

THE RATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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The *Rational Psychology* represents, in one sense, the culmination of the first period of Swedenborg's philosophical labors. This work had been projected at the beginning of the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* as the final treatise in that series. In it Swedenborg hoped to bring to final form and conclusion the efforts he had made in the whole *Economy* series. It is in the *Rational Psychology*, therefore, that we find the first formulation of the philosopher's early efforts to attain to a knowledge of the soul.

By the time of the writing of the *Rational Psychology*, Swedenborg had in some measure formulated the basic philosophical doctrines which he felt were necessary to the attainment of the knowledge that he sought. The doctrines of degrees and of the microcosm were suggested in vague form even in the *Principia*. As his early work progressed, Swedenborg saw other relationships which brought him to formulate, at least in his own mind, the doctrines of series and society, of correspondence, of use, of forms, of influx, and of the Grand Man. With the aid of these he had arrived at the concept of the intercourse between the soul and the body which we see presented in the work, *Rational Psychology*.

What Swedenborg presented in this work was in general organized according to the doctrine of forms as it had been explicitly put forth in the work, *The Fibre*. Briefly stated, the *Rational Psychology* concept of the relation between soul and body is as follows :

The soul and body are connected by a series of functions based in a series of organics which are related according to the doctrine of forms.

The soul, which is of the spiritual form and is entirely above nature, having only analogues of material qualities, receives life from the Divine form, or God, who is the origin of all forms. This soul possesses a pure intelligence by which it is enabled to perceive spiritual truths from God. The soul, then, is not educated as to the truths, but perceives them by its own power. This soul possesses two qualities, one of which is pervertible, and the other unpervertible. Thus the soul can be changed as to its state, that is, may become good or evil, and thus may be formed by the rational mind

of man. However, as to its pure intelligence, and as to its power to govern its animal kingdom or body, it is and must be unpervertible, whether the soul is good or evil.

Below this soul in the series of degrees is the *pure intellectory* or simple cortex, which is organized according to the celestial form, the inmost form of the natural world and the form of the universe. This pure intellectory, by virtue of powers derived from the spiritual soul which is the source of law governing in the body, has the *pure intellect*. This pure intellect is able without education to perceive the prime natural truths necessary to the building and sustaining of the natural body of man. This pure intellect is also the source of the animus, as we shall see, and from the pure intellectories or simple corticals proceed simple fibres which are the all in all of the fibres which weave the body under the direction of the vital essence produced by this simple cortex.

Below the pure intellectory is the *internal sensory* or *cortical gland* which is of the vortical form. This gland is composed of simple corticals and simple fibres. From this gland proceed fibres of the next degree or medullary fibres—i.e., nerve fibrillas, which carry the animal spirit or purer blood produced in the cortical gland. To this gland belong imagination and memory, which arise from changes of state induced by the sensations received from the body.

Below this degree is the brain as a whole, the external or common sensory, which is of the spiral form. The brain is made up of cortical glands and their proceeding medullary fibres. From the brain proceed nerve paths or nerves formed by a gathering together and projection of the medullary fibres into the body. There are two kinds of nerves—sensory nerves and motor nerves. The brain is the sphere of sensations; which have meaning and conscious value because of the operation of the *pure intellect*. It is the pure intellect which produces the animus, i.e., the life of these sensations of the external or common sensory.

Between this animus and the pure intellect arises the rational mind or the mixed intellect, which is the man himself as to thought and acquired character. In this sphere man has thought and freedom, and thus may turn the rational to favor either the lower animus or the higher pure intellect. The direction of this choice modifies the form of the soul so as to determine whether it will be good or evil.

Below the brain or common sensory is the body, the structures of which are in general of the circular form. This body is built of nerve fibers, which proceed from the brain to supervise its creation and preservation, and blood vessels from heart and lungs. The body is the sense organ of the mind of man. From it arise the impulses which become sensations in the brain by virtue of the animus, which, as said, derives its power from the pure intellect. Thus there is an unbroken connection through organics and their functions between the body and the soul.

Having come this far, Swedenborg realized that he was no nearer to a true concept of the real nature of the soul. And so he determined to begin his study of the animal kingdom anew. This time he wished to study all of the organs and provinces of the body, using the doctrines of philosophy as his guides. So he began work on the *Animal Kingdom* series, entering into a far more detailed study of the work than he had before. This work was to culminate in a true knowledge of the soul given by the Lord Himself, a knowledge which Swedenborg the philosopher never envisioned until his introduction into the spiritual world; an introduction that was not intended merely to satisfy his philosophical curiosity, but to enable him to serve as the Lord's servant in the giving of a new revelation.

Toward the end of his philosophical labors, Swedenborg came, in the works *The Senses* and *The Worship and Love of God*, to adjust his earlier concepts of the degrees and functions of the natural atmospheres.

In the *Principia* and in the *Economy* series he had had a concept of four natural atmospheres. The first was an inmost and universal element, bringing light from the stars, and determining the order of the universe, and being the form of the inmost or spirituous fluid of man. The second element formed a solar vortex, determining the limits of the solar system, having an organic function as the aura of magnetism. The third element, he thought, formed a wide terrestrial vortex, serving as the medium of light and giving the form of man's purer blood. The fourth element formed the lesser terrestrial vortex of the air, the medium of sound, and was of the same form as the red blood of man.

It is to be noted that nothing of the organic functions of the atmospheres had been suggested in the *Principia*. There, only the

degrees of the natural world were treated of. It was in the *Economy* that the organic correlation was given.

This concept of the atmospheres was changed in *The Senses and Worship and Love of God* to a three degree system of atmospheres, still maintaining a relationship to the organic functions of man.

In these works Swedenborg developed somewhat further his concept of the spiritual as something above nature, though no major changes occurred. The "conatus" of the *Principia* now had a mediating spiritual function and a spiritual form.

The series of atmospheres, as revised, was as follows:

Swedenborg still had a "celestial" aura which was universal, and the form of which was the very form of the starry heavens. This was the aura of universal gravity and the form of man's inmost essence.

The second aura was the ether, the medium of both light and magnetism in the solar system. Exhalations carried by this ether served as fixatives for the purer blood or "animal spirit" of man.

The third aura was the air surrounding the earth, capable of modifying light and heat, and serving as the medium of sound. The air is, of course, associated with the red blood.

In general, Swedenborg retained this concept of the form of the natural atmospheres even after his illumination.

There was more development of the idea of the soul of man, however, after his illumination. The doctrines of degrees, correspondence, use, forms, influx, the microcosm, and the Grand Man, were maintained in the Theological Writings and indeed were clarified by Swedenborg's experiences in the spiritual world. Thus they became means of presenting Divine truth in rational form in the revelator's mind; means to the seeing of the true nature of the soul as God now gave him to see it.

Swedenborg's ideas of the soul were now to become more distinct and detailed as he was instructed that both the soul receptive of the influx of life from God as the inmost formative force in the creation of man, and the human mind in which man's conscious life truly resides, were spiritual entities entirely above the sphere of natural forces. Thus the surviving or immortal soul of man came to include degrees which Swedenborg had previously thought might perish, either at death or sometime thereafter, before man entered heaven.