

The year is 1719, and Emanuel Swedenborg, the audacious young scientist, driven by the intellectual promise of the Age of Reason, begins what would become his life's work with a little book entitled *On Tremulation*. Here we find the first discussion of action-at-a-distance: how something here could affect a change in something there, remotely, and yet strangely simultaneous.

After taking time to lay the groundwork for a theoretical mechanism for all of Creation (*Principia*, 1734), we find our scientist at work again in a kind of footnote to this massive work, *The Infinite and the Final Cause of Creation* (1734). Here we find a new technical term, "contiguum," to describe the matrix through which this action works in living things. From this point on Swedenborg is through with natural points and elementary particles in aggregation to build matter up, into the complexities of the living world. His attention turns to the problem at hand: spirit into nature; soul into body; life into living things.

Again and again he searches the human form, in *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, and *Animal Kingdom*, where the cause becomes soul, its effects are form and function, and their connecting medium is a descending series of discrete degrees of organization. Again he pushes on, in *Rational Psychology*, this time with the promise of a universal mathesis, to explain this action in comprehensible terms—a formula in which one element corresponds to another, in a functional, interactive way. And finally, on the other side of a vast spiritual divide, we find the same thing again, but this time in the Doctrine of Correspondences, that explains the nature of this function that fills the form.

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Explained in depth in *Divine Love and Wisdom*, this descending series reappears as the chain of causes that powers the Divine Providence itself. And in 1768, at the end of his life, we find the topic revisited yet again, in *Conjugal Love* § 101 and elsewhere, where we find this series in the human being now a simple hierarchy of soul, mind, and body.

From one end of his life to the other, Swedenborg's mind was occupied by a rather short list of questions. Primary among them was how spirit comes into nature, forming it as it goes, and how that interaction is maintained, despite the differences between the world above and the world below. He rightly recognized the answer to this simple question as the spiritual holy grail, Divine gnosis, the cornerstone of religion itself.

"OK," we are inclined to ask, "but from the perspective of the intellectual world around us, who cares?" A good question, and well worth considering, in this antiintellectual, post-modern age.

Andrew Taylor Still was the founder of Osteopathic Medicine in the 1870s or so. His philosophy described a human of body, mind, and spirit, and his therapeutic system was based in spiritual-natural causality. He was deep, but not wide; he didn't explain himself as well as he might have done.

I recently taught an elective course for 1st and 2nd year osteopathic medical students entitled: Body, Mind, and Spirit: A.T. Still's Philosophy meets Swedenborg's Cosmology. It was a success. I took Swedenborg's well-reasoned system and built Still's human being up with it. The students left the course with a working model in their heads for a dynamic human being whose form and function were spiritual-to-natural. And they learned that to really heal the body you must address those other levels too.

What did I use on them? Oh, the usual suspects: *Divine Love and Wisdom*, the concept of the Grand Man, and the soul-body passages from *Conjugal Love*. But I started them out where the ideas first appear—*Principia*, *The Infinite*, *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, *Animal Kingdom*—the place you start if you want to really understand the roots of those great spiritual ideas found in their maturity in the Writings for the New Church.

How important are these "pretheological works"? Well how important is preparation? How important is process, if we are to appreciate the finished product? I'd say that it is not just important, but essential if we are

to reap the full harvest of Swedenborg's contribution to the modern world. Quaint 18th Century science? Museum pieces? My students didn't think so. Swedenborg's science was the real thing to them, and it explained that troublesome connection of spiritual and natural as nothing in their varied experience ever had.

In the Prologue to *Animal Kingdom*, Swedenborg extends this invitation:

Let us then gird up our loins for work. Experience is at our side with a full horn of plenty. The nine virgins are present also, adorned with the riches of nearly two thousand years: I mean, all the sciences, by whose abundance, powers, and patronage, the work is constructed. The sciences are indeterminate and of no profit or advantage, unless they be applied and made subservient to uses. What is knowledge of numbers, ratios, figures, and forms, in arithmetic and geometry, apart from its benefits in civil life? What are the philosophical sciences, with their predicates, qualities, modes, and accidents, without reference to reality? All things, at the present day, stand provided and prepared, and await the light. The ship is in the harbor; the sails are swelling; the east wind blows; let us weigh anchor, and put forth to sea.

That was 1744, 259 years ago. I believe that it is past time to deal with these works, time to dissect them and put them on a front burner for a change. The patience of Swedenborg's dedication to this mission would likely be worn thin by now, if he were to visit us today, and ask how his seminal work was going. The learned world is growing impatient too, in an age of increasing interest in these same ideas, with no clear answers. "The ship is in the harbor; the sails are swelling; the east wind blows;" it is up to us, the keepers of these marvelous works, to finally weigh that anchor and put forth to sea. □

