*Early Modern German Philosophy (1690-1750): A Reader* (edited and translated by Corey W. Dyck)

*I: Rationale and Project Aims*

In recent years there has been something of a rejuvenation of scholarly interest in the philosophical figures and debates of the 17th and early 18th centuries. Indeed, influential studies in the last decade have challenged familiar accounts of the development of the thought in this period and shown, for instance, that it is time to re-evaluate, or even discard, the staid distinction between rationalism and empiricism (as in Della Rocca’s work on Spinoza and the PSR, and in Anstey’s work on Locke and experimental method), that theological commitments play a role in the thought of the philosophers of this time that cannot be discounted (as in Jolley’s recent *Locke’s Touchy Subjects* [Oxford 2015], and Antognazza’s *Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography* [Cambridge 2011]), and that the influence of radical theorists cannot be discounted in the broader history of the Enlightenment (as in Israel’s ground-breaking studies and the literature they have generated). In addition, scholars have come to appreciate the important contributions on the part of minor and marginalized figures to the development and reception of the views of those philosophers with a more secure place in the historical canon (as in Thiel’s *The Early Modern Subject* [Oxford 2011], and Strawson’s *Locke on Personal Identity* [Princeton 2011]). The result is an enriched, and in some cases, revised understanding of perhaps the most active period in the history of philosophy.

Amid this rejuvenation of serious historical interest in the 17th and 18th centuries, one intellectual context is noticeably absent. The thinkers of the German-speaking nations from roughly 1690-1750 are widely overlooked or quickly dismissed as, for instance, merely dogmatic Leibnizians or as philosophical lightweights blinded by their own particular theological agenda, with the result that the secondary literature on this period focuses almost exclusively on the British and French (or even Dutch) contexts to the general exclusion of the German. With *Early Modern German Philosophy: A Reader* (*EMGP*), however, I aim to redress this scholarly oversight and show that the German thinkers of this period engage with the broader European debates, albeit in a rather distinctive way, and moreover that the figures of this period are philosophically interesting in their own right, in addition to being key for understanding later philosophical developments (and particularly in Germany). Indeed, the texts translated in *EMGP* are intended to document how German theorists deserve a place within the broader European context on precisely the themes already mentioned, namely, how figures like Christian August Crusius and Georg Friedrich Meier offered significant challenges to, and subtle refinements of, that philosophical rationalism championed by Leibniz; how theological and philosophical concerns productively and presciently inform one another in the Pietist opposition to Wolffianism; and how radical Spinozist and materialist thought was received and reacted to in the distinctive German context.

*EMGP* will thus make available to an English-language audience the key texts and debates in Germany in the first half of the 18th century, in most cases for the first time. There is no other volume currently available in English (or German for that matter) that offers such a focused or comprehensive presentation of the texts of this period. The translations contained in *EMGP* will range from texts by the most important figures of the period, including Thomasius, Wolff, Crusius, and Meier, as well as texts by consequential but less familiar thinkers like Theodor Ludwig Lau, Friedrich Wilhelm Stosch, and Joachim Lange. The topics covered in *EMGP* will range across a number of areas of theoretical philosophy, including metaphysics (the pre-established harmony, the immortality of the soul, the case for and against materialism), epistemology (the principle of sufficient reason, the limits of reason with respect to matters of faith), and logic (the role of prejudices in cognition and the doctrine of truth).

*II: Content of the Work*

a. Table of Contents

Introduction (approx. 6000 words)

1. Thomasius and Wolff on Logic, Truth, and Prejudice (approx. 8000 words)

i) Christian Thomasius, *Introduction to Logic* [*Einleitung zur Vernnunftlehre*,1691] (selections)

ii) Christian Wolff, *German Logic* [*Deutsche Logik*, 1713] (selections)

2. The Controversy between Wolff and the Pietists (approx. 13000 words)

i) Christian Wolff, *German Metaphysics* [*Deutsche Metaphysik*, 1720] (selections)

ii) Christian Wolff, *Remarks on the German Metaphysics* [*Anmerckungen zur Deutschen Metaphysik*, 1724] (selections)

iii) Joachim Lange, *A Modest and Detailed Disclosure* [*Bescheidene und Ausführliche*

*Entdeckung*, 1724] (selection)

3. Radical Philosophy in Early German Thought (approx. 21000 words)

i) Friedrich Wilhelm Stosch, *The Concord of Reason and Faith* [*Concordia rationis et fidei*, 1692] (selections)

ii) Theodor Ludwig Lau, *Philosophical Meditations concerning God, the World, and the Human Being* [*Meditationes Philosophicae de Deo, Mundo, Homine* 1717] (complete)

iii) Christian Wolff, *Natural Theology* [*Theologia naturalis* pt. 2, 1741] (selections)

4. The Principle of Sufficient Reason (approx. 25000 words)

i) Christian August Crusius, *Philosophical Dissertation on the Use and Limits of the Principle of Determining Reason, commonly called Sufficient* [*Dissertatio philosophica de usu et limitibus principii rationis determinantis vulgo sufficientis*, 1743] (complete)

5. Enlightenment and the Limits of Reason (approx. 30000 words)

i) Georg Friedrich Meier, *Thoughts on the State of the Soul after Death* [*Gedancken von den Zustande der Seele nach dem Tode*, 1746] (largely complete)

Bibliography and Index (approx. 2000 words)

b. Description of Contents and Rationale for Inclusion

Thomasius, *Introduction to Logic* (approx. 4000 words)

Christian Thomasius (1655-1728) was, alongside with Christian Wolff, one of the most important figures of the early German Enlightenment. Son of the eclectic philosopher Jakob Thomasius (who was one of Leibniz’s teachers), and active as a jurist in Leipzig, Thomasius became one of the founding faculty of the Friedrichs-Universität of Halle, where he also produced a large body of philosophical writings including works on logic, ethics, and metaphysics. The *Introduction to Logic* is a path-breaking work, not only because it was the first textbook to appear in German (which had not yet been established as an academic language), but also for its influential account of truth, error, and prejudice. The selections translated from the *Introduction* will include the Preface and selections from Chapter I (on prejudice), selections from Chapter III, V, and VI (on the cognitive faculties and truth), and Chapter XIII (on errors and their source). No portion of this text has previously been translated into English.

Wolff, *German Logic* (approx. 4000 words)

The *German Logic* of Christian Wolff (1679-1754) was, like Thomasius’ *Einleitung*, an influential German textbook; moreover, it was Wolff’s first publication on a philosophical topic. The *German Logic* offers a number of points of contrast with the text of his colleague in, for instance, its scientific character and aim, and in its efforts to synthesize rationalist (i.e., Leibnizian) and empiricistic (i.e., Lockean) epistemologies. The translation will include selections from the Preliminary Report (on historical and philosophical cognition), Chapter 1 (on concepts), Chapter 3 and 4 (on judgments and inferences), Chapters 5 and 7 (on science and experience), and Chapter 16 (on the blending of the understanding and sensibility in cognition). There is an existing English translation of the *German Logic*, though it is rather antiquated, dating to 1770, and not suitable for the needs of contemporary scholarship.

Wolff, *German Metaphysics* and *Remarks on the German Metaphysics* (approx. 8000 words)

Wolff’s *German Metaphysics* was his most influential textbook, going through many editions in his lifetime, and it was the metaphysical system elaborated therein that first attracted the ire of his Pietist colleagues. Wolff published a series of responses to the charges of Spinozism, materialism, idealism, and necessitarianism levelled by his opponents, the most important of which is the *Remarks*, which seeks to elaborate on and defend key claims from the original text. Translations from both of these volumes will focus on Wolff’s account of the principle of sufficient reason and its derivation from the principle of contradiction, the fundamentals of Wolff’s ontology, the presentation and defense of the pre-established harmony, and his discussion of the soul’s immortality (where Wolff’s position on each of these topics are taken up by some other author represented in this collection).

Lange, *A Modest and Detailed Disclosure* (approx. 5000 words)

In addition to being the birthplace of the German Enlightenment, the Friedrichs-Universität of Halle was also the home of the primary opposition to the Enlightenment in the first half of the 18th century, namely, the Pietists, a group of theologians who ran the famous orphanage that trained a generation of Prussian academics and administrators. The Pietists launched a campaign against Wolff, with Joachim Lange (1670-1744) charged with the task of refuting the Wolffian philosophy, which resulted in Wolff’s exile from Halle in 1723. Of Lange’s many polemical texts, the *Modest and Detailed Disclosure* is perhaps the most accessible and philosophically interesting, with the introductory Protheory containing a capsule summary of the Pietists’ case against Wolff, which includes a critical discussion of the principle of sufficient reason, the pre-established harmony, the nature of the soul, and Wolff’s account of God’s nature. My translation will provide the first English translation of this section.

Stosch, *The Concord of Reason and Faith* (approx. 3000 words)

The recent surge of scholarly interest in radical thought in the 17th and 18th centuries has drawn attention to a number of important figures in the early German context, the first of which is Friedrich Wilhelm Stosch (1648-1704). The publication of the *Concord*, which defends a Spinozistic account of substance and a materialist understanding of the soul, sparked a high-profile hearing to investigate the charge of atheism (where Pufendorf and Spener, among others, served on the committee). Selections from Stosch’s *Concord* have been partially translated into German (in Stiehler’s volume of 1966), and this will be the only English translation. Selections will include Chapters 1-5 (on metaphysics and ethics), and the Appendix on the soul.

Lau, *Philosophical Meditations concerning God, the World, and the Human Being* (approx. 8000 words)

*The Meditations* by Theodor Ludwig Lau (1670-1740) is, along with Stosch’s text, an important contribution to early German radical thought. Lau’s *Meditations*, which was widely known despite many copies being burned, is an important document in the reception of Spinoza’s philosophy in Germany but also important for its criticisms of established religion and plea for toleration. There have been two translations of Lau’s *Meditations* into German (one from the late 18th century, the other in 1966), but this is the first English translation and is a complete translation of the Latin text.

Wolff, *Natural Theology* (approx. 10000 words)

Wolff’s attempted refutation of Spinozism in volume 2, §§671-722 of the *Theologia naturalis* will serve as a companion piece to the Spinozistic texts of Stosch and Lau. Wolff’s discussion of the *Ethics* was highly influential, not only as a response to the Pietist charge but also later in the *Pantheismusstreit* (Mendelssohn makes liberal use of it in his late refutation of Spinoza). This translation, the first of this (or any) portion of text into English, is not a translation of the original Latin (though it is informed by it), but rather follows a German translation of this text published in Wolff’s lifetime, along with the first translation of Spinoza’s *Ethics* into German, by the Wolffian Johann Lorenz Schmid in 1744.

Crusius, *Philosophical Dissertation on the Use and Limits of the Principle of Determining Reason* (approx. 25000 words)

Christian August Crusius (1715-75) was a thinker in the Thomasian tradition with Pietistic sympathies, the most philosophically astute critic of Wolffianism, and a very important early influence on Immanuel Kant. Crusius’ *Dissertation* amounts to the most detailed treatment of the principle of sufficient reason in the period (in any language), as Crusius sets out to distinguish various current and historical forms of this principle and consider their validity and distinguish their domains of applicability. The *Dissertation* was a very influential work, and a translation of the original Latin into German was published with Crusius’ approval in 1744. My English translation will be the first, and it will be a complete translation of the text (with the exception of some lengthy footnotes).

Meier, *Thoughts on the State of the Soul after Death* (approx. 30000 words)

Georg Friedrich Meier (1718-1777) is best known as a student of Alexander Baumgarten and author of the logic textbook Kant used in his lectures on the topic, but he was a highly original thinker in his own right. While recent scholarship has focused on his contributions to logic, his metaphysics and discussion of the soul’s immortality, are perhaps his most innovative as he argues against rational certainty of our knowledge of the soul’s immortality after death but upholds the belief in immortality as an important ground of morality (an important anticipation of Kant). Meier’s *Thoughts* have not been previously translated into English, and this translation will include much of the 2nd edition of the German text published in 1749 (the main exception being the last section which is a discussion of a little-known contemporary’s defense of the certainty of immortality).