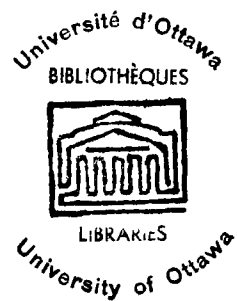


THE ONTOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN WOLFF

by

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INTRODUCTION

APOLOGIA PRO WOLFFIO

For many years, Christian Wolff has been one of the most misrepresented philosophers in almost all historical inquiries. He had the misfortune to be eclipsed by a giant of philosophical thought - Kant. And yet, Wolff's works are of the utmost importance for the comprehension of Kant, and maybe even more so of Hegel, whose logico-ontological work is based on the ontological terms as defined by Wolff. It was Wolff's disciple, Bilfinger, who introduced Wolffianism in Tübingen, where Hegel later studied.

But the great merits of Wolff do not end here. It was also Wolff who created the German scientific language. The excellent study of Eric Blackall does justice to Wolff in this respect. (1) Even though Christian Thomasius, celebrated jurist and professor at the University of Leipzig, announced and delivered in 1687 the first course in German at the university, "it was really Christian Wolff who introduced into Germany, both, the reasoned presentation of philosophy, and a stable philosophical terminology". (2) Leibniz, for whom language is

(1) Eric A. BLACKALL, The Emergence of German as a Literary Language, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1959, XI, 539 p.

(2) Ibidem, p. 26.

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the foundation of all culture, was concerned about the state of the German language after the Thirty Year's War, when Germany was flooded with foreign people who destroyed not only the country but also the language. (3) According to Leibniz what was missing most, was its lack of vocabulary to express those things not experienced by the senses; and as a result, the scholar was driven to Latin to describe such matters. (4) German, as Leibniz said, was rich in words denoting real objects especially in words related to occupations such as mining, hunting, seafaring, "ut ipsi Turcae in fodinis Graeciae et Asiae minoris vocabulis metallicis Germanorum utantur." (5)

The logical progression and its exposition depended upon clearly defined concepts which created a set of recognized terms. One of Wolff's first works written in German was a treatise on mathematics in which he achieved precisely the establishment of an accepted scientific vocabulary. (6) And this first description of the mathematical method he applies to the vocabulary of philosophy. The few German treatises

(3) LEIBNIZ, Unvorgreifliche Gedanken betreffend die Ausübung und Verbesserung der Deutschen Sprache, written probably in 1697, published by his secretary J.G. Eccard in 1717. Quoted by Blackall, op.cit., p.34.

(4) LEIBNIZ, Die philosophischen Schriften, ed. Gerhard, Berlin, 1880, reprinted by Olms, 1960, vol. IV, par. 15.

(5) Ibidem, p. 144.

(6) WOLFF, Mathematisches Lexicon, Leipzig, J.F. Gleditschens u. Sohn, 1716, 1608p.. But it is especially the Anfangsgründe aller mathematischen Wissenschaften, published in 1710. (The bibliographical data could not be traced.)

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by Leibniz are all written in a highly metaphorical language. In other words, its images belong to those of mystical language, the study of which Leibniz himself had advocated as a source of enrichment for the philosophical vocabulary. Wolff stripped these images of their mystical content and metaphorical use. This is precisely his merit because what is the magic of poetry is also the end of philosophy. He was the first to make a distinction between "Gewissen" and "Bewusstsein"; "Grund" and "Ursache". And he attempted a distinction between "Verstand" and "Vernunft". (7)

Also in Law and not the least in protestant theology, Wolff occupies an important place. (8) One has only to remind oneself that the formation of a metaphysical discipline within protestant thought and more specifically Lutheran thought, must have appeared at a first glance as an anomaly in the life process of the reformed churches. And yet, since the first attempts at formularisation by Cornelius Martini until the maturity of scholastic (9) thought in Wolff, and then in its

(7) Cfr. WOLFF, Metaphysik, pars. 368, 277, 29, 117.

(8) Cfr. James COLLINS, God in modern philosophy, Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, 1959, XII, 476 p. Better is the more comprehensive work of Emanuel HIRSCH, Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie, vol. II, chap. 19.

The author of this thesis had dealt extensively with this problem in a communication given at the congress of ACFAS, Montreal, 1965: "Note sur l'origine historique de la pensée métaphysique en Allemagne".

(9) "Scholastic" is not used here in the sense of historical scholasticism but simply as school-philosophy.

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dissolution, yet dependent upon it, in Kant, Fichte and finally Hegel, metaphysics constituted an integral part in the manuals of protestantism. But also since then metaphysics has been dissociated from natural theology. The former became the science of the most general principles, whereas the latter had God as its particular object of study. This distinction was made by Christian Wolff. (10)

Christian Wolff was born on January 24, 1678, in Breslau, which is now under Polish jurisdiction, but belonged in that time to the Austrian Empire. (11) Already in secondary school, the young Christian Wolff, born of protestant stock, came in contact with the scholastic philosophy of the Suarez interpretation as taught by the Jesuits in their Breslau College. Since there was no theological faculty for protestants in the province of Silesia, Wolff, destined by his parents to become a minister (Pastor), moved in 1699 to the University of Iena. He habilitated himself however in mathematics at the University of Leipzig in 1703. There began his relationship with Leibniz

(10) Aristotle seems to have seen the problematic in giving two definitions of metaphysics. Cfr. the excellent study of Pierre AUBENQUE, Le Problème de l'être chez Aristote, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1966, p. 279.

(11) Cfr. Herbert SCHOEFFLER, Deutsches Geistesleben zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung, Frankfurt a/M, Klostermann, 1956, XII, 245p. This is the best background study of Wolff. In regards to the influences upon Wolff the best work remains Mariano CAMPO, Cristiano Wolff e il Razionalismo precritico, Milano, Univ. Catt. del S. Cuore, in 2 vol..

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whom he met through Burkhard Munken. Also at this time he acquainted himself with Tschirnhausen's Medicina mentis. To both, Leibniz and Tschirnhausen he owes much. Yet the influence of Leibniz has been exaggerated in literature. In 1906, Wolff was called as professor of mathematics to Halle. Here he established his renown as a teacher which was unparalleled in his time and is easily comparable to, if not greater than the contemporary renown of a Heidegger. His extreme rationalism provoked his pietistic colleagues especially August H. Franke. But it was the president (Rektor) of the university, Gundling, who obtained his banishment by King Frederic Wilhelm I, in 1723. (12) From 1723 until 1740, he taught in Marburg, until recalled by King Frederic II, of Prussia to the chair and presidency of the University of Halle, where he remained until his death on April 9, 1754. This is a summary biography of the Baron of the Empire Christian Wolff. His life was filled with greatness, recognition and refusal which cannot be summarized.

It is our intention to follow Wolff's thought as closely as it is possible, without critical analysis, which latter seems to us an easy way to misunderstand Wolff's historical importance. We have however consulted and incorporated all available literature and taken a critical stand in regards to

(12) Cay Baron von BROCKDORFF, Die deutsche Aufklärungsphilosophie, München, E. Reinhardt, 1926, p. 180.

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to these interpretations. We put the emphasis so on the clarification of Wolff's own thinking, in trying to reconstitute his ontological thought to which we limit ourselves. We resort, especially in the last chapter, to his disciple A.G. Baumgarten, only in order to explicitate what we feel implicitly given already; that is to say, to clarify a direction of Wolff's thought he himself felt only obscurely. The scope of our inquiry is to contribute to the overcoming of oversimplifications of his philosophy made in historical textbooks, and to create a basis upon which we can then shed more light on his important influence on Kant, which is generally accepted, but has never really been ascertained nor clearly indicated in the respective English philosophical literature.

Many of Wolff's historical references seem to be ambiguous. We have left them as such, since we felt that his interpretation of Aristotle is justifiable and that we could neither find more distinctiveness in Aristotle than he did. Wolff's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas is certainly very much influenced by Suarez. We have here too rather kept Wolff's interpretation; since it was not our intention to compare both thinkers, but to see Wolff's argumentation. He did not write a history of metaphysical problems, nor a commentary on any preceding philosopher, but he wrote ontology in the sense of Cornelius Martini: *ad res ipsas*.

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All translations of Wolff and other authors are ours, except when differently stated. Wolff's works are quoted only by title. Latin titles refer to his latin works. German titles refer to works in that language. The German title of his metaphysical treatise we have for the sake of space just given as Metaphysik.

Vladimir Berens

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CHAPTER I

CHRISTIAN WOLFF'S ONTOLOGY (1)

I. DEFINITION OF ONTOLOGY
(*Ontologiae Prolegomena*, par. 1 - par. 26)

Christian Wolff's ontology is a part only of his broader German metaphysical study, which also includes cosmology, psychology, rational theology, etc.. Or, from a different perspective, ontology is first philosophy; that is to say, that part of philosophy which deals with the most general principles and with "primas notiones". Following the mathematical method - the Cartesian heritage - ontology consequently becomes for Wolff the science from which all other sciences proceed:

Quamquam philosophia prima dicitur, quod ab ea incipiendum est ut per alias doctrinas deinde procedatur, Wolffii *Ontologia* ob universalitatem tam recte philosophia generalis vocetur, (2)

and such, "quia prima principia notionesque primas tradit, quae in ratiocinandi usum habent". (3) Ontology thus precedes logic as well - a knowledge which in the later revival of scholastic philosophy has been overlooked.

Wolff defines ontology or first philosophy as "scientia entis in genere seu quatenus ens est" (4); that is to

(1) Cfr. appendix A for the "index capitum" of Wolff's ontology. We will proceed in the same way.

(2) Jean ECOLE, editor's introduction to the reprinted edition of Wolff's *ONTOLOGIA*, p. IX.

(3) *Ontologia*, par. 1, nota.

(4) *Ibidem*, par. 1.

ONTOLOGY I. DEFINITION

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say, he defines it according to its object and not according to its position among the other philosophical disciplines. Besides, even the Aristotelian formulation of φιλοσοφία πρώτη has for Wolff the much more restricted meaning of doctrine of first principles and is thus for Wolff identical with the meaning of ontology (5) in his Latin works and not with the meaning of metaphysics of his German works in which the content of the Ontologia is only a chapter, precisely, the second chapter of the German Metaphysik. M. Wundt points out that the German works of Christian Wolff and specifically the Metaphysik are much more modern than his Latin works, which emphasize the scholastic tradition. (6) Already the German title, Reasoned thoughts about God, the world and the soul of man and all things in general (Vernünftige Gedanken über Gott, die Welt und die Seele des Menschen und allen Dingen überhaupt), indicates the Cartesian influence. The very first chapter of the Metaphysik, though it is relatively small, takes precisely

(5) The name ontology is often asserted to be of Wolffian origin, but Clauberg published already in 1656 a treatise called: Metaphysica de ente quae rectius Ontosophia dicitur..., in which he states: "ita haec, ..., sed circa ens in genere versatur, non incommode Ontosophia vel Ontologia dici posse videatur". Quoted by J. Ecole, editors introduction to the Ontologia, p. VII. According to J. Ecole the name ontology was used the first time by Rudolphus Goclenius in his Lexicon philosophicum of 1613. The first consistent use of this term is to be found in the works of Abrahamus Calovius, Rostock, 1636.

(6) Max WUNDT, Die deutsche Schulphilosophie im Zeitalter der Aufklärung, p. 159.

ONTOLOGY I. DEFINITION

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the point of departure of Descartes in asking: "how do we know that we are and what good is this knowledge to us". (7) In other words, Wolff commences his Metaphysik with the question of selfconsciousness. The determinations of being are to be derived from the theory of the human mind. (8) The metaphysical inquiry in his German works is for Wolff "Realphilosophie" and a theory of substances. In the later Ontologia the starting point in selfconsciousness is abandoned and the determinations of being are developed not from a subjective but from an objective viewpoint. The method however remains the same in both that is to say, mathematical. The rigorous application of this method to the scholastic philosophy is Wolff's own merit and Kant praised him for it as the father of German thoroughness. (9) In other words, Christian Wolff was the first who tried to reconstruct the schoolphilosophy as a whole from the point of view of the then modern science. (10)

The principles and categories or ontological terms developed in the Ontologia have had a great influence upon Kant. This influence is subject to a different inquiry. However it seems necessary to make a brief remark about the schema of the Wolffian categories, which follows essentially the tra-

(7) Metaphysik, title of the first chapter.

(8) Max WUNDT, op.cit., p.152.

(9) Immanuel KANT, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, Vorrede zur 2.Auflage, p.XXXVI.

(10) Max WUNDT, op.cit., p.153.

ONTOLOGY I. DEFINITION

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dition of 17th century scholastic thought and thus Aristotle. Since Kant criticized the Aristotelian order and completeness of categories as "rhapsodical", it seems that this critique would also apply to Wolff, since contrary to the theory of principles, which Wolff tries to deduce rigorously, the theory of categories is not deduced on a rational, that is to say, mathematical basis. Prof. Heimsoeth points out that the postulate of a complete and structural transparent schema of categories is possible only on the basis of a transcendental logic, according to which the origin of all categories is solely in reason. (11) The reproach of dogmatism of reason seems, at least in this particular instance, more applicable to Kant than to Wolff, who as we have stated, follows the Aristotelian tradition in reading the categories or "termini ontologici" from the given, that is "ab experientia": "notiones nostras distinctas ex rebus ipsis derivavimus". (12)

Wolff defines ontology, as we have seen, as "scientia entis in genere seu quatenus ens est". However "ens" no longer has the Aristotelian meaning of being as such. (13) The identification of "ens" with "ὄν", and thus the translation of "ens" as being (Sein, Seiendes) is, as Pichler remarks, not

(11) Heinz HEIMSOETH, Studien zur Philosophie I. Kants, Köln, Kölner Universitätsverlag, 1956, p. 6.

(12) Ontologia, praefatio, p. 16.

(13) Aristotle, Metaphysics, Γ', 1003a "ἐπιστήμη ἡ δὲ αὐτὴ τοῦ ὄντος ἢ ὅτι ὄν".

ONTOLOGY I.DEFINITION

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correct.(14) "Ens" means for Wolff thing or object (Ding, Gegenstand),as it did already for the scholastics,especially those following Suarez. (15) This becomes obvious when reading Wolff's German works,in which "ens" is constantly translated as "Ding",that is,thing.Kant later followed the same way.(16) Ontology is thus science of the objects (Gegenständen) in general without consideration of their being or not being. Ontology becomes,as Pichler remarks, "daseinsfreie Wissenschaft";that is to say,science without consideration of existence. (17) Reality means for Wolff consequently objectivness (Gegenständlichkeit) and since reality and quiddity are synonymous for Wolff as he interprets the scholastics(18) the essence of a thing is its possibility.Existence thus is not an essential quality of all things since not all things

(14) Hans PICHLER,Über Christian Wolff's Ontologie, Leipzig,F.Meiner,1910,p.3. In the same sense also Mariano CAMPO,Cristiano Wolff e il Razionalismo precritico,vol.I.p.156

(15) SUAREZ,Metaphysica,Disp.2.,sect.IV.: "Constat ex communi usu,ens,etiam sumptum pro enti reali (ut nunc loquimur) non solum tribui rebus existentibus, sed etiam naturis realibus secundum se consideratis, sive existant sive non; quomodo Metaphysica considerat ens.... Unde obiter colligo, ens in vi nominis sumptum et rem idem omnino esse seu significare, solumque differe in etymologia nominum."

(16) Immanuel KANT,Kritik der reinen Vernunft, B 873: Metaphysik als Transzendentalphilosophie ist "das System aller Begriffe und Grundsätze die sich auf Gegenstände überhaupt beziehen, ohne Objekte anzunehmen, die gegeben wären".

(17) Hans PICHLER,op.cit.,p.4.

(18) Ontologia,par.243.

ONTOLOGY I. DEFINITION

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do exist and it - namely existence - then becomes a "complementum possibilitatis":

The existence of a created being is a mode, and hence, as divorced from its possibility, does not contain the necessity which is required for the scientific proposition. (19)

Thus the nominal definition of ontology follows the long scholastic-Aristotelian tradition. However the mood is different. The term science has a new meaning, that of rigorous demonstration, the "more geometrico" which, according to Wolff, was missing in the scholastic terms, or as he said it; "they were only clear, but not distinct" (20), because the scholastics enlarged only the "ontologia naturalis" (21) whereas science is only an "ontologia artificialis" (22), because it is this ontology, which

...trahit determinatas propositiones; ideo cum ad scientiam, tum ad vitam utilis (par. 122, Disc. prael.).

(19) Richard BLACKWELL, The structure of Wolffian Philosophy, in Modern Schoolman, (38), 1961, p. 209. Cfr. also Ontologia, par. 94. For the definition of mode, see Ontologia, par. 148, and the chapter "De notione entis".

(20) Ontologia, par. 14.

(21) Ibidem, par. 21, : "Unde (par. 19) Ontologia naturalis definiri potest per complexum notionum confusarum terminis abstractis, quibus generalia de ente iudicia exprimimus, respondentium, communi facultatem mentis usu acquiratarum."

(22) Ontologia, par. 23, : "Quemadmodum itaque logica artificialis est distincta explicatio naturalis; ita distincta quoque explicatio Ontologiae naturalis dici potest Ontologia artificialis."

ONTOLOGY I. DEFINITION

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Et quia notiones praeterea terminorum distinctas offert (par.23); ideo efficit, ut a Scholasticis et aliis dicta et clarius intelligantur, et ad majorem certitudinem perducantur, et eorum cum certis veritatibus nexus perspiciatur (par.161.Disc.prael.): id quod etiam ex eo patet, quod methodo demonstrativa tractetur. (23)

With this distinct explanation, which is the characteristic intention of the Wolffian philosophy, ontology adds a real knowledge of the thing (wirkliche Sachkenntnis) and is thus not only a nominal explanation and could therefore not as such be taken for a "Lexicon philosophicum". (24)

What Wolff claims to his own merit is to have brought ontology to a new height, insofar as he added the new scientific method to the traditional ontological problems, through which method he thought to show that these concepts harmonize together in this, what he calls a system. He did not, however, with this intend to bring back scholastic philosophy:

Qui philosophiam primam methodo scientifica pertractat is philosophiam scholasticam non postliminio in scholis revocat, sed eam emendat. (25)

(23) Ontologia, par.24.

(24) Ibidem, par.25, par.26. The entire "Prolegomena" are written in defense of ontology, which was fallen in disrepute since Descartes; cfr. the preface to the Ontologia.

(25) Ibidem, par. 7.

ONTOLOGY. II.STRUCTURE

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II.THE STRUCTURE OF THE ONTOLOGY

The Ontologia is divided into two parts: First comes the section "De Notione Entis in genere" (par. 27 - par.530), the second part then deals with the specific aspects:"De speciebus entium et eorum ad se invicem respectu" (par.531 - par.967). The first part of the Ontologia follows in its structure the second chapter of Wolff's German Metaphysik and is subdivided into three sections of which the first deals with the ontological principles in this order: "De principio contradictionis" (par.27 - par.55), "de principio rationis sufficientis" (par.56 - par.78). The second section (par.79 - par.178) is called "de essentia et existentia entis" which includes the chapters on the "possible and impossible" (par. 79 - par.103), on the "determined and indetermined" (par.104 - par.131),and finally on the "notion of being" (par.132 - par.178).

The possibility of a thing does not include its existence (26),but existence adds something to the possibility. Consequently Wolff gives to the problem of existence as a "complementum possibilitatis" a certain attention. (27) According to Max Wundt (28) Wolff is,because of his notion of the "complementum possibilitatis",much less a rationalist than

(26) Metaphysik, chapt.2, par.14;Ontologia, par.171f.

(27) Ontologia, par.171 - par.175.

(28) Max Wundt,op.cit.,p.187.

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Descartes who recognises that this which is distinctly thought is also real. Spinoza, too, is more rationalistic when he explicitly equates the order and connection of ideas with the order and connection of the things, the identity of both being based on the divine substance which contains the "extensio" and the "cogitatio" as different attributes. (29)

What is particular to Wolff is the extended treatment of the ontological principles and their place within the ontology. The doctrine of principles was far more modestly dealt with in the metaphysics of the 17th century, and then only the principle of contradiction was subjected to discussion. (30) Christian Wolff put both, the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason at the beginning of his Latin work, considering them as principles of being and thus also of knowledge, since the principle of contradiction has its foundation in the experience of our mind (31), and the principle of sufficient reason serves to show why something is. (32)

(29) SPINOZA, Ethica, Den Hag, M. Nijhoff, 1882, pars 2, prop. 7;: "ordo et connexio idearum idem est, ac ordo et connexio rerum."

(30) Max WUNDT, Die deutsche Schulphilosophie im Zeitalter der Aufklärung, p. 187. Cfr. also by the same author, Christian Wolff und die deutsche Aufklärung, in Das Deutsche in der deutschen Philosophie, edit. by Th. Haering, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1941, p. 227 - 246.

(31) Ontologia, par. 27.

(32) Ibidem, par. 56.

ONTOLOGY. II. STRUCTURE

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The third section of the first part, which has no equivalent in the German Metaphysik, deals with the general affections of being (par.179 - par.530). (33) In this section Wolff proceeds quite differently from the traditional philosophy. Also one notices here the influence of science, insofar as Wolff does not begin with the "proprietaes transcendentales" (unum, bonum, verum) or with the theory of potency and act, but rather he deals firstly with the problems of identity and similarity (par.179 - par.224) and then with the singular and the universal (par.225 - par.271), which are the first determinations reason discovers, insofar as it decides on the identity or difference of a thing by means of ordering the singular within the universal.

The third chapter of this third section is on necessity and contingency (par.272 - par.328), which are understood by Wolff not in terms of being, but in terms of non-contradiction; (34) that is to say, from the viewpoint of knowledge. Wundt points out very correctly that contrary to the traditional discussion of the properties, Wolff does not speak of causality in this chapter. (35)

(33) "De Generalibus Entis Affectionibus."

(34) Ontologia, par.279: "cujus oppositum impossibile, seu contradictionem involvit id Necessarium dicitur."

(35) Max WUNDT, Die deutsche Schulphilosophie im Zeitalter der Aufklärung, p.188.

ONTOLOGY. II.STRUCTURE

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In the following chapters 4 and 5 (par.328 - par.451 and par.452 - par.471) Wolff deals with quantity and quality respectively. He counts these notions, which the tradition viewed as "accidentiae", as properties or affectations. The final chapter of this section of the first part (par.472 - par.530) discusses the notion of the true and the good (perfectum) under the aspect of order, a notion which Wolff seems to have taken from Leibniz. (36)

From the title of the second part of the Ontologia, "De speciebus Entium" (par.531 - par.967), one might judge that it follows mainly the traditional division, discussing the bodily world, the soul and God. However this tripartition has been realised by Christian Wolff in separate works, namely: Cosmologia, Psychologia empirica, Psychologia rationalis and Theologia rationalis. (37)

Instead of particular contents, we have in the second part again as an object of study the thing in general. In three sections Wolff discusses firstly, "De Ente composito" (par.531 - par.672), secondly, "De Ente simplici" (par.673 - par.850) and finally, "De respectu entium ad se invicem" (par.851 - par.967). One does not really see the necessity of the dis-

(36) In these last two chapters the influence of Suarez is quite evident.

(37) Cfr. appendix A.

ONTOLOGY. II. STRUCTURE

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inction between first and second part. As Wundt puts it, "one often does not understand why certain problems are discussed in the second part and not in the first". (38) What Wolff deals with in this second part are the conditions, constitution and relations of the things as such. This is understandable, when one takes into account that for Wolff the essence of a thing lies in its composition and that the substance is found through the analysis of its parts. (39) Composed things presuppose simple entities; that is to say, those which have no parts. (40) Simple entities cannot be known by experience, but only through a reflexion of which the principle of sufficient reason is the basis.

Cum adeo in notione compositi non contineatur ratio sufficiens cur quid sit compositum, sine ratione tamen sufficiente, cur quid potius sit compositum, quam non compositum, compositum quid esse nequeat (par. 70); ratio sufficiens compositi extra compositum, adeoque in ente simplici quaerenda. Si igitur entia composita existunt, simplicia quoque existere debent, seu, sine entibus simplicibus nulla concipi, neque adeo etiam dari potest compositio. (41)

The Ontologia here follows closely the previous German Metaphysik. The origin of the simple entities is not

(38) Max WUNDT, op.cit., p.189.

(39) In the German Metaphysik, part II. chap. 2, which is the counterpart to this second part of the Ontologia, Wolff tries to justify the distinction on the basis that he discusses there the exterior things.

(40) Ontologia, par. 673: "Ens simplex dicitur, quod partibus caret."

(41) Ibidem, par. 686.

ONTOLOGY. II.STRUCTURE

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comprehensible to us, but if one can say something at all, their origin must be instantaneous (42), whereas the composed entities develop in time. (43) Time is the order of succession (44) in which all modifications occur. (45) Change or modification is called "actio" if the reason for the change is contained in the subject, but if the reason is exterior to the subject change is called "passio". (46) The reason which makes the change possible in the subject is the potency of the subject, of which Wolff distinguishes two forms: "potentia activa" or "facultas" and "potentia passiva". (47) Since potency refers to the possibility only, it follows that, "ex sola potentia activa nulla sequitur actio" (48) and "ex sola potentia passiva nulla sequitur passio". (49) Therefore, within the agent one has to admit something, "quod rationem sufficientem actualitatis actionis in se continet". (50) This something Wolff called "vis", that is force. As Wolff himself states, he

(42) Ontologia, par. 694, "Si simplex oritur, ortus ejus instantaneus est."

(43) Ibidem, par. 696.: "Si ens compositum ex alio prae-existente oritur, in tempore oritur." And Wolff explains in the note: "Etenim cum essentia entis compositi consistat in modo, quo tales partes invicem combinantur, ens compositum existere incipit, consequenter oritur, ubi tales partes tali modo invicem junguntur, ... partium formatio, et formarum combinatio in tempore fit."

(44) Ontologia, par. 700.

(45) Ibidem, par. 703.

(46) Ibidem, par. 713 et 714.

(47) Ibidem, par. 716.

(48) Ibidem, par. 717.

(49) Ibidem, par. 718.

(50) Ibidem, par. 721.

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has taken this notion from Leibniz's notion of the monad, however only as a force and not as a representation. (51)

This part of the second chapter in the second section is followed by a brief discussion of quantity (par.780), figura (par.782), situs (par.786), space (par.787), and time (par.788). The third chapter then deals with finite and infinite being (par.796 - par.850). He commences here with a rather lengthy explanation of the mathematical sense of both concepts and ends this chapter as the scholastics with the notion of God. (52) Here he refers to the special treatise Theologia naturalis.

The third section of the second part, the last of the Ontologia, (par.851 - par.967) deals with the mutual relations of the things. These relations are considered more as real relations of real things than in the German Metaphysik where they are considered as essential determinations. The second chapter, "De Causis", is the central and most important chapter (par.866 - par.952), which is preceded by a short chapter on the dependency and the relation of things and followed by an also relatively short treatment, "De Signo" (par.952 - par.967).

Relation is defined in par.856 as "quod rei absolute non convenit, sed tum demum intelligitur, quando ad alterum refertur". In Wolff's example, Adam, considered in himself, does

(51) Ontologia, par.761.

(52) Ibidem, par.850, nota: "Cum Deus sit hoc ens infinitum, ideo propositioni praesenti clarissima lux affulgebit, ubi in Theologia naturali Dei naturam demonstraverimus."

not permit the conclusion that he is a father, neither the consideration of Cain alone, that he is a son. The relation exists in the reference to each other. As such, relation does not add any reality to the being which being does not already possess considered in itself. (53) Wolff takes over the thesis of the Cartesian Clauberg that "relatio provenit ab intellectu" (54), however, not without indicating, contrary to the nominalistic tradition, that there is a "fundamentum in re" (55), which he explains with the example of the relation between Adam and Cain and vice versa:

Relationes enim sunt praedicata rerum, quae ipsis conveniunt, non propter operationem intellectus, sed propter fundamentum in re ipsa. (56)

The second chapter of this third section deals, as we have already mentioned, with the causes. After the definition of principles (57) at the very outset of the chapter (in par. 869 Wolff defines the "vis" as the principle of action), Wolff divides the principles in "principia essendi": "quodsi principium in se continet rationem possibilitatis alterius",

(53) Ontologia, par. 857: "Relatio nullam enti realitatem superaddit, quam in se spectatum non habet, sed nonnisi in dependentia quadam entis unius ab altero, sive vera, sive ficta consistit."

(54) Ibidem, par. 865, nota.

(55) Ibidem, par. 865.

(56) Ibidem, par. 865; cfr. also Heinz HEIMSOETH, Studien zur Philosophie I. Kants, p. 67.

(57) Ontologia, par. 866: "Principium dicitur id, quod in se continet rationem alterius."

and "principia fiendi" when they contain the reason of the actuality of a thing (58) and in "principia cognoscendi"(59). The principles are understood as relations, which are based on the principle of sufficient reason.(60) Wolff then proceeds to define the cause as a "principium fiendi":

Causa est principium, a quo existentia sive actualitas entis alterius ab ipso diversi dependet tum quatenus existit, tum quatenus tale existit. (61)

It follows that Wolff treats mainly the efficient cause (par.886), the instrumental (par.890) and the final cause (par.932), whereas the formal cause is only mentioned at the very end of the chapter as the essential determination of a thing.(62)

The Ontologia ends with a short chapter on the signes (par.952 - par.967).

(58) Ontologia, par.874.

(59) Ibidem, par.876.

(60) Ibidem, par.879.

(61) Ibidem, par.879.

(62) Ibidem, par.944 - par.949.

CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF PRINCIPLES

I.EPISTEMOLOGY OR ONTOLOGY

Essence according to Aristotle possessed reality in the inner realm of the world. The scholastic philosophy enlarged this notion of being to the realm of the beyond under the theological influence. In this view the priority of being is perceived as real in God. The former realm, restricted to the world, receives now its being by participation in the beyond, namely God. Existence as a mode of being-there in the realm of the world is therefore not an essential form of being; that is to say, it does not belong to the essence, but it is "actus ultimus". It is received under determined conditions by the being which is already formally constituted. The scholastic metaphysics has so a much larger extension than the Aristotelian or even the modern metaphysics.

The modern world, especially with the development of knowledge in natural sciences, turns again to the inner realm of the world. Man becomes confident in his own reason, in his own being and in the reality of the existent. Even though at first modern man did not doubt the reality of a transcendent world, he no longer conceived a relation between both; that is to say, the world of man is considered independent from the world of God. The reality of this inner world is explained without recourse to transcendent explanations.

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This stage of change in the concept of reality is attained in the times of Leibniz and Christian Wolff. Dun Scotus with his notion of "haecceitas" is probably the beginning of the movement. Wolff comes close to its end, which in Kant is then accomplished. Also with this change occurs the division of ontology into particular fields. This change is prepared by Clauberg and properly founded by Christian Wolff, for whom ontology becomes "Grundwissenschaft", as we have seen in the preceding chapter. The ontology of Wolff can therefore be called "an effort to treat the ontological problematic of the scholastics with the epistemological method of Descartes"(1); that is to say, on the basis of mathematics.

Two different ways lead to knowledge: experience and deduction. Even though the former can err and the latter not, one needs, in many instances, this experience. Even Descartes speaks somehow disdainfully of the philosophers, "qui neglectis experimentis veritatem ex proprio cerebro, quasi Jovis Minervam orituram putant".(2) To the deductive method might be added intuition as a means to obtain knowledge:

(1) Anneliese MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum Possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff, Diss. phil. Basel, 1937, p. 12.

(2) DESCARTES, Regulae ad directionem ingenii, reg. V.

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Per intuitum intelligo...mentis purae et attentae
non dubium conceptum, qui a sola rationis luce
nascitur...(3)

This intuition gives the immediate certainty of the first principles, whereas the deduction gives mediated certainty of the consequences. The continued, uninterrupted movement of thought is thereby necessary, which must follow a very determinate way in order to arrive at a conclusion.

Non aliter, quam longae alicuius catenae extremum anulum cum primo connecti cognoscimus, etiamsi uno eodemque oculorum intuitu non omnes intermedios, a quibus dependet illa connexio, contemplemur, modo illos perlustraverimus successive, et singulos proximis a primo ad ultimum adhaerere recordemur.(4)

Therefore, the thinking process is determined by certain and simple rules, which will give all the truths of which man is capable. Together, they form a "scientia universalis".

It is important to respect the order in which the different questions and objects are being developed, because by the way in which certain objects are known through others they are ordered in definite relations, for instance, as absolute or relative or respective:

Absolutum voco, quidquid in se continet naturam puram et simplicem, de qua est questio, ut omne id quod consideratur quasi independens, causa, simplex, universale, ...; atque idem primum voco simplicissimum et facillimum, ut illo utamur in quaestionibus resolvendis.

(3) DESCARTES, Regulae ad directionem ingenii, (Bibl. des Textes Philosophiques), 3e édit., Paris, Vrin, 1959, regula III, p.42.

(4) Ibidem, regula III, p.44.

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Respectivum vero est, quod eandem quidem naturam, vel saltem aliquid ex ea participat, secundum quod ad absolutum potest referri, et per quamdam seriem ab eo deduci: sed insuper alia quaedam in suo conceptu involvit, quae respectus appello: tale est quidquid dicitur dependens, ... particulare... Quae respectiva eo magis ab absolutis remouentur, quo plures eiusmodi respectus sibi invicem subordinatos continent. (5)

Only by following the "nexus" and the natural order can one progress from the respective objects to the absolute; that is to say, from those which contain the least relations one reaches the absolute. With sufficient enumeration of all parts of a given question and its solution the thing becomes clear and distinct. All that is clear and distinct is also true. Even though Descartes says, that the order of the objects of knowledge is other than the order of the things in themselves (6), he seems to accept a real nexus between both orders. (7) Only Spinoza identifies explicitly the order of ideas with the order of things. (8) This identity is achieved via the divine substance, which contains being and thought - "extensio et cogitatio" - as two different attributes.

For Christian Wolff, then, the relation between thought and being is inseparable and thus also for epistemology and ontology; that is to say, the epistemological problematic becomes, for Wolff, ontological.

(5) DESCARTES, Regulae..., regula VI, p. 56.

(6) Ibidem, regulae II et VIII et alii.

(7) DESCARTES, Meditationes de prima philosophia, (Bibl. des Textes Philosophiques), Paris, Vrin, 1967, med. IV.

(8) SPINOZA, Ethica, pars II, prop. 7, p. 80.: "Ordo et connexio idearum idem est, ac ordo et connexio rerum."

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Wolff does not at all intend a principal separation of the reasons of knowledge (Erkenntnisgrund) and the reasons of being (Seinsgrund), because it is the epistemological position of Wolff - and the Ontologia is intended to give the reasons - : firstly, that the possibility of knowledge of objects depends upon the reasons of being; that is to say, upon the reasons of the thing; and secondly, that all reasons of knowledge are only conceptually grasped formal or material reasons of being; *modus praedicandi sequitur modum essendi*. (9)

The Wolffian notions of "ordo, ratio, veritas, nexus, etc.", have primarily an ontological meaning and only secondarily an epistemological. According to Wolff, and this is important, man, because of his finite mind, is not capable of exhausting through the reasons of knowledge the reasons of being, which is only possible for a pure mind. (10) Man's mind remains finite, since he cannot liberate himself from the impeachments of the corporeal world; that is to say, he remains linked to the senses and the imagination. For this reason he needs experience.

Christian Wolff has shown in this sense, as all the scholastics, the limits of the mind. The often heard proposition, that the rationalist philosophers of the 17th and 18th

(9) Hans PICHLER, Über Christian Wolffs Ontologie, p.19. In the same sense also: Edmund KOENIG, Über die Begründung der Objectivität bei Wolff und Lambert, in Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik, 85 (1884), p.294.

(10) SUAREZ, Opera omnia, vol. XXVI, p.210.: "...etiamsi referatur ad verbum vel conceptum mentis, non est limitandum ad intellectum humanum naturaliter concipientem et judicantem, sed absolute sumendum de quocunque intellectu vere concipiente rem..."

In Kant we find the "intellectus archetypus" as this unlimited reason.

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century did believe in an unlimited realm of the human mind, is just simply false. Wolff especially has always emphasized it. He says in the Metaphysik, that "with all the clarity of our reason there always remains yet much unclarity and obscurity".(11) And even the possibility remains open that the things in themselves are not as they appear.(12)

But besides the more general recognition of the human mind's finiteness and thus its limitation, Christian Wolff's philosophy is interested mainly in what reason can know and in the fact that a certain clarity of knowledge is very well possible. Therefore he describes the phenomenon of the knowing process in terms of stages in which the relationship of objects is always understood more clearly by means of discursive thinking. The description of this process is linked with the notions of clear and obscure concepts, which is the Cartesian heritage. This theory received with Leibniz an ontological significance, because for him the respective degree of clarity or blurredness of the representation is the ontic distinction of the singular monads. For Leibniz the representation of an object is obscure, when one does not recognize the object later. But, when one can recognize it, then the representation is clear.

(11) Metaphysik, I, par. 285; also II, par. 214, : "...es wrd ein unendlicher Verstand erfordert, wenn man die Vollkommenheit nur in dem allergeringsten Körper, geschweige dann in der gantzen Welt, ihrem ersten Ursprunge nach, begreifen soll."

(12) Ibidem, II, par. 218.

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A clear concept is blurred, when the particular characteristics of the object are only indistinctly grasped; if distinctively, then also the concept is distinct. When all characteristics are distinctly understood in the clear concept, then the concept is adequate and perfect. The things about which we have only inadequate concepts, we know only by nominal definitions which consist in the enumeration of characteristics, whereas, from the "definitio realis", we obtain the possibility of the thing. (13) Leibniz stresses the point that definitions should be used for conclusions only when one knows them as such real definitions. (14)

Wolff continues this doctrine. The concept of a thing becomes clearer the more it is distinct from other things and the more the different characteristics in the thing itself are separated. (15) In this progressive clarity we find finally the reason of the thing, which allows us to grasp the meaning of the thing, its sufficient reason. (16) The reason of a thing is thus obtained through an inquiry into its content. But one can see the reason through the content only, when one does follow methodically the order, which, too, is contained in

(13) LEIBNIZ, *Meditationes de cognitione, veritate et ideis*, in *Die philosophischen Schriften von G.W. Leibniz*, ed. Gerhardt, Hildesheim, Olms, 1960 (reprint), vol. IV, p. 424.

(14) *Ibidem*, pp. 422 - 426.

(15) *Metaphysik*, par. 201.

(16) *Ibidem*, par. 77 and par. 210. - ("To grasp meaning" here as translation of the German "begreifen"). Its sufficient reason here is not its suf. reason of existence.

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the thing. In the order of a given thing it is already indicated, why the parts are so and not otherwise together; that is to say, the order is determined by rules according to which each part has its defined place. (17) In this very order consists the truth of things:

Veritas adeo, quae transcendentalis appellatur et rebus ipsis inesse intelligitur, est ordo in varietate eorum, quae simul sunt ac se invicem consequuntur. (18)

And since in each thing there is a certain order, each thing is also true. (19) Also for cosmology the concept of order is of the utmost importance, because the unity of the multiple, which is the world, consists, according to Wolff, in the order; that is to say, in the "connexus" and "successio" of the things in this world. (20) This means that the cosmological notion of order is of fundamental importance for the understanding of Wolff's ontology, since order does not only refer to systems but first of all to worlds. (21) The essence of a world determines its order and in this order each thing has its sufficient reason. This is, however, not yet a sufficient reason for its existence, since the "mundus adspectabilis" is only one of many possible worlds. (22)

(17) Metaphysik, par. 132.

(18) Ontologia, par. 495.

(19) Ibidem, par. 498.

(20) Hans PICHLER, Über die Erkennbarkeit der Gegenstände, Wien, Braumüller, 1909, p. 99f.

(21) Ibidem, p. 99.

(22) Cosmologia, sect. I, chapt. I, title: "De rerum nexu et quomodo inde resultet universum."

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Logical truth is thus only possible on the basis of ontological truth:

Si nulla datur in rebus veritas transcendentalis, nec datur veritas logica propositionum universalium, nec singularium datur nisi in instanti. (23)

It is precisely through order that truth is distinguished from the dream which is disorder:

Quoniam in rerum veritate nihil existit, quod non concipitur possibile antequam existat, et cuius non detur ratio, cur hic potius existat, quam alibi, et nunc potius existat, quam tempore alio, dum existit - in somnio autem perinde sit, sive quid possibile sit, sive impossibile, sive habeat rationem sufficientem, sive minus, ubi quod apparet sumitur, ac si revera esset - ideo in veritate cui vis locus tribuitur per eandem regulam constantem, in somnio non item, consequenter in veritate ordo est, in somnio confusio. Ordo distinguit ea, quae revera sunt ab iis quae, quod appareant sumuntur tanquam essent cum non sint. (24)

There is no true being in which the principle of contradiction, which is the foundation of the essence, and the principle of sufficient reason have no validity. (25) The "mundus fabulosus" is so posited as an opposition to the "ens verum", insofar as there is no objective order in it, no "ratio intrinseca" and consequently neither "ens unum" nor "ens verum", even though the phenomena of dreams are caused subjectively. (26)

The "veritas transcendentalis", which consists in the inner possibility and order is thus the criterion of true

(23) Ontologia, par. 499.

(24) Ibidem, par. 494.

(25) Ibidem, par. 498.

(26) Hans PICHLER, Über die Erkennbarkeit der Gegenstände, p. 101.

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being, of which existence is a special case. (27)

Si nulla datur in rebus veritas transcendentalis, nec datur in definitione, nec in conditione definitioni adjecta... (28)

The truth of universal propositions thus depends upon the transcendental truth. But even Wolff admits momentaneous truths in singular propositions. (29) It is interesting that Wolff accentuates the temporal aspect of the singular propositions which are the judgments of mere perception. In the Logica Wolff distinguishes between nominal definitions and real definitions of logical truth. The definition of the former, "est veritas consensus iudicii nostri cum objecto, seu re repraesentata", (30) whereas, "veritatis logicae definitio realis: veritas est determinabilitas praedicati per notionem subjecti sive absolute positi, sive certo modo determinati". (31) If an attribute has its basis in the essence of an object, or a mode has its reason in the relationship of one object to another, then the praedicate is either absolutely or conditionally contained in the concept of this object. In opposition to the nominal definition the real definition proposes a logical immanent concept of truth. The truth of universal, particular, or singular judgments is then simply

(27) Ontologia, par. 495.

(28) Ibidem, par. 499.

(29) Cfr. preceding page, quotation (23), "nisi in instante".

(30) Logica, par. 505.

(31) Ibidem, par. 513.

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outside of time, when that which is predicated either absolutely or conditionally has its reason in the object. In other words, the predicate is founded in the concept of the subject. Therefore that which does not have its reason in an object, is also not founded in the concept of objects. Without transcendental truth no proposition of a timeless truth exists. (32)

Veritas eorum, quae in mundo contingent, determinata est, antequam contingent. (33)

The transcendental truth and the order of objects are determined through sufficient reason. (34) Wolff indicates in his Metaphysik, that it was Leibniz who first understood the importance of this principle of sufficient reason and that he had proven it in his Theodicée and in his letters to Clarke. (35) Also, according to Wolff, it was Leibniz who pointed out, that all contingent truth has this principle as its source. (36) Wolff, however, vindicates for himself to have clarified the notion of "ratio", which Leibniz had only indicated as being more than "causa". (37)

The necessary truth however have as their source the principle of contradiction. Since the innerworldly realm

(32) Cfr. Hans PICHLER, Über die Erkennbarkeit der Gegenstände, p. 104.

(33) Cosmologia, par. 107.

(34) Metaphysik, pars. 144, 145, and Ontologia, par. 70: "Nihil est sine ratione sufficiente, cur potius sit, quam non sit."

(35) Metaphysik, I, par. 30.

(36) Ibidem, I, par. 14.

(37) Ibidem, I, par. 14.

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has only contingent truth, the principle of sufficient reason becomes important. From here Wolff draws his consequence:

Quoniam in disciplinis tradi debent propositiones universales, cum alias nullus earum in vita usus sit, sublata autem veritate transcendentali, quae in rebus est, nulla datur propositionum universalium veritas logica, si nulla datur in rebus veritas transcendentalis, nullae quoque disciplinae possibiles sunt. (38)

In other words, without "rationes essendi" no "rationes cognoscendi". This relationship leads to the center of Wolff's ontological problematic. When one knows a thing in its perfection, that is the order through which one knows the many harmonize in the one (39), and in its sufficient reason, so one knows also why the thing is as it is; that is to say, one sees the thing in its essential possibility. "When the reason of a thing constitutes the possibility of its essence, then - at the same time - the possibility of existence is given." (40) The existence of a thing is only possible by the reason of its essence.

The theory of clear or obscure concepts leads to the principle of sufficient reason, to the notions of order, truth and perfection. These latter notions bring forth the theory of possibility. The theory of concepts and perceptions is primarily developed from epistemological relationships and only secondarily does it receive its ontological meaning.

(38) Ontologia, par. 500.

(39) Metaphysik, I, par. 152 and II, par. 45.

(40) A. MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn..., p. 19.

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However the theory of sufficient reason as that of order mediates via the twofold meanings of the concepts of reason and order the passage to a pure ontology which focuses on the possibility, because for Wolff the object of ontology is the thing, namely being in its ontic possibility.

II. THE FIRST PRINCIPLES

The two most fundamental principles of Wolff's ontology - as already stated, the Ontologia begins with them - are the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason. Both are taken over from the tradition and from Leibniz respectively. (1) We will now develop further on the basis of these two principles the question whether the Ontologia is primarily an epistemological or an ontological treatise.

As a general characteristic of principles Aristotle mentions that those principles are first, through which something is, becomes or is known. (2) He then divides them into inner and exterior principles. Thomas Aquinas and the scholastics follow Aristotle. (3) In addition to the above division we have also a division in principles of essence, of existence

(1) WOLFF, Ausführliche Nachricht von seinen eigenen Schriften, Frankfurt, lib. Rengeriana, 1726, p. 119.

(2) ARISTOTLE, Metaphysica, Δ 1, 1013a 17f.

(3) THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, I. q. 33. a. i.

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and of knowledge. Traditionally, one considers the principles of essence and existence as ontological principles in opposition to the logical propositions, namely the principles of knowledge. However the relations are more complicated.

As principles of logic we first consider concepts and propositions which serve as points of departure for other knowledge. A mere parallelism is not sufficient, but a relation of dependency is necessary. A principle of knowledge in the strict sense is one, which does not presuppose any other principle, but which is the first foundation of all other subsequent knowledge. We can so state that two characteristics are necessary for such principles, namely, a relation of priority in regards to other knowledge which is founded on it and secondly, an independence from all other knowledge. It is then a different question, whether there is only one such principle or more mutually unreducible principles.(4)

Another quality, which belongs to these principles, is their universality; that is to say, they are not only propositions which cannot be reduced to other propositions, but as $A=A$ they are universally valid and thus they express a necessity: A necessarily equals A. Here we can already see its relation to the formulation of the principle of identity.

(4) Lorenz FUETSCHER, Die ersten Seins und Denkprinzipien, Innsbruck, F. Rauch, 1930, p.12.

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But what we have said about the principles of logic as the starting point of knowledge, can be and is in scholastic philosophy also applicable to the ontologically given. Ex.gr., the world leads us to God (cosmological proof); God as the creator explains the existence of this world, etc.. We can so conclude that what we have said about the principles of logic is not by itself the exclusive property of the general definition of the principles of knowledge.

The principles of essence and of existence have been defined as ontological principles. From these the things have their "quid sit" and their "an sit". This distinction is important for the understanding of the principle of sufficient reason. Principles of essence and of existence according to their distinction as inner or exterior are firstly, the formal and material causes and secondly, as exterior principles the final causes, the efficient causes and the "causa exemplaris". Besides these, we distinguish universal and necessary laws. We have then the principle of contradiction as the principle of essence; that is to say, as the absolutely valid principle of being: a being which is not being is impossible. The principle of causality would consequently be the most general principle of existence: a becoming without cause cannot be. Here we must now distinguish different extensions of universality or generality, because universality can relate to all being, divine as well as created. So the principle of contra-

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diction is in the strict sense a transcendental principle of being.(5) The question now remains whether Wolff was justified in elevating the principle of sufficient reason to such a transcendental principle in the same sense as the principle of contradiction. If not in the same sense, what are his reasons to consider it so much more important than for instance the principle of causality? We will have to come back to this question.

It becomes clear from what we have said that the principles of being are the norms of our thinking and in this sense they are also principles of thinking. A square circle is something in itself impossible. Since it cannot have an essence, it cannot be realized and consequently not be thought, at least, not meaningfully, clearly and distinctly. The principles of being are the foundation of the ontological order and so Wolff accepts them from tradition. The principles of thought are the same as the principles of being only under a different viewpoint. The logical order bases itself upon the ontological order. The reason of the essence and existence of a thing explains, if known, the thing in its essence and existence and for this relationship the principle of sufficient reason is of utmost importance.(6)

(5) Its limitation to a determined class of being is naturally possible.

(6) Cfr. Hans PICHLER, Über Ch. Wolffs Ontologie, p.6. Pichler makes the same point for Aristotle.

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We can now clarify what we have previously touched upon.(7) In par.27 of the Ontologia Wolff states:"Eam experimur mentis nostrae naturam,ut dum ea judicat aliquid esse, simul judicare nequeat,idem non esse." With this proposition he opens the chapter on the principle of contradiction. It is thus an experience of the nature of our mind which stands at the beginning of all inquiry into being. We have already mentioned that Christian Wolff in his Metaphysik,his earlier German ontological treatise,was much more influenced by the subjective starting point of Descartes.(8) We pointed out that in the Ontologia the first chapter of the Metaphysik was missing.(9) In the first proposition about the principle of contradiction,however,we find again this element of subjectivity.

Already Descartes intended to write a systematic metaphysical presentation in his Principia Philosophiae,yet he begins his treatise with "De principia cognitionis humanae".(10) Also A.G.Baumgarten,following Wolff,once defines metaphysics as "scientia praedicatorum entis generaliorum" and once as "scientia primorum in humana cognitione principiorum".(11) Wolff,too,seems to mix both these aspects at least re-

(7) Cfr.p.16 of this thesis.

(8) Ibidem,pp.9-10.

(9) Ibidem,p.10

(10) DESCARTES,Principia Philosophiae,table of content

(11) A.G.BAUMGARTEN,Metaphysica,Halle,Hemmerde,1779, 7.ed.,par.1 and par.4.

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garding the treatment of principles, as for instance, the whole first part of the Ontologia is called, "on the notion of being" and not simply "on being". In other words, the concept of being seems to be questioned even though ontology was first clearly defined as "scientia entis in genere, seu quatenus ens est".(12) Each science needs for its realization concepts; that is to say, each science develops its respective concepts. But as Kahl-Furthmann points out, it is an essential difference, if the object of an inquiry is a thing which exists, or if the object of the inquiry is the concept, as such, of the thing.(13)

In reading the Ontologia one finds that only the concept of being appears as a title, whereas in the chapters on necessity, order, truth, etc. the objects as such are always the thematic of the inquiry.(14) The interpretation that Wolff intended in the first part of his Ontologia to come to grasp with the conceptual aspect of being and that in the second part he tried to establish the modes and relations of being as such according to the original definition of ontology, is not conclusive. Also in the second part he deals occasionally in subchapters with concepts in order to clarify his meanings and determinations. It seems, and we agree with Kahl-Furthmann that Wolff was not fully aware of the prin-

(12) Ontologia, par.1.

(13) G.KAHL-FURTHMANN, "Inwiefern kann man Wolffs Ontologie eine Transcendentalphilosophie nennen, p.84.

(14) Cfr. chap.II.II. of this thesis.

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ciple significance of his formulation.(15)

More critical, however, is the question whether the experience to which Wolff refers in his definition of the principle of contradiction as subjectivity is constitutive of the sphere of being or what other relation Wolff intended?

(16) Already in the next paragraph Wolff proposes:

Naturae igitur mentis nostrae nobis conscii ad exempla attendentes sine probatione concedimus propositionem terminis generalibus enunciatam: Fieri non potest, ut idem simul sit et non sit, seu quod perinde est, si A sit B, falsum est idem A non esse B, sive A denotet ens absolute consideratum, sive sub data conditione spectatum.(17)

That is to say, without proof this most fundamental principle is derived from the subjectivity of our experience. The same holds true for Wolff regarding the principle of sufficient reason, which is defined: "Per rationem sufficientem intelligimus id, unde intelligitur, cur aliquid sit."(18) Wolff also first defines this principle from the side of the subject; we, the knowers, know something through its sufficient reason. Only in paragraph 71 does Wolff bring the historical formulation of this principle:

Propositio, quod nihil sit sine ratione sufficiente, cur potius sit, quam non sit, dicitur principium rationis sufficientis.(19)

(15) G.KAHL-FURTHMANN, op.cit., p.85.

(16) Ontologia, par.27.

(17) Ibidem, par.28.

(18) Ibidem, par.56.

(19) Ibidem, par.71.

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But against this formulation, which makes the principle sound like a principle of being, right after, namely in paragraph 74 the principle is again related to the subject:

Eam experimur mentis nostrae naturam, ut in casu singulari non facile quis admiserit aliquid esse sine ratione sufficiente. (20)

It seems that Wolff was somehow uncertain about the solidity of the position of the principle of sufficient reason in the Ontologia, because he first tries to derive this principle from the principle of contradiction as a theorem and not as an axiom. This deduction goes as follows: Each something has its reason either in something or in nothing. No something can have its reason in nothing, since nothing cannot be a reason. Therefore, each something, that is to say, everything, must have its reason in something. (21) That this does not conclude becomes evident, when we use - as Pichler - an example:

Each man has either stolen something or nothing.
One cannot steal nothing since to take nothing is no theft.
Therefore each man has stolen something. (22)

This syllogism does not conclude, because the major premise has only the appearance of a disjunctive proposition, whereas in reality it is a contradiction. Instead of " $P \vee q$ " expressed in symbolic language, it is really " $p \vee \sim p$ " and this is a contradiction. Pichler calls this proof the "beauty-

(20) Ontologia, par. 74.

(21) Ibidem, par. 70. (Resumé of this paragraph)

(22) Hans PICHLER, Über Ch. Wolffs Ontologie, p. 8.

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mistake" of the Ontologia. Wolff continues to say that for those who do not accept the conclusiveness of this deduction, to accept the principle of sufficient reason on the basis of experience which is sufficiently legitimate, since the experience answers our questioning for reasons so often that we can hope to find the reasons yet for the questions to which the answers are still missing. (23) We opt therefore for our purpose to accept this principle as an autonomous axiom.

Quoniam ea est mentis nostrae natura, ut naturali quodam impetu in rationem sufficientem ejus feratur, quod est, nec principium rationis sufficientis experientiae contrarium deprehenditur, quin potius a casu quovis singulari abstrahi potest, consequenter ejus veritas per notiones confusas, quas experientia in mente nostra excitavit, sola attentione innotescit, nisi perversa studendi methodo depravatum et praejudiciis praepeditum habueris animum; principium rationis sufficientis absque probatione instar axiomatis sumere licet. (24)

The nature of our mind is also the decisive characteristic which validates the principle of sufficient reason. This is indeed interesting - as Kahl-Furthmann remarks - since Wolff had the science of being as being as the object of his effort intended. Even though Wolff could only grasp the ontological problematic through acts of the mind, the deduction of the two first principles of the Ontologia from the nature of the knowing subject is still remarkable, even more so if

(23) Ontologia, par. 75.

(24) Ibidem, par. 75.

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one compares this with the deduction of the other principles. (25) Maybe because these two first principles are more than the others and more deeply engaged in the subjectivity, that Wolff, following the Cartesian influence even though modified, gave them the extraordinary methodical position they occupy. This special position is not touched by the fact that the other principles are also indicated in the subtitle of the Ontologia as principles of knowledge. (26) Already the title of the earlier Metaphysik indicates that it is ultimately for Wolff a problem of knowledge, even though this problematic is overshadowed by the inquiry into "ens qua ens", or maybe more correctly, it is the problem of a knowledge which is directed toward being. (27)

It is hardly believable that Wolff, who proceeds in his Ontologia with a painstaking slowness, almost pedantry, should have oscillated between epistemology and ontology in the strict sense. The ontology deals with being as being with the purpose to come to grasp with the most fundamental principles of being and consequently at the same time with the principles of knowledge. Not the subjective aspect,

(25) KAHL-FURTHMANN, Inwiefern kann man Wolffs Ontologie eine Transcendentalphilosophie nennen, in Studia philosophica, 9 (1949), p. 88.

(26) Complete title: Philosophia prima sive Ontologia methodo scientifica pertractata, qua omnis cognitionis humanae principia continentur.

(27) Complete title: Vernünfftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt.

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cognition, but the objective side, being, is the prime question. The Ontologia is as Pichler remarked a "gegenstandstheoretische" inquiry. (28) Wolff therefore writes in the Ontologia when discussing the origin of simple things, that the general ontological concepts are directive concepts which lead the intellect to choose the right way. (29)

Max Wundt defends the opinion that both aspects, the being of the object and the cognition of the object are un-separated by Wolff, but that his successors and disciples have emphasized one or the other aspect. So, for instance, Thümmig and Darjes saw being as the aim of the Ontologia, whereas Bilfinger, Knutzen, Baumgarten and Kant accentuated more the principles of knowledge in the ontological discipline. (30) Indeed, we would agree with Wundt. Both sides are not really separated and this is - as Kahl-Furthmann also points out (31) - not because of a missing clarity, but precisely because it is the aim of ontology to reflect upon being as being in order to find in this ~~reflexion~~ reflection the principles of human knowledge according to the scholastic dictum: *modus praedicandi sequitur modum essendi*.

The implicit presupposition of the congruency of the order of being and the order of knowledge, which is the basis

(28) Gegenstand = object = res = ens.

(29) Ontologia, par. 691.

(30) Max WUNDT, Kant als Metaphysiker, Stuttgart, 1924, p. 186.

(31) KAHL-FURTHMANN, op. cit., p. 90.

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of Wolff's work, is especially supported in his treatment of the transcendental truths (32), where he writes:

...docuimus vi veritatis transcendentalis in nostro sensu acceptae ens aptum esse, ut ab intellectu ejus notio formari possit. (33)

Through the power of the transcendental truth being receives the aptness that its concepts may be formed through the intellect. Yet the presence of transcendental truth in the thing is given without relating it to the knowing subject.

(34)

In Kant we again find this understanding of the aim of ontology. He recognizes the merits of Christian Wolff when he wrote in the unfinished paper "Zur Preisfrage 1791": "...the ontology is...an analysis of the knowledge in concepts...which are given a priori in the reason and which are used in the experience." (36) Following Wolff, Kant defines the content of ontology as the analysis of the concepts of pure reason and of the a priori principles. In other words, he defined the aim of Wolff's ontology in the same sense as

(32) Cfr. the preceding chapter of this thesis.

(33) Ontologia, par. 502.

(34) Ibidem, par. 502.

(35) Immanuel KANT, Preisfrage 1791: Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolffs Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat, in Sämtliche Werke, edit. by Karl Vorländer, Leipzig, Felix Meiner, 1921, vol. 5, Schriften von 1790 - 1793, p. 85. Cfr. also Hans PICHLER, Über Christian Wolffs Ontologie, p. 73.

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he tried to achieve in his "Transcendentalphilosophie".(36)

We will now consider closely the two fundamental principles of Christian Wolff's ontology, namely the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason.

A. THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTRADICTION

In Aristotle we find this principle expressed in different forms at different places.(37) Thomas Aquinas follows the Aristotelian formulation and writes:

Non contingit idem esse et non esse secundum unum et idem tempus et aliis conditionibus servatis quae consequuerunt in contradictione apponi, scilicet secundum idem, simpliciter, et alia huiusmodi.(38)

And in the Summa Theologiae Thomas Aquinas indicates the position of this principle in regards to all others:

Primum principium indemonstrabile est, quod non est simul affirmare et negare, quod fundatur supra rationem entis et non entis; et super hoc principio omnia alia fundantur.(39)

Behind Aristotle and Thomas stands the whole scholastic. The principle of contradiction is considered in the scholastic philosophy as an ontological principle as well as a logical one. Ontologically it means that something cannot under the same circumstances and conditions be and not be.

(36) G. KAHL-FURTHMANN, Inwiefern kann man Wolffs Ontologie eine Transzendentalphilosophie nennen, p. 92.

(37) Cfr. ARISTOTLE, Met. 103, 1005b 19 ff., similar Met. B 2, 996 b 27 ff., also Anal. pr., B 2, 53 b 15.

(38) THOMAS AQUINAS, In XI. Metaph., lect. 5.

(39) THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologiae, I, 2q. 94 a 2.

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It is thus a universal and necessary law of being.

From this follows that one cannot affirm and negate at the same time one and the same thing under the same conditions, since otherwise one thing could be and not be under the same aspect. If we retain the definition of logical truth as "adaequatio intellectus cum re", then it follows, that two mutually contradictory opposed propositions cannot be true and false at the same time and this is the logical formulation of the principle of contradiction.

As a logical principle the principle of contradiction relates only to objects, which, as such, are in the knowing subject, as for instance: judgments, propositions, concepts, etc.. In this relationship the principle predicates something about these objects, what is again only in the knowing subject, namely truth or falsity. (40) As an ontological principle however the principle of contradiction refers to objects, which can exist independently of the knowing subject and it predicates respectively thing-relations about these objects. (41) The proposition which expresses this is however again in a logical form. (42)

(40) Lorenz FÜTSCHER, "Die ersten Seins und Denkprinzipien", in Philosophie und Grenzwissenschaften, vol. III, Heft 2/3, Innsbruck, F. Rauch, 1930, p. 24 (124)

(41) Ibidem, p. 24.

(42) Alexander PFÄNDER, "Logik", in Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung, edit. by E. Husserl, vol. 4 (1921), p. 156.

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The scholastic recognition of the absolute priority of the principle of contradiction is sustained by Wolff, but with the added deductive method of all the other philosophical determinations and with the further addition of a second principle, that of sufficient reason.

Deduximus philosophiam primam omnem ex principio contradictionis et rationis sufficientis, rebus existentibus non invitis, a quibus eadem notiones a posteriori derivantur, quae ex istis principiis a priori consequuntur.
(43)

Besides the recognition of the ontological and logical priority of the principle of contradiction, Wolff also deduces everything else from this principle according to his method and his concept of system, as we have already explained, even the principle of sufficient reason. This latter deduction however, as we have seen, is not convincing. Important, though, remains the clear methodic conception in which he excelled all previous essays of systematization. This deduction is of mere logical importance and has little to do with the ontological priority of this principle. It is false to interpret the above quotation as if Wolff rigorously intended to derive ontological as well as logical entities from this principle. (44) The principle of contradiction is the fundamental axiom of the ontology and the certainty of axioms,

(43) WOLFF, "De notione directricibus et genuino usu philosophiae primae", in Hórae subsecivae Marburgenses, trimestre vernale, 1729, IV, par. 1, p. 311.

(44) Hans PICHLER, Über die Erkennbarkeit der Gegenstände, p. 95, nota.

which cannot be proven, Wolff discusses in his Logica.

Axiomata certa sunt, itemque postulata. Axiomata et postulata sunt propositiones indemonstrabiles, atque adeo terminis intellectis patet, praedicatum subjecto convenire vel non convenire, quod vel eidem tribuitur, vel ab eodem removetur. (45)

Postulates are practical yet non demonstrable propositions, whereas the axioms are theoretical propositions which are not demonstrable. (46) A proposition is called not demonstrable, "cuius subjecto convenire, vel non convenire praedicatum terminis intellectis patet". (47) The expression "terminis intellectis patet" is here a technical term which we will have to explain.

We understand an expression, when we are able to represent clearly yet not distinctly its meaning. A notion is clear when it gives us sufficient characteristics to acknowledge (ad rem agnoscendam) a thing and to distinguish it from others. (48)

Notio clara, quam habemus, distincta est, si notas, quas nobis sistit, distinguere valemus, confuse vero est, si eas distinguere non possimus. (49)

This distinction which goes back to Leibniz and Descartes that representations can be clear yet confusing allows Wolff to explain the certainty of axioms. He gives

(45) Christian WOLFF, Logica, par. 572.

(46) Ibidem, par. 266; par. 267; par. 269.

(47) Ibidem, par. 262.

(48) Ibidem, par. 80.

(49) Ibidem, par. 88.

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as an example the Pythagorean theorem, which needs for its certainty a demonstration. Yet one can understand its significance without being certain.

Enimvero sitibi repraesentes triangulum cum quadratis eius lateribus singulis superstructis, quod quadratum maximum sit duobus ceteris simul sumtis aequale nondum perspicis, atque adeo non patet, quod praedicatum conveniat subjecto, etsi propositionem intelligas. (50)

The axioms however, as well as the postulates, describe such simple relationships in such a way that we can see clearly, yet confusedly, whether the predicates belong essentially to their respective subjects or not. The criterion, whether the "terminis intellectis patet" exists or not in a given case, is then:

Si ideam subjecti, de quo aliquid praedicatur, in animo tuo excites, atque id, quod definitioni ejus respondet, eadem referre nequeat, quin una exhibeatur, quod praedicato significatur, tum ex terminis manifestum est, quod praedicatum conveniat subjecto. (51)

It is interesting to mention that Wolff does not at all negate with this distinction that evidence can also exist or be accepted for propositions which can be proven:

Haec vero summa evidentia est, si abstracta ad intuitum reducuntur, ut quae mens ratiocinando colligit, ipsi sensui sint obvia et ejus judicio confirmentur. (52)

And this is precisely the point which is often overlooked when one criticizes Wolff for his seemingly

(50) WOLFF, *Logica*, par. 261.

(51) *Ibidem*, par. 262.

(52) *Ontologia*, par. 353.

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absolute rationalism. The rigorous deduction of all ontological determinations from the principle of contradiction is not primarily an ontological problematic but rather the logical structuring of the development of the ontological problematic. Nor does Wolff propose that the axioms and definitions are of a pure rational origin alone.(53)

The chapter on the principle of contradiction is opened with the already mentioned definition: "Eam experimur mentis nostrae naturam, ut dum ea judicat aliquid esse, simul judicare nequeat, idem non esse."(54) The experience, to which the principle as its foundation refers, is the most obvious, as Wolff in his following annotation to the principle remarks. It is, as we have tried to explain, the residue of the first chapter of the earlier German Metaphysik, which followed more closely the then modern Cartesian approach.(55) Wundt's statement that Wolff abandoned this part altogether is thus not correct.(56) Paragraph 28 proposes this principle in general terms after reminding us of the nature of our mind and without proof Wolff proceeds then to acknowledge the origin of this principle by Aristotle and its use by the

(53) Hans PICHLER, Über die Erkennbarkeit der Gegenstände, p.95. - We owe Pichler the main argumentation of this point.

(54) Ontologia, par.27.

(55) Cfr. also the annotations to par.27.

(56) Max WUNDT, Die deutsche Schulphilosophie im Zeitalter der Aufklärung, p.152 and p.159.

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scholastics (par.29). After the definition of the term contradiction as the simultaneous affirmation or negation of one and the same (par.30) with reference to the Logica (par.288), he exemplifies in par.31 the principle (57) and in par.32 he refers to the square of opposites propositions in the Logica (pars.294,295,307) considering the quality and quantity of contradictory propositions. In the paragraphs 33 and 34 he deals with the quantitative reduction of contradictory propositions to singular ones and in paragraph 35 he affirms that the contradiction of universals ("omne A est B") is derived from the contradiction of the singulars (A=C;D;E;F...). This logical consideration is then extended to particular propositions and their respective reduction to singular propositions (pars.36,37). The considerations about the possible falsity of the universal propositions either from the part of the determinations of the subject (par.38) or from the part of a possible repugnance of the predicate (par.39) are much more of logical than of ontological interest. One has the feeling, that Wolff, after having stated the principle as an ontological one, has only logical considerations to add, in the sense, that all distinctions and differentiations are really of a logical nature. The ontological - or as one would say today - the ontic reality stands alone. Left

(57) With the proposition, "Sol movetur et sol non movetur."

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to mention is only the paragraph 52 in which Wolff states the principle of contradiction as "fundamentum exclusionis medii inter contradictoria" and the paragraph 55 of the Ontologia in which he states that the principle of contradiction is the source of all certainty.

For the explanation of the significance and the validity of the principle of contradiction a psychological consideration is not needed. It is of no importance if the most universal and abstract concept of being is also the first we grasp. Similarly it is also of no importance how we arrive psychologically at the notion of negation. (58) Only the ontological and logical question is of significance and being as such is here the most universal and also ultimate content, which is found in each and all that has a real or an ideal essence and which is consequently not nothing. Regarding the reality of the essence the principle of contradiction has nothing to say, or at most it would have only hypothetical character. (59) Füttscher determines this principle as a static

(58) Lorenz FÜTSCHER, Die ersten Seins und Denkprinzipien, p. 29.

(59) "If something exists, then..." Father Gurr concludes from this that the principle of contradiction can be accepted only as a logical one. He seems to have looked upon Wolff's theory of principles from an isolated viewpoint; that is to say, he overlooked the important theory of the "complementum possibilitatis". Cfr. John E. GURR S.J., The principle of sufficient reason in some scholastic systems 1750-1900, Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1959, p. 36.

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one and opposes it as such to the dynamic principle of sufficient reason, the latter which he seems, however, to identify simply with the principle of causality. (60)

B. THE PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON

Christian Wolff introduces the principle of sufficient reason in paragraph 56 of his Ontologia with the following formulation: "Per rationem sufficientem intelligimus id, unde intelligitur, cur aliquid sit." He seems to grasp in the annotation to this paragraph the dynamic structure of this principle when he writes:

Ubi postmodum in notionem entis et praesertim actus seu existentiae inquisituri sumus, notio rationis sufficientis clarior evadit. (61)

We will in the next chapter inquire into the relationship between this principle and the possibility of being in relation with the "complementum possibilitatis". For now, however, we will try to establish the formal aspects of this principle.

In the paragraph which follows the introduction of the principle of sufficient reason, Wolff tries to elucidate basic notions which belong to the understanding of this principle. (62) First of all there is the "nihilum" which is

(60) Lorenz FÜTSCHER, Die ersten Seins und Denkprinzipien, p.18 and p.30.

(61) Ontologia, par.56n.

(62) Ibidem, par.57.

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precisely defined as that to which no notion corresponds.(63)

In reference to Weigel's definition of nothing as "id,quod cogitamus,quando plane non cogitamus" (64) Wolff explains:

Pone enim,te habere notionem trianguli,dum tibi repraesentantes figuram tribus lineis comprehensam.Pone ulterius,te removeere illam notionem,nec aliam in ejus locum succedere:quod igitur remanet,erit nihil.Unde patet,sublata notione,poni nihil.(65)

In opposition then to nothing,something is defined in paragraph 59 as that to which a notion corresponds.Between nothing and something no middle is accepted.(66) Since nothing does not contain the reason why something is (67),we cannot predicate anything about nothing.(68) Consequently nothing can neither produce nor cause (efficit) something. (69)

Wolff then proceeds to prove the principle of sufficient reason in restating the principle in a more precise form:

Nihil est sine ratione sufficiente,cur potius sit,quam non sit,hoc est,si aliquid esse ponitur,ponendum etiam est aliquid,unde intelligitur,cur idem potius sit,quam non sit.(70)

(63) Ontologia, par.57.

(64) Ibidem, par.57.

(65) Ibidem, par.57.

(66) Ibidem, par.60.

(67) Ibidem, par.66.

(68) Ibidem, par.67.

(69) Ibidem, par.68.

(70) Ibidem, par.70.

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The proof, that this principle can be deduced from the principle of contradiction, is as follows:

Each something has its reason either in something or in nothing.
 Since no something can have its reason in nothing, because nothing cannot be a reason,
 therefore, each something, that is to say, everything, must have its reason in something. (71)

Only Lüthje, as far as we can judge from the literature, has tried to show the mistake of this argument. For the sake of completeness we will give here the essence of his argumentation. (72) The mistake of Wolff's argument lies, for Lüthje, in the use of the notion of nothing, which is taken as a noun, supposedly with an essential content; that is to say, it signifies here a special given thing according to its essence. However the "nihilum" does not have an essential content, because legitimately it can only express a relation, namely a separative relation. Only in propositions, in which this relation is expressed, does the "nihilum" have a legitimate place; that is to say, where it can be replaced by "not-something". If one introduces this in the Wolffian argument we find that the major premise can yet be defended and from there seems to stem the plausibility of Wolff's argument. However in the minor premise it is different, because from

(71) Ontologia, par. 70. Cfr. also appendix C for the original latin text of which this is an abstraction.

(72) We have given on page 43 of this thesis our own explanation why the argument does not conclude.

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both parts absolutely "nothing" remains; which means, there are both meaningless. If one resolves the double negation then the minor premise is reduced to the proposition: Each something must have its reason in something, because something must be the reason. But this means that that which should be proven appears already in the minor premise. From the whole argument only the major premise remains; that is to say, the alternative, that each something has its reason in something or not. However, the decision as to which of the two eventualities is the right one cannot be established by means of a deduction from the principle of contradiction, but only from the facts. (73)

Wolff, as we have pointed out, must have been somehow aware of the dubious character of his argumentation, without however completely understanding it. Besides, he did not receive in his lifetime any critique on the conclusiveness of this proof. On the contrary, Wolff's renown was so great that many successors accepted his argument without trying to evaluate it for at least a quarter of a century with the exception of the French mathematician André Pierre Le Guay de Prémontval and the famous Leonard Euler, member of

(73) Hans LUTHJE, Christian Wolffs Philosophie-begriff, in Kantstudien, XXX, Heft 1/2, p. 48.
Cfr. also Hans PICHLER, Über Wolffs Philosophiebegriff, p. 8.

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the Berlin Academy.(74) In any event, already in paragraph 75 of the Ontologia he states; "principium rationis sufficientis absque probatione instar axiomati sumere licet". He follows here the reference made by Leibniz in his Théodicée and in his letters to Clark.(75) Also Newton, according to Wolff, operated with this principle.(76)

However it is now important to grasp what Wolff understands under "ratio" which we have translated as reason. "Ratio" is firstly an equivalent to the German "Grund", as Wolff uses it in his German works. "Ratio" is defined by Wolff as that which lets us understand why something is, rather than not, which seems to signify the same as cause. As a matter of fact "Grund" is mostly like "Ursache" translated as cause. In order that we can declare A as the reason of B, it is essential that A explains why B is. If B is only added in an exterior manner to A, then we cannot, without the pre-supposition of an inner relationship, conclude that A is the reason for B only on the basis of a regular order.(77) In other words, the notion of reason as "ratio" includes also an inner relationship. The thesis, which Wolff explains in the principle of sufficient reason, is, that everything is within

(74) Cfr. John E. GURR, S.J., The principle of sufficient reason in some scholastic systems, p.97.

(75) LEIBNIZ, Die philosophischen Schriften, edit. Gerhardt, vol. III, p.356.

(76) Ontologia, par.75.

(77) Metaphysik, I, par.29.

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such a relationship which might not always have been clearly given but which at least can be explored. And here also lies the difference between "ratio" as "Grund" (reason) and "causa" or "Ursache". It was precisely Leibniz who reformulated the old dictum that everything has a cause, to everything has its reason. The postulate of the "intellectio" (Einsehbarkeit) as a particularity of the rationality, which is very much the spirit of the encyclopedists (Aufklärung), indicates this rationalism which, independent of the hypothesis of a psychological a priori, hoped to find the "ratio", the reason of the conditioning relationships. (78)

Wolff's teaching on the principle of sufficient reason has been often misunderstood. One of the main reasons might have been particularly Schopenhauer's interpretation of the quadruple root of the principle of sufficient reason. (79) As we have stated, Wolff distinguishes "ratio" and "causa", but not at all in the sense in which Schopenhauer seems to understand it: that "ratio" would signify "ratio cognoscendi" and "causa" "ratio essendi". For Wolff "ratio" signifies reason in general (Grund überhaupt) and the "ratio cognoscendi" for him is no autonomous principle at all. Besides, the "ratio cognoscendi" belongs to the Logica. Wolff

(78) Cfr. H. PICHLER, Über Wolffs Ontologie, p. 9.

(79) Arthur SCHOPENHAUER, "Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde", in Sämtliche Werke, Stuttgart, Cotta, 1962, vol. III, par. 10, pp. 31 - 33.

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deals only in very general terms with it at the end of the Ontologia.(80) It is especially paragraph 71, which Schopenhauer interprets as an excursus about the principle of sufficient reason as a principle of knowledge.(81) We will develop here briefly this paragraph which is so important for the understanding of Wolff's philosophy.

Paragraph 71 commences with the restatement of the principle. As such, the principle was known to Archimedes as well as to Confucius, who related it to moral truth.(82) However it was Leibniz who first used the principle to order his concepts. Wolff himself adds this principle to the ontological principles (sic!) in order to apply it to the unshakeable foundations of human knowledge.

...Scholastici dudum usi sunt axiomatica, nihil esse sine causa: sed haec propositio cum principio rationis sufficientis minime confundenda, cum ratio et causa plurimum differant, quaemadmodum deinceps docebimus.(83)

Effects, for which the scholastics could not find a cause, were described as "qualitates occultae". Wolff refers to magnetic attraction as an example. Descartes seemed to

(80) Ontologia, par. 876. Cfr. also p. 23 of this thesis

(81) Arthur SCHOPENHAUER, op.cit., p. 31.

(82) Wolff's interest for Chinese philosophers is an expression of his time, but for Wolff, in particular, it also was one of the reasons of his dismissal from the chair at the University of Halle. Cfr. Donald F. LACH, The Sinophilism of Christian Wolff, in Journal of the History of Ideas, 1953 (14), pp. 561 - 574.

(83) Ontologia, par. 71.

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have had a clear conception of the meaning of "ratio" when he insisted that these "qualitates occultae", which were not demonstrable by intelligent means, should be excluded from the sciences. According to Wolff this is also supported by the first axiom of the Meditations which comes before the mathematical proof of the existence of God and the distinction between soul and body. Descartes says there:

Idem etiam claret ex axioma primo quod Dei existentiam et animae a corpore distinctionem more geometrico demonstraturus in contraversiis Meditationibus de prima philosophia subjunctis p.m.80 praemittit. Dum enim: Nulla res, inquit, existit, de qua non possit quaeri, quatenus sit causa, cur existat. Hoc enim de ipso Deo quaeri potest, non quod indigeat ulla causa, ut existat, sed quia ipsa ejus naturae immensitas est causa sive ratio, propter quam nulla causa indiget ad existendum; discrimen inter causam et rationem confuse agnovit. (84)

From there Wolff concludes, we can see that Descartes recognized, even though not distinctly, the difference between cause and reason. On the basis of Descartes, Leibniz has clearly known this distinction even though he had not stated it clearly anywhere. Wolff then claims to have defined the principle of sufficient reason not only clearly but also distinctly. Briefly this is paragraph 71 of Christian Wolff's Ontologia.

Wolff bases the distinction between cause and reason (ratio) upon the intuition (Einsicht), the why of the

(84) Ontologia, par. 71. (Wolff speaks for Descartes).

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"ratio", whereas the cause indicates only the relation. Already Descartes has seen the insufficiency of the concept of causality, writes Wolff, and therefore has tried to find for God an explicative reason since God does not need an exterior cause; that is to say, he was not satisfied with the explanation God is "causa sui". Schopenhauer's mistake depends on the introduction to the paragraph, where Wolff states that the principle of sufficient reason has an important role as a principle of knowledge. The mistake is, to conclude from the fact that the principle of sufficient reason can serve as a principle of knowledge, that it must have as a content a predication about the "ratio cognoscendi". Any proposition about things can serve as a "ratio cognoscendi". (85) But that one has to understand "ratio" as "ratio cognoscendi" is nowhere indicated either in this paragraph nor in any other place of the Ontologia. That the principle of sufficient reason has an important contribution to make to the problem of knowledge, Leibniz already pointed out in his letters to Clark.

Also in the above quotation of the Ontologia it is evident, that this principle relates to things and not to propositions. (86) The argument, that this principle serves to prove that every proposition can be proven, is only possible,

(85) Cfr. H. PICHLER, Über Ch. Wolffs Ontologie, p. 15.

(86) Cfr. also Metaphysik, I, par. 29.

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if there is a system of axioms from which the proofs have to follow. The principle of contradiction - as Pichler rightly remarks - however is not such a system, nor does it replace such a system. And it is precisely the principle of contradiction from which Wolff is supposed to derive everything. Pichler tries to argue that Wolff recognizes that each definition contains presuppositions and empirical elements.(87)

But from this one should not conclude that "causa" and "ratio" are opposed, nor that the cause is a type of "ratio". Strictly speaking, for Wolff, the cause contains a reason. Reason is the "intellectio pura" (Einsicht) which is not given in the cause. The possibility to know things depends upon the "rationes essendi" which are based upon the independent objective reality of the things. The "rationes cognoscendi" are nothing but conceptualized formal or material "rationes essendi".(88)

The principle of sufficient reason is thus the cornerstone of rationalist thought because it permitted the renunciation of the innate theories which Wolff himself renounced. In order to understand Wolff's rationalism, we must see a last meaning of "ratio", namely, its meaning as "Vernunft" which is again usually translated as reason.(89)

(87) Hans PICHLER, Über Ch. Wolffs Ontologie, p.17. Cfr. also Psychologia Empirica, par.495ff., Logica, Disc.prael., par.11.

(88) Ibidem, p.19.

(89) As for instance in KANT, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, transl. as Critique of pure reason.

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"Ratio" as "Vernunft" appears in the title of most of Wolff's German works, at least in all those which concern metaphysics. Wolff defines "ratio" as "Vernunft" in the following way:

"Ratio est facultas nexum veritatum universalium intuendi seu perspiciendi." (90) The more one perceives the relationship of truths the more one possesses reason. (91) Also Leibniz defines "la raison comme l'enchaînement inviolable des vérités". (92) In the same non-psychological sense Wolff then defines pure reason: "Ratio pura est, si in ratiocinando non admittimus nisi definitiones ac propositiones a priori cognitae". (93) We know a priori, "quod ratiocinando nobis innotescit". (94)

(90) Psychologia Empirica, par. 483, and the same in Metaphysik, I, p. 368.

(91) Metaphysik, I, p. 374.

(92) LEIBNIZ, Die philosophischen Schriften, vol. VI, p. 64.

(93) Psychologia Empirica, par. 495. Leibniz also knows the notion of pure reason. Cfr. LEIBNIZ, op. cit., vol. VI, p. 49: "La raison consistant dans l'enchaînement des vérités, a droit de lier encore celles que l'expérience lui a fournies, pour en tirer des conclusions mixtes: mais la raison pure et une, distinguée de l'expérience, n'a faire qu'à des vérités indépendantes des sens."

(94) H. PICHLER, Uber Ch. Wolffs Ontologie, p. 9n.

CHAPTER III

THE ONTOLOGY OF POSSIBILITY

I. POSSIBILITY IN ITS RELATION
TO THINGS AND EXISTENCE

Ontology has as its object being qua being insofar as being can be. Being - as we have noted - is the same as "res", as it is translated into the German works (Ding). The essential aspect of the ontological investigation, according to Wolff, is consequently the possibility of the being of things. The factual realization or actualization is only exterior and thus not essential.(1) For this reason ontology is as the science of being as such the science of all things because each thing is possible and all that which is possible is a thing.(2)

Wolff deals with possibility and its relation to existence and things in the chapters De possibili et impossibili and De notione Entis.(3) Possible is all that which does not contain a contradiction.(4) In paragraph 133 of the Ontologia Wolff concludes from this definition that all which is possible can also exist, since there is no sufficient

(1) Anneliese MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff, Diss.phil., Basel, 1937, p.20, also H. PICHLER, Über Wolffs Ontologie, p.3ff.

(2) The "ens et res convertuntur" under consideration of their possibility.

(3) Ontologia, sect.II, chapt.1.

(4) Ibidem, par.85.

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reason in the concept of the possible that would indicate that it could not exist. What can exist, however, is "ens" and so everything that is possible is "ens"; that is to say, a thing. (5) Both chapters are introduced by negative definitions. Wolff states first what is impossible, namely, "quidquid contradictionem involvit". (6) And in the next chapter Wolff states, "quod impossibile est, existere nequit". (7) In other words, from the mere absence of the contradiction follows the possibility of being.

These constructions of thought can only be understood with the historical background of the notion of possibility, which we will recall briefly. Besides the Aristotelian conception of matter as potency we find that the scholastic philosophy, more and more in its later development, places the possibility of a thing in its "quidditas". This essential possibility is understood as "possibilitas absoluta" or "possibilitas logica". Its first characteristic was negative, namely the non-contradiction. (8) These possibilities had their being in God, who is himself "actus purus". Different opinions however did exist on the question whether God could think in terms of contradiction or if he was also bound to the logical possibilities. (9) Generally the scholastics

(5) *Ontologia*, par. 134: "Quod possibile est, ens est."

(6) *Ibidem*, par. 79.

(7) *Ibidem*, par. 132.

(8) Anneliese MICHAELIS, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

(9) Bound here does not mean limitation.

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thought as did Leibniz, that God could think only the non-contradictory.

Not all possibilities which are somehow contained in the mind of God become real. But God decides in his will what should be realized. The "possibilitas absoluta" becomes existent when the real conditions as real possibilities are added. Yet the absolute possibility does already constitute the possibility of existence, since everything that has no contradiction can exist. The idea of the transformation of that which is logically possible into that which is really possible by means of the real conditions, can be found in Thomas Aquinas. Dun Scotus determines the really possible according to its possibility to fit into the ordered composition of the world. However it is with Leibniz that the notion of "compossibilitas" receives its central significance. Leibniz designates the really possible as the "compossibile hujus mundi" and opposes it to the mere possible.(10) Only the "compossibile hujus mundi" is the really possible. Compossibility alone does not include existence. Leibniz speaks so of compossible worlds, which do not exist, since only a special cause - the act of God's will - makes the compossibility of a world to the compossibility of this world.(11) Thus all really (wirklich) possible either is or becomes real.(12) The

(10) LEIBNIZ, Die phil. Schriften, vol. III, p. 572.

(11) Ibidem, p. 572 ff. (Letter to Bourguet).

(12) Ibidem, p. 572.

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logical possibility therefore does enter into reality. In the realm of the real it constitutes the "quidditas" of the existing things. Wolff writes in his Ontologia; "realita et quidditas apud scholasticos synonyma sunt".(13) Pichler points precisely to this proposition when he defines Wolff's ontology as a "daseinsfreie Ontologie der Gegenstände", since reality is in this context, according to Pichler, "Gegenständlichkeit", that is to say, reality is that which possesses objectivity or thingness or is that which "objicit" the intellect.(14) We have several times already pointed out the translation of "ens" as "res=thing", which Kant then calls "Gegenstand". The "ens" as the object or thing is the most general notion of Wolff's philosophy, since it has no proper definition and corresponds to the most general laws, namely the law of the excluded contradiction, insofar as contradictory notions do not determine objects, because objects are always possible objects.(15) Objective notions (gegenständliche Begriffe) have as a characteristic the inner possibility; that is to say, absence of contradiction. This means that the principle of contradiction is the most universal law of all representable objects, since we cannot represent the impossible, which is "nihilum".(16) The object needs representation:

(13) Ontologia, par. 243.

(14) H. PICHLER, Über Ch. Wolffs Ontologie, p. 18.

(15) Ontologia, par. 79 et 85.

(16) Ibidem, par. 100.

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"Impossibile igitur sibi repraesentare nequit,consequenter nulla ejus datur notio."(17) The possible is always something (aliquid) to which a notion always corresponds (18) and that to which there is a corresponding notion is possible.(19) Notions without representations are empty.(20)

In order to grasp the implications of what Wolff intends here,we have to go back again to the scholastic tradition. The mere "essentiae" do not suffice to give existence; they need the addition of "accidentia" which as "materia signata quantitate" or "materia quanta" form the individual and only the individual exists. In the later scholastics, existence often was considered as an accident.(21)

Even though the essence needs the accidents in order to become real,only the essence in the sense of essential possibility is understandable. Only the "quidditas" is open to reason and this is an Aristotelian determination which is appropriated by Thomas Aquinas: "Non enim res est intelligi-

(17) Ontologia,par.100.

(18) Ibidem,par.102.

(19) Ibidem,par.103.

(20) Cfr.Ontologia,pars.27;57;59 and 101. Also KANT, Kritik der reinen Vernunft,Introduction to transcendental Logic,p.94;Transcend.Analytic,p.108; also B.347.

(21) The influence of Avicenna.Cfr.AVICENNE,Metaphysique (Le livre de Science),Paris,Les Belles Lettres,1955, livre II,tract.3,chap.3. Also THOMAS AQUINAS,Quodl.,II.a.3; quoted by Fr.UBERWEG,Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, vol.II,"Patristische und Scholastische Philosophie",12.edit., Graz,Akademische Verlagsanstalt,1951,p.435.

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bilis, nisi per definitionem et essentiam suam." (22) The different expressions: "essentia, notio, definitio, possibilitas per se ipsum, resp. possibilitas intrinseca", have the same meaning but under different "rationes", insofar as the essence also constitutes the inner possibility of a thing since it is its "ratio intrinseca". However, since the essence is something universal or general and only the accidents render this universal or general as particular or singular, notions, definitions or in short, the rational understanding of a thing explains only the universal in the given thing. The particular or singular escapes the reason. (23)

It is however the essence which constitutes the "ens" or, as Aristotle puts it, the essence is already the essential being. (24) The essence lets us comprehend the being, since it indicates what the being is. Upon the essence depends the perfection of the thing; that is to say, the essence is the perfection of the thing. So the essence is - in the strict sense - indifferent to its existence and consequently also to being. It always possesses however the possibility of existence. For Leibniz then essence has a desire to exist. (25) Only for God

(22) THOMAS AQUINAS, De l'être et l'essence, (text latin avec trad. par C. Chapelle) 2ème édit., Paris, Vrin, 1956, p. 19.

(23) We can here only indicate the great lines of scholastic thought. Some generalisations are so inevitable.

(24) ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, A1017b, 21.

(25) LEIBNIZ, Die philosophischen Schriften, vol. VII, p. 305.

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is "esse" and "essentia" the same and this is the basis for the ontological proof, its conclusive justification. But for all other beings "esse" does not belong necessarily to their essence; that is to say, it has to come from outside. Consequently:

Omnis autem essentia vel quidditas potest intelligi sine hoc quod aliquid intelligatur de esse suo: possum enim intelligere quid est homo vel phoenix et tamen ignorare an esse habeat in rerum natura. (26)

One can thus come to know an essence without knowing if it has any existence. The scholastic philosophy following Aristotle now made an important distinction in indicating that not all "ens" relates to an essence. So, we have two meanings of "ens": one, in which "ens" means that which is signified through the forms of the categories and thus "ens" is the same as "res". The other meaning understands "ens" as that which indicates that something is true. In this second formulation of being is contained not only that which is in the "res" but also that which can be predicated of it. However, also the first determination does not indicate anything about existence or not existence, since ontologically a given thing could be "ens in potentia" or "ens in actu". Both these meanings are in the later Scholastic referred to as "ens reale" or "ens rationis". The real being is the "res", whereas the "entia rationis" represent the things of the mind. In the philosophy of the

(26) THOMAS AQUINAS, *De l'être et l'essence*, p. 57.

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seventeenth and eighteenth century the real beings and the beings of reason only are both brought together through the theory of sufficient reason and the doctrine of the clear and distinct ideas. The "ratio" as the sufficient reason of a thing is put into the thing itself and becomes adequately comprehensible through the clear, distinct and complete concepts. But only a pure reason is capable of perceiving the sufficient reason of the thing.

Also for Wolff the "ens" is determined through and by its essence. Also for him the essence has a pure possibility, the possibility of existence. And finally, Wolff also accepts in his theory of the possibility the Leibnizian concept of the "compossibile hujus mundi"; however only as a "possibile hujus mundi", yet in the same sense. It is especially dealt with in his doctrine about the essence and existence of compound things.

We have already seen that for Wolff the possible is always something.(27) Something is, to which a notion corresponds.(28) To each possible and consequently to each thing a notion corresponds. What is something cannot be nothing, since this would contain a contradiction.(29) So Wolff concludes rightly "inter nihilum et aliquid non dari medium".(30) Hence,

(27) Ontologia, par.102.

(28) Ibidem, par.59 et par.103.

(29) Ibidem, par.27.

(30) Ibidem, par.60.

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the possible is neither a nothing nor a medium but a something. This must be emphasized, since the possible was also at times understood as a medium between nothing and something, between being and non-being. For example the philosopher of Megara concluded on the basis of the principle of contradiction, that there are no mere possibilities. In other words, he ordered the realm of the possibilities to the realm of the real. On the other hand, for Aristotle there was a possibility of being and not being, a so called disjunctive possibility, and this insofar as potency and act do not necessarily coincide. Something could be possible without it ever being realised; and something could be realised which also had the possibility of not having been realised. The possible thus has the possibility to be or not to be. Only the impossible can never be. But the ontological possibility exists for Aristotle only in the movement; that is to say, in the movement from potency to the act. In other words, the possible in motion somehow already has an actuality; it is already something. (31)

From this perspective we now understand why Wolff emphasizes that the possible is something whereas the impossible is nothing. (32) From here Wolff concludes in the chapter "De notione entis", that the impossible cannot exist (33) and, consequently, that it is a "non-ens". (34) He accepts as "ens

(31) ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, book k.

(32) Ontologia, par. 101.

(33) Ibidem, par. 132. (34) Ibidem, par. 136.

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fictum", that we can assume an impossibility as being possible and that we then speak of an impossible thing, but in reality there is no such thing. (35) The "ens fictum" is opposed to the "ens verum" which is really the alone possible since it is that which can be. (36)

We see that for Christian Wolff there is a close relation between thing, possibility and being. We must in this sense qualify our introductory position, when we wrote - in quoting Pichler - that Wolff's ontology is "daseinsfrei". We did not interpret as Pichler, in showing that existence is not essential, that Wolff did not take any interest at all in the problematic of existence, that he was consequently a rationalist in the most exaggerated sense, but rather that existence has no direct impact on the constitution of the essence as such, a position all scholastics defended in a similar way. That it is for Wolff a problematic, which Pichler did not completely understand, since he interpreted Wolff, perhaps too much, from the "Gegenstandstheorie" of a Meinong, we hope to have demonstrated through the connection of these very important notions of thing, possibility and being. The possible for Wolff is a possible to be. Yet to say that Wolff's ontology is metaphysics in the same sense as for Aristotle, as Anneliese Michaelis did in her otherwise excellent dissertation, seems to us also

(35) Ontologia, par. 140 and Metaphysik, I, par. 16.

(36) Ontologia, par. 133; par. 134; par. 135.

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a conclusion which is not warranted. It rather appears to us that Wolff stands in the middle. On the one hand we see the end of a great tradition, on the other Wolff stands among others, who perhaps are justifiably better known, at the beginning of a new type of philosophy which leads via Kant to German Idealism.

We will next consider the "complementum possibilitatis" in Wolff's ontology, in order to clarify this important point even more.

II. THE "COMPLEMENTUM POSSIBILITATIS"

A. The problem

Everything that does not contain a contradiction is, as such, possible. Everything that is possible can exist, but it does not necessarily exist for that reason. From the possibility one can only conclude that it can exist but not that it actually exists. Wolff writes in his Metaphysik:

Besides the possibility something more must be added (was mehreres) if something should be, through which the possibility receives its completion (Erfüllung). And this completion of the possibility is precisely that which we call reality (Wirklichkeit). However in what this reality consists, that is to say, how the possible becomes reality, will be shown in its place (pars. 928, 929), in respect to God as the necessary and independent essence (par. 565 et seqq., par. 572 et seqq., par. 930) in respect to the other things... (par. 14). (37)

(37) Metaphysik, I, par. 13.

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Only the possibility of God does not need a completion since his possibility already contains the reason and cause of his reality.(38) However, the things of this world do not have the reason for their reality in themselves, but rather outside of themselves; that is to say, they must be caused to become real. But all causes are linked to each other. Therefore the total connection of the chain of causes is needed so that something becomes real in this world; that is to say, the entire antecedent causality.(39) Only that becomes real which is founded in the nexus of the things of this world. If something does not become real, it does not because it had no reason to become so in the present relationship of causal connections, but it could have become real in other relationships; that is to say, in other worlds.(40) The possible, which has its reason in this world (*possibile hujus mundi*), must also be or become real:

What is possible in this world thus was either already there, or is still there, or will be there in the future.
(41)

We can see here the importance of the principle of sufficient reason as the prime principle of the things of this world or, as Fütcher called it, the first dynamic principle. Precisely in having a sufficient reason the possibility

(38) Metaphysik, I, par. 929.

(39) Ibidem, I, par. 14 and par. 565.

(40) Cfr. the concept of order. (p. 32 seq. of this thesis.)

(41) Metaphysik, I, par. 572.

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receives a certain necessity of existence. This necessity should not be understood as an absolute necessity, but only as a hypothetical necessity, since only under the condition of the present relationship of things the possible becomes with necessity real.(42)

In order to further determine the possible of this world, we must now refer to a distinction made by Wolff. Wolff divided the possible firstly as "possibile absolute tale resp. possibile internum sive intrinsecum" which is the absolute possible; that is to say, dependent upon the principle of contradiction and which considers the thing only in itself and for itself. But not all that is possible in itself and for itself is also possible with other possibilities. In order that something can be possible in this more restrictive sense, the reasons must be given (namely the sufficient reasons) which lead to its reality. This second possible is defined as "possibile respective tale" because it is considered with respect to the reasons given in this world.(43) It is also called "possibile externum sive extrinsecum", since a something is not capable by itself to come to its own reality but has to receive the reasons for its existence from the outside, namely from the causes.(44)

(42) Metaphysik, I, par. 575.

(43) Ibidem, I, par. 6, appendix to that paragraph.

(44) Ibidem, I, par. 6.

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Wolff continues this line of thought in the Ontologia where he states that the mere possibility is not yet the sufficient reason for the existence of a thing, but that something has to be added in order that the being as a mere possibility achieves reality. This something, that has to be added, is, according to Wolff, existence itself:

Hinc Existentiam definio per complementum possibilitatis..
Dicitur existentia etiam Actualitas.(45)

This definition is considered by Wolff only as a nominal definition. He explains in what this "complementum possibilitatis" consists according to what kind of possible it complements in the Ontologia, the Theologia naturalis, the Cosmologia and the Psychologia respectively.

Quidnam istud sit, quod accedere debeat, ut possibilitas compleatur et ens ex statu possibilitatis in statum actualitatis traducatur, suo ostendemus loco. In Theologia nimirum naturali demonstrabimus, quatenus sit ratio existentiae Numinis atque actualitatis universi; in Cosmologia, quomodo existentia contingentium in mundo materiali determinetur; in Psychologia denique, quo pacto in mente humana possibilia ad actum deducantur...(46)

In the Ontologia the concept of the "complementum possibilitatis" is important for the consideration of the things of this world and this means for the understanding of the principle of sufficient reason. Wolff does this in the chapter "De Causis". There he relates existence and thus the complementation of the possibility to the theory of the

(45) Ontologia, par.174.

(46) Ibidem, par.174.

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causes. Since the being of this world is caused, we have to find the reason of its existence in its cause.(47) The cause is then defined:

Causa est principium, a quo existentia sive actualitas entis alterius ab ipso diversi dependet tum quatenus existit, tum quatenus tale existit.(48)

In the Cosmologia, Wolff writes that the inner possibility receives its existence from the exterior possibility because the exterior possibility is given with its cause:

Intrinsece possibile est, quod in se spectatum tale est, hoc est, in se consideratum contradictionem nullam involvit.... Extrinsece possibile est, quod determinatam causam in mundo adspectabili (49) habet, hoc est, quod in eodem existere valet.... Extrinsece possibilia dicuntur quoque Possibilia hujus mundi, quia cetera ipsis opposita existere nequeunt in hoc mundo, adeoque extrinsece im-possibilia sunt.(50)

Wolff continues to argue that only that which has an exterior possibility in this world is also real, because that which has a determinate cause must become real. The exterior possibility involves the hypothetical necessity of existence. (51) This hypothetical necessity however does not cancel the the contingency of the existing. Since the existence of the cause is contingent, the existence of the caused also remains contingent, even though necessary ones the cause is given. To

(47) Ontologia, par. 883.

(48) Ibidem, par. 881.

(49) The real world in opposition to the world "in abstracto"; cfr. Cosmologia, par. 49.

(50) Cosmologia, par. 111.

(51) Ibidem, par. 114.

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this relationship Wolff refers in the chapter "De Necessario et contingente" of the Ontologia.

He defines firstly as necessary "id cuius oppositum impossibile, seu contradictionem involvit".(52) That which is necessary, "id unico modo determinabile est".(53) Thus the possible is also by necessity possible, since the unique is given as that which has nothing similar.(54) Wolff then continues to state; "Quodlibet, dum est, necessario est"(55) and argues:

Quoniam nihil est sine ratione sufficiente, cur potius sit quam non sit (par.70), quodlibet, dum est, rationem sufficientem habet, cur sit potius, quam non sit. Quare cum ex ratione sufficiente intelligatur, cur aliquid sit (par.56); ex ratione sufficiente etiam intelligitur, cur aliquid necessario sit, dum est.(56)

The contingent is accordingly defined in paragraph 294 of the Ontologia as that which does not involve a contradiction; that is to say, what is not necessary and thus also changeable.(57) The essence of things is necessary because the essence consists in the non-repugnance of these, "quae una in iisdem insunt, nec tamen per alia quae simul insunt, determinantur".(58) In paragraph 302 he distinguishes between absolute necessity and hypothetical necessity:

(52) Ontologia, par.279.

(53) Ibidem, par.284.

(54) Ibidem, par.283 and par.286.

(55) Ibidem, par.288.

(56) Ibidem, par.289.

(57) Ibidem, par.295. (58) Ibidem, par.299.

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Id,cujus in se sive absolute spectati oppositum impossibile est,seu contradictionem involvit,dicitur absolute necessarium:illud vero,cujus oppositum non nisi in hypothesi data,seu sub data quadam conditione impossibile aut contradictionem involvit,hypothetice necessarium est.(59)

He then enumerates the essences of things,the attributes and the "possibilitas proxima modi" as absolute necessary,whereas the modi,the "possibilitas remota modorum",are hypothetically necessary.(60) If the sufficient reason of existence is contained in the essence of the being,then this being does exist necessarily. The contingent being however does not have its sufficient reason in its essence and consequently does not necessarily exist.(61) Wolff concludes that all being is either a necessary being or a contingent being.

So far we have determined that the "complementum possibilitatis" of the things of this world consists in the addition of the exterior possibility to the inner possibility. Further we have shown that the exterior possibility is given when the respective thing (aliquid) is founded upon the relationship of connections of this world through sufficient reason and has there its cause. We must now indicate: 1.What is the exterior possibility? 2.Why is this possibility given with its cause? 3.How does the passage from the possible to the real happen? Also here we have to try to understand Wolff

(59) Ontologia,par.302.

(60) Ibidem,pars.303;304;305;306;307.

(61) Ibidem,pars.308;309;310.

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from the viewpoint of his system, following his own interpretation that the singular problem is understandable only from the total perspective. First, however, we will establish a historical consideration in order to understand from where Wolff's solution stems.

B. Historical solutions to the problem
of the complementation of the possibility

Only the disjunctive possibility can be completed; that is to say, the possibility of being and not being. We assume, at least, that the not perfected possibility is a possibility of being or not being. We call a real possibility the one which is perfected; that is to say, which is a possibility for being only. (62) The philosopher of Megara knew only the possibility to be. In other words, possibility and reality are identical. Aristotle, however, knew the possibility as one of either being or not being. We will here indicate briefly how the passage from possibility to reality is explained by Aristotle. (63)

The possible receives its reality when to the dynamis (δύναμις) the energeia (ἐνέργεια) comes. The energeia leads the

(62) Anneliese MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum Possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff, p. 29.

(63) ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, book Θ.

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dynamis to the entelechy; that is to say, to the state of actuality and perfection. The dynamis becomes entelechy and so all real is also always possible, whereas the possible is not always real. (64)

The potency, namely matter, is passive, receptive. The energeia or eidos, that is the form, completes the potency. The completion of the potency through the form constitutes the aim of the completion; namely the entelechy, the compound of form and matter. (65) The mere potency has for Aristotle also the possibility not to achieve its goal, the entelechy; that is to say, the potency has the possibility to attain the opposite goal and is in this sense inferior to the act which is, through its unilateral determination, in all respects superior:

Everything of which we say that it can do something, is alike capable of contraries, e.g. that of which we say that it can be well is the same as that which can be ill, and has both potencies at once; for the same potency is a potency of health and illness, of rest and motion, of building and throwing down, of being built and being thrown down. The capacities for contraries, then, is present at the same time; but contraries cannot be present at the same time, and the actualities also cannot be present at the same time, e.g. health and illness. Therefore, while the good must be one of them, the capacity is both alike, or neither; the actuality, then, is better. (66)

Aristotle conceives here the possibility as disjunctively contradictory. One can however dissolve this into a

(64) ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, (H), 1047a, 30 seq..

(65) *Ibidem*, (H), 1048b, 35 seq..

(66) *Ibidem*, (H), 1051a.

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simple disjunction, namely the possibility is a possibility to being and not-being, to A and Non-A. Behind the possibility to Non-A is the "possibilitas alterius" to B, C, D, etc.. When A becomes real, then the possibility to Non-A is taken away and with it the possibility implicit in Non-A to B, C, D, etc.. (67)

It is important to realize, that the possibility to something else does not mean a possibility to everything else, since only pure matter is also pure potency. In the realm of the real, however, we find already a somehow determined matter which is no longer capable to receive any form, but only some. In reality pure possibilities consequently do not exist, but only those which are already given on the basis of something real; that is to say, those which receive from the reality limiting intentions. The reality has thus priority over the possibility. (68)

We can now see what can be known in the possible, namely the determinations which reality imposes upon the possible; that is to say, its limits. In other words, the possibility as such cannot be known, only the possibility predetermined through reality because the real is the compound of matter and form. Only the form can be known but not the matter. Consequently the real can be known only through its

(67) Anneliese MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum Possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff, p. 31.

(68) ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, Θ , 1050b 2.

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formal parts. All that we cannot understand in the real, also the contingent, has its roots in matter. For this reason the possible which has its roots in matter is in itself not understandable. It augments however in its comprehension the more it is predetermined by the real which contains constitutively the form. Matter without form is privation.(69)

Until now we have considered the possibility from a structural point of view. We must now try to grasp the character of its modality. In book Δ of his Metaphysics, Aristotle defined the dynamis, which is potency and possibility, as a "source of movement or change which is in another thing than the thing moved or in the same thing qua other".(70) In book Θ he comes back to this definition adding however that potency also means that something can in one sense be and in another not.(71) Here we can see that the potency does not only intend the structure, namely the capacity to suffer, to receive or to cause (efficient), but also the modality.

With this distinction of the potency it seems we could also understand its development to the entelechy in two parallel ways, namely in a structural and a modal sphere. In the first the potency is preformed matter. As matter in this world, potency is always related to something that is more

(69) ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, book Δ , 1022b.

(70) Ibidem, book Δ , 1019ab.

(71) Ibidem, book Θ , 1046a.

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than itself. Since all becoming is final, potency already contains its entelechy. It must only be brought forth through the impact of the act. Entelechy and potency are here in their point of departure not completely separated. The entelechy is not yet developed, but potency is; that is to say, matter, but matter only in its coexistence with the entelechy. (72) This is achieved insofar as the entelechy, once brought forth out of the matter, determines now the matter in giving it its form, for which this matter was predetermined. The entelechy so gains the dominance over matter. Firstly being only interior, the entelechy now becomes interior and exterior.

The modal way of development is based on the structural one. It is the development of the potency as a mere possibility to the entelechy as the goal, as actuality or reality. The movement from potency to entelechy is possible because structurally the entelechy is already contained in the potency. (73)

From this we can now understand that the possibility in its development can at the same time be a possibility to being and not-being. Since in the structural realm the entelechy can be hindered in its movement through the potency by obstacles, the respective potency can in the modal development

(72) ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, Z, 1033ab.

(73) Anneliese MICHAELIS, *Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum Possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff*, p.33.

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come to being or not-being.(74) We should however always remember that the modal development is not independent from the structural realm.

In the Arabic philosophy we also find possibility as one open to being and not-being, as for instance Alfârâbis and Avicenna. For Avicenna possibility receives through its complete cause and, in relation to it, its necessity for being. Since relation is an accident, existence also, which depends upon it, is an accident.(75) The cause mediates between the "possibilitas a se" and existence in adding the "necessitas ab alio"; that is to say, through the cause the "ens possibile a se" becomes an "ens necessarium ab alio". Cause is here understood as "causa efficiens". The "possibilitas a se" is the inner possibility, whereas the "necessitas ab alio" means exterior possibility.(76) It is obvious that these distinctions between inner and exterior possibility (absolute and respective by Wolff) and between inner and exterior necessity (absolute and hypothetical) are vital.(77)

The Aristotelian disjunctive possibility is also recognized in the scholastic philosophy. Thus Thomas Aquinas defines: "...dicitur possibile, quod potest esse et non esse".

(74) ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, @, 1049a.

(75) AVICENNE, Métaphysique (Le livre de Science) vol. I pp. 136; 139 and 109.

(76) Ibidem, I, p. 136 seq.

(77) Cfr. Wolff's critic of Spinoza in Metaphysik, II, par. 6.

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(78) Thomas has already treated the completion of the possibility in De Ente et Essentia. Here the Aristotelian elements are in the scholastic systematical pyramid ordered and the completion of the possibility depends upon whether the questions focus on substances, simple or compound, or accidents. The relation of potency to act is only in this pyramid understandable in which God as "actus purus" is the top. He is "esse tantum" and "esse absolutum". Only God possesses "esse a se". All other beings as creatures receive their "esse ab alio". This means they receive it directly or indirectly from God, who is the first being in the sense of "causa essendi omnibus rebus". Every perfection is contained in God. Only God is "esse" and "essentia" at the same time. The more the other beings are from God the more they possess potency. First - after God - come the simple substances (substantiae separatae a materia) which consist only in form and "esse". (79) They are absolute in relation to their essence, but receive their being from God. That is the reason why they are not pure actuality, but "habent permixtionem potentiae" (80), since:

Omne autem quod recipit aliquid ab alio est in potentia respectu illius; et hoc quod receptum est in eo est actus ejus. (81)

(78) THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa contra Gentiles, vol. III, Marietti, Taurini, 1961, cap. 86, 2624.

(79) THOMAS AQUINAS, De Ente et Essentia, Taurini, Marietti, 1957, 3. edit., cap. V, p. 15.

(80) Ibidem, cap. V, 3, p. 16.

(81) Ibidem, cap. V, 5, p. 17.

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The capacity to receive is limited and the simple substances too cannot receive being in its perfection.(82) The different substances are distinguished according to the degree of their perfection: "secundum recessum a potentialitate et accessum ad actum purum".(83) This is the Neoplatonic idea of emanation in which God has an abundance of being. The degree of the intensity of being is determined by the proximity to God. The lowest degree of simple substances among the intelligent beings is the human soul. Because of its proximity to the compound material substances, the human soul is linked to such a substance, namely to its body. Notwithstanding, it possesses a certain being for itself.(84) We have thus a complex relationship between potentiality and actuality in man, which refers to the simple and compound substance in man. Carrier of the higher actuality is the soul.

Beneath man, whose soul is still a simple substance and consequently immortal, we have in the Thomistic order the animals and the minerals, both forms of the "rerum materialium". Whereas the simple substances have their essence "a se" and only their "esse ab alio", the compound substances have both "ab alio". Yet all substances have essence and "esse". The accidents however do not possess these as their own but only

(82) THOMAS AQUINAS, *De Ente et Essentia*, cap. VI, b, p. 18, "Esse... est receptum et ideo limitatum et finitum ad capacitatem naturae recipientis."

(83) *Ibidem*, cap. VI, b, p. 19.

(84) *Ibidem*, cap. V, p. 17.

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insofar as they belong to a subject.(85) From here follows the relation of potency and act for the "accidentia". The substance is primarily being. The "accidentia" e contra have secondarily only a part of being and this on the basis of their inherence into the substance. Since the substance is in its essence form and matter, so it follows that either the accidents are originating from the form, or from matter and form. From the matter alone they cannot follow since without form it has no being.

(86) And here Thomas Aquinas now writes something interesting:

Sciendum etiam est quod accidentia aliquando ex principiis essentialibus causantur secundum actum perfectum ..., aliquando vero secundum aptitudinem tantum; sed complementum accipiunt accidentia ex agente exteriori... Et in talibus aptitudo est accidens inseparabile. Sed complementum quod advenit ex aliquo principio quod est extra essentiam rei vel quod non intrat constitutionem rei, est separabile.(87)

Thomas writes only about the completion of accidents which need it to come to reality. But in any case, we have a recipient and something that fulfils it. The more something must receive something else in order to become real, the more it possesses potentiality. The possible is brought into reality by the "complementum". Because the possible according to its essence depends necessarily on a completion but not the factual realisation of this completion, the factual completion is thus only accidental to the possible. We have therefore

(85) THOMAS AQUINAS, De Ente et Essentia, cap.VII, 1, p.19.

(86) Ibidem, cap.VII, 2, p.20.

(87) Ibidem, cap.VII, 2, p.20.

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the Aristotelian disjunctive possibility again which is one of being or not-being. Only with the completion of the possibility, the necessity for being is given.

We will now inquire into the structure of the possible and the real according to Christian Wolff. We intend to show, in comparing these structures, the way by which the possible becomes real; that is to say, how the possible is completed for Christian Wolff.

C. The structure of the possible and the real in Christian Wolff's ontology.

Wolff approaches the structure of being from two sides: Firstly, being as that which is composed of simple elements, and secondly, being as that which is determined by different determinations.

1. The essence of the compound thing. Wolff first deals with this problem in the second and fourth chapter of the Metaphysik. In part III of the Ontologia he deals with it in the chapters "De Ente composito" and "De Ente simplici" and further in the Cosmologia, especially in the chapter "De essentia mundi et ejus attributa".

All things in this world are compound things. The parts of the compound are linked to each other in a determined order. (88) A compound thing is "quod ex pluribus a se invicem

(88) Metaphysik, I, par. 51.

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distinctis partibus constat".(89) Since the one under the consideration of the many is a "totum"(90), then the "ens compositum" is a "totum aliquod"(91); that is to say, the order throughout the many creates the unity of the one.(92) The totality of the one is also to be distinguished from aggregates.

The essence of the compound thing consists in the way of its composition.(93) Since the essence of a thing constitutes its inner possibility, so the possibility of the compound thing consists precisely in the capacity to compose many parts into one entity. With the essence and the possibility of a thing, its determinations and its reason is given. A compound thing can then be known when one knows its parts and the mode of their interconnection.

Essentiam adeo entis compositi cognoscit, qui cognoscit, quales sint partes et quomodo partes istae inter se jungantur, ut prodeat compositum.(94)

In the determination of the essence of the compound thing we find its possibility to become and to corrupt. However as essence, it is unchangeable. When something changes, then the original essence is being replaced by a new one. Even when only the connection of the parts changes and the parts remain the same, the essence will be different.(95) When the order

(89) Ontologia, par.531.

(90) Ibidem, par.341.

(91) Ibidem, par.532.

(92) Metaphysik, I, par.24.

(93) Ontologia, par.533.

(94) Ibidem, pars.534;535.

(95) Ibidem, par.537.

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changes, the harmony of the many in the one also changes. It becomes thus a different whole (totum) which has a different essence, a different order and so a different perfection.

This conception is important for Wolff's cosmogony and the idea of the many possible worlds which he received from Leibniz. The world as a whole is a compound thing. Consequently - as we have seen - its essence exists in the way of its composition. If only a little bit in this world would be different, then it would no longer be this world but another. And precisely because besides this composition of this world other such compositions are possible, there are many possible worlds. Any other composition could have been realized instead of this. Thus our world does not exist with an inner necessity but it was mere contingency that our world became real. From here, in Wolff's works, follows the cosmological proof of the existence of God. (96)

Wolff writes in his Theologia naturalis (paragraph 50) that one who does not consider the world as a series of contingent things cannot conclude to the existence of a divinity different from the world. Consequently he does validate the teleological proof only, if and when one reduces it to the proof from the contingency, because one cannot conclude teleologically from a necessary, i.e., mathematical series. The proof

(96) Metaphysik, I, par. 567 seq. and par. 576 seq..

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"a contingentia creaturarum" is the only way through which we come "a posteriori" to the certainty of the existence of God.
(97)

The compound thing originates from parts and it disappears with them. It receives its existence when the parts are ordered together and it loses its existence when they fall apart again.(98) Not only does a change in the intrinsic order of the composition change its essence, but even when the order of connection remains almost the same and only a part in it is changed do we have a change of essence. This relationship of order, perfection, totality and essence of the compound thing by Wolff has had, according to Anneliese Michaelis, a great influence on the organismic philosophy of H. Driesch.(99)

A specific relationship of the parts belongs of necessity to a "totum" as such, which is given as an interconnection resp. mixture of its parts. From the significance which the orderly system of the parts has for the essence of the whole, we can conclude that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.(100) This is the starting point of the later theory of complexes or "Gestalt", in which the complex or the "Gestalt",

(97) Athanas COTTIER, Der Gottesbeweis in der Geschichte der modernen Aufklärungsphilosophie: Descartes-Spinoza-Leibniz-Wolff-Kant, Thèse Lettres, Fribourg/Suisse, 1943, p.110.

(98) Ontologia, par. 542.

(99) Cfr. A. MICHAELIS, op.cit., p.42. The author refers specifically to Driesch's work, Das Ganze und die Summe, 1921.

(100) Cfr. also p.30 seq. of this thesis.

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in which the complex or the "Gestalt" as a distinction functions precisely against a mere sum of parts. Relation means then the relation of different parts within the ordered whole and the qualities of the whole become the "Gestaltsqualitäten".

From these more general discussions Wolff now turns his attention to more precise determinations of the parts.(101) The compound thing consists of parts which can again be divided into smaller parts. This process of always further division can be continued - at least in the mind - until one reaches the smallest particles which can no longer be divided. These last parts are called by Wolff simple things. The concept of these simple things is without doubt taken over from Leibniz's concept of the monad in which the universe is reflected in a specific degree of clarity and distinctiveness. Against the idea of the monads Wolff however has some reservations to make.(102) The simple thing is in distinction to the compound without spatial extension and immaterial, since it would otherwise be again divisible.

We must now ask how for Wolff the unextended, non-spatial, immaterial things could compose spatial and material

(101) Metaphysik, I, par. 75 seq., I, par. 582 seq. and Ontologia, part II, sect. II "De Ente simplici", and Cosmologia, II, chap. 2, "De Elementis corporum".

(102) Metaphysik, I, par. 603 seq.. For a general critic of Leibniz's metaphysical theory see, WOLFF, Horae subsecivae Marburgenses, trimestre vernale, 1729, I, "De hypothesibus philosophicis", pp. 177 - 193.

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compounds, or as he says, how they can become elements of nature. (103) The simple things are not mathematical points which are similar to themselves because they are different through the power (*vis*) which they possess. Nor could one imagine them in a certain analogy to the compound things because they are completely different from these.

Again Wolff tries to explain this with the principle of sufficient reason insofar as each simple thing has a sufficient reason as to why it is in one precise point and not in another. Because of the distinctiveness of all simple things, each occupies a special point. Two different things cannot be at the same point. The simple things have thus a definite order outside each other and so fill a space. (104) Yet, "even though each of them for itself does not fill a space, but only has a certain point in space". (105) For Wolff, space is not only a container for the material things, but space also exists without these; nor does he identify the space with the bodies as Descartes did. Space is, for Wolff, the order of the simultaneous things in their being exterior to each other (106), as time for him is the order of successive things in a continuous series. (107) Even though the simple things in themselves do

(103) Metaphysik, I, par. 603 seq..

(104) Ibidem, I, par. 46.

(105) Ibidem, I, par. 602.

(106) Ontologia, par. 589: "Spatium est ordo simultaneorum, quatenus scilicet coexistunt."

(107) Ibidem, par. 572: "Tempus adeo est ordo successivorum in serie continua."

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not occupy space, they form in their interconnection the compound things in space. Wolff recognizes that he has not explained this sufficiently. But, he says one should not reject a partial truth when one cannot have the whole truth and the composition of things from simple things is such a partial truth for him. (108) In the chapter "De modificationibus reum, praesertim simplicium" he gives positive determinations of the simple things after the negative determinations as non-spatial, immaterial and non-extensive. (109)

The simple thing as substance has the source of its changes in itself. It is "substantia simplex"; that is to say, substance in the strict sense, whereas the compound things are only "aggregata substantiarum simplicium", substance in the large sense. The essence of the simple substances is - and here Wolff introduces a new notion - in its power (vis) which expresses itself in the continuing effort to change the existing limits. The "vis" is thus more than potency because it becomes efficient when no opposition exists. "Through the potency a change is only possible, through the "vis" the change becomes real." (110) These limits of the simple substances are not in space but consist in a measured degree, "which is represented as if it would be composed of other, that is to say,

(108) Metaphysik, II, pars. 217, 218.

(109) Ontologia, part II, sect. II, chapt. 2, also Metaphysik, I, par. 106 and par. 596 seq..

(110) Metaphysik, I, par. 117.

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inferior degrees as of parts and which give it a quantum".(111) As an example of a measurable degree Wolff gives the degrees of speed of a movement. Since the essence of any thing is unchangeable, only its limits can change.(112) With this theory Wolff confronts the difficulty of having to prove that inspite of constant changes of the limits of things the essence of these things remain unchanged.

For the compound things the limits are spatial limits of the extension which constitute the figure of things: "limes extensi dicitur figura".(113) Only the extended things have figures. The figure is as exterior to the essence of a thing as its limits. It changes when its extension receives other limits.(114) The way of limitation defines the state (Zustand) of things and with the constant change of the limitation the state of things also changes.(115) For the figure and the state of the compound whole those parts are decisive which themselves have a figure because they are extended. The individual parts are with all other individual parts and with the whole in a mutual relationship; that is to say, not only the whole is oriented to the parts but also the parts to the whole.

(111) Metaphysik, I, par.106.

(112) Ibidem, I, par.107 seq..

(113) Ontologia, par.621.

(114) This formal concept of figure is within the conception of Euclidean geometry.

(115) Metaphysik, I, par.121 seq..

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Since all compound things in the world are linked together...and the simple things with other simple ones and thus form a compound thing..., the inner state of each simple thing must orient itself according to all compound ones, which are ordered around the simple thing as their centerpoint. In such a way each simple thing consents (*zustimmen*) with the whole world; from which the perfection of the world originates. (116)

Here we have, as already mentioned, Leibniz's theory of the harmony of the world.

From the relationship of "vis", limitation and mutual influence, we can now understand the relation of simple and compound things. The essence of simple things lies alone in their "vis" which is continuously at work and thus always changes the state of the essence. Since everything which exists in this world consists of these simple things, the difference between the fixed thing and the active power (*vis*) disappears. The compound things consist as aggregates of the simple things through the functional coordination of the "vis". Insofar as the compound things are formed from the simple things the former are also determined by the latter. Anneliese Michaelis compares this view - somehow too defensively in favor of Christian Wolff - to the modern scientific view of energetic states; that is to say, she understands Wolff in the sense of a dynamic-energetic theory and overlooks, even though not completely, the great gap which remains in Wolff's thought between the simple

(116) Metaphysik, I, par. 596.

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and the compound things.(117) Nor is she able to account for the great difficulty how to reconcile Wolff's theory of the essences and their fragility with the constant change of the limits of things, since the question remains open as to how far the limits of a thing determines its essence.(118)

2.The essential and unessential determinations of things. We will now consider the chapters "De determinato et indeterminato", "De notione entis" of section II and the chapters "De ente singulari et universali" and "De necessario et contingente" of section III of the first part of the Ontologia.

The undetermined is not the same as nothing since to be determined is contained in its very notion. Consequently, it already possesses a certain reality, only not a complete one: it is something. As something it already has fundamental determinations which cannot contradict each other and of which one cannot be posited by the other.(119) Cottier calls the inner possibility of the something the "conditio sine qua non" of the real existence which must be added to the "quidditas" as a completion in order that the thing becomes real.(120) Since all that exists can exist only insofar as it is comple-

(117) Anneliese MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum Possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff, p.45 seq..

(118) Cfr. p.99 of this thesis.

(119) Athanas COTTIER, Der Gottesbeweis in der Geschichte der modernen Aufklärungsphilosophie, p.106.

(120) Ibidem, p.106.

tely determined, Wolff commences with the notion of the "ens omnimodo determinatum": "Ens omnimodo determinatum dicitur, in quo nihil concipitur indeterminatum"; that is to say, something is then completely determined when it is negatively and positively determined in regards to all being. (121) Wolff, and this is important, considers only the individual as being completely determined:

Cum entia singularia existant, evidens est, ens singulare, sive individuum esse illud, quod omnimodo determinatum est. (122)

It is thus the complete determination which is the principle of reality and at the same time the principle of individuation. Hence Wolff defines the "ens universale" as that which is not completely determined. (123) Consequently, as such it cannot exist. It is however false to conclude from this passage, as Cottier does, that "with the identification of the principle of existence (reality) and of the principle of individuation, Wolff abandoned altogether the reality of the universal and defended a nominalistic position"; in other words, that he can no longer affirm the universality of the real essence of the singular things. (124) Since Cottier intended to defend a position of moderate realism; that is to say, the position of Thomas Aquinas, such a conclusion from this

(121) Ontologia, par. 225.

(122) Ibidem, par. 227.

(123) Ibidem, par. 230.

(124) A. COTTIER, Der Gottesbeweis in der Geschichte der modernen Aufklärungsphilosophie, p. 107.

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passage is at least astonishing, because Thomas also writes in De Ente et Essentia:

Ergo patet quod essentia hominis et essentia Socratis non differunt nisi secundum signatum et non signatum.(125)

And this is precisely the difference between "determinatum" and "non determinatum". Wolff writes directly after the definition that only individuals exist, that the "entia universalia" too have a certain existence insofar as they enter in the "entia singularia". The completely determined receives the incompletely determined; the individual receives the universal.(126) Wolff writes so:

"...demonstravi, universalia non existere nisi in singularibus, quod exinde facile colligitur, quod non nisi ea contineant, quae singularibus communia sunt.(127)

The "entia universalia" constitute the similarity of the individual things which are thus divided into "genera et species".(128) Wolff writes in paragraph 233 of his Ontologia: "Entium singularum similitudo est id, quod speciem appellamus", and in the following paragraph: "Similiter genus est similitudo specierum".(129) In paragraph 247 Wolff continues saying: "Genera et species per essentialia determinantur". It seems that "genus et species" are constituted according to Wolff firstly, through the "entia universalia" and secondly, through

(125) THOMAS AQUINAS, De Ente et Essentia, III, 1, p. 11.

(126) A. MICHAELIS, op. cit., p. 46.

(127) Ontologia, par. 235.

(128) Ibidem, par. 232.

(129) Ibidem, par. 234.

the "essentialia". We conclude that the "ens universale" is composed of the essentials. The totality of essentials form the essence. The essence however - as we have seen - as the totality of the essentials forms the "ens universale" and is as such not completely determined. Besides this the inner possibility of a thing also constitutes the essence; that is to say, the possible thing itself:

Per essentiam ens possibile est....Patet adeo essentiam entis possibilitas ejus intrinseca absolvi.(130)

Here Wolff states different propositions which are even contradictory, as for instance, when he writes that the universals can not exist, but then he defines the possible things as those which can exist. The "ens possibile" seems to be the "ens universale" which becomes an "ens in actu" and thus "ens singulare", when the incomplete determination is completed. We find two opinions about this basic uncertainty of Wolff. Julius Bergmann defends the position that Wolff did not at all see the relationship between universality, possibility and incomplete determination on the one hand and individuality reality and complete determination on the other.(131) He follows in this view Kant's interpretation, whose paper "Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund, etc. Bergmann quotes and in which Kant writes, that only Baumgarten has explained existence as

(130) Ontologia, par.234.

(131) Julius BERGMANN, "Wolffs Lehre vom Complementum Possibilitatis", in Archiv für systematische Philosophie, Berlin, 1896, vol.II, Heft 4, p.457 seq..

the complete determination (allseitige Bestimmtheit). Bergmann adds that Wolff defines only once, namely in the Ontologia, paragraph 226 and 227, the individual things as the existent ones:

Quidquid existit vel actu est, id omnimodo determinatum est. Cum entia singularia existant, evidens est, Ens singulare sive Individuum esse illud, quod omnimodo determinatum est. (132)

Bergmann continues to argue that Wolff probably did not understand that the proposition "cum entia singularia..." contained the answer to the problem of the above relationship. (133) Also Cottier, as we have mentioned, reaches an excessive conclusion, but in the opposite sense. (134)

Anneliese Michaelis "e contra" defends the position that this relationship is contained in Wolff's ontology even though only implicitly and with this we tend to agree. However, as above indicated, we do not agree with her, when she concludes from this - among other argumentation - that Wolff's ontology is metaphysics in the same sense as was the Aristotelian metaphysic. (135)

(132) Ontologia, pars. 226; 227. (Two paragraphs quoted as one following Bergmann's argumentation. Cfr. J. BERGMANN, Wolffs Lehre vom Complementum Possibilitatis, p. 457.

(133) Julius BERGMANN, op.cit., p. 457.

(134) Athanas COTTIER, Der Gottesbeweis in der Geschichte der modernen Aufklärungsphilosophie, p. 107 seq..

(135) We will discuss Baumgartens and Wolff's theory of possibility and determination in the next chapter. Alexander G. Baumgarten is one of the most important disciples of Wolff and it is in his works that Kant studied Wolffian ontology. For this reason we include him in our study.

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We have said that the essence as totality of the essentials constitutes only the "ens universale". We have now to inquire into further determinations which form the "ens singulare". In paragraph 144 of the Ontologia, Wolff defines the essence in relation to things as that without which no thing can be. Besides the essence Wolff recognizes attributes and modes which were called by the scholastics "proprietaes" and "accidentia" respectively. Wolff avoids these terms because of their ambiguity. He defines both: "Attributa enti constanter insunt; modi inesse et non inesse possunt". (136) The attributes or properties are determined by the essentials and are inherent to the thing exactly the same way as in the scholastic tradition. The modes are also founded upon the essence, but only their possibility, never their facticity; that is to say, they have in the essence of the thing their capacity to become real. If they are realized in the thing then only under certain conditions; for instance, they could only belong temporarily to the thing. Whereas the essentials as well as the attributes possess absolute necessity, only a hypothetical necessity belongs to the modes. (137) That which is not absolutely necessary is contingent and what is contingent could also be different. The contingent is thus also the changeable: "Quod contingens est, illud mutabile est". (138) The modes are

(136) Ontologia, par. 150.

(137) Ibidem, pars. 299; 303; 304; 306.

(138) Ibidem, par. 295.

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that which change in the thing. The substantial subject composed of essentials and attributes, according to Wolff, remains the same in these changes. All changes are variations of modes.(139) Since it is the changeable which determines the state (Zustand) of things, the state depends upon the modifications of the modes.(140)

Mutabilium determinatione enascitur status rei. Ut adeo status sit coexistentia mutabilium cum iisdem fixis. Fixa nempe sunt essentialia et attributa, utpote in se immutabilia, mutabilia autem cum modi, qui sunt in iis, tum relationes rei ad alia, qualis est situs, qui motu rei mutatur(par.603.643). (141)

To be completely determined, and this means in view of its existence, the things need the modes. But since the modes are contingent, the thing becomes through its modes also contingent. The relationship between the eternal essences and the mutability of things is thus explained in relation to the whole (totum). Through the modes the things acquire the capacity to possess more possibilities than they can realize at one time. In other words, the "ens contingens" has the possibility to a mode A and a mode Non-A. According to the law of non-contradiction, which includes the principle of the excluded

(139) Ontologia, par.703; "Omnis rei durantis mutatio in variatione modorum consistit."

(140) Pichler had translated "modus" as "Zustand". This is at least ambiguous, since also "status" has to be translated as "Zustand"; cfr. Ontologia, par.706 : "Si status rei constituitur mutabilibus intrinsecis, nempe modis, internus dicitur. Si vero extrinsecis, quales sunt relationes rei ad alias, externus."

(141) Ontologia, par.705.

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middle (142), only one of two contradictory determinations can be given at the same time. This precisely makes the thing to a finite thing:

Ens adeo finitum reale est ens, in quo omnia simul
inesse nequeunt, quae eidem actu inesse possunt. (143)

In the same chapter, namely "De Ente finito et infinito" of the Ontologia, Wolff also writes in relation to the finitude of things:

Ex ipsa adeo mutabilitate rei, vel mutatione actuali...
concluditur finitudo rei, etsi limitationes distincte
non agnoscantur. (144)

Likewise, it is not possible that at the same time all possible states are realized in a particular thing. The state is determined through that which changes in the thing. Since the changes come from the successively changing modes, other states also follow in the thing.

Quare cum status rei internus mutatur, si modi non manent
iidem; entis finiti status internus successive mutari,
adeoque ens finitum successive alios aliosque status
habere potest. (145)

Insofar as the state depends upon the mutability of the modes, it also depends upon the limitations because "omnis modus in limitationibus consistit". (146) The finite things exist only in their limitation or, in other words, in their

(142) Ontologia, par. 54: "Quodlibet est vel non est, aut..., principium exclusi medii inter duo contradictoria ex principio contradictionis deduci potest."

(143) Ibidem, par. 837.

(144) Ibidem, par. 835.

(145) Ibidem, par. 834.

(146) Ibidem, pars. 828; 836.

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finitudes. They are always something which is limited. Again we see that a given thing can never realize all at once its possibilities because the realized possibilities in their totality would break all limitations. Only in the infinite being are all possibilities realized at the same time. In the finite being, which is finite precisely because it is limited, the realization of only one or some possibilities is given which excludes the realization of all others. Yet, these others are implicitly included because the possibility of contradiction belongs to the modality of the possible. Through the realization of its possibility, the contingent being is included in time. (147) Through the modes the things depend in their existence upon causes. The modes require the "rationes intrinsecae", which are given through the sufficient reason, and also a "ratio extrinseca", which stems precisely from an exterior cause. (148)

Et quoniam vi principii rationis sufficientis, quod in attributis obtinet, quemadmodum modo vidimus, modorum quoque ratio sufficiens dari debet, per quam intelligitur, cur hic potius existat, quam alius, cum ens per essentialia et attributa ad utrumque oppositum indifferens sit. (149)

But the sufficient reason indicates only why the modes can be in the thing, but not that they really are. The

(147) Cfr. A. MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum Possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff, p. 49.

(148) The definitions of the "ratio intrinseca" and "extrinseca" Wolff gives in the Logica, par. 1004.

(149) Christian WOLFF, Horae subsecivae Marburgenses, trimestre vernale, p. 312. Also Ontologia, par. 160.

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causes, however, lie in the preceeding modes of the same thing or in other beings. (150) Since the things depend upon the modes in order to be completely determined and thus come to exist, the causes of the modes also become the causes of the things. The possibility is not the sufficient reason for the existence of a thing (151), even though that which exists is possible but not vice versa. (152) Thus besides the mere possibility something else is required in order that the thing exists and this is the problem of the "complementum possibilitatis". (153)

D. Wolff's solution:
the complementum possibilitatis.

We have shown that the possible, according to Wolff, is the not completely determined being, the "ens universale"; that is to say, it is that which contains only essential determinations. The real is then further defined as that which is completely determined; that is to say, that which possesses essentials, attributes and modes, namely the "ens singulare". And finally we have defined the real according to Wolff as a compound in which all parts form a whole (totum) according to a definite order.

(150) Ontologia, par. 160.

(151) Ibidem, par. 172.

(152) Ibidem, par. 170 and par. 171.

(153) Ibidem, par. 173 and par. 174.

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The development of the possible to the real always happens through greater determinations. To the essentials the modes, unessential determinations, are added. It is a dynamic order which constitutes the whole. Since the real becomes a thing only when it is completely determined, the last determination also has the greatest importance for the real.

Parallel to this structural development is the modal one in which we see a possibility which grows through the addition of determinations. The last determination through which the thing becomes real completes the possibility of the thing.

We will now inquire if both conceptions - the structural and the modal one - could be traced in Wolff's work and if they supplement each other. We have already mentioned the difference of interpretation regarding the question whether these relations are implicitly contained in Wolff's writings or not. Explicitly we can only notice a parallelism. In order to grasp this we will inquire first into Alexander Baumgarten's Metaphysica. (154)

The structure of Baumgarten's Metaphysica, which contains as parts ontology, psychology, cosmology and natural

(154) We have already indicated Baumgarten's relation to Wolff and feel historically justified to make use of his work to interpret Wolff. Cfr. p. 106, note 135 of this thesis.

We follow here basically the argumentation of A. Michaelis as put forth in her doctoral dissertation which was written under the direction of Prof. Dr. H. Schmalenbach, a scholar of Leibniz.

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theology, is similar to Wolff's. (155) Important to us is the first part of the Metaphysica, namely the ontology, which discusses in three chapters the predicates of things. The first chapter "Praedicata entis interna universalia" deals with the concepts of the possible, the rational, the thing, as well as with the one, the true and the perfect. The second chapter "Praedicata entis interna disjunctiva" deals with the necessary and the contingent, the changeable and the unchangeable, the real and the negative, the particular and the universal, the whole and the parts, the substance and the accidents, simple and compound and with the finite and the infinite. Finally the third chapter "Praedicata entis relativa" treats the similar and the different, the simultaneous and the successive, cause and caused and the signes. (156)

Mainly we have a short recapitulation of Wolff's approach, but the importance to us is here the explicit treatment of Wolff's "implicit intentions", if we can say so, and this especially in the discussion of the relation between possibility and determination.

(155) Alexander G. BAUMGARTEN, Metaphysica, 7th. edit., Hemmerde, Halle-Magdeburg, 1779, reprinted by G. Olms, Hildesheim, 1963, pars. 1000. (No exact pagination.)

(156) Cfr. Alexander BAUMGARTEN, index cap. of the Metaphysica; In this work Baumgarten defines also ontology with respect to metaphysics: "Metaphysica est scientia primorum in humana cognitione principiorum" par. 1, and in paragraph 4, "ontologia est scientia praedicatorum entis generalium".

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The essentials are the determinant factors of the inner possibility of a thing. All the essentials form the essence:

Complexus essentialium in possibili, seu possibilitas eius interna est essentia... (esse rei, ratio formalis, natura, ...quidditas, ...substantia, ...conceptus entis primus). (157)

The determinations of the inner possibility form a unity; that is to say, they are linked inseparably together. (158) The essence, as the complex of essentials, is absolutely necessary and constitutes in the singular things the "nexus universalis" (harmony). (159) From the essentials we have then other determinations, namely the affectations of which the essence is their "ratio". The "ratio" is defined as: "id, ex quo cognoscibile est, cur aliquid sit". (160) For some affectations, the attributes, the essence is also the sufficient reason, whereas for others, like the modes, the essence is only a partial reason:

Modi entis per essentiam non sufficienter determinantur... Ens ergo, qua modos actuales, per essentiam est indeterminatum... id est modi possunt abesse et adesse salva rei essentia. (161)

The essence itself has no reason (ratio) since it does not need a condition being itself unconditioned. The attributes, which are entirely founded upon the essence, are as

(157) Alexander BAUMGARTEN, *Metaphysica*, par. 40.

(158) *Ibidem*, pars. 47; 43.

(159) *Ibidem*, par. 48.

(160) *Ibidem*, par. 14.

(161) *Ibidem*, par. 65.

necessary as the essence. The modes however are contingent and that means they are only hypothetically necessary because the essence is undetermined in their regards; that is to say, the addition of mode A or mode Non-A is exterior.

Modorum oppositum est in ente absolute possibile...
hinc modi sunt determinationes entis in se contingentes.
(162)

Also for Baumgarten, the essence does not constitute a completely determined being, since the essence is open in regards to the modes. The essence constitutes only the inner possibility of being. The possible on the other hand is always something. This means, the possible has already some, though not yet sufficient determinations. If it would not have at least some, it would be nothing. To the complex of the essentials thus must be added as "complementum" the complex of the compossible affectations. Both form a completely determined being which now becomes actual, whereas before it was only "privative".
(163)

Existentia...(actus...actualitas) est complexus affectionum in aliquo compossibilium i.e. complementum essentiae sive possibilitatis internae, quatenus haec tantum, ut complexus determinationum spectatur. (164)

The existence is according to Baumgarten the complex of the unessential determinations which supplements the complex of the essential determinations. The essence as such does

(162) Alexander BAUMGARTEN, Metaphysica, par. 108.

(163) Ibidem, par. 54.

(164) Ibidem, par. 55.

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not need any completion. Considering it only as a complex of determinations, the essence needs however a fulfilment since, as such, it is not a completely determined being. In Baumgarten's view, we cannot therefore distinguish clearly between structure and modality since essence and existence stand upon the same basis. The process of completion is directly related to two complexes of determinations of which the second - the unessential - forms the completion of the first. In this process, both form one complex which constitutes the complete determination of the thing; that is to say, it makes the "ens universale", the essence, to an "ens singulare".

Complexus omnium determinationum in ente compossibilium est omnimodo eius determinatio. (165)

The discussion of the relationship between universality, possibility and incomplete determination and individuality, reality and complete determination leads directly to Wolff's notion of the "complementum". The greater explicitation of Baumgarten is of help. As we have seen, modality and determination are closely linked in Baumgarten's view, so much so that it is indeed difficult to distinguish both. It is also important that the possible has for him a different structure than the real. The former consists in an incomplete complex of determinations.

We will return now to Wolff and try to interpret

(165) Alexander BAUMGARTEN, *Metaphysica*, par. 148.

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his determination with the help of Baumgarten's. We have said that the "complementum possibilitatis" is, for Wolff, the addition of the exterior possibility to the inner possibility. Thereby, we have defined that the exterior possibility is given when the thing is sufficiently founded upon the interrelated connection of this world and so does have its cause. We can now determine this exterior possibility more exactly.

The inner possibility refers to the essence with which the attributes are given. The modes, however, are only insufficiently founded upon the essence of a thing and for this reason they also need besides the "ratio intrinseca" a "ratio extrinseca", the latter which they find in the exterior causes. The exterior possibility is caused in this sense by such an exterior cause. The exterior possibility regards the modes and through them the thing as a whole. The complete exterior possibility is given with a sufficient cause. If this cause is given, then the existence in this world is also given. (166) This cause is defined by Wolff as the "causa efficiens proxima" or the "causa efficiens sufficiens". (167)

Wolff defined cause as a principle, "a quo existentia sive actualitas entis alterius ab ipso diversi dependet tum

(166) Cfr. Hans PICHLER, Über die Erkennbarkeit der Gegenstände, p. 97.

(167) Ontologia, pars. 886; 889 and par. 897: "causa efficiens sufficiens est, quae continet rationem sufficientem effectus alicujus dati."

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quatenus existit,tum quatenus tale existit".(168) The cause is a principle of becoming if it contains the "rationem actualitatis".(169) The cause is thus not a principle of being, the latter which Wolff defines,"quod in se continet rationem possibilitatis alterius".(170) Only the "causa proxima" as an efficient sufficient cause is capable of adding the last determination. The "causae remotae" are not capable of doing this.(171) The former develops from a "ratio externa" to the "ratio actualitatis";that is to say,it becomes the "principium fiendi".(172) It becomes the principle of becoming because the completing cause is followed necessarily by the existence of the effect.(173)

Quoniam posita actione causae efficientis sufficientis effectus ponitur (par.898),atque adeo hoc ipso effectus existere incipit,quod causa agit;causa efficiens sufficiens effectui impertitur existentiam,consequenter effectum producit.(174)

It is thus the "causa proxima" which brings with it the "complementum possibilitatis" for the things in this world. Besides the possibility of being,Wolff,in paragraph 173 of his Ontologia,writes that something else is required in order that a thing exists;"hinc existentiam definitio per complementum possibilitatis".(175)

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- (168) Ontologia,par.881.
 - (169) Ibidem,par.874.
 - (170) Ibidem,par.874.
 - (171) Ibidem,par.900.
 - (172) Ibidem,par.874.
 - (173) Ibidem,pars.883;898.
 - (174) Ibidem,par.899.
 - (175) Ibidem,par.174.

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In the Metaphysik, it seemed that Wolff defined the "complementum possibilitatis" in a much broader way, namely in the sense that everything that did not belong to the non-contradictory possibility would constitute the "complementum"; that is to say, the entire exterior possibility and not only the last determination which is brought with the "causa proxima". (176) Also Baumgarten conceives the entire complex of affectations as "complementum" whereby we have to indicate that for Baumgarten also the attributes belong to the affectations, not only the modes. (177) Wolff's division in essences, attributes and modes, is given differently by Baumgarten, namely as essences and affectations, whereby the attributes and the modes belong to the latter.

However, since the exterior possibility receives its capacity to complete or to fulfil the existence only with the last determination which is the "causa proxima" - in the scholastic tradition the "actus ultimus" - it does not matter much whether one considers the entire exterior possibility or only the last condition which fulfils the exterior possibility as "complementum possibilitatis". The existence or completion in the sense of Wolff's definition however is given only with the last determination through the "causa efficiens sufficiens".

(176) Metaphysik, I, par. 13.

(177) A. BAUMGARTEN, Metaphysica, par. 48 seq..

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Anneliese Michaelis describes the process of the existential fulfilment according to Wolff the following way:

With the last determination by the "causa proxima" the sufficient "ratio extrinseca" is given. The latter is primarily only the "complementum" of the modes. However, in fulfilling the possibility of the modes, it, namely the "causa proxima", becomes, because of the necessity of the modes for the complete determination of the being and its existence, at the same time also the "complementum" of the "ens" as such. It adds to the essence the existence. Thus the existence of the whole depends upon it. Even though the modes are unessential to the essence, they are essential for the existence, since they decide about it. The existence of the essential depends upon the completion of the unessential. (178)

With the completion of the modes the essence receives its existence from the outside. The existence is "conveniens" and thus contingent. The existence is then in itself a mode of the essence and appears in this world as a limitation of the essential.

The definition of existence as a mode has its difficulty. Kant saw this clearly, but Wolff perceived it, at the most, with some confusion. If we understand the mode as a moment of the structure - as Wolff seems to understand it at times - then the existence would be a mode with content; that is to say, the existential mode would add something to the thing and thus would be equal to all other modes. Against this structural conception Kant directs his critique that existence is not a determination which adds a content as do the other

(178) Anneliese MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum Possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff, p.54-55.

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modes. But one can retain the classification of existence as a mode, if one does not consider it as belonging to the structure but, rather, to the sphere of modality. The term "modus" is ambiguous and permits this distinction, which we have already used above. (179) This distinction is brought in focus by Kant when he says:

The categories of the modality have the peculiarity that, in determining an object, they do not in the least enlarge the concept to which they are attached as predicates. (180)

The propositions of modality are not, in Kant's language, objectively synthetic since the predicates of possibility, reality and necessity do not add anything to the content of the concept in regards to its object, but they express only the relation to the capacity of knowing them. (181) But for Kant there is no real answer either to the question, what then is the existence of a thing? He speaks about the position of the thing in order to avoid saying that existence is something that belongs to the thing in the sense of an addition. Also, his other answer, that to exist means the same as being contained in the context of the entire experience is not really satisfactory. (182) Kant, as we have pointed out, did not see

(179) Cfr. p. 112 of this thesis.

(180) Immanuel KANT, Critique of pure reason, transl. by N.K. Smith, London, Macmillan, 2nd print., reprint 1961, A 219, B 266.

(181) Ibidem, A 219, B 266.

(182) Cfr. Julius BERGMANN, Wolffs Lehre vom complementum possibilitatis, p. 469-470.

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the more or less implicit distinction by Wolff, but contended that only Baumgarten defined the existence as a form of the complete determination. (183)

But then, too, in the works of Wolff, existence is not only understood as a mode which adds something, but existence is also the totality of the completed modes of the exterior possibility which corresponds with the definition of Baumgarten. It is without a doubt the merit of Anneliese Michaelis' excellent doctoral thesis to have not only pointed out this intention, but also to have argued it so very well. She writes;

that the implicit intentions of Wolff lead in their expression to the idea, that existence is a mode of its own right which is given with the complete determination of the structural modes. (184)

In order to emphasize this, she proposes to introduce the term "Gestaltqualität", through which is expressed the unilateral relation of dependence of existence upon the structure of the thing as a whole (Gestalt), in order to distinguish the particular mode of existence from the other modes and determinations of being. (185) The modality would then be distinguished from the structure and yet related to it. (186)

After a careful study of the texts by Wolff, this distinction seems to us significative and hence the critique on

(183) Julius BERBMANN, Wolffs Lehre vom complementum possibilitatis, pp. 469 and 470.

(184) Anneliese MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff, pp. 54-55.

(185) Probably in connection with Ch. von Ehrenfels.

(186) A. MICHAELIS, op. cit., p. 55n.

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Wolff by Kant and J. Bergmann not correct. With this, we do not say, as we have pointed out a few times, that Wolff explicitly so formulated it, but rather that the context of the texts, which are for themselves ambiguous, permits us to read them in the way of an implicitly possible interpretation.

We can now, on the basis of this distinction between structure and modality, inquire into the problematic of the "complementum possibilitatis" from the viewpoint of the relation between the essence of the compound thing and the modality. (187) The essence of the compound consists in the manner of the composition of its parts. (188) It is precisely the order of the parts which constitutes the whole, of which the parts, as Baumgarten writes, "compartes". (189) The complete order is, however, only given when all parts are together which belong to this order. Until then the somehow isolated parts possess only a possibility. The last determination completes the order of the whole. This last determination comes from the "causa proxima" which perfects the order in forming the "ens totum". As a completely determined thing the essence enters into existence. Also here the "causa proxima" brings the completion with it.

We must now question where the "causa proxima" re-

(187) We follow here the thesis of Anneliese Michaelis.

(188) *Ontologia*, par. 531.

(189) A, G, BAUMGARTEN, *Metaphysica*, par. 155.

ceives its capacity to play this important role; that is to say, in regards to the existence of the only prior possible. This cause stays in a relationship to other causes, since it is itself a contingent being and has thus a cause outside itself from which it depends in its own existence. This new cause is again caused and so forth. We have thus a chain of causes as contingent beings, each of which is cause and being caused at the same time. The concept of causality which Wolff receives from the scholastics (190) is the unity of the temporal succession of beings. Upon it is built the interconnection of the real in this world.

This causal connection is not simple but multiple. Many causes act upon one thing and so become linked together. Wolff calls these causes "concausae". (191) Many things are given through these mutually linked causal chains: "Dantur in mundo adspectabili res plures simultaneae." (192) These simultaneous things coexist; that is to say, they do not exist in a parallel way but are interrelated and influence each other.

Sane corpus nostrum a cibo ac potu, quo fruimur, ab aere, quem ducimus, a calore, quo fovemur, ita pendet, ut aliquo eorum sublato corpus amplius subsistere nequeat. (193)

The interrelation and interconnection of all finite things in simultaneous and successive moments constitutes the

(190) Ontologia, par. 884.

(191) Ibidem, par. 885.

(192) Cosmologia, par. 57.

(193) Ibidem, par. 53.

world as such.

Series entium finitorum tam simultaneorum, quam successivorum inter se connexorum dicitur mundus.(194)

We have already indicated the importance of the concept of order for the compound thing as well as for the world as such. The things are all related to each other in such a way that each contains the reason for the existence of the other: "in mundo res omnes a se invicem dependent quoad existentiam." (195) The dependency of the things presents itself as a system of relations between the things which Wolff explains in the chapter "De dependentia rerum earumque relatione" of the Ontologia. Only that which has an immediated resp, mediated relation to the entire interconnected reality will become real. The immediate relation is the relation to its immediate cause, namely the "causa proxima", which mediates the thing with the entire reality. In its inner possibility alone, the thing remains, as we have seen, outside of the interconnected reality. It is the exterior possibility which orders the thing within the nexus of the real. Thereby Wolff defines the relation as this,

quod rei absolute non convenit, sed tum demum intelligitur, quando ad alterum refertur, id dicitur relatio.(196)

He specifies that the relation does not add any reality to the thing, but consists solely in a dependency.(197)

(194) Cosmologia, par.48.

(195) Ibidem, par.58.

(196) Ontologia, par.856.

(197) Ibidem, par.857.

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The thing rests in the inner possibility as not mediated in itself, away from all temporality and development. Only the real and efficient cause moves the inner possible via the modes into the dynamic and changeable, therefore temporary reality.

Si quid intrinsece possibile fuerit et in serie rerum, ex qua constat mundus, habet causam efficientem sufficientem, id necessario actum consequitur. (198)

That which makes the "causa efficiens sufficiens" to the last determination of existence is thus the whole causal relationship. No cause is for itself; each is in itself caused. The more remote causes are only mediated. The last cause alone which is the closest is immediate, namely the "causa proxima". If this one is sufficient, then the possible becomes real. This is the meaning of the principle of sufficient reason, that all that is, has a sufficient reason as to why it is and only from this reason can we understand the thing (being) in its ontic possibility.

The sufficient reason in the strict sense, however, is only given when one arrives at the end of all causes. Since all being in this world as finite and contingent is caused, the end of all causes, resp. the first of all causes, cannot be within this world, but must be outside of it.

Contingentia in mundo non habent rationem sufficientem actualitatis suae in serie successivorum, sed in ente

(198) Cosmologia, par. 98.

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alio extra seriem istam constituto, eoque necessario. (199)

With this idea Wolff commences his Theologia naturalis which concludes from here to the existence of a necessary being. (200) Only this absolutely necessary being does not need any other being for its existence. It does not need the completion of its possibility through an exterior cause. (201) God alone exists through his possibility: "hoc est privilegium entis a se, quod ideo existat, quia possibile." (202) In God we find the end of all causes and reasons. The "complementum possibilitatis" finds its goal in God as the last absolute reason and cause of all. Within the realm of the ontic, innerworldly we cannot find, according to Wolff, the sufficient reason for the "complementum possibilitatis" of the things of this world. The process of the completion of the possibility can only be described, but not explained.

The "complementum possibilitatis" leads out of the unlimited into the limited, out of the infinite into the finite. The possibility fulfils itself as existence in the limitation. (203)

(199) Cosmologia, par. 90.

(200) Theologia naturalis, par. 24.

(201) Ibidem, par. 25.

(202) Ibidem, par. 34.

(203) Anneliese MICHAELIS, Der ontologische Sinn des Complementum Possibilitatis bei Christian Wolff, p. 59.

CONCLUSION

Two problems of Wolff's metaphysical thought we have tried to clarify in this thesis: 1. Is Wolff's ontology a theory of principles of knowledge only or is it also a theory of being; that is to say, is it an epistemology alone or is it ontology in the strict sense, namely a doctrine of being as such. 2. What is the role of existence as "complementum possibilitatis" in this ontology.

Both questions we have tried to answer on the basis of Wolff's two fundamental principles: the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason.

Since the validity of the principle of contradiction as a principle of being was not really questioned in the texts of Wolff we had to show that the ambiguity of Wolff's definition in which this principle at the first glance seemed to be of an epistemological character only resulted from his basic rationalist position according to which almost all possible beings are either known or knowable within the future. In other words, the epistemological order is based upon the order of reality. Wolff follows thus the ontological tradition.

More complicated it was to demonstrate the significance of the principle of sufficient reason within the framework of Wolff's ontological thought. Since the principle of contradiction was defined as an absolute principle, the prin-

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ciple of sufficient reason was defined as a relative principle, relative namely to the created things in regards to their dependency upon the first of all causes.

This principle - we have shown - is of the utmost importance to the problem of existence, insofar as the latter is the completion of the possibility. Existence, as such, is not a concept of ontology for Wolff. It is considered only insofar as it completes the possible in this world. In this sense Wolff's Ontologia is firstly a theory of the principles of being and knowledge within the Aristotelian meaning of "first philosophy". But it does not remain there. As we have seen, in the subsequent sections of the Ontologia Wolff develops that which is traditionally known as the ontological problematic on the basis of these two principles, namely a theory of being, of causes, of determination, of the finite and the infinite, etc.. However, it remains on the most universal basis in refusing to make the absolute as God its central theme against the Aristotelian identification of first philosophy with natural theology. For this reason the Ontologia as such cannot answer the question of existence.

But then too, the Ontologia is not the whole of Wolff's transcendental philosophy. It was precisely Wolff who made the now well accepted distinction between ontology and cosmology, rational psychology and natural theology which together form his metaphysical thought as resumed or, more correctly, anti-

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icipated in his German Metaphysik. The ontology is "daseins-frei" not because existence is not a metaphysical problem but because it is a problem which cannot be solved within the framework of the Ontologia, but instead transcends its problematic towards natural theology, even though also there the last answer cannot be found. In this sense one can say that Wolff's Ontologia is essentialist and even deterministic. Yet, one should not confound the ontological essentialism with a metaphysical one. Wolff's rationalism has been decried, but mostly on the basis of an insufficient knowledge of Wolff's works and especially of his German works.

We hope to have contributed to the clarification of the complexity of Christian Wolff's thought, who himself was perhaps not a very original thinker, but nonetheless the father of German thoroughness.

APPENDIX A

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INDEX CAPITUM CONSPECTUM
TOTIUS OPERIS EXHIBENS.

Philosophiae primae prolegomena I.

PARS I. DE NOTIONE ENTIS IN GENERE, et proprietatibus, quae
inde consequuntur.

Sectio I. De principiis philosophiae primae.

Caput 1. De principio contradictionis,

Caput 2. De principio rationis sufficientis,

Sectio II. De essentia et existentia entis, agnatisque nonnul-
lis notionibus.

Caput 1. De possibili et impossibili,

Caput 2. De determinato et indeterminato,

Caput 3. De notione entis,

Sectio III. De generalibus entis affectionibus.

Caput 1. De identitate et similitudine,

Caput 2. De ente singulari et universali,

Caput 3. De necessario et contingente,

Caput 4. De quantitate et agnatis notionibus,

Caput 5. De qualitate et agnatis notionibus,

Caput 6. De ordine, veritate et perfectione,

PARS II. DE SPECIEBUS ENTIIUM et eorum ad se invicem respectu.

Sectio I. De ente composito.

Caput 1. De essentia entis compositi,

Caput 2. De extensione, continuitate, spatio et tempore,

Caput 3. De qualitatibus et magnitudine entis compositi,

Caput 4. De motu,

Sectio II. De ente simplici.

Caput 1. De differentia entis simplicis et compositi,

Caput 2. De modificationibus rerum, praesertim simplicium,

Caput 3. De finito et infinito,

Sectio III. De respectu entium ad se invicem.

Caput 1. De dependentia rerum earumque relatione,

Caput 2. De causis,

Caput 3. De signo.

APPENDIX B

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SCHEMA OF THE WOLFFIAN SYSTEM

HISTORIA (Knowledge of facts)

MATHEMATICA (Knowledge of the quantity of facts)

PHILOSOPHIA (Knowledge of the reasons of the facts)

1. METAPHYSICA

- ONTOLOGIA (De ente in genere)
- PNEUMATICA (De spiritibus)
 - PSYCHOLOGIA (De anima humana)
 - PSYCHOLOGIA EMPIRICA
 - PSYCHOLOGIA RATIONALIS
- THEOLOGIA NATURALIS (De Deo)
- PHYSICA (De corporibus)
 - PHYSICA GENERALIS
 - PHYSICA EXPERIMENTALIS
 - PHYSICA SPECIALIS
 - COSMOLOGIA
 - TELEOLOGIA

2. LOGICA (Scientia dirigendi facultatem cognoscitivam)

3. PHILOSOPHIA PRACTICA (Scientia dirigendi fac. appetitivam)

- ETHICA (Homo in statu naturali)
- POLITICA (Homo in statu societatis civilis)

ONTOLOGIA, par.70 (Principium rationis sufficientis probatur).

Text:

Nihil est sine ratione sufficiente, cur potius sit, quam non sit, hoc est, si aliquid esse ponitur, ponendum etiam est aliquid, unde intelligitur, cur idem potius sit, quam non sit. Aut enim nihil est sine ratione sufficiente, cur potius sit, quam non sit; aut aliquid esse potest absque ratione sufficiente, cur sit potius, quam non sit (par.53). Ponamus esse A sine ratione sufficiente, cur potius sit, quam non sit. Ergo nihil ponendum est, unde intelligitur, cur A sit (par.56). Admittitur adeo A esse, propterea quod nihil esse sumitur; quod cum sit absurdum (par. 69), absque ratione sufficiente nihil est, seu, si quid esse ponitur, admittendum etiam est aliquid, unde intelligitur, cur sit.

E.gr. Ponamus lapidem, qui erat frigidus, factum fuisse calidum: aut igitur datur aliqua ratio, per quam intelligi potest, cur lapis nunc potius sit calidus, quam frigidus, aut nulla datur. Si nulla datur istiusmodi ratio, nihil ponitur in lapide, nec extra eundem, ad quem ortus caloris referri potest. Utique igitur admittitur, lapidem, qui erat frigidus factum fuisse calidum, cum nihil esset nec in lapide, nec extra lapidem, a quo calor proficisci potuit. Quoniam tamen calor coepit, qui ante non erat, cum etiam nihil in lapide, aut extra lapidem esset, unde oriri potisset; ut appareat, cur nunc calor fuerit subortus, qui antea non oriebatur, admittendum erit, aut nihilum in lapide abiisse in calorem, aut nihilum extra lapidem eundem produxisse, hoc est, affirmare debet lapidem esse calidum, propterea quod vel nihil fuit in lapide, vel extra lapidem, a quo proficisci potuit. Quis vero non ultro largietur, haec esse absurda, atque ideo affirmabit, dari aliquid vel in lapide, vel extra lapidem, unde calor iste ortum suum duxit? ...

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Vladimir Berens

The Ontology of Ch. Wolff

ABSTRACTUM

Christian Wolff distinguished in his Nachricht von seinen eignen Schriften between ontology and metaphysics. The former is the fundamental science (Grundwissenschaft) and the latter the principal science (Hauptwissenschaft). Ontology is thus doctrine of the fundamental principles of our knowledge - a knowledge which is based upon the reality of being. The ontology is thus "daseinfrei"; that is to say, existence as such is not a problem of ontology in the Wolffian sense but only insofar as it completes the possible as an unessential determination and insofar as existence belongs to the realm of the principle of sufficient reason.

Therefore we have defined first ontology and then we have shown its structure. The next step was to explain Wolff's theory of principles of which Wolff recognizes two fundamental ones: the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason. The principle of sufficient reason is the more problematic one. In discussing first the extension of the principles we pointed out that, in spite of the ambiguities of the texts, these principles are for Wolff not only principles of knowledge but also of being. The principle of sufficient reason - first proposed by Leibniz but really developed only by Wolff - is based upon the distinction between "ratio" and "causa" (Grund - Ursache). (the "causa" does not give the reason why something is.) The theory of this principle is

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perhaps Wolff's most important achievement. Even though the interest in this principle had almost died by the end of the last century it remained an important underlying principle of modern culture as Martin Heidegger once more had pointed out. (M.Heidegger,Der Satz vom Grunde).

The third chapter of our thesis inquires into Wolff's central concept of the possible and its relation to existence. We tried to establish that existence as the completion of the possible in this world transcends the intention of the ontology in leading into the metaphysical realm of natural theology. There too, that is to say, in God who is presupposed, we find the foundation of the principle of sufficient reason which is linked to the issue of existence.

We have thus finally argued that even though existence is as an unessential determination a mode, it is not a mode which adds something to the essence as all other modes do. For this reason we distinguished between modal and structural viewpoints, recognizing that this distinction is not explicitly given in Wolff's texts. Thus we interpreted existence as a mode "sui generis", namely as a "Gestaltsqualität" and consequently not subject to Kant's criticism.

CORRICENDA

- p.30 - 3rd last line instead "conent" read "content".
- p.43 - 3rd last and last line instead "contradiction" read "tautology".
- p.59 - 1st line read "they" instead of "there".
- p.81 - last line read "once" not "ones".
- p.114 - note 158 should read pars.47,73 and not "47,43".