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THE SPIRITUAL AND THE NATURAL

A Study in the Philosophy of the Writings

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ARISTOTELIAN LOGIC REQUIRED BY THE WRITINGS

Today we are living in a world in which the fundamental axioms of Aristotelian philosophy are being challenged. The question as to the existence of a basic *substance* behind the properties and phenomena of things is of slight interest to the scientist. Substance—he claims—cannot be demonstrated scientifically and seems to dissolve under his eyes into mere patterns of force or quantities of energy.

Yet the essentials of Aristotle's logic and ontology are either explicit or implicit in all that the Writings teach. Constantly we are reminded in them that God is Substance, that the soul and the spiritual world are substantial, that the natural world has its existence as a substance described as "matter." And it is shown that there can be no form without a substance, no effect without a cause, no properties and no predicates without a subject.

Since all research yields only a further knowledge of the properties and gives no sight of the thing-in-itself, the existence of matter as a substance cannot be concluded *unless* we accept the proposition that the properties discovered prove the real existence of a substance which is their subject—a substance which is defined by those properties.

In the New Church—in our educative efforts and our doctrinal teaching—we are confronted with the choice of taking our position firmly on the principal premises of classic logic—or of yielding to the currents of modern skeptical sophism and reducing Swedenborg's Writings to the level of a moral philosophy of no other

than emotional and speculative appeal. For without the premise of the Aristotelian categories, Swedenborg's appeal becomes non-rational and most of his close-knit reasonings lose their meaning. If the rational mind has no intuition to recognize logical order in its thought, it is of course impossible to address a revelation to it.

The attempt to define "the spiritual" and "the natural" must be made, if at all, on the basis of the concept that nothing partakes of reality unless it has substance. This at once distinguishes New Church philosophy as a form of Realism, or as opposed to Idealism or Phenomenalism or Temporalism.

THAT THE DIVINE IS THE ONLY SUBSTANCE DOES NOT
PRECLUDE DERIVED SUBSTANCES

Our first problem comes when we read that the Divine love and wisdom, or "the Divine," is Substance-*in-se* or the only substance from which all things created are.¹ God is substance because He is *Esse*. For unless *esse* be substance and form it would be only an *ens rationis*. Substance means a subsisting entity. And God-Man, all things of Whom are infinite, is the only, the very, and the first substance and form.²

If so, it might seem that there is nothing else than God. We seem to be faced by a pantheistic concept.³ But immediately the teaching goes on to say: "Angels and men are substances and forms created and organized for receiving the Divine flowing into them through heaven. . . ." And unless an idea be formed of God as the first substance and of His form as the Human itself, idle fancies would arise, such as that men were formed by a chance conflux of the elements, or that the world originated from points forming geometrical lines of which nothing can be predicated and which are therefore nothing in themselves.⁴

Thus it is *because* God is the only *esse-in-se*, the only substance-*in-se*, that other things can exist by "creation." The Writings speak of two such created substances—the spiritual and the natural. Being infinite, the Divine substance is not limited by substances derived by creation; created substances cannot interfere or conflict with the Divine, nor can they confine it. Their *esse* is derived, not original, yet their limitation or finition is not a finition of the Divine; creation does not imply that the Divine substance has lost anything of itself in creating. Yet speaking in appearances,

¹ DLW 198, 197, TCR 20.—² TCR 20.—³ DLW 283.—⁴ TCR 20.

the convenient expression is used in the Doctrine, that God "made His infinity finite."⁵

The cutting of the Gordian knot which entangles our thought when this is confronted with the creative act through which the Lord "first made His infinity finite by substances emitted from Himself,"⁶ is done by the introduction of the idea of discrete degrees of existences and substances and by the abstraction of the thought from the notions of time and space.⁷ That which is created in God by God is not continuous from Him, but receives life by contiguity.⁸ Created things have in their *esse* nothing Divine, no *esse-in-se*.⁹ They are only like a mirror in which a man appears while yet there is nothing of man in it.¹⁰ They are like a sphere derived from a man but from which the life of the man has been withdrawn.¹¹

FINITE OR PRODUCED SUBSTANCES ARE NOT A MERE IDEA OF BEING

In thus countering the notion of Pantheism, the Writings class both spiritual and natural things as "outside" the Divine—as devoid of "life-*in-se*," or as receptacles of life. The "first of creation" or the "first of finition" is said to be in the spiritual Sun, which is His proximate compass.¹² The Sun of heaven is also called "not the Lord, but a proceeding from His Divine love and Divine wisdom." But it is explained that it was *produced* as a medium of the Divine proceeding.¹³ Using the terms in a strict sense, it is elsewhere shown that the finite cannot proceed from the Infinite, although the finite can be produced or created by the Infinite.¹⁴ Yet the Infinite constantly proceeds "through the finite." And without the implied presence of finite mediations we can have no idea of any "proceeding" of the Divine.¹⁵ But it is a confusing error to identify these media—the spiritual and the natural atmospheres—with "the Divine proceeding."

The doctrine that things created and finite do not have any *esse-in-se*, in no way denies that they are *something*.¹⁶ Idealists are called "visionaries" because they regard "created things, especially man and the love and wisdom in him" as "merely an idea of being."¹⁷ We are also assured that it is proper to predicate

^{5, 6} TCR 33.—⁷ DLW 283.—⁸ DLW 52.—⁹ DLW 55, 56.—¹⁰ DLW 56, 59.—¹¹ DLW 55, 291-294.—¹² TCR 29:3, 33, DLW 152, DP 6.—¹³ DLW 152, 291.—¹⁴ DP 219.—¹⁵ AE 726:4.—¹⁶ DP 46, DLW 53.—¹⁷ DP 46, AC 4623.

esse, substance, form, life, and even love and wisdom, of things created and finite.¹⁸ But in this sense life, wisdom, love, *esse*, mean *receptivity* of the life which is God's alone. Man's life is not life. It is not a part of the life of God. It is reception.¹⁹ And it is the same with all created and finite things—in man or out of him, spiritual or natural. Finite "life" is only a state—a finite, limited measure of reception.

SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE IS NON-SPATIAL, BUT
SPIRITUALLY EXTENDED

What has been cited so far holds true of all created things, thus of all finite substances, both spiritual and natural. And when we seek to learn *how* spiritual and natural things are to be regarded *inter se*, we find that the distinctions become more and more succinct and definite in the later Writings. The spiritual Sun is shown to be the one and only source-substance of creation from which all else is derived. This substance is "not in space," yet is the all-in-all both of the derived "substantiates" and—at length—of "material things."²⁰ Nor can the extension of space be predicated of spiritual things which are the derivations of the spiritual Sun.²¹ The expanse around the Sun of the angelic heavens is therefore not an extense, whatever the appearance.²² The spiritual world is not confined within the natural, but inflows into it and is thus present "with the living subjects therein according to reception, and the reception is according to forms and states."²³ The spiritual has nothing in common with space.²⁴ Thus the soul or spirit which is created of finite things, namely, from "spiritual substances which are in the spiritual world," has not extension but only impletion.²⁵ Spiritual light does not advance through spaces.²⁶ In short, space and time "do not exist in the spiritual world as things proper to it."²⁷ Yet spaces and times "make finite" each and all things which are in both worlds: for in the spiritual world also there are spaces and times, not actually but apparently, so that one thing might be distinguished from another.²⁸ This is done by appearances of space such as the mental space in which our thoughts take form.²⁹ But

¹⁸ DLW 53.—¹⁹ AC 3938.—²⁰ DP 6, DLW 300.—²¹ Infl. 5.—²² TCR 35:11, 475:2, Wis. xii. 3:2, 5 Mem. 17.—²³ TCR 35.—²⁴ TCR 103.—²⁵ CL 220:2, 315:6, TCR 470 and Index II of lost work on Marriage, *s.v.* Influx.—²⁶ CLJ 14e.—²⁷ AE 1212:5, AC 4043, 5253.—²⁸ TCR 29.—²⁹ Cf SD. *min.*, 4609, SD 3605.

this appearance with spirits does not give rise to a notion of space, but to a notion of states.³⁰

Lest we should believe that this absence of space is not predicated of substance but that it merely refers to the notion of space, it is said: "The soul is a spiritual substance which has not extension but impletion, and from which there is no taking away of a part, but a production of the whole without any loss of it. Hence it is that this substance is just as fully in the least receptacles (which are the seeds) as in its greatest receptacle which is the body."³¹ This could not be said of any natural substance—or of any of the *Principia* finites! It could be said of affection and of thought; but here it is predicated of a definite substance. And we are further informed: "Substances in the spiritual world appear to be material, but are not, and because they are not material they are not constant."³² The spiritual creations about the angels disappear when their affections change; "and the same would have been true of the angels if they had been created there," that is, created directly into the spiritual world. Those who think that the inmost of nature is God and "that all beyond it is merely ideal . . . will wonder how anything can possibly exist where there is no time or space; and [how it could be] that the Divine itself is without them and that spiritual beings are not in them but only in appearances of them. . . ." ³³ But this doubt comes from being wedded to the idea that the only substance must be material and spatial.³⁴

Substance does not mean material stuff, nor even forms of motion or quantities of energy. Substance means "that of which something can be predicated," thus a *subject* for certain attributes and properties.³⁵ This is the reason why it is said that God is a substance. Certainly He is not "matter," but is the Subject of which infinite love and wisdom can alone be predicated. And such as is the subject, such are the predicates.³⁶ How then can anyone question that a spiritual substance exists, the attributes of which are spaceless? The Writings caution us frequently to abstract the ideas of time and space; but never do they advocate that the idea of substance should be abstracted from spiritual things.

³⁰ HH 195e, DLW 70e, AC 3356, 3938.—³¹ CL 220:2, cf TCR 103.—³² Wis. viii. 3.—³³ AE 1220.—³⁴ Cf LJ post., 266.—³⁵ DLW 40-43, 209, CL 66.—³⁶ AC 103, SD 1603, CL 66, DP 4:2, DLW 73.

THE SPIRIT IS NON-MATERIAL, YET ORGANIC

The trouble has been that many of the learned, in speaking of man's spirit or mind, have been so afraid of making it material that they have stripped it of all attributes except pure "thought"—"thought without an adequate subject," indeed "without any other subject than the body in which it is."³⁷ Some felt that it had to be a "simple substance" devoid of organic form and without any extension, not even spiritual extension such as the Writings assign to it. Many denied that it was a substance at all, or that it could dwell in the body.³⁸ That the spirit was organized of affections and thoughts, goods and truths, knowledges, memories, etc., was not appreciated. Nor was it known that life in the physical body was intended for the spiritual organization of the mind. As to himself, Swedenborg confesses:

Before my sight was opened, the idea I cherished concerning the countless things that appear in the other life differed but little from that of others; that is to say, that in the other life there could be no light and such things as exist from light, together with the things of sense; a notion derived from the phantasy entertained by the learned respecting the immateriality which they predicate so strongly of spirits and of all things pertaining to their life; from which no other conception could be had than that because it was immaterial, it was either so obscure that no idea of it could be grasped, or that it was nothing; for immateriality involves such things. And yet the fact is just the reverse; for unless spirits were organic, and unless angels were organic substances, they could neither speak, nor see, nor think.³⁹

We recognize these fears in Swedenborg's earliest works; although in the *Rational Psychology* he begins to define the soul as "immaterial," devoid of motion or parts, but still having analogues of parts and motion, *i.e.*, something *corresponding* to the qualities of matter.⁴⁰ In the Writings it is continually taught that the spiritual is "non-material"—which we presume to mean the same thing.⁴¹

An interesting passage has been cited to support the idea that the spiritual is not a substance but merely the activity of a spatial finite of a higher order. It occurs in the *Spiritual Diary*, n. 2299, where a certain spirit is said to have conceived spiritual things as small white lines. This was a sign that they were conceived materially, when yet "they are not material, because they are forces from substances." Now, if they were imagined to be forces from material substances, or forces of nature apart from any

³⁷ AC 5222.—³⁸ AC 455.—³⁹ AC 1533; cf SD 4293, AC 3891.—⁴⁰ R. Psych. 498.—⁴¹ AC 7089:2, CL 207:5, AE 1218:3, LJ post. 323, Wis. viii. 6.

substance, such a concept would be materialistic. But what is said can be fairly interpreted to mean that spiritual things are forces arising from spiritual substances.⁴²

That the spiritual is organized, is quite clear from the Writings. And the doctrine is that in the *natural* mind spiritual substances are associated with natural substances, while the *spiritual* mind or degree consists only of spiritual substances.⁴³ The same teaching occurs in the work on *Influx*; the soul is there distinguished as a "higher" and the mind as a "lower" spiritual substance, while the body is said to be from the substances of nature.⁴⁴ And by the soul is there meant a receptacle of life.

The danger in denying a spiritual extension to spiritual things is simply that the spiritual is thus stripped of both subject and attributes; and it is only by attributes that we can know of anything of a substance. Spiritual dimensions are those of good, or truth, and of use.⁴⁵ Spiritual extension is necessary to express the relation of the states of the spirits.

A similar danger confronts us in regard to the Divine substance, or God-Man. Doctrine affirms that God has, not "parts," but "things" or powers which are to be called His hands, His face, His eyes, His breast, loins and abdomen; for "without these He would not be Man."⁴⁶ That they are infinite and thus not mutually exclusive, does not deny their existence, even if our natural minds have difficulty in grasping what they are. To limit truth to our natural capacity is of course not rational.

NATURAL SUBSTANCE CANNOT THINK

"Such as is the subject, such is the predicate."⁴⁷ To a Divine substance only infinite predications can be attributed. What then of *spiritual* substance? Of this we cannot predicate space or time or motion in space-time, nor quantitative energy, nor natural light or heat. If we do, we simply turn it into a physical substance in our thought. Hence, when the doctrine makes distinctions between the spiritual substances of the natural mind and its natural substances which serve that mind on earth and which afterwards "recede" to constitute a cutaneous covering for the spiritual body which is used in the other world, it is carefully pointed out that "from its spiritual substances comes thought, but

⁴² Cf. *Infl.* 11.—⁴³ DLW 257, 260, 270.—⁴⁴ *Infl.* 8, cf. 11.—⁴⁵ DLW 7, HH 197, 198, AC 9499.—⁴⁶ DLW 18.—⁴⁷ AC 103.

not from the natural substances.”⁴⁸ This is affirmed elsewhere. “It is not man’s body which thinks, but his spirit, thus not his natural, but his spiritual.”⁴⁹ “The material body does not live and think, but the spiritual substance in that body.”⁵⁰ In fact, even in the *Economy*, Swedenborg calls it a self-evident truth that “matter, or any part or extense of matter, cannot think nor feel”; and this he says to show that as to its substance, the spirituous fluid comes from the first aura of the world and “can by no means be said to live,” although the soul uses it as an instrumental cause.⁵¹

It is self-evident that a natural substance, however interior or however intense its motion, cannot give rise to thought, affection, sensation or consciousness. For life cannot be conceived as motion or any other predicate of matter or space-time substance. A substance is such as are its attributes. If there is thought and affection, there must be a substance which thinks and loves. What is that substance?

If we attempt to define spiritual substance merely as an influx—an operation of the Infinite in the inmosts of nature—we must pause and take care. For if it is the Divine operation that is the subject that thinks and wills, then man’s thought is simply God’s thought in him. So think the mystics. The opposite view supposes the material vessel to be the subject that is doing the thinking and loving—which surely matter cannot do! We must therefore look elsewhere for the solution.

CAN NATURAL SUBJECTS HAVE ‘SPIRITUAL’ ATTRIBUTES?

It might be objected that the attribute “spiritual” is often used to describe a material object, a man in the world. By regeneration a man becomes “spiritual” in both mind and behavior. But when this is said, the *True Christian Religion* explains, “it is not meant that he becomes spiritual as an angel is in himself; but that inwardly in his natural the spiritual is [present] as thought is in speech”⁵² so as to make the natural represent the spiritual. It is the order imposed upon natural substances and forms that so represents the spiritual, but this ordering does not make the natural to become spiritual as to substance.

When the Writings treat of the intercourse of soul and body—as in the work on *Influx*—they point out the futility of discussing

⁴⁸ DLW 257.—⁴⁹ DLW 8.—⁵⁰ CL 314:11.—⁵¹ 2 Econ. 232-234, 1 Econ. 635.—⁵² TCR 607.

such communication as long as the spiritual is altogether unknown, being thought of either as something ethereal or as a mere thought or as natural activity or as a passing influx of vitality.⁵³ "The spiritual is not bounded (*finitum*) and terminated as the natural is," *viz.*, by space; but should be thought of from quality not quantity.⁵⁴

We are therefore warned over and over again that it is wrong to think of spiritual things as of purer natural things.⁵⁵ "The natural can never by subtilization approach the spiritual so as to become it."⁵⁶ No matter how fast a spatial "finite" spins or how small it is, it will never become spiritual substance, or a subject of spiritual attributes, a subject the proper activity of which is not motion in space, but affection and thought.

WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL IN THE NATURAL?

The spiritual present in the natural can therefore *not* be conceived as a set of higher and more perfectly elastic spatial finites—like the first and second finites of the *Principia*—present "inside" the lower atmospheres and the lower finites. The answer to our question is instead given plainly in so many words:

That which from the spiritual world is present in natural things is called a force implanted from first creation; but it is a *conatus* (endeavor) on the cessation of which action or motion ceases. Hence the universal visible world is a theatre representative of the spiritual world. It is as with the motion of the muscles, from which action is: unless there were in this a *conatus* from man's thought and will, the action would cease in a moment; for according to the rules [accepted] in the learned world it is known that when *conatus* ceases, motion stops, and that all of the determination is in the *conatus*, and that in motion there exists nothing real except the *conatus*. It is evident that this force or *this conatus* in the action or the motion is *spiritual in the natural*; for to think and will is spiritual, and to act and be moved is natural. They who do not think beyond nature do not indeed grasp this, but still they cannot deny it.⁵⁷

The passage adds that the will and thought are only represented in the actions but are really in a quite different form.

If then the spiritual cannot manifest itself in the natural except as *conatus*—a thing which is indisputable—what is the spiritual regarded in itself? In itself, the spiritual is certainly manifested in a very different form and appears very complex and composite;

⁵³ AC 6053.—⁵⁴ SD 6069.—⁵⁵ Infl. 9, CL 326:3, DLW 350, TCR 695:3, AC 10099:4, etc.—⁵⁶ TCR 280:2.—⁵⁷ AC 5173.

indeed, as a spiritual world of many degrees and manifold creations, a world peopled by spirits and angels who are organic and real; yet it is without space. And note that Swedenborg lays down the rule that there is no motion without conatus, but there is conatus without motion.⁵⁸ The spiritual or the cause can exist without the effect, but never the effect without the cause.

DEGREES OF CONATUS. THE ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL

The Writings teach there are degrees and kinds of conatus.⁵⁹ There is of course the Divine will or the Divine love which implies infinite conatus. But conatus as we recognize it in nature is manifold—some an endeavor to produce vegetable uses, others animal and human forms of use. Conatus is thus an influx of various spiritual things: we call these “souls” if they are living. But a much mistranslated passage in the *Divine Love and Wisdom* says, “*Sed usque omnes illi conatus non sunt vivi, sunt enim conatus virium ultimarum vite . . .*”; which I would render, “But still not all these endeavors are living, for there are endeavors of the ultimate forces of life. . . .”⁶⁰ It is then shown that in ultimates, the atmospheres become such forces in which the non-living conatus holds earthly substances and matters in form, ready to serve to clothe life if and when this inflows.

From this it seems quite clear what it is that creates and forms the substances of the natural universe. The nature of matter is from a conatus to motion, the most ultimate form of conatus. For matter is simply a form of energy or motion—both according to Swedenborg’s *Principia* and according to modern theory.

All conatus is from the spiritual world, and indeed from the spiritual Sun which contains all the indefinite varieties of endeavors toward uses.⁶¹ The *Principia* aids us to see how the natural world could originate from *conatus to motion*—which is the generalized and ultimate effect of all the degrees of the spiritual world acting as a whole, acting as “the conatus of life’s ultimate forces.” How the prior spiritual world originated from the infinite Divine will, can be perceived to some extent from analogy or correspondence. The “primitives” of the spiritual Sun certainly *correspond* to the points of energy from which the natural world must have been composed; although to draw an *identity* between them would not only be confusing, but would be meaningless and—to my mind—materialistic. The creation of the spiritual

⁵⁸ Hier. Key 10.—⁵⁹ DLW 310.—⁶⁰ DLW 311.—⁶¹ DLW 155, 300, DP 6.

world gives the pattern for the creation of the natural. Hence we find that, from the spiritual Sun, there were formed, by a series of mediations of the original spiritual substance, three "atmospheres," each of which also had its termination in a "substance at rest" ⁶² which is now sensed by spirits as lands and waters. ⁶³

Everything natural must have a spiritual cause; and a cause is certainly "prior" to its effect even if it is not apparent until the effect is obtained. All the possible uses of creation were pre-existent in the various degrees of substance and atmosphere which descend from the Sun of heaven towards their spiritual ultimates. ⁶⁴ They contain the "image of creation"—for this image or pattern or spiritual form is not from nature at all, but is wholly spiritual. ⁶⁵

NATURE'S TWO ORIGINS

Nature is dead. Its substance is nonetheless formed by a conatus to motion and this conatus is the manifestation or expression or *existere* of the spiritual in its general drift and ultimate power. This conatus present in all matter is the ultimate spiritual from which nature has its origin. ⁶⁶ Within this spiritual ultimate, all spiritual degrees with their interior conatus lie concealed, even as in matter all degrees of natural substance are involved. But in its ultimate the spiritual is called "not living," for there it "retains no more of life than is sufficient to produce a semblance of being alive." ⁶⁷ This semblance to life which it produces is *motion*, which in elemental nature is seen as a neutral, mechanical and purposeless movement by which the units of matter form conglobations and masses and thus fall under statistical laws of predictable action. Nature is *produced* through the spiritual world; ⁶⁸ but the product is so deprived of spiritual attributes that it is said that the natural world "derives nothing whatsoever" from the spiritual. ⁶⁹

The spiritual (or the conatus) within matter is sufficient to maintain its form. As conatus, the spiritual is acting within the natural activities, i.e., within the radiant energy, or the heat and the light, of the world. ⁷⁰ Nature is dead. Yet "its essence from which it exists is the spiritual," and this may be called its "soul." ⁷¹ The heat and the light of nature are "entirely dead," as are the

⁶² DLW 302.—⁶³ AE 1210, DLW 177.—⁶⁴ AE 1210-1212.—⁶⁵ DLW 315, 344.—⁶⁶ Idea.—⁶⁷ AE 1212:2.—⁶⁸ Can. God, iv. 7, 10.—⁶⁹ DLW 83.—⁷⁰ CL 235:2, TCR 75, 44:2, AE 1206e.—⁷¹ AE 1206:2.

atmospheres which convey it and as are all the "forces" of nature.⁷² Yet the conatus from the spiritual is present within every least particle of matter,⁷³ and without it matter would collapse or cease to exist!⁷⁴

The sun of nature is pure elementary fire, "death itself," an atomic furnace of pure and total motion. Its fire is sometimes called "material."⁷⁵ It is that through which all nature derives its "secondary" origin. "Jehovah God, through the Sun in the midst of which He is, created the spiritual world, and through this, mediately, He created the natural world."⁷⁶ "All things in the spiritual world are from a spiritual origin only." But nature has a "secondary origin" which is additional, and this is from the sun of the world.⁷⁷ "The dead part added in nature to the spiritual does not make it real but diminishes its reality."⁷⁸

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD OF CAUSES

"Spaces and times were created together with the natural world" and are peculiar to that world.⁷⁹ Yet their two beginnings in God are Immensity and Eternity. For there is in God or with Him neither space nor time. Creation occurs by discrete steps and formations, and the qualities of the lower degree are not like those of their causes in the higher, but merely "correspond." We cannot say, because matter was formed from conatus or created by a concentration of spiritual primitives,⁸⁰ that therefore the spiritual must also be a spatial substance woven by patterns of energy in space! Logic would then compel us to think that because God created space and time there must be space and time in the Divine substance. No. The whole meaning of creation is the formation of something new, a new quality, a substance with new attributes which have no finite ratio with their source-substance, no comparison, but only a relation as between cause and effect; and no communication except by an influx according to correspondences.

The spiritual was created by a finition apart from space; a finition whereby the infinite Will of love—by a process of self-negation or limitation—was distinguished into well-defined *finite* uses really existent as substances and powers and spiritual forces even

⁷² DLW 158, 175, 353, AE 1209:4.—⁷³ AE 1207:3.—⁷⁴ Cf DLW 157.—⁷⁵ AE 1208:2.—⁷⁶ Can. God, iv. 7.—⁷⁷ Infl. 9, Wis. xii, 1, 2, 5:3, AE 1211e, 1219:3, 1218:2.—⁷⁸ AE 1218e.—⁷⁹ TCR 27.—⁸⁰ TCR 280:8, CL 320.

though as yet not made perceptible or effective. These are described as a spiritual Sun and a series of discrete substantial atmospheres each of which—having distinct limitations—suffered gradual concentration or condensation and became productive of more ultimate objectives or lower “uses.”⁸¹ Thus the “souls” of all possible forms of life, and the causes of all possible effects, were discretely present in spiritual fact. And all this was—in a time-less way—“prior” or prerequisite to natural creations.

The little treatise bearing the title *An Angelic Idea of Creation* and several other treatments of the process of creation⁸² present this idea of a prior spiritual world of causes for which no spaces or times are required, but from which nature took its origin. Before man existed, this spiritual world was indeed—as the *Principia* suggests—only a world of non-spatial but all-inclusive *conatus* emerging from infinity with the object of finding its eventual expression in creative *motion*. This spiritual world, complete but as yet undifferentiated, in its ultimates produced first of all the *conatus-to-motion* by which the energetic fires of the natural suns were kindled and the planets later formed. But the Writings show a way by which the *various* spiritual degrees can later inflow into the formative *conatus* within matter and thus produce corresponding forms of life.⁸³ Thus there inflow the “soul” of the plant-kingdom and the “souls” of animals, which are all from the lowest spiritual degree. Finally man was created with a soul from the highest spiritual degrees. And with him the real purpose of all the ranges of the spiritual world was opened for the human mind to explore, and the potentialities of the heavens became tangible and visible in the uses of human life and in the representative creations of the other world.

NECESSITY OF POSTULATING A SPIRITUAL SUBJECT

It is a question how far New Church students really differ in their perception of what the spiritual is. Surely every one must think of the character of a spirit as an organization of goods and truths, or of states of thought and affection, such as could never be described in terms of a physical mechanism or even a “limbus” of the purest things of nature! The spiritual world is simply the

⁸¹ DLW 302.—⁸² Notably TCR 33, 75, 76, *Canons*, God, iv, and the work on *Influx*.—⁸³ AE 1206e and series.

revelation of these states in their orientation to the Lord and in their perspective as received by men born in time. It is this *organic* world of spiritual things that the Writings speak of as a spiritual creation—a world of *spiritual substance* now made visible. It is a created world which is the subject of spiritual properties; and we cannot learn anything of its nature unless we first affirm its real existence as substance.

And note that it is not the Divine which thinks in us or exercises choice—for that choice is often an evil choice. Nor is our thinking done by the material body. If we deny that our soul is spiritual in essence and in substance, we go counter to the simple logic of the Writings.

SWEDENBORG SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION

The Sixty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Swedenborg Scientific Association will be held at Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, in the auditorium of Benade Hall at 8:00 P.M., Wednesday, May 16, 1962.

There will be reports and election of officers, after which Edward F. Allen will deliver the Annual Address, entitled:

Cause in Modern Science