

CATEGORIES OF CORRESPONDENCES

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CATEGORIES OF CORRESPONDENCES

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A student of Swedenborg's Writings frequently meets up with statements about "correspondences" which seem to conflict with each other. This makes it difficult to find any universal definition of the term. But actually no definition has an exclusive application. In the endeavor to avoid confusion and to distinguish the various meanings of "correspondence" used in the Writings, we have temporarily adopted a set of categories for descriptive purposes.

While correspondence is *primarily* a relation between discrete degrees the term may also have a *secondary* meaning, and be predicated of answering elements in any two parallel series or homologous forms which bear some resemblance to each other in structure, function, or activity, or even in appearance. We say that the part "corresponds" to the whole, the individual to society, the cell to the body, the child to the adult, a day to a year, a man to a woman, left to right, men to animals, the eye to the ether, etc. Such "correspondences" are usually only analogies or relations based on continuous rather than discrete degrees. For we miss here the primary idea that "the effect should correspond to the cause and the cause to the end."¹

Various parallels and comparisons are also called correspondences. All individuals, e.g., go through corresponding stages of growth and development without necessarily affecting one another. And the science of mathematics is suffused with the concept of correspondence.

¹ AC 5131 : 2.

PRIMARY CORRESPONDENCE

Creation was effected according to the law of correspondence, which is thus a universal law. Primarily, correspondence describes the relationship between the end and the cause, or the cause and the effect²; or between the internal and its external, between the spiritual and the natural; or between the discrete degrees of a homogeneous series. Such degrees, whether in successive or simultaneous order, have a common origin.³ Being discrete, they are not related by any finite ratio.⁴ But "without correspondence there would be no continuity from the very Being of life."⁵ And Swedenborg once instructed certain spirits that "there is no ratio between the spiritual and the natural, thus there is no conjunction through what is continuous, but through what is discrete, that is, by correspondences."⁶ Indeed "one cannot have any idea of correspondences" unless one acquires a knowledge both of continuous and of discrete degrees.⁷ The descending degrees of creation in the spiritual and natural worlds thus correspond to each other mutually like end, cause, and effect.⁸ Swedenborg confirmed this by "the conatus, forces, and motion in dead and living subjects." Conatus does nothing from itself but by forces corresponding to itself. In man, who is a living subject, the living conatus is his will united with his understanding, while the living forces are the interior constituents of the body, and living motion is the corresponding action.⁹

² Canons, *God*, iv. 1, 14, TCR 33, 75, 76, AC 9272: 2, 5131: 2, 3636, HH 98 (ref'ces), AE 593: 2e, Wis. ii: 4.

³ DLW 188 seq., 195.

⁴ TCR 32: 8.

⁵ AC 4525, cp DLW 56, 88, 219: 2.

⁶ LJ post. 271, cp 307f, Wis. xii: 4.

⁷ See LJ post. 307 ff, 271.

⁸ TCR 33, HH 100, 102e, 89.

⁹ DLW 218, 219, AC 5173e.

CORRESPONDENCE TO IDENTITY

From the "universal correspondence" of heat to love and of light to wisdom or truth, all other correspondences are derived.¹⁰ It is also an arcanum now revealed that "man is so formed as to correspond to heaven in respect to all things in him, and through heaven to the Divine Human of the Lord."¹¹

Because there are in God the Creator infinite things which are distinctly one, there are, in His Infinite, degrees both discrete and continuous; which in Him are Life,¹² while the corresponding degrees in man are recipients of life.¹³ It is therefore specifically stated that God Man has a Body and everything pertaining thereto, being the Source of everything human.¹⁴ The three degrees of height in the Lord are all infinite and uncreate.¹⁵ These three infinite discrete degrees which are Love itself, Wisdom itself, and Use itself, must necessarily correspond to each other in mutual union even to complete *identity*. For there is nothing higher and lower in the Lord.¹⁶ But in the Divine proceeding the Infinite Divine is accommodated to finite planes as "the Infinite and Eternal *a Se* in things finite,"¹⁷ or as the Divine Celestial, the Divine Spiritual, and the Divine Natural—which are mutually correspondent.¹⁸ The doctrine further shows that the Divine Natural into which the Lord entered "actually" by the Advent has also three degrees—the Divine Sensual, the Divine Natural, and the Divine Rational.¹⁹ During His glorification the Lord first made His Body correspondent with the Divine in Him and then "put on the Infinite from the Father."²⁰

¹⁰ AC 3636, SD 4710.

¹¹ AC 3624.

¹² DLW 224.

¹³ AE 1125: 3, cp. LJ post. 310, 311.

¹⁴ DLW 18.

¹⁵ DLW 230.

¹⁶ AC 4715.

¹⁷ DP 52.

¹⁸ AR 49, 466, TCR 195.

¹⁹ Cp. AC 4715.

²⁰ AC 1414e, Ath. Cr. 192, SD 4845, LJ post. 129.

SPIRITUAL CORRESPONDENCE

The general doctrine is that the natural world, and all things in it were created to correspond with the spiritual. "Everything in nature that exists and subsists from Divine order is a correspondent."²¹ "The universal law of correspondence is that the spiritual adapts itself to the use which is its end, and actuates and modifies the use by means of heat and light and clothes it through provided means until there is a form serviceable to the end; in which form the spiritual acts as end, the use as the cause, and the natural as the effect. But in the spiritual world there is the substantial for the natural."²²

A *spiritual correspondence* exists as a relation of man's body to his mind (or spiritual body), of sensory impulses to sense-perceptions, of heart to will, of speech to thought, and of earthly animals to the natural affections of man or to their causes in the spiritual world. But there is also a spiritual correspondence between the various degrees of the human mind, between material ideas or mental objects and superior spiritual ideas, between the natural mind and the spiritual mind, between the ideas of the literal sense of the Word and the ideas of the spiritual sense, between the three heavens *inter se*, and finally between the heavens and the Lord's Divine Human.²³

The sense of the letter of the Word is couched in significatives, and every significative there "draws its origin from the representatives in the other life, and these from correspondences."²⁴ Since every significative in the Word draws its eventual origin from correspondences it can be said that the Word was written "by mere correspondences."²⁵ Such ideas however as 'flesh' or 'heart'—which signify 'good'—are not represented as such in the world of spirits, but still they correspond, as what is natural to what is spiritual. The Writings therefore explain that "a *spiritual or significative correspondent* is conjoined with that to which it corresponds as a man's sight with his eye. . . ." ²⁶

²¹ HH 106–108, 89.

²² Wis. ii. 3.

²³ AC 4318.

²⁴ AC 6048: 2, 2763.

²⁵ Inv. 59.

²⁶ AC 7850.

It is not proposed here to discuss the difference between correspondence and representation, except to note that all things have a correspondence by virtue of creation, and that all representations or representatives are based on some correspondences. The lion is a ferocious animal and as such has an evil correspondence, yet its power—as the ‘king of the forest’—*corresponds* to Divine omnipotence and this enables it to *represent* the Divine truth of the Word as to power.²⁷ The same thing is true of the eagle, which in its lofty flights resembles the sight of the rational. In the sacred story of Israel, many of the kings could represent the Divine Truth because of their office, although they were themselves evil.²⁸ Correspondence is the appearing of what is internal in what is external, and its representation there. But only when the internal is *rightly represented* in the external are they said to correspond.²⁹ Thus we are told that between one heaven and another there is influx but no communication except by correspondences. Communication by correspondences is called “influx.”³⁰

ELEMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

All things in both worlds “have been created by means of the heat and light [of the spiritual Sun]. . . . There are three degrees of that light and heat to the ultimates of the spiritual world, and afterwards three degrees to the ultimates of the natural world.”³¹ *Elemental* correspondences (as contrasted with organic) are relations due to the creative procession from the Divine, thus the relation of some discrete degree of creation to its prior substance or cause. The successive spiritual atmospheres correspond mutually. The natural atmospheres not only correspond *inter se* but to the spiritual atmospheres which are their causes and counterparts in the spiritual world.³² Each natural sun corresponds to the spiritual Sun, and physical earths to the spiritual ultimates upon which the angels dwell.³³ Natural heat or energy corresponds to spiritual

²⁷ AR 241, 265.

²⁸ AC 665.

²⁹ AC 4044, 5053, 5422, 2990.

³⁰ HH 207, DLW 202.

³¹ Fragment at end of *Angelic Idea*.

³² TCR 33, 75.

³³ AE 1210, 1211.

heat or love. And all these things correspond to something infinite in God.

The forces of the atmospheres are also correspondent *inter se*. The wind and sound of the air correspond to the more subtle pressures and vibrations of the ether, while radiant light and electricity seem to correspond to those forces in the aura which cause gravity.³⁴ Clouds, rain, lightning and other modifications of the atmospheres, are also correspondences; as are moon and stars and the rotations which cause days and years.³⁵ The laws of gravity clearly correspond to the laws of spiritual attraction or love, by which the heavens are oriented.

Between the three discrete degrees "of height" there is a progression to infinity, in that the lower degree cannot be perfected so as to become the higher.³⁶ Yet each atmosphere can by compression or *continuous* decrease suffer a loss of activity until it is no longer an atmosphere but "a substance at rest."³⁷ Each stage of this transformation of an atmosphere into a passive substance represents a degree of a *continuous* process and is not discrete from the atmosphere which was its origin.³⁸ But when an atmosphere has "by degrees of breadth" been compressed into its ultimate state as a "substance at rest," it may by *composition* be formed into a new and lower discrete degree which corresponds to the atmosphere of its origin.³⁹ This mode of creation applies to the spiritual world as well, but apart from space. The formation of discrete degrees is by composition.⁴⁰ The conjunction of discrete degrees is not through continuity, but by correspondence.⁴¹

³⁴ LJ post. 312.

³⁵ HH 105.

³⁶ TCR 32: 8.

³⁷ DLW 302, 346: 2.

³⁸ DLW 302.

³⁹ DLW 302-304.

⁴⁰ DLW 306, 190, 302.

⁴¹ DLW 218: 2, 219: 2, cp. DP 34: 2, 41.

ORGANIC AND FUNCTIONAL CORRESPONDENCES

It may be permissible to distinguish the structure of creation when viewed apart from forms responsive to life, as an Elemental Kingdom which in both worlds—from its firsts in the Spiritual Sun to its ultimates on the earth—is to serve as the substances and matters which can be formed into vessels receptive of life.⁴² All things of this structure of creation with their unlimited potentialities are correspondences of the infinite affections of God and of the infinite perception of His wisdom.⁴³ But even vegetation and fauna and “all that God has created and does create were and are good,” and as such are correspondent with the Divine love and wisdom.⁴⁴

The basic concept of the *Maximus Homo* underlies all the teachings about correspondences. The Lord is God Man, and hence the whole of heaven and the church on the earths altogether are before Him as a Human Form,⁴⁵ or a spiritual Man which does not consist of persons but of the uses present among persons.⁴⁶

It is therefore shown in the Writings that “although the heavens do indeed correspond to the very organic forms of the human body . . . they nevertheless correspond chiefly to the *functions* of these viscera or organs. . . . As they correspond to the functions they also correspond to the organic forms, for the one is indivisible or inseparable from the other. . . . It is the use which imposes the forms. . . . The use existed before the organic forms of the body came forth; and the use produced and adapted them to itself, and not the reverse. . . .”⁴⁷ “The forms in which uses are clothed are correspondences, and are conjunctions just to the extent that they are forms of uses.”⁴⁸

There are many instances within the human body of organic structures which have no physical resemblance yet have corresponding functions. Functionally, the “cortical glands” correspond to the heart, being the centers of a higher circulation, that of the

⁴² DLW 5.

⁴³ Cp. TCR 78: 3.

⁴⁴ TCR 78: 5.

⁴⁵ AE 1166e, 1222, AC 3189, TCR 119.

⁴⁶ Love xiii: 3.

⁴⁷ AC 4223.

⁴⁸ HH 112, DLW 343.

“animal spirits.”⁴⁹ The functional correspondence of the cerebellum with the heart and of the cerebrum with the lungs may also be discovered. For the state of the body continually reflects the state of the brain and what is naturally true of the physical body is in some sense true of the spiritual body. Angels have a body, a rational, and a spiritual, and externals which correspond to their internals; “but the correspondences are spiritual, not natural.”⁵⁰

FORMATIVE CORRESPONDENCES

Since man was created last, all things of Divine order from primes to ultimates or from all the degrees of both worlds, were collated into him.⁵¹ His body and all its forms and organs are formed after the image of the natural world.⁵² So, for instance, is the ear formed after the nature of the air, and the eye such that it reacts to light, etc. We find here an obvious “correspondence” between the senses of the body and the various atmospheres—and consistently such correspondences throughout the body.

Yet though it be said that the eye was formed to the modifications of the ether, and that the various atmospheres are active forces while the organs are passive, this does not imply that the atmospheres are the causes of these organs.⁵³ From the Divine foresight atmospheres and sense-organs are created to match. Swedenborg therefore adds the pregnant sentence: “Thus the atmospheres must be such as they are in order that the organs may be such as they are.”⁵⁴

In the spiritual world this “formative” correspondence is equally represented in the relation of the spiritual atmospheres and degrees to the bodies of spirits and angels. For the spirit, mind, or spiritual organic is built into the whole substantial structure of discrete degrees, so that every spirit is an image of the entire spiritual world.⁵⁵ The same is true of every human mind.

⁴⁹ DLW 423, SD 3459.

⁵⁰ DLW 87, 334, 423.

⁵¹ LJ 9.

⁵² AC 4523, 6057, 6013.

⁵³ AC 4523, SD 4066, cp. AC 3628: 2.

⁵⁴ SD 4066.

⁵⁵ TCR 470: 3.

CORRESPONDENCE OF SPHERES

The Writings frequently speak of "spheres," noting that a certain "effluvium" pours out of every natural object, plant, animal and man, and similarly in the spiritual world spheres which are not material, but correspond to odors in the world.⁵⁶ Although every "sphere" corresponds to a higher one, it is not (to my knowledge) said that these spheres correspond to the object which is their source, but that they "concord."⁵⁷ The spheres of an angel or of a man *are* not the angel or man but are from him and devoid of his life. They concord because they are taken from the forms of his body which in him were the forms of his life. They act as "extensions outside of him of the life that is in him." In the other life, the quality of a spirit's affection is perceived at a distance by others from his sphere which unconsciously pours out from him into the spiritual atmospheres and is represented in various correspondential forms.⁵⁸

It is obvious that the spheres above referred to are substantial emanations. But every object is also a center of specific activities—giving off waves of sound and heat and light, and thus impressing its image upon its surroundings. In the spiritual world the affections and thoughts of a spirit or angel "are all imaged in various ways, as trees, gardens, birds, animals. In these, when in-
mosty regarded, an image of the man appears. . . ."⁵⁹ These representations "are called appearances because they are visible, and are said to be correspondences and are real because they spring from creation."⁶⁰

⁵⁶ AC 10130, SD 1846, TCR 499: 2.

⁵⁷ DLW 291, 294.

⁵⁸ TCR 410: 3, AE 392: 2, CL 171, SD 3817.

⁵⁹ Char. 117, 120, TCR 66, 78, DLW 322.

⁶⁰ TCR 794, AE 553, 1218e, cp. 704, Wis. viii. 3.

MICROCOSMIC CORRESPONDENCE

The entire doctrine of the *Maximus Homo* comes within the general scope of Microcosmic Correspondence, which implies the similarity of the unit to the whole. The body of man is then seen as a small world, a microcosm, corresponding to the entire natural universe which is a large world or macrocosm.⁶¹ The human mind is called a micro-uranus.

In a general sense, the spiritual world is then to be regarded as the mind of the created universe, which animates the entire natural world as the soul animates the body.⁶² But sometimes the Lord is likened to the omnipresent soul in man. For as to uses the universe is His image.⁶³ The Divine is the indwelling life, the only living force in the Grand Man. "The universe as to its contents from the inmost to the ultimate, is organic," and is "filled by the Lord."⁶⁴

Since all things of the universe correspond to all things of man, the three "kingdoms" of nature display something of this correspondence. Animals correspond to his affections and thence his thoughts, plants to his understanding, minerals to the ultimate knowledge of his memory. This is clearly represented in the spiritual world.⁶⁵ Even in a physical sense, the three kingdoms of nature are represented in the human body. The bones resemble minerals, the cell-tissue are vegetative in quality; the organs resemble those of animals, only the interiors of the brain being of a degree superior to that of beasts. The bloods of the body also correspond to the atmospheres and waters of nature, by analogy. (The constitution of the blood stream is surprisingly similar to that of sea-water.)

⁶¹ TCR 71, 604e, DLW 319.

⁶² DP 162.

⁶³ DLW 52.

⁶⁴ SD 3576, 1625, 3419, Wis. xii.

⁶⁵ DLW 52, 61-64, HH 104.

HOMOLOGICAL CORRESPONDENCES

All organic forms show resemblances of structure and function, since they are created by the same Only Lord and the conatus to the human form is latent in all His works. The life-functions, such as sensation, nutrition, locomotion, are present in all organic nature.⁶⁶ Animals, in differing measures, are furnished with organs and members corresponding to those in man, and some have even "an analogue of reason." "There is a correspondence between a man and a tree"—the stem to the man, the wood to his good, the leaves to his thoughts, the fruits to his uses, etc.⁶⁷

ANALOGICAL CORRESPONDENCE

Analogues exist where there are resemblances and also differences. Yet "the difference does not take away the analogy."⁶⁸ Swedenborg, however, often warns that it is dangerous to argue from mere analogies.⁶⁹ So for instance there are many analogues between men and beasts. (See Homological Correspondences.) Animals even have an analogue of reason. Indeed there is something analogous to freedom of choice in every metal or grain of sand!⁷⁰

The same warning is given as to the use of correspondences in seeking out the spiritual sense of the Scriptures.⁷¹ Man can violate the Divine truth of the Word "if he is in the knowledge of correspondences and wishes by it to explore the spiritual sense, from his own intelligence; for by means of some correspondences known to him he can pervert that sense and even force it to confirm what is false. . . ." ⁷² "No one can see the spiritual sense except from the doctrine of genuine truth" and provided he is in enlightenment from the Lord.⁷³

It is impossible here to recount the many forms of parallelism and analogy which are used in the Writings of Swedenborg and are employed in our ordinary thought and speech. The Writings

⁶⁶ AE 1203: 2, 1208: 2f.

⁶⁷ Coro. 27: 2, AE 1197: 3, 1084: 6, TCR 374: 3, DP 332: 2.

⁶⁸ Wis. iv.

⁶⁹ AC 196.

⁷⁰ TCR 499: 2.

⁷¹ SS 26, 56.

⁷² TCR 208.

⁷³ De Verbo xxi (= 58).

are profuse in comparisons. Dawn, noon, evening are thus compared to childhood, adult age, and old age, or to the normal stages of regeneration to which they correspond.

DERIVATIVE CORRESPONDENCE

The human body is the norm to which all correspondence refers itself. The organs and members themselves correspond to the mind which they serve or to the *functions* which they are intended to perform. But these organic functions look to uses outside of the man—uses to society as well as to his own body; so that his whole environment comes to some small extent to be affected and comes to correspond more nearly to his heart's desire.

This is particularly evident in the spiritual world where the affections and thoughts of a spirit or angel appear, to him and others, to be projected around him as representative creations which constitute an external environment which images his state in correspondential forms.⁷⁴

Even in our short life-time we may discern changes in our physical environment which are brought about by spiritual causes, especially by an increase of knowledge about the workings of nature. Our environment reflects the state of spiritual life among men, although we can trace only its physical progressions. Our so-called civilization with its mechanical marvels is irresponsibly squandering the resources of all the kingdoms of nature at an ever increasing rate.

Not satisfied with the powers with which the Creator endowed us, mankind on this planet has chosen to feed on the tree of knowledge and ventured to improve on the Lord's work, while listening to the Serpent's words—"Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." But all the products of man's invention and industry—even to the most intricate machines—are still only extensions of the uses of the human body, and draw their correspondence from that of our arms and legs, our heart and brain, etc. After listing many things from the three kingdoms of nature as correspondences of different degrees, Swedenborg therefore adds many man-made things such as foods of all kinds, clothing, houses and other buildings.⁷⁵ But these are only examples.

⁷⁴ Wis. vii. 3, 5, TCR 78, DLW 349, 326, AE 582, 553.

⁷⁵ HH 104e.

SYMBOLIC AND VERBAL CORRESPONDENCES

Before human language came into use, man's emotions, feelings and desires were expressed and communicated through gestures and actions, in sounds and simple symbolic rites. The Writings ascribe such modes to the "most ancient church."⁷⁶ In the *Rational Psychology*,⁷⁷ Swedenborg describes a *Natural Correspondence* which arises from the spontaneous perception of the harmonies of nature and the order of creation, from which the speech of brute animals is derived, and also the sense of musical harmony, melody and symmetry.

The words of primitive languages have their roots in such natural correspondences.⁷⁸ The roots of many words may be traced to *onomata poetica*, to the voices of nature, the spontaneous calls of affection, the tones of distress, the murmur of mother love, and other correspondent sounds. Poetry, from a sixth sense, labors to restore this original harmony of words with their affections. And in Hebrew and even in other languages, many words are selected for the natural correspondence of the vowel sounds.⁷⁹

But natural correspondence was not sufficient to build up a language of spoken words. Such words "were not infused immediately, but were invented and applied to things; which could not be done except in course of time."⁸⁰ This calls for a new kind of correspondence which Swedenborg calls *Acquired Correspondence*. It is acquired by use and cultivation, for objects arouse associated ideas which are the same whatever language is employed. "Hence a correspondence is brought forth and formed which must be called acquired correspondence."⁸¹ Since such a relationship is not "from creation," it is really a representation rather than a correspondence.

⁷⁶ AC 8249, HH 237.

⁷⁷ R. Psych. 161 ff, 401.

⁷⁸ AC 8249, SD 4865, 4870.

⁷⁹ R Psych. 161 ff, 401; AC 793: 2, SD 5114, 5622, 5620. See the pamphlet "Some Reflections on our New Church Language," General Church "Pastoral Extension Service," 1937.

⁸⁰ AC 1120, 8249.

⁸¹ R Psych. 165, 401.

CORRESPONDENCE BY OPPOSITION

The presence of evil calls for a law of permission, and a new mode of Divine government, by which each evil is counteracted by being held *opposite* to the particular good of which it is a perversion. It is even said that "most things in the Word have a two-fold sense, a good sense and its opposite."⁸²

The Lord rules the hells through opposites. Opposite must correspond exactly to opposite that there may be equilibrium.⁸³ By this, human freedom is preserved. Thus the lowest hell is opposite to the highest heaven, and so on; and the same order obtains in the natural mind.⁸⁴ But this equilibrium is not a numerical equality of the heavens and the hells, for it is exerted in the world of spirits.⁸⁵

* * *

One final observation is necessary. Whenever we find a statement about correspondence, we must first of all determine in what category or connection such a correspondence falls—and this can be done only by a careful study of the *context*. For it is the context which reveals its meaning and application.

⁸² AC 4750: 2, 1834, 4816.

⁸³ AE 1043: 2, TCR 62, cp. CL 425, SD 6088e.

⁸⁴ DLW 275, DP 299, AE 1043: 2.

⁸⁵ HH 600, cp. SD 5003.