis</i> ( <i>Economy of the Animal Kingdom</i> – EAK). 2. <i>De Via ad Cognitionem Animae</i> . 3. <i>De Fide et Bonis Operibus</i> .

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1739 (60)	Publishes: <i>Philosophia practica universalis ... pars posterior.</i>	1739 (51)	Writes: <i>De musculis in genere.</i> May. To Paris. Dec. Amsterdam. Finishes EAK I.
1740-44 (61-65)		1740-44 (52-56)	Oct. 1740, returns to Stockholm. Writes: <i>Varia philosophica et theologica (A Philosopher's Notebook)</i> – contains extracts from W.
1740 (61)	Frederick the Great recalls Wolff to Halle University. Publishes: <i>Jus naturae methodo scientifica pertracta (1740- 1748).</i>	1740 (52)	Jan.-Oct. Amsterdam Publishes: <i>E.A.K., Part. I.</i> Writes: 1. <i>De Ossibus Cranii, deque Ossificatione, et de Dura Mater.</i> 2. <i>Philosophia Corpuscularis in Compendio</i> (where he says, "These things are true, I have the sign"). 3. "On the Computation of the Declination of the Magnetic Needle" [a paper he read]. 4. <i>Philosophia Universalium Characteristica et Mathe- matica</i> – a subject discussed by W. 5. <i>Anatomia omnium partium Cerebri, Cerebelli, Medullae ob- longatae et spinalis.</i> 6. <i>De cute, deque lingua.</i> Oct. Leaves Holland for Sweden
		1741-44 (53-56)	Writes <i>Varia philosophica et theologica (Philosopher's notebook)</i> – many extracts from W.

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1741 (62)	Publishes: <i>De necessitate methodi scientificae et genuino usu juris naturae et gentium.</i>	1741 (53)	Whole year in Stockholm. Publishes: <b>E.A.K., Vol. II</b> — <i>refers to W. re soul.</i> Writes: 1. <i>De Prudentia Divina, Praedestinatione, Fato, Fortuna; et Prudentia Humana.</i> (Unpublished MS., lost.) 2. <i>Mathematica et physica in compendia redacta.</i> 3. <b>E..A.K., Vol. III.: The Fi- bre.</b> Uses Wolff's for <b>definitions</b> Finishes in 1742.
1742 (63)		1742 (54)	In Stockholm (ill now & then). Writes: 1. <i>Varia in mineralia, anatomia, chymia, pschologia,, et cetera.</i> 2. <i>Adversaria in metaphysica.</i> 3. <b>Transactia prima de anima et ejus et corporis harmonia in genere</b> — <i>refers to W.</i> 4. <i>De origine et propagatione animae.</i> 5. <i>De spiritu animale.</i> 6. <i>De sanguine rubro.</i> 7. <i>De actione.</i> 8. <b>Psychologia rationalis</b> — similar subject to W.'s 1734 book, although no direct ref. to him. 9. <b>Ontologia.</b> Here W. is one of the three authorities from whom philosophical definitions are compiled.

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1742 cont. (63)		1742-43 (54-55)	<i>Regnum animale anatomice, physice, philosophice perlustratum ...</i>
1743 (64)	Made Chancellor of Halle University.		
		1743 (55)	Aug. 6 Arrives Stralsund, Germany. Sept 2 Amsterdam. Oct.-mid. Probable date of Lord's first manifestation to him. Writes: <i>De Cerebro.</i> Begins <i>Journal of Dreams</i> , Dec. 1 Arrives at Hague, Holland.
		1744 (56)	April 6, 7 : The Lord manifests Himself to Swedenborg. Writes: 1. <i>De sensu communi.</i> 2. Early or middle 1744: <i>Clavis hieroglyphica</i> – refers to W. 3. <i>De correspondentia et representatione, ex Psychologia rationalis Scriptura Sacra.</i> 4. <i>De musculis faciei. (et abdominis).</i> Publishes: 1. <i>Regnum animale ... de abdominis...</i> , Part I; 2. <i>Regnum animale ... de thoracis...</i> , Part II.

YEAR (W.'s age)	WOLFF	YEAR (Sw.'s age)	SWEDENBORG
1745 (65)		1745 (57)	Writes: 1. <i>History of Creation</i> . Publishes: 1. <i>De Cultu et Amore Dei</i> , Parts I & 2. 2. <i>Regnum animale ... de thora- cis...</i> , Part II.
1745 (66)	Receives title of Elector of Bavaria (= Baron of Holy Roman Empire).		July. Returns to Stockholm.
1749 (70)	Publishes: <i>Jus Gentium</i> .		
1750-53 (71-74)	Publishes: <i>Institutiones jures naturae et gentium</i> . <i>Philosophia moralis sive ethica</i> .		
1754 (75)	Dies April 9.		
		1754- 1764 (66-68)	Writes: <i>Experientiae Spirituales</i> – refs. to W. in nos. 4727, 4757, 4851, 6018, 6049.
		1758 (60)	Publishes: <i>De Telluribus</i> – ref. to W. in no. 38.
		1759- 1763(?)	Writes: <i>De Ultimo Judico (post.)</i> – refs. to W. in nos. 262, 263.
		1769 (81)	Publishes: <i>De Commercio Anima et Corporis</i> – refs. to W. in nos. 17, 19.
		1770 (82)	Publishes: <i>Vera Christiana Religio</i> – refs. to W. in nos. 90, 335, 696.

## SWEDENBORG'S FURTHER REFERENCES TO WOLFF, CONTINUED

Swedenborg's numerous further references to Wolff, both of a direct and indirect nature, further bring out how well-known Wolff was to him—and how significant to his readers he seems to have thought Wolff was.

*Economy of the Animal Kingdom*

Swedenborg took Wolff's thinking into consideration in a number of other areas. First, there was the concept of a *universal mathesis*. Even his small, 1740 manuscript *Philosophia universalium characteristica et mathematica*, while it contains no direct reference to Wolff, as mentioned earlier, dealt with a subject that had already been promoted and discussed by Wolff, *mathesis universalis*. We know of his awareness of Wolff's own concept of a *universal mathesis* from his words in another work he wrote that same year, *Economy of The Animal Kingdom (Oeconomia regni animalis)*:

...[A] mathematical philosophy of universals must be invented, which, by characteristic marks and letters, in their general form not very unlike the algebraic analysis of infinites, may be capable of expressing those things that are inexpressible by ordinary language. On this subject Wolff observes [in no. 755 of his *Ontologia*] "Among the desiderata of learning, is a science which should deliver the general principles of the knowledge of finite things; a science from which the geometrician might draw his measures, when desirous usefully to exercise his calculations in the mathematical knowledge of nature...And this science would have a better title to the name of universal mathematics, than the science of quantities in general, or of indeterminate numbers, since it would deliver the first principles of the mathematical knowledge of all things... Thus we might at last obtain the true mathematical principles of natural philosophy and psychology which might be of use to philosophers in guiding their further discoveries, and in general to all for accurate practice. I wish the learned would turn their attention to it."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*. Trans. Augustus Clissold. 2 vols. (New York: New Church Press, undated) II: n. 651.

The foregoing from Volume I of the widely read *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* is just one of several times Swedenborg mentioned Wolff in this work. In Volume II he refers to him in regard to the following subjects:

*Series*

In the mundane system there are several series, both universal, and less universal. These series, the instant they are clearly defined, or viewed as defined, are usually arranged into genera and species, whence arise superior and inferior genera, and in like manner species, which acknowledge degrees of universality; wherefore species, and occasionally even individuals, are considered as a genus; and vice versa, when compared with genera more universal. The most universal series is the universe, or the system of the world, which contains within itself several series. The world or universe, according to the celebrated Wolff, is a series of finite entities connected with each other, consequently it is one entity; but this system comprises many simultaneous and many successive things. (*Cosmologia Generalis* ns. 48, 51, 52, 60.)<sup>56</sup>

*Definition of substance*

Wolff observes, that “substance is the subject of intrinsic, constant, and variable determinations,” and “is that in which dwell the same essentials and attributes, while modes successively vary.” He, therefore, supposes that substance, without active force, is not conceivable (*Ontologia*, § 769, 770, 776); and hence he describes its accidents [forces?] as alive. (*Cosmologia*, ns. 378, 379.)<sup>57</sup>

*The interrelatedness of all things—simple substances are the ultimate causes of everything:*

If the first substance of every series be assumed as depending for its existence on the first substance of the world, then, according to Wolff,

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<sup>56</sup> *Economy*, II: n. 584.

<sup>57</sup> *Economy*, I: n. 589.

“Every state of every element involves a relation to the whole world. In elements and simple substances are contained the ultimate causes of those things that are found in material things. The connection of material things depends on the connection of elements. Extension cannot originate from Zenonic or self-similar points. (*Cosmologia*, ns. 213, 191, 192, 205, 218)”<sup>58</sup>

*The First Substance is constant and permanent, and contains most perfect harmonious variety*

It seems indeed that this [first] substance must be acknowledged to possess the highest degree of constancy and permanency in regard to its essence and attributes; and that in regard to its other faculties, which in the subsequent substances are called accidents and modes, it possesses the most perfect harmonious variety: other wise we could not possibly understand anything to be contained in it beyond a most fixed oneness. This I believe to be the meaning of the celebrated Wolff, when he describes substance as the subject of intrinsic, constant, and variable determinations, and as that in which dwell the same essentials and attributes, while modes successively vary.<sup>59</sup>

*Definitions of Form and Matter*

Materiality cannot be ascribed to the human spirituous fluid. For when we speak of form, and the matter or materia *ex quo, in quo et circa quam* [Wolff, *Ontologia.*, n. 949], to which matter are assigned its parts, which are such that quantity cannot be predicated of them, we mean, with the ancients, some things in opposition to no things; in which sense, the Philosopher says that matter is the first subject from which all things subsist, which are born originally of themselves, and not through the medium of another; and that it is the ultimate part into which things are resolved, and in which they terminate: wherefore also amongst principles he reckons matter and form. But the same term, applied to substances, is

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<sup>58</sup> *Economy* II: n. 592.

<sup>59</sup> *Economy* II, n. 605.

at this day applicable to compounds, as having *vis inertiae* and extension. Wolff says: "Matter is an extense endowed with *vis inertiae*; it is modified by variation of figure; and is that which is determined in a compound entity." (*Cosmologia*, n. 140, 140; *Ontologia*, n. 948)<sup>60</sup>

*Epistemology—discovery requires facts as well as reason*

"By reflection and abstraction alone," says Wolff, "universal notions are not made complete and determinate. For reflection is wholly occupied in the successive direction of the attention to general principles; nor is anything obtained by abstraction, except that those general principles are also seen to be different from the objects of perception in which they exist...Thus it does not hence appear, whether those general principles contain more or fewer particulars than are sufficient to...distinguish the things of that genus or species from those of another...Therefore, it is unknown whether they are complete and determinate" (*Psychologia Rationalis*, n. 401).<sup>61</sup>

*The essential role of singulars in the perception of universals*

"We cannot," says Wolff, "represent to ourselves universals, except so far as we perceive singulars" (*Psychologia Rationalis*, n. 429); and "if we point out by words...the generals of those singulars that enter a universal notion, the words are not understood, except so far as there is a perception of those generals in individuals." (*ibid.*, n. 428).<sup>62</sup>

*An entity's form is the principle factor in determining its peculiar existence; consequently, it is the cause of the entity*

"By means of the form of an entity," says Wolff, "we understand why that entity is of one particular genus or species, or of one quality rather than another; and why it is adapted to act in one particular manner: consequently the law of these predicates is contained in the form. The form,

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<sup>60</sup> *Economy* I: n. 638.

<sup>61</sup> *Economy* I: n. 648.

<sup>62</sup> *Economy* I: n. 650.

therefore, is the principle of the entity, upon which its peculiar existence depends; consequently, it is the cause of the entity. (*Ontologia*, n. 947 )"<sup>63</sup>

### *Definition of Nature*

Wolff says: "By universal nature, or nature simply so called, we mean the principle of mutations in the world, the principle intrinsic to the world. Since nature is intrinsic to the world, it cannot be a distinct entity from the world. Universal nature is an aggregate of all the motive forces that there are in the bodies coexisting in the world taken collectively. (*Cosmologia*, ns. 503, 504, 507.)"<sup>64</sup>

*The essence and nature of the soul consist in the power of representing the universe.*

"In every system," says Wolff, "of explaining the intercourse between the soul and body, it is necessarily supposed, that the essence and nature of the soul consist in the power of representing the universe, according to the place of the organic body in the universe, and suitably to the changes that happen in the sensory organs (*Psychologia Rationalis*, ns. 547, 62 [?])."<sup>65</sup>

### *Philosopher's Notebook*

Swedenborg's continuing interest in Wolff's opinions shows itself in one of his scholarly activities upon his return to Sweden from Amsterdam after publishing Part II of the *Economy*. Settled again Stockholm, he then began making notes on various doctrines of philosophers past and present that he would make use of in writing the third volume of his *Economy* and, perhaps, other smaller essays. Among the collection in *Varia philosophica et theologica* (published in English under the title of *A Philosopher's Notebook*<sup>66</sup>) were many extracts from Wolff. All of these were

<sup>63</sup> *Economy* II: n. 244.

<sup>64</sup> *Economy* II: "The Human Soul," 235.

<sup>65</sup> *Economy* II: n. 276.

<sup>66</sup> Swedenborg, *A Philosopher's Note Book*. A. Acton, transl. and ed. (Philadelphia: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1931. Reprinted 1976)

drawn from Wolff's 1734 work *Psychologia Rationalis*, under the following wide range of headings:

Will. Heart. Sense, Sensation. Imagination, Memory. Truth, Good, Felicity. Erudition, Wisdom, Intelligence. End, Means. Free decision. Systems Concerning the Soul. Divination, Prediction of the Future, Presages. Immortality, Eternity. Cause, Principle. Motion. The Soul. Organic Mind, Intellect, Reason, Thought, Judgment. The Simple, the One, Substance, Matter, Series (as discussed by Wolff's disciple Bilfinger). Pleasure, Cupidity. Pre-established Harmony. Spirit, Spiritual Essence. Substance.

It may be worthy of note that in the instances when transcriptions from both Wolff and Leibniz were made on any one topic, Swedenborg always recorded Wolff's statement *before* that of his senior and preceptor Leibniz.

*Economy of the Animal Kingdom—Fibre*

In 1742 in Stockholm, in spite of bouts with illness, Swedenborg finished writing Part III of the *Economy*, "The Medullary Fibre of the Brain." It contains eight references to Wolff. He is, however, never mentioned for being the originator or source of a particular idea; here again Swedenborg recurs to him for authority on fundamental definitions and for confirmatory support of his own statements. Two of the eight citations are from Wolff's *Cosmologia*, the other six from his *Ontologia*. They read as follows:

*Definition of passive force, the force of inertia*

[What passive force is, or the force of inertia, is]...is evident from the definition given in Wolff's *Cosmology*, namely, that it is the principle of resistance to bodies in motion, n. 130; and that the force of inertia resists every mutation, n. 132...<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, III, *The Fibre* (trans. & ed. Alfred Acton; Philadelphia, Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1918), n. 164.

*Genera and species and their definitions*

That the genera and species of compounds are determined by the mode in which the parts are interconnected, see Wolff in his *Ontology*, n. 539; and for the definition of genus and species, see *ibid.* ns. 533–534.<sup>68</sup>

*Variety makes perfection*

Wolff...says, "That world is more perfect wherein is a greater variety of things consentient. For if, in a world, the variety of things which are mutually consentient is greater, then more things would be observable in that world than in a world where the variety was less. And therefore, since that world is more perfect wherein is a greater number of things observable it certainly follows, that that world is more perfect wherein is a greater variety of things consentient" (*Cosmologia* n. 552).<sup>69</sup>

*Definition of Compound — Wolff's simple substances underly all entities and accidents*

But in order to the existence of accidents, substances are required, which, inasmuch as they constitute a compound, must be called simple substances. Assuming then that the fibres which compose the fascicle, are such substances, it follows, according to the rules laid down by Wolff in his *Ontology*, that "Compound entities are the aggregates of substances" (n. 793); that "Accidents cannot exist without substances" (n. 791); that "The essence of a compound ens consists of nothing but mere accidents" (n. 789); and that "In a compound ens there is nothing substantial except the simple entities" (n. 792).<sup>70</sup>

*Definition of form*

"Form [according to Wolff] is that which we call essential determinations. He understands the form of the human body who understands not only its structure and hence the figures of its organic parts and the manner in

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<sup>68</sup> *Fibre*, n. 172.

<sup>69</sup> *Fibre*, n. 241.

<sup>70</sup> *Fibre*, n. 243.

which they are inter joined, but also the combination of similar parts whence organic parts are composed (*Ontologia*, n. 944). [And further on he says], That an entity can act in a given manner is from its form; hence the scholastics affirm that form contributes operation to things (*ibid.* n. 946). [And] Form therefore is the beginning of an entity upon which depends the existence of such an entity; consequently it is the cause of the entity. (*Ibid.* n. 947)<sup>71</sup>

*Form's definitive role—specific difference*

“Since specific difference [according to the teaching of Wolff] consists of essential determinations, and by the same determinations is determined the genus and species of an entity, therefore it is by reason of its form that an entity belongs to a given genus or species and is distinguished from other entities (*Ontologia*, n. 945).”<sup>72</sup>

*Wolff's substance*<sup>73</sup>

“The simple ens [says Wolff], has no parts; is not extended; is indivisible; is endowed with no figure; is void of size; can fill no space; in it no intrinsic motion is possible; to it can be attributed no properties that belong to a compound as such, that is, that are attributed to a compound by virtue of its definition (*Ontologia*, ns. 673–9, 682–3).”<sup>74</sup>

*All in the compound ens derives from the simple ens*

“In the compound ens [says Wolff], there is nothing substantial save simple entities (n. 792). There are no substances save simple substances,

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<sup>71</sup>*Fibre*, n. 255, p. 266.

<sup>72</sup>*Fibre*, n. 261a, p. 173.

<sup>73</sup> Wolff's concept of form and the “Simple Substance” came from Plato through Leibniz. Plato had said, “It is necessary that that which receives forms of all kinds should itself be void of all form.” In his *Timaeus* he calls this form “an invisible form void of figure and yet capable of all figures, a form which is perceived with difficulty.” In *Parmenides* he calls this the “One,” saying that it is also the “First and Smallest” (*Parmenides*). “The One (he says) is in itself void of magnitude and of smallness, and it neither exceeds itself nor is exceeded” (*ibid.*). This was his conception of the simplest, or simple, substance (*ibid.*). Leibniz then took this “invisible form void of figure” that Plato called the “One,” and termed it “Unit” or “Monad”, and Wolff in turn referred to it as “Simple Substance.”

<sup>74</sup>*Fibre*, n. 266a.

and compound entities are aggregates of substances (n. 793). And that veriest force perpetually impressed, which resides therein. If there is force in a compound substance (says the same illustrious author), it must result from the forces of simple substances (*Ontologia*, n. 795).<sup>75</sup>

## Swedenborg Becomes Critical

### *Harmony of the Soul and Body*

In Swedenborg's treatment of Wolff in his next treatise after *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* there is a fundamental change. In his essay "The Harmony of the Soul & Body" (*Transactia prima de anima et ejus et corporis harmonia in genere*), which he wrote in 1742, the year after the publication of Part II of the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, he now deals with Wolff in a manner that is sometimes critical. Although he praises Wolff as the thinker of his day who has done the most to pull philosophy out of the dust of scholasticism and into "a more enlightened field of contest and a nobler arena,"<sup>76</sup> now he points out the deficiencies and inconsistencies in Wolff's theory of a "pre-established harmony" between the soul and body (which theory in actuality originated with Wolff's preceptor Leibniz).

First, Wolff is noted as saying that the soul possesses a "force representative of the universe."

[Wolff says] that in the soul there is a "unique force," namely, "a force representative of the universe." This force "produces all perceptions [and appetitions]" and these "have their sufficient reason in a force representative of the universe" [Wolff, *Psychologia Rationalis*, n. 622]. That is, that "in the soul there is a series of perceptions and appetitions (and thus of volitions); but in the body, a series of motions; which two series, by virtue of the nature of the soul and body are harmonically consentient (and conspiring)." (*Ibid.*, n. 612)<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Swedenborg, *The Fibre*, n. 273.

<sup>76</sup> Swedenborg, "Harmony Between the Soul and Body," in *Psychological Transactions*. Trans. & ed. Alfred Acton. (Philadelphia, Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1955), n. 78.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 7.

Swedenborg finds it hard to grasp what Wolff means here by such a “force representative of the universe” and politely expresses his disagreement.

What this unique, proper, essential and natural force is [Wolff, *Psychologia Rationalis*, ns. 613, 614], to which is given the name “force representative of the universe,” and what its nature, is, in my opinion, a question that presents difficulty in the unfolding and stands in need of the explanation of interpreters. Here, as in some dark oracular saying, the mind hesitates as to what is the meaning of a representation of the universe by an efficient force; nor do I possess such power of prescience or anticipation, perhaps the author’s meaning lacked adequate words wherewith to express or fully bring out what was pictured in his mind, as to know what the author wished to express by the statement that the soul has the power of producing an idea of the whole present universe without direction by any extraneous and higher principle. [*Psychologia Rationalis*, ns. 613, 614] If I grasp his meaning, I would state it as being that the soul is the sufficient efficient cause of the whole of perception; or, that it is a living tablet or mirror wherein is a force that represents the objects of the universe; or, that there is a force in the animal mirror the effect whereof is, that everything is represented universally; or merely, that there is a force. Pardon me for wishing to get at the matter and make it clearer to myself by a guess. But assuming any one of these meanings, though I do not then concede the position, what comes clearly to the perception, as a proposition thoroughly ascertained, is, that in the soul there is a force of acting and perceiving. All the other points are matters of occult quality.<sup>78</sup>

Besides this he finds Wolff’s concept of a harmony between totally independent entities quite perplexing.

But since the fact that there is a harmony, and that it actually exists, is among things already known and published, the system [of Wolff] goes on to say that God joined to the soul a body, wherein might thus exist motions consentient with the perceptions and appetitions of the soul.

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<sup>78</sup>Swedenborg, “Harmony Between the Soul and body,” *Psychological Transactions*, ns. 35, 36.

This cannot be far from the truth, since the fact that the body acts out and effects what the soul desires and appetises, cannot escape anyone who is conscious of his own being; and also the fact that actions and effects are harmonically concordant and consonant with their means and causes. But the independence spoken of above draws the mind into perplexity as to whether we ought to assume a harmony of this kind, which in two subjects and substances, shall be concordant at every moment and in every way, and this without any connection and dependence except only “as respects the specification of perceptions and the continuity of the time in which they are contingent with the motions in the sensory organs.” [Wolff, *Psychologia Rationalis*, n. 620]<sup>79</sup>

He says also that he is confused at the variety of Wolff’s monads and simples:

We are also confused at the variety of the monads and simples, which are made up to be equal in number to all the essences and substances that are purer than the organism of our senses. As soon as we betake ourselves from an effect to its cause we immediately fly to simples as asylums of refuge, and from there give our answers, concentrating in simples almost all the qualities that we have ever observed in the effect. Rational souls are held to be simple substances [Wolff, *Psychologia Rationalis*, n. 645], and in order to assign to them attributes, essentials and qualities, they say that “these substances are endowed with intellect and free will” [ibid. n. 645]. The souls of brutes also are said to be simple substances [ibid. n. 753], wherein is “an analogue of reason” [ns, 26, 765]; but which are devoid of intellect and free will [ibid. ns. 761, 763]. So likewise spirits, howsoever numerous, or whatever their quality, are all referred to the class of simple substances [ibid. ns. 658, 659]. The elements and primitive entities of the existing world are also pronounced simple substances [ibid. n. 644], to which are adjoined their own proper attributes and essentials which are “ever the same, while modes successively vary” [ibid., *Ontologia*, n. 770]; and consequently are “enduring and modifiable” [ibid. n. 768], or “are the subjects of intrinsic determinations, constant and determinable [ibid.

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<sup>79</sup> Swedenborg, *ibid.*, 42.

n. 769]. In a word, according as they observe series of things in the world, so they bend about, and assume an equal number of simple substances, in which, as their principles, there shall be the analogue of similar series. To every such substance in general and in particular, they attribute conatuses, forces, determinations, laws, series; or, what amounts to the same thing, some ratio or analogue of these qualities; besides many other things, all of which have to be comprehended and represented to oneself purely and analytically by the bare faculty of intellect and imagination. They assert that all entities and substances of this kind were created and produced from the same origin, to wit, from nothing [*Ontologia*, n. 691]; and yet in these substances there are affections, and these are not affections of nothing, but are qualities agreeing with the essence of each substance. In these simple substances, they say, there are no parts [*ibid.* n. 673]; consequently, no limits from part to part; but that they are all pure within, and are bare essences with their forces, conatuses and determinations; and yet they are limited and finited, since they are natural and are subjected and dedicated to their own laws and to none others. They further say that they are therefore not divisible into points or parts, being devoid of points or parts [*ibid.* n. 676]; but if they should be divided they would relapse into their nothingness [*ibid.* ns. 697, 698]. Likewise that they are devoid of “degrees” or of “quantities of quality” [*ibid.* n. 747], and also of moments; or that they are devoid of dimension, measure” [*ibid.* n. 752 ].<sup>80</sup>

Then he goes further in his critique, turning Wolff’s own words against Wolff himself, explaining that the “simple” substance that forms the soul is actually complex and not, as Wolff maintained, without parts. Quoting Wolff he says:

[It is] when we are not conscious of causes and think that [minute] effects contain no degrees, moments, laws, succession or series...that we take refuge in substances [like Wolff’s] consisting of nothing, which substances cannot be any thing, since “nothing and something are mutual

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<sup>80</sup> Swedenborg, *ibid.*, 56, 57.

contradictions" [Wolff, *Ontology* n. 60]. For as said by the illustrious philosopher of our age, Christian Wolff, in his *Ontology*: "If you assume nothing, howsoever many times you choose to assume it, what is assumed is nothing and not something" [n. 61]; and again, "He who knows many terms knows nothing; nor does he understand why a thing is, since nothing is falsely assumed as the cause" [n. 64]. Furthermore, "If nothing is assumed, it is not therefore to be admitted that it is something" [n. 69]. "If something is assumed as being, it must also be assumed to be something; for nothing is without a sufficient reason why it is, rather than is not" [n. 70.]"<sup>81</sup>

### *Rational Psychology*—a Response?

In these passages from his "Harmony of the Soul and Body," besides quoting from Wolff's *Ontology* and *Cosmology*, Swedenborg makes numerous references to a third work by Wolff, published in 1734, *Rational Psychology*.

Since the next major disquisition he wrote after "Harmony of the Soul and Body," in 1742, is also titled *Rational Psychology*, one might wonder if it was meant as a critical response to Wolff's work. This is rather unlikely, however, for the following four reasons: (1) The fact is that *Rational Psychology* was published posthumously and the title was assigned by the editor. (2) This treatise was part of an intended series—the sixth and crowning piece in the series he had initially proposed for his multi-volume work *The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*.<sup>82</sup> (3) While many of the topics he takes up in his consideration are indeed similar to those treated of by Wolff, this similarity is undoubtedly the result of the general nature of the subject rather than of any attempt by Swedenborg to answer him point for point basis. (4) In his manuscript on "rational psychology" he never once counters a statement by Wolff; in fact he does not even once mention Wolff's name.

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<sup>81</sup> Swedenborg, *ibid.*, 62, 63.

<sup>82</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Philosopher's Notebook*. Trans. N. Rogers & A. Acton. (Philadelphia: Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1931), 491.

*Ontologia*

Nonetheless, although he had criticized Wolff on numerous points in his essay “The Harmony of the Soul and Body,” afterwards Wolff was still kept close at hand. Later the same year, 1742, when Swedenborg was compiling a formulation of the definitions of basic philosophic terms he was and would be using—a brief sketch published posthumously under the title *Ontologia*<sup>83</sup>—Wolff is present again. He is present along with Scipio Dupleix and Robert Baron, as one of the three authorities whose definitions Swedenborg cites in developing his own definitions of philosophic terms. Although Swedenborg left this manuscript in rough form, it is very probable that initially he intended to complete and publish this sketch, for in several of his plans of publications he outlined he mentions “*Ontology*.” It is noteworthy that in one of his prospectuses, as element no. 6 of “Introduction to Rational Psychology,” he lists “*Ontology* or First Philosophy,” for this was actually the full title of Wolff’s *Ontology*.<sup>84</sup>

The terms discussed by Swedenborg in his own *Ontologia* that use the definitions in Wolff’s *Ontologia* as a starting point are, in their respective chapters: 1. Form, Formal Cause; 2. Figure; 3. Organ, Structure; 4. State, Changes of State; 5. Substance; 6. Matter, The Material; 7. Extent, Extension, The Continuous, The Contiguous, Part; 8. Body, Corporeal Things; 9. Essence, Essentials; 10. Attribute; 11. Predicate; 12. Subject; 13. Affections; 14. Accidents; Contingents; 15. Modes, Modifications.

However, the fact that Swedenborg uses Wolff’s definitions as starting points does not mean that he accepted them completely. For example, concerning “Affection” he writes:

95. Wolff says that affection comprehends both attributes and modes, that is, both intrinsic and *extrinsic* predicates. Hence, he says, predications are the same as affections. (*Ontologia*., Pt. I., Sect. 3, Cap. I.)

96. But every affection supposes in the ens an active and a passive, that which acts and that which reacts, that which gives and that which receives; (etc.).<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *Ontology*. Trans. & ed. Alfred Acton. (Boston: Massachusetts New-Church Union, 1901) xi, xii.

<sup>84</sup> See Acton’s preface to *Ontology*, p. x.

<sup>85</sup> *Ontology*, 44.

*Clavis Hieroglyphica*

The final references Swedenborg, as yet still in the role of scientist and philosopher, makes to Wolff is two years later in the early or middle part of 1744, in *Clavis Hieroglyphica*. In English translations the full title of this posthumously published work is “A Hieroglyphic Key to Natural and Spiritual Arcana by Way of Representations and Correspondences.” In it there are two references to Wolff. Both involve the term *conatus*, a Latin word meaning “attempt,” “effort”:

That *conatus* without motion is a dead force, is also in accordance with the rule laid down by Wolff, to wit, that a dead force is one that consists in *conatus* alone, and that living force is conjoined with local motion [*Cosmologia* n. 356, 357]. Wolff says that universal nature, or nature taken simply, is the principle of changes in the world [*ibid.* n. 503], and that it is an active or motive force, or the aggregate of motive forces [*ibid.* n. 506, 507], that is, of *conatuses*; for *conatus* consists in force; so that this principle must of necessity be implanted in *conatus*.<sup>86</sup>

While neither of these two references relate Wolff directly to “hieroglyphics,” there was material on the subject in Wolff that Swedenborg could have referred to. In writing on “hieroglyphics” Swedenborg was not presenting a subject unfamiliar to his contemporaries. There was, for example, a brief discussion by Wolff on the subject in his 1736 *Theologia Naturalis*, in a section headed, *Dei per figuras hieroglyphicas representatio S.S. conformis* (The symbolic depiction of God by hieroglyphic figures that agree with the Sacred Scripture).<sup>87</sup> And, in this discussion Wolff refers to the earlier comments on “hieroglyphic meaning” he has made in nos. 151 and 157 of his book *Psychologica Empirica*.

### WOLFF IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

The next references to Wolff, considerably later, come in a heavenly rather than earthly context. After the just noted references to Wolff in the

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<sup>86</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, “A Hieroglyphic Key,” *Psychological Transactions*, 157, 161.

<sup>87</sup> Christian Wolff, *Theologia Naturalis* (Frankfurt & Leipzig: 1736). Pars 1, Cap 1, no. 98

*Hieroglyphic Key* in 1744, a full decade passes until Swedenborg writes of him again. Thus, it is also a decade after the Lord manifested Himself to him and opened his sight into the spiritual world.

This next reference to Wolff is in the journal Swedenborg kept of his spiritual experiences in that now-opened world, where he met many he had known about on earth prior to their death. The year he met Wolff there in the spiritual world was the very year Wolff died, 1754.

Whenever Swedenborg further had these face-to-face contacts with Wolff, it was always a meeting of a seeming incidental or circumstantial nature: Swedenborg never speaks of specifically seeking out Wolff in the spiritual world. As is generally the case with the spiritual experiences in his journal, the incidents when he sees or mentions Wolff are independent of each other. He simply records them as they occur. They seem like various items delivered to a warehouse from different sources and stocked on the shelves merely in the order in which they happened to arrive.

Now, in the spiritual world, Wolff is seen in quite a different light, the revealing light of the Sun of Truth that makes one's inner nature evident. In this light he is seen to be of quite a different character than that which he had displayed to earthly society. The first entry regarding Wolff in his journal, no. 4727, begins:

#### CONCERNING THE FAITH OF WOLFF.

There was a certain one very celebrated in the world of letters, who had written very much, even on theological matters. He was at first naturalistic, but later, when he was admonished, he turned round, and pretended to be pious and make confession of faith from the heart, to such a degree, that they knew no other than that he was a good, converted Christian. But that he only did this orally, and contrary to what was in his heart, is evident from his confession before good spirits in the other life, where he was reduced into such a state that he was obliged to speak from the personal thought which he had in the world, and not from what he wanted to simulate. He then confessed that he never believed in any God, but that nature was everything.

He said his reasons were: First, that God is never seen nor heard, but that He is in secret, and this for ages; and that if there were a, God, he

should present himself to the sight of men, so that they might believe. Second, that nothing of Divine Providence appears. Third, that the soul is nothing but breath, which exists thus from the interior organisms, which being dead the soul also is dissipated, because that is only a kind of atmospheric something. Fourth, that brute animals also think, and will too, and some of them more dexterously and intelligently than man, as, for instance, the bear, dogs, mice, foxes; and what differs is so little that it is scarcely worthy to be mentioned. It is as to speech, which they do not have because they have not such an organism [as man], that they differ, but still parrots and the like speak, and they know what they say. Fifth, that the last judgment has been expected in vain for so many ages, and that it is false that the stars will then fall from heaven upon the earth, because they are larger than the earth, and that the sun which still sits unmoved in the center will do likewise, besides other things of a similar kind. He admitted these things in the presence of good spirits, although he had spoken otherwise [in the world].

From this it is evident what the learned of the world are like, and that the most learned are atheists, and that they confirm their own viewpoint more than others do, in the degree of their greater knowledge, their greater self-confidence and their greater supply of arguments supporting what is false. The result of this is that for them learning serves to their becoming insane.

It was pointed out to him to him that [in the world] he did not believe that he was going to live after death, but that he now realizes he is alive, and that formerly he had thought incorrectly in this respect.

Swedenborg's account continues:

His followers, along with himself, operated into my tongue, and infused an effort to bite and hold it, which is a proof that they spoke according to the confession of faith, but that inwardly they were devils, to wit, in love of self and the world. He was especially immersed in love of money apart from its use, thus immersed in a filthy evil; moreover, in self-love, for he wanted to be hailed the "light of Europe." But he was told that he is coming among fools and simpletons; for the doctrine of faith, which he

professed to believe and at heart denied, is wholly taken away from him, and he is left to his evil.

Inasmuch as he did not want to believe this, he was told that by professing belief he is associated with good spirits who are in the ultimate of the order of heaven, because they believe that men are of such a sort as they say are—asserting that it cannot be thought otherwise. On the other hand, he was told, by denial of God, and of all the things of faith, he is associated with hell; and thus, he is between heaven and hell, and that good spirits raise him above hell, and that the infernals also employ him as an instrument for injuring the good. To prevent this from happening, the knowledge of truth from the Word and doctrine is taken from him, and he is left to his evil, and so is cast into hell.<sup>88</sup>

Sixteen entries later Swedenborg records another experience with Wolff that gave further insight into his actual character: he saw that Wolff had had no concern for truth itself, even in the realm of nature. His journal entry 4744 reads:

CONCERNING THE LEARNED WHO HAVE PLACED LEARNING ONLY IN SUCH THINGS AS SUBSERVE INTELLIGENCE AND NOT IN INTELLIGENCE ITSELF. CONCERNING CHRISTIAN WOLF.

4744. I was conscious of a particular person from whom an aura like clouds of dust emanated; and when it came into my nostrils it was just like dust, almost suffocating; and he spoke slowly, with a certain gravity. They said that he sat in his chair earnestly meditating; and it was said that it was Wolf, in that state. He was then in a position forwards, in the plane of the sole of the left foot. He was perceived to be of such a character because, in the world, he had studied only such things as are instrumental causes, or means for acquiring understanding—such things as mathematics, physics, philosophical studies, logic—in which things he had placed wisdom. But he had not studied the truths of nature themselves,

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<sup>88</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *Spiritual Diary*. Trans. James P. Buss. (London: Speirs, 1889). Trans. revised in this article by the author; hereinafter SD) ns. 4727, 4728.

still less in the truths of faith. These, consequently, he had not believed. They who study thus have such an aura; and also, in visual appearance, look like chimney-sweeps.<sup>89</sup>

The next contact Swedenborg had with Wolff in the spiritual world further illustrated the fact that for Wolff natural theology took precedence over Divinely revealed truth, and showed the viciousness in his atheism.

REVEALED THEOLOGY, OR THE WORD, AND NATURAL THEOLOGY.

4757. For several days there was an important discussion involving some that have had the belief that the Word and everything in it is from the Divine, thus, that it is Divine in itself. They were arguing with some of those who in their bodily life had believed Natural Theology should have precedence, and that this should throw light on the Word, and not the reverse. There was hostility; but it was on the part of those who were in favor of Natural Theology, and not on the part of those who were in favor of the Word. The former attacked the latter cruelly, for several days, and breathed nothing else than the destruction of both their soul and body. They also allowed the hells to enter themselves, to act through them; and this to such an extent, that the hells spoke through them directly.

These not only deny that the Word, or revelation is anything, [but even] despised it on account of its style, which, as they say, is so simple and absurd—thus in their heart they completely rejected it. They were then told, that it was of such a style because within it contains the most profound things, which are sequentially laid open in the three heavens; and that in these is the Divine Wisdom, and from this comes the heavenly and spiritual nourishment of these heavens; for the heavens are conjoined with men, especially with those who are of the Church, and dwell in their good affections. In this way they make one with the man of the Church, by means of the Word.

But still they could not accept it. They understood, indeed, that it was so, and also knew it, in the other life; but, because they have been of such

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<sup>89</sup> SD, n. 4744.

a character in their bodily life, it has not remained with them,. On the contrary, the hells still acted through them, and they thus wished, with all earnestness, to destroy those who had faith in the Word. From this it was apparent how the case is with those who believe that a person can know from nature that the Divine exists, what its nature is, that there is a heaven and hell, that there is a life after death—that the case is that they believe nothing at all. The reason [for their disbelief] is that they are in the light (lumen) of nature, and not in the light (lux) of heaven; thus they are with those who are of a hellish nature, not with those who are heavenly. Two or three of them were known to me in the world Ericus Benzelius, Anders Rudberg, Christian Wolf. Two were priests.<sup>90</sup>

Wolff's inner nature was such that his mere presence once occasioned Swedenborg the grossest irritation, a terrible itching.<sup>91</sup>

4851. ...and I rubbed it until it became painful. And, when I did this repeatedly, certain [spirits] were observed below, under it; and I sensed that [the itching came] from their presence, and that it was on account of the fact, that, in the world, they had believed themselves to be rational, and yet they were not. They had actually not only believed they were rational, but had been proud of it, and [supposed] they were wiser than others; and yet nothing could be less true. Such pride produces itching of the anus and [brings on] the rubbing. They were Wolff, Ericus Benzelius, and Lars Benzelstierna and Gustav Benzelstierna. When they noticed that this is what some people thought of them, they then began to devise something they might use to show that they are rational. However, what they devised was a profanation of the Lord, made with cunning and malice. But they were told, and shown, that malice is by no means intelligence, it is rather insanity, thus completely contrary to intelligence, consequently, that by so acting they show themselves to be irrational.

Not all of Swedenborg's contacts with Wolff in the spiritual world, however, were such as to provide new information about his character.

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<sup>90</sup> SD, n. 4757.

<sup>91</sup> For more on Wolff's inner nature see SD, n. 4851.

Number 6018 in his journal, for example, records another event involving Wolff, but it was an occasion when Swedenborg observed the effect produced by one or another kind of spiritual clothing, rather than one when he learned more about Wolff as a person.

#### CLOTHES AND THEIR CORRESPONDENCES

6018. When C[harles] XII came into the place of those who are sensual, he appeared naked, and wanted clothing. He was told that they were hanging on the wall. He first took trousers, next a shirt, then the remaining garments. By this means he divested himself of communication with those who were not sensually-minded and acquired communication with those who were; and, consequently, he became sensually-oriented. The same thing happened with another person, Wolff, who to himself appeared naked; but different clothes were given to him. By means of this was taken away communication with those with whom he was not to communicate, and communication given with those with whom he might communicate.<sup>92</sup>

The last of Swedenborg's journal entries mentioning Wolff does not record an personal contact with him, but gives him as an example of the inability to think other than materially that is typical of those who have not lived their life following religious principles.

#### POLHEM AND WOLFF. THE MATERIAL IDEA WITH SPIRITS AND ANGELS

6049. All those who have not believed in the Lord, by acknowledging His Divine, and not lived according to the precepts of religion, when in the other life think materially. On this account, they cannot think spiritually, that is to say, in a way abstracted from the concepts of space, time and persons, the matters from which the ideas of natural thought arise. Consequently, they are unable to think as the angels of the higher heavens do. For to think spiritually is to think apart from these things. These [i.e. those

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<sup>92</sup> SD, n. 6018.

who think spiritually] ascend above, and as it were leave those things beneath them, so that they do not appear. Certain ones who thought much in the world, such as Polhem and Wolf, inasmuch as they did not live a life of religion, were not able to think otherwise than materially. The attempt was made, in their case, to separate material things, but to no avail.<sup>93</sup>

Swedenborg's note goes on to say that while these people do speak the spiritual language in the other life, it is "so mingled with their vernacular tongue that one can readily distinguish the nation from which they are." This is somewhat ironic in the case of Wolff, who even on earth was inclined to use his native German when all the other philosophical writers around him wrote in Latin.

### Swedenborg's first public disclosure of Wolff's inner nature

The foregoing citation's regarding Wolff as Swedenborg knew him after death in the spiritual world are all taken from Swedenborg's private journal, which was not accessible, of course, to his contemporaries. Nevertheless, even before the last of these journal entries was made—late in 1761 or in early January 1762—Swedenborg made public something of what had learned about Wolff. He did this in his 1758 book *Earths in the Universe*, in an episode illustrating the nature of the spirits from Mercury. Although Wolff's name is mentioned almost as an aside as a person from our earth whom spirits from Mercury met, Swedenborg's commentary on this incident provides what, for that day, was probably a somewhat shocking disclosure regarding Wolff's elaborately reasoned, success-oriented, intellectual authoritarianism. The spiritually-minded spirits from Mercury, it happened, were quite alienated by Wolff's naturalistic reasonings and focus on mere definitions. We read:

Spirits of Mercury came to a particular spirit from our earth who during his life in the world had been very distinguished for his learning—it was Christian Wolff— and they came with the desire to get information from

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<sup>93</sup> SD, n. 6049.

him on various subjects. But when they sensed that what he said was not raised above the sensual things of the natural man—because when he spoke his thoughts were intent on honor, and because he desired, as he had in the world (for in the other life every one is like his former self), to link various things into series, and from those into series again, and constantly form different conclusions, and from such conclusions to link together still more in this way, which they did not see or admit to be true, and which they therefore declared were chains that neither hung together in themselves, nor with the conclusions drawn from them, calling them the fog of authority— they then desisted from asking him further questions. They only asked, “What is this called?” and “How is that termed?” And since he answered these inquiries too with only material ideas, and with no spiritual ones, they retired from him. For every one, in the other life, speaks spiritually, or by spiritual ideas, so far as he had believed in God—and materially, so far as he had not believed.<sup>94</sup>

Swedenborg’s commentary on this incident further shades in the picture of Wolff’s gray inner character.

The occasion here offering itself, it is permitted to mention how it is in the other life with the learned who acquire intelligence from their own meditation, kindled with the love of knowing truths, for the sake of truths thus for the sake of uses abstracted from worldly considerations, and how it is with those who acquire intelligence from others, without any meditation of their own, as they are wont to do who desire to know truths solely for the sake of a reputation for learning, and thereby for honor or gain in the world; thus who desire to know truth, not for the sake of uses abstracted from worldly considerations...<sup>95</sup>

The next of Swedenborg’s comments on Wolff, written in 1763 and apparently originally intended for but not ever brought into print by him, occur in a further account of the Last Judgment. It was made in reference to the Leibnizian/Wolffian concept of the primal units of created stuff,

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<sup>94</sup> *Earths in the Universe*, n. 38.1. Trans. revised by the author.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 38.2.

which Leibniz termed monads and Wolff *simple substances*. This passage contains a confirmation of Swedenborg's above noted critique of Wolff's theory that he had published back in 1742 in "Harmony of the Soul and Body." Here now it is the master Leibniz himself who supports Swedenborg's evaluation. This passage is doubly significant because it reports Wolff's statement regarding what he had in mind when he was making his own particular formulation of the theory of monads and simple substances, namely, he wanted to gain approval from the theological establishment. He wanted to give support to their dogma of creation out of nothing.

### LEIBNIZ AND WOLFF

262. I Spoke with John [C.] Wolff and his preceptor Leibniz concerning the simple substance and pre-established harmony.

263. Concerning the simple substance: Leibniz said, that his opinion on the *monad* was never like Wolff's on *simple substance*. He said that he certainly acknowledged monads as unities, but felt that there were simpler and purer substances in them by which the monad was formed, and from which changes of state existed in them. Because if there were nothing in a monad, it would be nothing, and in a nothing there can be no change of state, for a vacuum admits of no change. Leibniz wondered therefore at the fact that Wolff held that his monad, which he calls a simple substance, was created out of nothing and that when divided it falls into nothing, and yet he had attributed changes of state to it. And he wondered also that Wolff had called some existences simple substances which yet are things in nature that anyone can see are aggregations of substances, like the parts of the air and ether, the elements of metals, and also souls.

Wolff said that by using his definitions of his simple substances he had wanted to captivate the minds of theologians, who want it to be believed that all things have been created by God out of nothing. He said he did this not realizing at the time that his followers, by confirming these principles in themselves would close in themselves the ways to angelic wisdom, which are founded on natural truths.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> JP, ns. 262, 263. Trans. revised by the author; italics added.

Wolff and his doctrine of *simple substances* are spoken of again by Swedenborg six years later in his book dealing with the then, as ever, active philosophical question of the mind-body relationship, to which Wolff, once again following Leibniz's thinking, had proposed a solution. But the Leibnizian-Wolffian solution was merely that the mind has no effecting influence on the body whatsoever. For Wolff as for Leibniz, the mind's effect on the body is only an appearance. They claimed that the reality is that "God has pre-established harmony between soul and body, in that he has adjoined to the soul a body wherein can exist a series of motions consentient with our perceptions and appetions of the soul; and has made such a connection between material things that these motions are carried into action by means of continual impressions made on the sensory organs."<sup>97</sup> This "pre-established harmony" between mind and body has been likened to two separate clocks both set for the same time and started running at the same instant—their activities coincide but there is no causal interaction whatsoever.

Swedenborg in responding to this hypothesis of Leibniz, which Wolff had appropriated and further promoted, points out in his *Intercourse of the Soul and Body*:

Who does not see that the end with man is the love of his will; for what a man loves, this he proposes and intends: the cause with him is the reason of his understanding; for by means of reason the end seeks for middle or efficient causes: and the effect is the operation of the body...They who do not know these things [about the relation of end, cause and effect], and do not thus distinguish the objects of reason, cannot avoid terminating the ideas of their thought in the atoms of Epicurus, the monads of Leibnitz, or in the simple substances of Wolff, and thus they close up their understandings as with a bolt, so that they cannot even think from reason concerning spiritual influx, because they cannot think concerning any progression; for the author says concerning his simple substance, that if it is divided it falls into nothing.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Christian Wolff, *Psychologica Rationalis* (Leipzig: 1740) n. 624.

<sup>98</sup> ISB, n. 17

Wolff, who had made so much of the *cause-effect* relationship in his earlier writing on the nexus of things in series, had disregarded it entirely in giving his support to Leibniz's Pre-established Harmony theory.

Swedenborg concludes his dissertation on the question of the mind's relation to the body with the account of this spiritual experience involving Wolff:

After these things were written, I prayed to the Lord that I might be permitted to converse with disciples of Aristotle, and at the same time with disciples of Descartes, and with disciples of Leibnitz, in order that I might draw forth the opinions of their minds concerning the intercourse between the soul and the body. After my prayer, nine men were present—three Aristotelians, three Cartesians, and three Leibnitzians—and they stood around me, the admirers of Aristotle on the left side, the followers of Descartes on the right, and the supporters of Leibnitz behind. Quite a distance away and spaced off from each other three people were seen as it were crowned with laurel, and I knew from an inflowing perception that they were those three great leaders or teachers themselves. Behind Leibnitz there was a person standing holding the skirt of his robe in his hand, and I was told that it was Wolff...<sup>99,100</sup>

So significant was Wolff that he is mentioned yet again, twice, by Swedenborg in his final major work *The True Christian Religion*. He first mentions him again when explaining that if it is not understood that God's power proceeds and works in accordance with order, then contradictory and nonsensical ideas may be formed. Ideas such as that: "God...could

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<sup>99</sup> ISB, n. 19.

<sup>100</sup> This account did not go unnoticed by Swedenborg's contemporaries. Professor J.H. Lidén, writing to C. G. Gjörrwell, on August 29, 1769, mentions the memorable relation where Aristotle, Descartes, Leibnitz, and Wolff are disputing about the intercourse of the soul and body, and about the mode in which influx takes place. (*Documents*, II: 2: 702). This letter was subsequently published in nos. 86 and 87, of the *Almänna Tidningar* (General News), published in Stockholm on July 6, and 7, 1770. The letter concludes, "At the close of the work may be read one of the Assessor's visions, which he describes as follows." Mr. Lidén quotes here the introduction of the memorable relation, in which Aristotle, Descartes, Leibnitz, and Wolff are introduced, and then gives the following summary of it: "These old gentlemen begin now a most learned disputation on the intercourse between the soul and the body, but cannot agree; wherefore they at last resolve to find out the right mode of influx by the casting of lots; when the lot declares for spiritual influx." Tafel, *Documents*, II: 2: 701, 702.

become angry with the human race, consign it to destruction, and be willing to be brought back to pitying it through the Son, and that He would do this through an act of intercession and the remembrance of His crucifixion; and then go on to put His Son's righteousness into a person, and plant it in his heart like Wolff's simple substance, in which according to that author all the Son's merits are present, but which cannot be divided, since if it were, it would collapse to nothing."<sup>101</sup>

The last time Wolff is mentioned in all of Swedenborg's works is at the conclusion of a report of an angelic spirit's impromptu speech explaining that human beings have no connate ideas. Here Wolff's indecisiveness on this question is shown. And, as ever, in inward respects Wolff comes off less a man than Leibniz was perceived to be:

After this I looked round and saw close by Leibniz and Wolff, who were listening intently to the arguments put forward by the angelic spirit. Then Leibniz approached and indicated his approval and assent; but Wolff went away both agreeing and disagreeing, since he lacked the inner powers of judgment that Leibniz had."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion*, n. 90.2. Trans. revised by the author.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 335e.

(To be continued)

