

we find a discussion of a plan for the preparation of a primer of Swedenborg's science and philosophy—a proposal that was taken up again five years later by the Rev. Lewis F. Hite. Although the form of such a work might not be that which was originally under consideration the proposal should not be overlooked by being buried in the files.

CONCLUSION

Here we conclude this very inadequate survey of a long and distinguished editorship: one carried on in the midst of other arduous labors and marked by tireless zeal for the uses of the Swedenborg Scientific Association—zeal grounded in the belief that as Swedenborg's philosophy was the means of preparing him for his use as a revelator, so the study of that philosophy will prepare us to enter more interiorly into the rational truths and doctrines of the Writings. Much has been done to make more of Swedenborg's philosophical works available to the English reader through the pages of *THE NEW PHILOSOPHY*; and if this survey has not entirely failed in its purpose it will be seen that much more has been achieved than might at first be supposed in expounding the scientific and philosophical principles contained in those works, and thus in promoting the study of those works.

In characteristic fashion Dr. Acton listed in his final report to the Association a number of works that remain untranslated and enumerated subjects which he thought might be discussed in the pages of *THE NEW PHILOSOPHY* with great profit. Advanced years made it necessary for him to lay down the burden, but in his mind the work was not ended. Like some of his famous addresses it was not finished. It just stopped!

PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES

In the last installment of these notes, exception was taken to the view expressed by a recent historian that the background of Swedenborg's philosophy was in modern industrialization, since his early works were on mining and other very practical matters. The position was taken instead that the background of his philosophy was in the ideas of the scholars of his day, especially the rationalists.

With this installment, some idea of the relation of Swedenborg's philosophy and rationalism will be given, using the particular notion of "clear and distinct" ideas as an example. Descartes and Locke were two philosophers, whose writings were well known to Swedenborg, who made considerable use of the terms "clear and distinct."

The use by philosophers of these two words, "clear and distinct," in juxtaposition is not just an attempt to clarify by using a multiplicity of synonyms. Such a rhetorical device often succeeds in obscuring rather than in explaining. The importance to philosophy of these two words is brought out by Descartes as follows:

"There are indeed a great many persons who, through their whole lifetime, never perceive anything in a way necessary for judging of it properly; for the knowledge upon which we can establish a certain and indubitable judgment must be not only clear but also distinct. I call that clear which is present and manifest to the mind giving attention to it, just as we are said clearly to see objects when, being present to the eye looking on, they stimulate it with sufficient force and it is disposed to regard them; but the distinct is that which is so precise and different from all other objects as to comprehend in itself only what is clear."

Principles of Philosophy, XLV

Because of the importance of "clear and distinct" to Locke, and further because he wished his ideas not to be confused with popular notions concerning "clear and distinct," he denotes these words by "determinate."

Descartes devoted much time to his consideration of "clear and distinct." He arrived at three conclusions. *First*: He would regard as the "highest truth" and with "certainty, only those things presented to [his] mind so clearly and distinctly as to exclude all ground of doubt." *Second*: The method of arriving at such certainties was given by example in mathematics. *Third*: The idea *cogito ergo sum* was just such a clear and distinct idea, and was to be contrasted with ideas gained from the senses, which he regarded as obscure and confused ideas. The *cogito ergo sum*, far from being a sense experience, was rather an idea arising in reason alone, and because of this it was accepted by him as the first fundamental rational truth.

It is interesting to note that while Swedenborg does put great emphasis upon the concept of "distinct," he makes little if any use of the notion of "clear and distinct" in the Cartesian sense. It

is also interesting to note that Descartes himself said that what is seen distinctly is also clear, as for example: "It is shown . . . that a perception may be clear without being distinct, but that it cannot be distinct unless it is clear" (*ibid.* XLVI).

Some appreciation of the importance to Swedenborg of "distinct" can be obtained from the following quotation from the *Rational Psychology* concerning thought and its sensory, the cortical gland:

"But the changes of state of this sensory . . . are properly thoughts, being induced and formed by the thought itself; for a state so formed as to embrace singulars (and) particulars, at first obscurely and then distinctly, is not a state of the imagination, inasmuch as the latter is concerned merely with particulars and singulars" (no. 152).

How Swedenborg himself used both the terms "clear" and "distinct" is seen in the following:

"In the science of rational psychology, nothing is more difficult than clearly to understand what specifically the animus is, and what the mind; and even if this is understood, than clearly to set it forth; for the several operations which are carried on in our inner sensories appear like a little chaos, of which we do not distinctly see even the surface, still less the parts, one of which adheres to the other as in a chain" (*ibid.* n. 282).

"Distinctness" in Swedenborg's philosophy does not imply a mere separation but has deeper significance. He says, for example:

"Reason or understanding is a faculty partaking both of the soul and the body, whose end is, to enable the soul to be instructed through the body and its organs, that afterwards it may dispose all things in such an order and connection, and call them forth with such distinctness, that a rational principle may be the result" (The Infinite, Preface).

In his philosophy, "distinctness" is applied in thought such that thought becomes aware of the nature of creation. That is, it could be said that his "distinctness" bears more upon the structure of the world rather than on thought alone. Thus, for example, it is necessary to see that there are distinct changes of state in the sensories, in particular the cortical glands, to produce thought (R. Psych. no. 153); or, as elsewhere, that there is a distinctness between forms (*ibid.* no. 286); and that there is a distinctness between the imagination and thought (*ibid.* no. 140); also that there is a distinctness between the intellect and the mind (*ibid.* no. 403),

and that there is a distinctness between series and degrees (1 Econ. 580-87, etc.).

For rationalistic philosophy, the concept of "clearness and distinctness" itself is a criterion of truth and certainty; that is, it is a first principle of epistemology. For Swedenborg's philosophy, however, which is not so much concerned with epistemology as such, "distinctness" (which includes "clearness") is an essential of thought, not an "a priori" principle. This thought by itself sets up no criteria of truth. Such criteria come about at a later state in the individual man's development through the opening of his rational, which is above thought.

And so it is in other respects, that while Swedenborg uses the philosophical language of his day, which was the language of the rationalistic school, his philosophical ideas involved in this language are quite different.

E. F. A.

NOTES BY THE EDITOR

The Fifty-seventh Annual Meeting of the Swedenborg Scientific Association will be held at Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, on Wednesday, May 19, in the auditorium of Benade Hall at 8:00 p.m., D.S.T. After the usual business has been transacted, Professor Eldric S. Klein will give an address on "Swedenborg's Journey of 1733." It is hoped that reports on their activities during the past year will be received from local Chapters of the Association.

In *The Enigma of the Hereafter* (Philosophical Library Inc., New York, 1952), Dr. Paul Siwek, a professor at Fordham University, says: "Among those who are supposed to have enjoyed the signal privilege of remembering their former lives is Swedenborg. But we do not intend to discuss his case at length. Swedenborg, as Gilbert Baillet plainly proves in an extensive study of his case, was, from the psychic point of view, seriously ill; he was suffering from persistent hallucinations. Were not his so-called memories of former existences a part of these?" (pp. 53, 54). The professor has evidently obtained at secondhand this piece of misinformation, which shows an abyssmal ignorance of Swedenborg and his teaching, for he does not cite Baillet as his authority but