

SWEDENBORG'S CONCEPT OF THE TRUE PHILOSOPHER

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PREFACE

The first thing said in chapter I of the *Principia*¹ is "If the mind [*animus*] be well connected with the organs of the senses, or in other words, if man be truly rational, he is perpetually aspiring after wisdom." The title of the chapter is "On the means which conduce to true philosophy, and on the true philosopher." True philosophy is described as follows:

By a true philosopher, we understand a man, who, by the means above treated of, is enabled to arrive at the real causes, and the knowledge of those things in the mechanical world which are invisible and remote from the senses; and who is afterwards capable of reasoning *a priori*, or from first principles or causes, concerning the world and its phenomena, both in physics, chemistry, metallurgy, and all other sciences or subjects which are under the empire of mechanical principles; and who can thus, as from a central point, take a survey of the whole mundane system, and of its mechanical and philosophical laws.

But it is a fact that Swedenborg is a Christian so that he knows and believes, as he wrote:

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¹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Principia*. Trans. by Augustus Clissold. (London: W. Newbery, 1846. Reprinted by the Swedenborg Scientific Association, 1976, 1988). All page references refer to this edition. It is of interest to note that the translator dedicated the first edition as follows: "To the Swedenborg Association instituted for the purpose of promoting the diffusion of all literature which may tend to the Christianization of science, and hence for the purpose of printing and publishing the philosophical and scientific works of Emanuel Swedenborg, the humble attempt at a translation of The Principia, is most respectfully inscribed by the translator." (Ed.)

No man seems to have been capable of arriving at true philosophy, since the age of the first of mortals who is said to have been in a state of the most perfect integrity, that is to say, who was formed and made according to all the art, image, and connexion of the world, before the existence of vice.

As a Christian Swedenborg compares man in integrity with man not in integrity, concluding:

The reason...why man in a state of integrity was made a complete philosopher, was, that he might the better know how to venerate the Deity—the Origin of all things,—that Being who is all in all. For without the utmost devotion to the Supreme Being, no one can be a complete and truly learned philosopher. True philosophy and contempt of the Deity are two opposites.

And so we pass to the last thing said:

It is therefore agreeable to reason to conclude, that there would have been no love in God towards man in his unconnected and discontinuous state, but only justice, had not the Infinite and Only Begotten for this cause been made man, that in Himself as a man, and consequently through a certain connexion with Himself, He might restore a connexion with the Infinite in those who are like Him.

When we have read chapter I of *Principia* and we have read this, the last thing said in the chapter, a question remains: who are “those who are like Him.”? There is an answer given by the Lord Himself. After the sermon on the mountain He addressed the multitude about things not to say when they pray. But He said,

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come as it is in heaven...

That is, it follows that they who pray as He taught are those who are like Him.

INTRODUCTION

In 1734 Swedenborg published a three volume series the first of which was his *Principia*. The first chapter is entitled "On the means which conduce to true philosophy, and the true philosopher." In order to introduce that chapter by offering some idea of its contents, I here give its first and last things said. By adding Bishop William Frederic Pendleton's descriptive headings of the first and last things said respectively at the beginnings of Chapters III and IV of his book *Science of Exposition*, some idea of the nature of chapter I of the *Principia* may be obtained. This is not only the first thing said in Swedenborg's entire philosophy, but is also a contribution to the history of philosophy in general. It is, in addition, seen in its distinctive use as a contribution to Swedenborg's being prepared to become revelator and the agent whereby the Lord made his Second coming. Concerning the first and last thing said, W.F. Pendleton said: "The first thing said reigns universally in what follows." And: "The end which is first appears in the close of the series or in the last thing said."

THE FIRST THING SAID IN CHAPTER I, *PRINCIPIA*: If the mind (*animus*) be well connected with the organs of the senses, or in other words, if man be truly rational, he is perpetually aspiring after wisdom.

THE LAST THING SAID IN CHAPTER I, *PRINCIPIA*: Man's having cause for fear implies justice in God. It is therefore agreeable to reason to conclude, that there would have been no love in God towards man in his unconnected and discontinuous state, but only justice, had not the Infinite and Only Begotten for this cause been made man, that in Himself as a man, and consequently through a certain connexion with Himself, He might restore a connexion with the Infinite in those who are like Him. [The reference here, of course, is to the First Advent].

It is the purpose of these remarks to state the first and last things in Chapter I of *Principia*, and to explain how Swedenborg was enabled to arrive at the last thing said in the chapter.

In order to accomplish that, a large part of these remarks is devoted to examination of the kind of Experience, Geometry and the Faculty of Reasoning that is required. As it turned out, the examinations of both experience and geometry are fairly straight forward. However, because Swedenborg was a Christian, the historical fact of the fall of man as told in the letter of the Word prevented the examinations of experience and geometry sufficiently so that he could become a true philosopher. And so, since the fall of man is described in the following manner,

No man seems to have been capable of arriving at true philosophy since the age of that first of mortals who are said to have been in a state of the most perfect integrity, that is to say, who were formed and made according to all the art, image and connexion of the world, before the existence of vice. (p. 34.)

it became necessary for him to devote the remainder of the chapter to an examination of the difference between integrity and not being in integrity. The final words of these remarks are devoted to how finally Swedenborg became able to become a true philosopher.

ANALYSIS

I. *Three different things are said in the Principia, Iron, and Copper, published as volumes I, II, and III in 1734.*

The first things said in volume I is:

If the mind (*animus*) be well connected with the organs of the senses, or in other words, if man be truly rational, he is perpetually aspiring after wisdom.

The first thing said in volume II which is on iron is:

I here present the benevolent reader with the first Part of my Mineral Kingdom in which Iron is the subject treated of; it being my intention to treat in the same way not only of the other metals, but also of the various salts and stones; and in fact to traverse the whole kingdom to which these belong. I am indeed aware of the magnitude of the undertaking, and that I am attempting to compass and make the chart of a mighty ocean, in a little bark, and with slight and tattered sails; so that I may justly fear lest, as the poet sings, "Gemeat sub pondere cymba Sutilis, et multam accipiat rimosa paludem." (Virgil, *Aeneid*. vi. 1. 413).

The first two sentences of volume III which is on copper are:

The vast abundance and varied store of substances and objects that exist in the bowels of the earth, and which are indeed so numerous that words are hardly plentiful enough to supply names for those already discovered, may well strike us with a feeling of wonder. The subterranean kingdom from the richness of its treasures, produces not only minerals, metals, stones, and earths, but as a general mother yields and renovates the seeds of the vegetable kingdom, and as a nurse supplies all kinds of plants and trees with their peculiar juices; and with the aid of the elemental world, performs the same offices for all the species of living creatures: in short, it labours with abundance, and still may produce an infinite variety of new subjects, provided the elements or the elemental world concur to the effect, and are able to bathe the planet in a new temperature, or to influence it by new conditions.

Let us take special note of the third case because Swedenborg expressed his "feeling of wonder" at the things that are in the earth. Pay attention! Both Socrates and Aristotle gave wonder as the source of people philosophizing. Plato reports Socrates saying: "The sense of wonder is the mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin" (Plato's *Theatetus*, 155d). Aristotle wrote:

For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize: they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about greater matters, e.g. about the phenomena of the moon and those of the sun and the stars, and about the genesis of the universe. (*Metaphysics* 982 b12)

And so the strong dedication to “my mineral kingdom” stated above in *Iron*, i.e. volume II, has stacked against it the “feeling of wonder” in volume III, *Copper*.

So for the next eight years the pursuit of philosophy controlled Swedenborg’s mind even as Socrates and Aristotle would have said. Since by comparing first things said in the three volumes Swedenborg published together, we discovered that, in spite of the fact that at the time he was Assessor of Mines in the College of Mines in Sweden, with an international reputation as an expert in processing raw ore, and an author of two books on minerals, in spite of all this, his main interest really became philosophy that is contrary to his conscious interest in the mineral kingdom.

II. *The first and last thing said in chapter I repeat in order to gain a feeling for the nature of the philosophical endeavor over the entire chapter.*

THE FIRST THING SAID. The first thing said reigns universally in what follows:

If the mind [*animus*] be well connected to the organs of the senses, or in other words, if man be truly rational, he is perpetually aspiring after wisdom. The soul is in the desire of being instructed by the senses, and of continually exercising its perception from them, as from a source distinct from itself; while the senses in their turn desire to exercise their perception from the soul, to which they present their several objects for contemplation. Thus each performs and contributes to the same common operation, and tends to one ultimate object, the wisdom of the man. For this

purpose there exists a continual connexion between the soul and the body; for this purpose also reason is added to the senses. And hence the desire after wisdom becomes the peculiar mark and characteristic of man: unless however he desires and attains to a knowledge which lies beyond or above his senses, he is far from being truly rational, nor is there a due connexion between the senses and the soul.

THE LAST THING SAID. The end which is first appears in the close of the series or in the last thing said.

But the contrary to all this must necessarily take place in a man not in a state of integrity and in whom the connexion above mentioned is disrupted. Such a man has not the wisdom, the veneration and adoration of the deity we have described: and as his knowledge of the Divine benefits and grace is also imperfect in proportion to his deficiency in wisdom, so neither can he have such love: In a word, he cannot have any such veneration, adoration, and love of the Deity, as was entertained by the first wise man, unless he receives them from another source, that is, immediately from grace. But whatever veneration, worship, and love, may exist in a man so changed, and in whom the connexion is broken by vices and cupidities, they can never be unaccompanied by fear, because he never can be without cause of fear. Neither can love be supposed to exist in God towards man, after the connexion is broken, but, instead of love, justice. Man's having cause for fear implies justice in God. It is therefore agreeable to reason to conclude, that there would have been no love in God towards man in his unconnected and discontinuous state, but only justice, had not the Infinite and Only Begotten for this cause been made man, that in Himself as a man, and consequently through a certain connexion with Himself, He might restore a connexion with the Infinite in those who are like Him.

Let us compare the first sentence of the first thing said in Chapter I, that is:

If the mind [*animus*] be well connected with the organs of the senses, or in other words, if man be truly rational, he is perpetually aspiring after wisdom.

with the last sentence of the chapter, which is:

It is therefore agreeable to reason to conclude, that there would have been no love in God towards man in his unconnected and discontinuous state, but only justice, had not the Infinite and Only Begotten for this cause been made man, that in Himself as a man, and consequently through a certain connexion with Himself, He might restore a connexion with the Infinite in those who are like Him.

As said, in order to discover how this occurs is the principal subject of this paper. On first thought it may not be proper as a subject for philosophy. However, even a casual acquaintance with the history of philosophy from the time at least as far back as Augustine or even to the time of Aquinas, theology, that is, the presence of God as a subject, is the rule. In the case of Swedenborg's philosophy the relation of philosophy and theology is the rule beginning on the first page of the *The Infinite The Final Cause of Creation*:

In order that we may be favoured and happy in our endeavours they must begin from the Infinite or God, without whom no understanding can attain a prosperous issue...Human Philosophy and its wisdom are for the most part anxious to be taken into company with theology.

III. *After rational psychology and rational philosophy by nature (but not yet by name) have been introduced, there is an "unless- however" by which that philosophy of those who desire knowledge that is beyond the senses is introduced.*

When philosophizing about some aspect of the nature of man, a comparison with animals can be useful. So here, for example:

Now there are no animals besides man who possess any knowledge beyond that of the mere senses, and of their organs disposed of in the *pia minix* of the brain.

Wherefore animals are put at a serious disadvantage as compared with man. However, it gives opportunity to begin with man.

But truly the wisdom of man cannot be said to differ from theirs, if we refer the subjects or operations of the world upon our senses, not to the soul and its reason, but to the same principle as they do. The sign that we are willing to be wise, is the desire to know the cause of things, and to investigate the secret and unknown operations of nature. It is for this purpose that each one consults the oracle of the rational mind, and thence awaits his answer; that is, he is eager to acquire a deeper wisdom than merely that which is proffered to him through the medium of the senses. But he who wishes to attain the end, must wish likewise to attain the means. Now the means which more especially conduce to a knowledge truly philosophical, are three in number—experience, geometry, and the faculty of reasoning. First then let us ascertain whether, and in what manner, we have the power, by these three means, to arrive at knowledge a priori, or to reach, in natural and physical inquiries, the farthest boundaries of human wisdom. (p. 2)

This probably is the best known statement from Chapter I. But, however, it leads to a blunder, because so often misread as final instead of being introductory to what follows.

IV. *And so in what follows I will let Swedenborg himself lead you in some selected passages to illustrate what he means by 1. Experience; 2. Geometry; 3. Faculty of reasoning.* (I. Experience, here from p. 8; 2. Geometry, from p. 14; 3. Reasoning, from p. 29.)

1. Experience may be defined to be the knowledge of everything in the world of nature, which is capable of being received

through the medium of the senses. This definition is calculated to embrace everything, whether in the elementary kingdom, or in metallurgy, chemistry, botany, anatomy, etc., in so far as we can ascertain the manner in which things may indeed be termed objects of the senses, and phenomena drawn from the great storehouse of natural things. (p.4)...We are indebted to experience therefore for all our knowledge, while experience itself is indebted to the senses, by means of which objects are subjected to ratiocination of the mind, and thus we are finally enabled to acquire wisdom. In proportion, therefore, as the supply of experience is the more abundant, and the better disposed and distributed throughout the organs; in proportion as the mediate organs are more exact in their harmony, and better adapted in their figure; and in proportion as a more elevated path is thrown open to the most subtle principles of things by series and continuity, in the same proportion man may become wise. But, after all, alas! what is our wisdom?—truly such as what is finite is to what is infinite; and in respect therefore to infinite wisdom, nothing. The reason for which we are to acquire knowledge by means of experience, and to investigate the nature of objects and set them in a distinct point of view, by subjecting them to the operation of the reasoning faculty, is, that we have an active and most subtle principle and soul, to which the subjects of our inquiry can be submitted; whereby we are enabled, through the comparison and series of many phenomena, to form a judgment respecting them; and, by considering their equations, similitudes, analogies, and analyses, to discover their causes by a course of geometrical and rational investigation. Man is distinguished from brutes by reason alone: in other respects we are mere animals and organized forms. Our senses are similar to those of brutes, and we have an interior gesture not unlike theirs: our sole distinction consists in that invisible or reasoning faculty, that more subtle active principle, to which we are enabled more inwardly to refer objects, and consequentially to perceive them with more distinctiveness (pp. 9-10)...He ought to have arranged the events and phenomena and transactions of former times so arranged, by means of his organs and the various

chambers of his memory, as to be able, on every occasion, to refer to such historical circumstances as are most similar and analogous to the case in hand; and these, and no others ought, as if spontaneously, to offer themselves to his reasoning powers. Nor is he even then wise, unless he has previously penetrated, by means of a rational philosophy, into the causes and principles of things; in order that he may afterwards be able to argue upon the present emergency from causes and principles, or from reason and a priori; and to form more certain conclusions by means of a connected chain of inferences; and, having his counsels derived from such a source, may be able, by the timely adoption of proper measures, to provide for the welfare of the state. Hence it follows, that he who retains all the natural experience of the world laid up in the storehouse of memory, is not on that account a philosopher, and capable of knowing the causes of things, and of reasoning a priori; for to do this, *he must know moreover how to digest all things analytically by means of geometry and rational philosophy*; [added emphasis] and must possess the faculty of reasoning philosophically, which consists in a certain situation and figure of the organs, as connected with the rational faculty, produced by continual cultivation and use. It is thus that a man may first become a philosopher, may be enabled to penetrate into the causes of things, and may afterwards from causes speak by means of experience. Hitherto we have treated of the first medium leading to philosophical wisdom, or the knowledge of the mechanic or organic world: we now proceed to the next. (p. 14)

V. Swedenborg now turns to examine geometry, and continues with his examination of rational philosophy.

2. The second medium leading to wisdom, by which the arcana of invisible nature may be unlocked or revealed, is geometry and rational philosophy; by means of which we are enabled to compare our experiments, to digest them analytically, to reduce them to laws, rules, and analogies, and thence to arrive at some more remote principle or fact which before was unknown. Mere

experience is incapable of unfolding anything, and of reducing it to its more simple parts; it cannot so arrange facts that bear a resemblance to each other, as to discover what was unknown by observing its similarity to things that are known; for this is the office of reason. But to retain a great abundance of observations in the memory, and afterwards to form conjectures or conclusions respecting things unknown from their similitudes and analogies to such as are known, and thus to ground our discourse upon a connected chain of experiments, is a method of attaining wisdom at once familiar and natural. (pp. 14-15)

The whole world itself, as consisting of the elements and of the mineral and vegetable kingdoms, is a pure system of mechanism; and so also is the animal kingdom, as to its anatomical organization. The science of mechanics itself with all its powers, geometry with all its figures and quantities, and philosophy with its comparative and proportional reasoning, sprang solely from the elementary world; they are the offspring of the elements of which they were conceived and born. (p. 15)

In these invisible and smallest elementary figures there is the same kind of mechanism as in the greatest; that it is the same in whales and the smallest insect, in an immense inhabited globe and a little revolving ball. If geometry be considered, it will be found to be always like itself. For if there be space, it is always accompanied by figure; if there be motion, figure too is always inseparable from it; if several spaces and figures be imagined, there will always be a ratio between those spaces and figures; there is the same ratio between the greatest numbers as between the smallest; as, for example, there is the same between 100,000,000,000,000 and 500,000,000,000,000 as there is between 000,000,000,000,01 and 000,000,000,000,05. The case is the same with the differences in the infinitesimal or differential calculus; that is, there is the same ratio between (dx) and (dy) as there is between the essential integers (x) and (y) , though (dx) and (dy) are differences nearly equal to nothing. Thus also in occult nature, or the smallest corpuscular

existences; there cannot be any other proportion between the smallest elementary particles, than what exists between the greatest bodies of the same figure, unless there be collateral considerations that cause dissimilitude. (p. 19)

Thus the mechanism of the world consists in contiguity, without which, neither the world nor its mechanisms could exist. Unless one particle were to operate both upon another and by means of another, or the whole mass were to operate by all its particles respectively, and at the same time at a distance, nothing elementary, capable of affecting or striking the least organ of sense, could exist. Contiguity is necessary to the production of every operation. Without a perpetual connexion between the end and the means, the very existence of elementary nature, and of the vegetable and animal natures thence originating, would be impossible. The connexion between ends and means forms the very life and essence of nature. For nothing can originate from some other thing; hence there must be a certain contiguity and connexion in the existence of natural things; that is, all things, in regard to their existence, must follow each other in successive order. With respect to the subject of contingencies, or modes and modifications, which exist both from ultimate and simple, and from intermediate substances, neither can these be otherwise than continuous and mutually connected, depending successively on each other from one end to the other. Thus must all things, both such as are essential and such as are contingent, necessarily have a connexion with their first substantial principle: for they proceed solely from simple or compound substances; and as these substances depend, for their existence, mutually upon each other, it follows that the modifications related to those substances must be dependent on the same connexion. We see then that there is contiguity in all things, and that nature produces them by means of the connexion, extending from one end to the other, both of substances and causes. Whatever is first produced by such a connexion must continue to subsist by the same means. We see in vegetables that there is a connexion between the root and the extremities, and

every part of the extremities: that there is connexion between the intermediate stem and the little twigs and leaves, by infinite filaments stretching from one shoot, branch, and stalk, into another, and thus affording secret passages for the continual reception of aliment. It is in such a contiguity that vegetation itself consists; and the life of the vegetable afterwards continues in the same contiguity and connexion: the part where it ceases no longer grows, but withers and dies, and drops useless from its stem. The case is the same in animals; parts cover the parts, and grow by contiguity. Both the nervous and membranous system is coherent and contiguous. There is no part in the whole animal to which the fibres, muscles, veins, and arteries do not extend; no fibre, which is not derived and ramified from some larger nerve; no nerve, which does not proceed from the medulla spinalis or oblongata and its teguments; and no vein, but what originates from that great one which flows immediately from the heart. (pp. 20-21)

In short, no reason can be assigned for any phenomenon, unless we admit the existence of contiguity or connexion; for no phenomenon can exist, except in something contiguous. The conclusion therefore is, that the mechanical world has its consistence in contiguity and connexion. That there is a continuity and connexion in the elements, appears also in men and animals, who are composed, and in a manner formed, according to that contiguity and connexion. In some, the connexion of things existing in the elements appears to be natural, for all the harmony in the elements conspires with the connexion of their organs, whence a corresponding harmony is felt in their organs without any assistance from rules: for the mechanism of the world to some men and animals is natural, or is familiar to them by nature, without any other instructor. Thus we find the hearing delighted by harmonious sounds and the concordant vibration of musical strings. Musical harmony has itself also its own rules, its own proper geometry: but this we have no need to learn in order to perceive the harmony; we have it in the ear itself and the organs of hearing, which are in harmonious coherence. By harmonious and accordant sounds

we are exhilarated, affected, dissolved away; but discordant sounds give us pain. (p. 23)

But though the world is constituted in a mechanical manner, there are innumerable things which are not mechanical, nor even geometrical; such as the Infinite, and whatsoever is in the Infinite...there are also many other things, the nature of which, though they originated from the Infinite, and began to exist together with the world, have not yet been discovered by any geometry or any reasoning philosophy. (p. 25)

We also see every emotion and mode of the soul performed mechanically in the body: still, after all, what that intelligence itself is which is in the soul, which knows and is able to determine, which knows and is able to choose, and to let one thing pass out into act and not another, we are obviously ignorant. (p. 26.)

We behold the spider construct her artful snare with diametrical lines and connecting circles, and then lying in the middle, she places her feet, as instantly to feel into what part of her web the prisoner has fallen. What marks of prudence excite our wonder in the fox! What artful frauds and cunning tricks does he practise! What wonders of a like nature are observable in innumerable other animals; and all flowing naturally from a grosser kind of soul. But what is the nature of this intelligence: in man it is more direct and rational: in the Infinite it is infinite, and infinitely surpasses the comprehension and sphere of the most rational intelligence. There are also other things which occur in the world that cannot be called geometrical. Thus there is a providence respecting all things, which is infinite in the Infinite, or in the Being who is provident in the highest degree; and there follows from hence a connexion or series of consequents, according to which all circumstances are determined and arranged, by causes and the causes of causes, toward a certain end. We see from experience, and *a posteriori*, that there is such a connexion of contingencies, from causes and their causates, in producing a

given end; but to know the nature of this connexion, *a priori*, is not within the province of man or of geometry. There are also innumerable other things which we in vain endeavor to explore by geometry and *a priori*; as perhaps, the nature of love. We see, *a posteriori*, that it has its consistence in the connexion of things; that it exists independently of the organic body; is antecedent to corporeal pleasure;...(p. 27)

But since intelligence in the soul is not mechanical, but only the mode in which the soul operates, we next enquire what that is in the soul which is not mechanical, and what its essential rational and intelligent principle which is not subject to known laws. The rational principle [*rationale*] in the soul does not consist in knowing many things which the world naturally exhibits and represents to the senses; for this knowledge refers itself to the world, the senses, and experience. The rational principle does not consist in knowing the figures and spaces in which motions terminate; for this is the province of geometrical science. The rational principle does not consist in knowing the proportion between figures and spaces, and the other rules and proportions of motion, by which the world acts and produces its phenomena; for this belongs to nature, mechanics, science, and philosophy. But the rational principle consists in knowing how, and at the same time being able, to arrange into such order and connexion the reasons or proportional facts known from the world, as to view their analogy: yet this presupposes an active principle, or a certain force, impelling into motion all those things which inhere as it were scientifically in its organs; that is, it presupposes a soul. The rational active principle derived from this, consists in knowing how, and in being able, actually to elicit from analogy a third or fourth truth previously unknown. A subsequent rational principle consists in being able to form a certain series and connexion of such reasons or proportional facts, consisting of things known and unknown in succession, till it distinctly arrives at the end it has in view: to accomplish which, all the sciences must cooperate with reason; as geometry, mechanics, rational philosophy, and abundant experi-

ence. The rational principle in the soul, therefore, is the continual analysis of those things which are scientifically as it were inherent in its organs.

These observations may suffice respecting the second means of arriving at a mechanical knowledge of the secret things of nature; we now come to treat of the third means, or of the faculty of reasoning.

3. The third means by which we may arrive at a true philosophy in cosmology, and at the knowledge of occult nature, is the faculty of reasoning... (pp. 28-29; emphasis added)

Now as we read that, at first it seems to come quite naturally as the third of three means to a true philosophy following examination of experience and geometry. But on a more careful reading it deserves to be regarded as introducing a new subject of special importance and so I write it as a subject heading:

VI. *The third means by which we may arrive at a true philosophy in cosmology, and at the knowledge of occult nature, is the faculty of reasoning.*

For by careful reading it can be known that it is not by the same kind of movement of the mind as for experience and geometry, so far, because it is not in order for the same kind of reasoning, that is, reasoning in general but reasoning explicitly with regard to special reasoning required for what Swedenborg will call "a philosophy in cosmology" which is intended for what he calls "my *Principia*," although at first he begins with the same intuition as before, that is, reasoning in general.

Let experience and geometry be given: that is, let a man possess the utmost store of experimental knowledge and be at the same time a complete geometer, and yet suppose him to be deficient in the faculty of just reasoning, or of comparing the several parts of his knowledge and experience, and representing them distinctly to the soul; he can never attain to the mysteries and inward recesses of philosophy. Knowledge without reason—a heap of many things in the memory without judgment to separate

and distinguish them, and without the talent of deducing the unknown object of inquiry from certain known data, by means of the rational or geometrical analysis,—in a word, the possession of the means without the faculty of arriving at the end. (p. 29)

And yet there arises a change in intentions from philosophy in general to a specific philosophy, that is, to what is called “the present volume of our *Principia*”!

Suppose, then, the means to be in our possession, and that we have acquired the power and faculty of reasoning, and have brought it into actual operation, we may arrive at true philosophy, or may be able to discourse and frame dissertations on the phenomena of nature from their genuine causes, by the aid of experiment: nay, we may arrive at the very fountain-head from which all things that appear mysterious are derived. With respect to the knowledge of the elements, [which one who has read the *Principia* by elements can recognize as finites, actives and elementaries], which is the chief subject of discussion in the present volume of our *Principia* Volume I, I confess that it appears to be of the most occult nature, being remote and imperceptible to the ken of the senses. (pp. 31-32)

That is, “a true philosophy in cosmology” has become “our principia.” For the terms just introduced, note on the title page of the *Principia*: NEW ATTEMPTS TOWARD A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLANATION OF THE ELEMENTARY WORLD. Also read the first paragraph of the preface of the *Principia*:

I am apprehensive lest, at the very outset of our philosophy, particularly in the first part, my readers should be deterred from proceeding further, when they meet with views which cannot but appear strange and foreign to those which are generally received; as also with such unusual phraseology as that of Finite, and Active, an Elementary, etc.; terms which are unknown in any of our philosophical treatises;... (xciii)

At any rate, the supposition introduced above continues for almost a full page leading to:

How far this may be affirmed of my *Principia*, it is for the reader to decide. (p. 32)

Note that when Swedenborg wrote the Preface to *Iron*, it was:

I here present the benevolent reader with the first part of my Mineral Kingdom...it being my intention to treat in the same way not only the other metals, but also of the various salts and stones.

But when he wrote the Preface to *Copper*, he was struck "with a feeling of wonder." But now when beginning "New Attempts Towards the Philosophical Explanation of the Elementary World," at first he said that it is "the chief subject of our discussion in the present volume of our *Principia*," and now that "this may be affirmed of my *Principia*, it is for the reader to decide." That is what began as a determined effort to treat of "my Mineral Kingdom"; now he is determined to treat "my *Principia*." Swedenborg now feels able to describe a true philosopher:

VII. *The nature of a true philosopher described.*

4. By a true philosopher, we understand a man, who, by the means above treated of, is enabled to arrive at the real causes, and the knowledge of those things in the mechanical world which are invisible and remote from the senses; and who is afterwards capable of reasoning a priori, or from first principles or causes, concerning the world and its phenomena, both in physics, chemistry, metallurgy, and all other sciences or subjects which are under the empire of mechanical principles; and who can thus, as from a central point, take a survey of the whole mundane system, and of its mechanical and philosophical laws.

One may recall that the first things said in chapter I of the *Principia*, namely, if the mind is to be well connected with the senses and "if man be

truly rational, he is perpetually aspiring after wisdom," when these two are more fully described there arises a problem!, that is,

unless however he [i.e. the same man] desires and attains to a knowledge which lies beyond or above his senses, he is far from being rational, nor is there a due connection between the senses and the soul.

And we see in the description of a true philosopher that such a man is enabled to arrive at the real causes, and the knowledge of those things in the mechanical world which are "invisible and remote from the senses."

Almost word for word this fits that part of philosophy that is described following "unless however" in the first thing said in chapter I of the *Principia*. In addition, it is known that the first philosophers in the time of Pythagoras, because of their love of wisdom, were called "philosophers," that is "lovers of wisdom." And further, each was a cosmologist. That is Thales who said all is water, Pythagoras that all is number, Heraclitus that all is motion (even fire) and Parmenides, who disagreed, said there could be no motion in consequence of an argument he proposed. Democritus gave the name atom to the things out of which all things are made—a kind of anticipation of what Rutherford and others early in our century call atoms: the smallest things they know. However, for our purpose the students of Thales gave the name Natural Philosophy to the study of cosmology. Hence those earliest philosophers had as their subject "philosophy in cosmology." So Swedenborg said that it was philosophy in cosmology which was the part of philosophy in which the desire was to know causes, that is, to know things beyond or above the senses. And so he wrote:

Natural philosophy may be compared to the spider herself. The spider chooses a situation which will permit her to fasten her threads to the various parts of surrounding objects: the radii which she draws she then makes to meet in a certain centre, and these she ties and connects together, at various distances, by circles and polygons; her design in which is, to render all parts of the sphere which she occupies contiguous to one another...Now

nature herself closely resembles this spider's web; for she consists, as it were, of infinite radii proceeding from a certain centre, and connected together, in like manner, by infinite circles and polygons; so that nothing can happen in one of them which does not immediately extend itself to the centre, from whence it is reflected and dispersed through a great portion of the fabric.

VIII. *Natural philosophy is called upon.*

So, to compare the above with natural philosophy:

Natural philosophy is capable of taking her station, with Nature herself, near this centre to which all natural things have reference, or in which all the motions or affections of all the circumambient parts are concentrated; she is capable of instantly knowing and feeling anything that occurs in the surrounding peripheries, what it is, and whence it comes; and is able to explain the reasons, to her companion Nature, why the phenomena occur successively, and by a certain necessity, at such a certain distance, in such a certain manner, and in no other. (p. 33)

But it seems that there is beginning a hesitation in Swedenborg's mind as he progresses:

Were it possible, by such means, first to bring to light elemental nature, afterwards the nature of the metallic kingdom, then that of the vegetable, and finally that of the animal, how great would be the advantages which the world would reap from the discovery! For if we knew *a priori* the causes of the things observable in these kingdoms and were able to dissert upon them, commencing from the same principles and causes from which nature herself brings forth and manifests her phenomena, every one might know that objects which Nature has in view; every one might then give responses as from the inmost recesses and from behind the veil of Nature's temple; every philosopher would be a

Themis or Apollo, that is, would be acquainted with all phenomena that can exist, and would comprise the vastest sciences within the compass of a nut-shell. (p. 34)

So Swedenborg, desiring to obtain a true philosophy and also to be a true philosopher, to be successful would be like Themis the Greek goddess of the form of the earth and of the law and harmony of physical phenomena; or be like Apollo who was the god of many things including god of wisdom of the oracles.

IX. *The Christian as a natural philosopher is affected by the fall of man.*

But Swedenborg was a Christian. Christians are responsible to the fall of man, that is,

No man seems to have been capable of arriving at true philosophy, since the age of that first of mortals who is said to have been in a state of the most perfect integrity, that is to say, who was formed and made according to all the art, image, and connexion of the world, before the existence of vice. (p. 34)

And the last ten pages of chapter I of the *Principia* treat of man who has lost integrity. That is, without integrity man cannot become a true philosopher. And so Swedenborg, who desires to be able to obtain a true philosophy and become a true philosopher, devotes those pages in investigating a comparison of being in integrity and not being in integrity. These alternate conditions deserve special treatment elsewhere. But for the purpose of arriving at the last thing said in chapter I of the *Principia*, as promised, let us sense the tone of the concluding words of that comparison:

[W]e therefore conclude again, that the wiser a man is, the more will he be a worshipper of the Deity. From the same reasoning it follows, that such a man must have been the object of God's supreme love; for love is not only reciprocal, and according to connexion, but is also greater in its prior degree, and becomes less in the derivative. (p. 45)

As promised at the beginning, we now arrive at the last thing said in chapter I of the *Principia*:

But the contrary to all this must necessarily take place in a man not in a state of integrity, and in whom the connexion above mentioned is disrupted. Such a man has not the wisdom, the veneration and adoration of the Deity we have described: and as his knowledge of the Divine benefits and grace is also imperfect in proportion to his deficiency in wisdom, so neither can he have such love: in a word, he cannot have any such veneration, adoration, and love of the Deity, as was entertained by the first wise man, unless he receives them from another source, that is, immediately from grace. But whatever veneration, worship and love, may exist in a man so changed, and in whom the connexion is broken by vices and cupidities, they can never be unaccompanied by fear, because he never can be without cause of fear. Neither can love be supposed to exist in God towards man in his unconnected and discontinuous state, but only justice, had not the Infinite and Only Begotten for this cause been made man, that in Himself as a man, and consequently through a certain connexion with Himself, He might restore a connexion with the Infinite in those who are like Him. (p. 45)

X. *Question: Who are those "who are like Him"?*

However, a problem remains. Who are "those who are like Him"? We know that Swedenborg daily read and meditated on the Word of the Lord. And so besides knowing about the fall of man, we can be sure that he read and meditated on the Sermon on the Mountain, and especially the next chapter (in Matthew) because that is where the Lord's prayer is. He knew what the Lord told the multitudes who were there to hear about the beatitudes. And so, Swedenborg had it in his head what the Lord told the multitudes after the Sermon. It begins with telling them things not to do, such as: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven."

This admonition endures for six verses, then:

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathens do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have use of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

With regard to the Lord's prayer, two times there are references to "those who are like him." 1. When it says, "After this manner therefore pray ye." 2. "As we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 1:9,12). That is "be not like the heathens", but "be like Him". □

