

Kant's Appropriation of Wolffian Faculty Psychology

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This article argues that Kant was engaged in an ongoing critical appropriation of Wolffian faculty psychology throughout his career. It provides an overview of Wolffian faculty psychology, emphasizing the distinction between rational psychology and empirical psychology; the relationship between the soul's power of representation and the cognitive faculties; and the criteria Wolff uses to distinguish sensibility and the understanding. It also tracks Kant's appropriation of Wolffian faculty psychology through his published writings and the transcripts of his lectures from the 1760s and 1770s. Although he modifies and transforms many of the central doctrines of Wolff's faculty psychology during the pre-critical period, the article concludes that many of the positions Kant defends in the Critique of Pure Reason are still indebted to Wolffian faculty psychology.

Keywords: Immanuel Kant, Christian Wolff, Empirical Psychology, Rational Psychology, Metaphysics.

1. Introduction

Christian Wolff first articulated the principles of his faculty psychology in his *German Metaphysics (Rational Thoughts Concerning God, the World, and the Human Soul, and also All Things in General, 1720)*, though he reformulated and expanded upon them in later works like the *Empirical Psychology (1732)* and *Rational Psychology (1734)*. Immanuel Kant rarely cites these works directly, but he would have been familiar with their contents through Baumgarten, Meier, and other works that he read and used in his teaching. In what follows, I will argue that Kant was engaged in an ongoing critical appropriation of Wolff's faculty psychology throughout his career. Although he modifies and transforms many of the central doctrines of Wolff's faculty psychology during the pre-critical period, the conceptions of sensibility, understanding, reason, and the soul that Kant employs in the *Critique of Pure Reason (1781/1787)* are still indebted to Wolffian faculty psychology.

To explain the nature of this debt, and Kant's appropriation of Wolffian faculty psychology, I will begin with an overview of Wolffian faculty psychology, emphasizing Wolff's accounts of the