

**Recepcja poglądów Chrystiana Wolffa w środowiskach katolickich
polskiego Oświecenia**

**The reception of Christian Wolff's views in the Catholic milieus
of the Polish Enlightenment**

SUMMARY

The views of Christian Wolff spread in the academic gymnasia of Toruń (Thorn) and Gdańsk (Danzig) already at the beginning of the 18th century; this was a natural environment for the reception of his views, because the teachers there were connected with Protestant universities in Germany. It is much more interesting to see how Wolff's views were adopted and adapted by the Catholic milieus of the Polish Enlightenment. How can we account for the interest shown by those milieus in a philosophical-scientific system that had originated in Protestant Germany? What were the limits for accepting his views in Poland? These questions are all the more relevant in that, paradoxically, Wolff's views were disseminated by Catholic priests of various rank, both at the universities of Cracow and Vilna as well as in monastic colleges.

Philosophia recentiorum, which began to reach Poland at the beginning of the 18th century, was meant to serve as a weapon against the hegemony of scholasticism, that is, as long as it did not undermine the dogmas of the Catholic faith. This proviso accounts to a large extent for the unpopularity of Cartesianism, regarded as a *gradus ad atheismum*, as well as for the particular popularity of Wolff's views. For, although of a Protestant origin, the system allowed for compromise, it was eclectic, its tenets were systematic and hence lent themselves to school instruction, and it also tended to have practical use; all of this made it acceptable in Catholic Poland. The rationalism of the "master of Halle" was more guarded than the modern rationalism of other European countries, while the interpretation of the principle of sufficient reason was of a finalist nature. Thus, Wolff's views did not conflict with Catholic doctrine and that is, among other things, why they were more readily accepted in Poland than other systems of *philosophia recentiorum*. Wolff's works were all the more attractive for the fact that Wolff presented his views in a "mathematical way".

The article is based almost exclusively on source materials, including: Wolff's correspondence with count E.Ch. Manteuffel and with A.S. Załuski, and fragments of his autobiography; the correspondence between Mitzier de Kolof and J.Ch. Gottsched; the information contained in D. Janocki's *Lexicon derer itzlebenden Gelehrten in Polen*; and information deriving from the journals and university records of those times.

These materials show that Wolff's mathematics and physics textbooks were first introduced into Poland by the Theatines, who used them in their colleges. In fact, it was the Theatine monk, A.M. Portalupi, tutor of the future king Stanislaw August Poniatowski, who was the one that "philosophiam Wolffianam inter primos in Polonia docuit".

As for the Piarist colleges, Wolff's views reached those during the educational reforms of S. Konarski. In *Ordinationes visitationis Apostolicae...* the works of Wolff are recommended as obligatory reading; this concerns his works on philosophy and ethics, as well as his

mathematics and physics textbooks. Wolff's treatises on the law of nature and law of nations are recommended as obligatory reading alongside the works of H. Grotius and S. Puffendorf.

Also the Jesuits showed themselves to be well acquainted with Wolff's works as early as the 1740s; they were particularly keen on his *Elementa Matheseos universae*. Wolff's views reached the Vilna University through the mediation of J. Stepling, professor of the Charles University in Prague, a Wolffianist, who was the teacher of a group of young Polish Jesuits such as J. Bohomolec, M. Poczobut, T. Siekierski, or T. Żebrowski. Attempts to introduce lectures based on the "system of the master of Halle" at the ultra-Catholic University of Cracow were connected with the comprehensive reforms of Bishop A.S. Załuski. However, there is no confirmation for the alleged attempts to bring Wolff himself to Cracow. What is true is that a scholar that A.S. Załuski sent to Halle to study directly under Wolff, M. Świątkowski, lectured on mathematics according to Wolff's system in the academic year 1749/1750.

The vivid interest with which Wolff's ideas were received in Catholic schools and universities is an argument against one-sided and frequently unfair assessments of the early Enlightenment period in Poland.

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