

until he was miraculously restored to health. At the age of 23, she went to live a hermit's life in a wood near Brussels. Here Count Godfrey of Brabant established the convent of Le Grand Bigard for her in 1120. Acting as prioress she put it under the direction of the abbot of AFFLIGEM and labored diligently to maintain the true religious life there. After her death she was glorified by many miracles. Her relics are now in Notre Dame du Sablon at Brussels. Her cultus was confirmed by Urban VII in 1625; a Mass and Office was approved in 1903.

Feast: Dec. 19 (formerly Dec. 17); Dec. 16 (Benedictines); Sept. 25 (translation).

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WOLFF, CHRISTIAN

German philosopher and mathematician, name sometimes spelled Wolf (Lat. Wolfius), best known for his systematization of scholastic philosophy; b. Breslau, Jan. 24, 1679; d. Halle, April 9, 1754. His father, a tanner, hoped that Christian would enter the ministry, and his early studies at the Magdalenen Gymnasium were so directed. In 1699 he entered the University of Jena where mathematics, physics, and philosophy became his predominant interests. He qualified as a *Privatdocent* at the University of Leipzig in 1703 with a treatise entitled *De philosophia practica universali methodo mathematica conscripta*. The title of this work indicated what was to become his lifelong goal, i.e., the attainment of certitude and the reorganization of knowledge by means of the mathematical method.

Academic Career. Upon the recommendation of LEIBNIZ in 1706, he was appointed professor of mathematics at the University of Halle. During the ensuing years his lecturing and writing, including numerous articles in *Acta Eruditorum*, Germany's first learned journal, gained him an ever-broadening reputation as a scholar. However, his increasing involvement with philosophical and moral issues brought him into conflict with the pietistic movement centered in Halle. The Lutheran theo-

logians, led by Joachim Lange, accused him of teaching determinism and of making excessive claims for the abilities of reason in moral matters. In 1721 the dispute reached a climax with Wolff's lecture *De Sinarum philosophia practica* in which he concluded that the maxims of Confucius prove the power of unaided reason in the attainment of the good moral life. The argument became famous with hundreds of pamphlets and challenges for debate issued by many people on both sides. Finally Frederick William I was persuaded that Wolff's teachings were dangerous, and on Nov. 8, 1723, a royal proclamation ordered Wolff to leave Halle within 48 hours under pain of death.

Sympathy for his cause and respect for his reputation brought Wolff many attractive academic offers, and he finally settled in Marburg under the protection of the landgrave of Hesse. His years at Marburg were very productive, adding considerably to his already wide reputation. To reach a broader audience he began to write his major treatises in Latin rather than German. By the late 1730s the atmosphere in Prussia had changed but Wolff was unwilling to return. However, in 1740 Frederick the Great, a patron of learning and a friend of scholars, succeeded his authoritarian father, and one of his first acts was to invite Wolff back to Halle as vice-chancellor of the university. Wolff returned in triumph. In 1743 he became chancellor and in 1745 was made a baron. During these last years he wrote primarily on moral and political philosophy, but his popularity as a lecturer gradually began to decline.

Major Writings. Wolff was an unusually prolific writer, and only his major works can be indicated here. Most of his more important mathematical and physical treatises are collected together under the title *Elementa matheseos universae*, 4 volumes. Between 1713 and 1725 he published a series of seven works, the title of each beginning with the expression *Vernünfftige Gedanken von . . .*, which are devoted to philosophy, morality, and physics. Of this group the *Vernünfftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele der Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt* (1719) is a basic presentation of his metaphysics and methodology. The volumes of his Latin series in systematic philosophy include (abridged titles): *Philosophia rationalis sive logica* (1728) to which is prefaced the *Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere*, *Philosophia prima sive ontologia* (1730); *Cosmologia generalis* (1731); *Psychologia empirica* (1732); *Psychologia rationalis* (1734); *Theologia naturalis* (Pars prior, 1736; Pars posterior, 1737); and *Philosophia practica* (Pars prior, 1738; Pars posterior, 1739). The second Halle period produced *Jus naturae* (8 v., 1740–48), *Jus gentium* (1749), *Institutiones juris naturae et gentium*

(1750), and *Philosophia moralis sive ethica* (5 v., 1750–53).

Nature and Division of Philosophy. Wolff's chief contribution to the history of thought has often been characterized as the introduction of the spirit of thoroughness and detailed organization into German philosophy. Not an unusually original thinker himself, he was heavily influenced by Leibniz, and in many ways he helped prepare the atmosphere from which KANT broke in the late 1760s. But as Wolff himself insisted, his philosophy is not simply a systematization of the ideas of Leibniz. Rather in Wolff one finds the meeting ground and attempted reconciliation of three earlier and often opposing traditions: (1) Cartesian-Leibnizian RATIONALISM with its stress on clear ideas and the power of reason, (2) Newtonian science with its foundations in experience and experimentation, and (3) the Aristotelian-scholastic school tradition which emphasized the primacy of METAPHYSICS. Wolff's synthesis was based on a rigorous application of the mathematico-deductive method to all the sciences, tempered by an inductive appeal to the facts of experience. As a result he organized each science into a strict, deductive pattern and then placed all the sciences into a hierarchical order built on the same principles.

Classification of the Sciences. His influential theory of the division of the sciences constituted the details of this program. All natural human knowledge falls under one of three headings: (1) history (knowledge of facts), (2) philosophy (knowledge of the reason of the facts), and (3) mathematics (knowledge of quantity). Philosophy receives its experiential foundation from history and its fullness of certitude from mathematical method. He distinguished the parts of philosophy on the basis of differences in subject matter. Theoretical philosophy was divided into ONTOLOGY (being in general), natural THEOLOGY (God), rational psychology (human souls), general COSMOLOGY (world in general), and dogmatic physics (material bodies). The first four taken together constitute metaphysics. Ontology was given the top position in the deductive hierarchy of the sciences. Because of the wealth and complexity of the factual information relating to man and the physical world, Wolff added the special disciplines of empirical psychology and experimental physics as inductive preparations for the principles in these areas. Practical philosophy followed the traditional divisions into cognitive, appetitive, and productive branches.

First Principles. Philosophy, defined as the science of the possibles insofar as they can be, was ultimately governed by the two great principles of CONTRADICTION and SUFFICIENT REASON, with the latter derived from the former. These two principles provided the starting points



Christian Wolff.

for the mathematically-modeled structuring of philosophy. The component elements (*essentialia*) of a possible must be mutually compatible. This consistency is regulated and judged by the principle of contradiction. But to be possible is not to be in ACT. Hence an explanation must be provided, according to Wolff, as to why the particular objects and events of the given world are actual in preference to the myriad of other possible objects and events. This explanation is what is demanded by the principle of sufficient reason, understanding by "sufficient reason" that which explains why something is. The Wolffian ontology developed from these principles was thoroughly essentialistic, with EXISTENCE being defined as the final complement in the order of possibility. In natural theology Wolff looked upon GOD as the sufficient reason of both His own existence and the existence of the contingent world. The possibles were ultimately grounded in the Divine Intellect, but the sufficient reasons motivating the Divine Will to create remain inscrutably hidden from human knowledge.

Man and the State. Wolff's conception of man shows an unmistakable debt to DESCARTES and Leibniz. Our consciousness of ourselves and of external things provides the foundation for his argument for the existence of the SOUL, with the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* cast into syllogistic format. For Wolff the soul is an independent substance distinct from the body, and he shows little awareness of the Aristotelian doctrine of the soul and the body as incomplete principles of one substantial unity. As a result he was burdened with the soul-body DUALISM of classical rationalism. Although there must be a natural sufficient reason for the harmonious cooperation of soul and body, Wolff was unable to find it, and he concluded that Leibniz's doctrine of preestablished harmony is the most probable of the available hypotheses relating to the soul-body problem.

Wolff also held a representational theory of knowledge (see KNOWLEDGE, THEORIES OF). Perception is an unconscious mechanical process which produces our ideas. When apperception or consciousness arising from within the soul is brought to bear on our ideas, then knowledge results. What we know are our ideas as representative of external objects. Thus he defined the soul as consisting in the force of representing the universe (*vis repraesentativa universi*), which is reminiscent of Leibniz's view of the MONAD as a mirror of the world.

The moral ideal for Wolff was the attainment of self-perfection. This goal involved for him a complicated balance between the internal needs and demands of human nature, a proper and sufficient disposition of material goods, and involvement in social and political life. He stresses the values of education in producing a clear notion of these elements and their interrelations in the moral life.

Wolff's views on political theory were progressive for the 18th century. He argued that many duties, and therefore rights, are innate to human nature, and in this respect all men are by nature equal. No man can usurp the freedom of action of another. However to obtain a wider range of good and protection than the individual can attain by himself, the state is formed by implicit or explicit contract. The function of the state is to promote the common welfare with a minimum of interference with personal FREEDOM. Thus the root of governmental power is the consent of the people, although they may transfer this power to a monarch. But an absolute ruler may never dictate anything contrary to the laws of nature and society. Relations between nations are similar to relations between individuals. Hence Wolff advocated the development of a *jus voluntarium*, i.e., a society of nations formed by mutual consent devoted to the promotion and protection of the welfare of mankind in general.

Wolffian School. Because of their strict deductive format, the writings of Wolff appear dry, rigorous, and unimaginative to the modern reader. However, this was not the reaction of many of his contemporaries. During his own lifetime Wolff and his writings became very popular, and his teachings were widely adopted in the universities, especially in Germany. A Wolffian school of considerable influence soon developed, the members of which published numerous reformulations, compendia, and abridgments of the works of Wolff designed for use as textbooks. Notable among these supporters of Wolff were L. Thümmig, G. Bilfinger, J. Gottsched, A. Baumgarten, G. Maier, M. Knutzen (a teacher of Kant), and F. Baumeister. But Wolff was not without his critics, especially J. Lange, C. Crusius, and A. Ruediger. By the middle of the 18th century the Wolffian system predominated at the German universities, and it was in this atmosphere that Kant spent his early days as a student and teacher.

Another significant consequence of the work of Wolff was its effect on the development of scholastic philosophy. His theory of the division of the sciences and his emphasis on the principle of sufficient reason were the chief doctrines incorporated gradually into the scholastic manual tradition, and traces of these influences can still be seen in many 20th century textbooks of scholastic philosophy.

The first volume (*Ontologia*) of a 20-volume reprint of the works of Wolff, edited by J. Ecole and H. Arndt, was published in 1962 by Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim.

See Also: DYNAMISM; SCHOLASTICISM; ONTOLOGY; THEODICY.

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WOLFF, GEORGE DERING

Editor; b. Martinsburg, WV, Aug. 25, 1822; d. Norristown, PA, Jan. 29, 1894. His father was Rev. Bernard C. Wolff, professor at the German Reformed Theological Seminary, Mercersburg, PA. After reading law in Easton, PA, and being admitted to practice, Wolff studied theology at Mercersburg and was ordained in the Reformed Church. Both he and his father were strongly influenced