

## SOME PRELIMINARY PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

Because we live now, in our own setting, within the borders of a system that is unique in terms of communication, labour methods, and a sophisticated scientific enterprise, it is important to re-evaluate what we know or understand concerning this word “influx” within these parameters if it is to be meaningful in a modern context. That is to say, if this word is to be relevant, it is because it provides a means of affecting those parameters in a significant way; it should provide a more specific form of perspective that is capable of application beyond the usual generalisations of materialism and alienation as criticisms of the status quo. The reason for this should be stated clearly at the outset: the current paradigms are both outworn and have become restrictive.

Rather than discuss these at length, it would be easier to cut the Gordian knot and state the case in simple terms. The measure of application of any system of thought is determined by its borders, but there is no easy or clear-cut method for determining what or where those borders lie. Secondly, whatever counts as a legitimate critique, it is inevitable that it would be largely ignored since how things are measured would place material advantage over what might be seen as, at best, a moral stance. After all, there is clearly an audible murmur of discontent, a rumble of unease, and an awareness that has more than once been described as disenchantment in the presence of plenty. Is it possible to give an effective voice to this spirit of dissatisfaction?

There are two ways of doing this which are not disconnected, and which invariably must enfold the subject in question. The first is to try to manifest the principle of inevitability as a way of thinking about a system of thought and its end-state. Consequently, one can think of the Enlightenment, for instance, as already seeded with disenchantment from the out-

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set, so that its fruits in full-blown application are the fruits of disenchantment. In other words, it is not that people are becoming disenchanted as much as the fact that the expression of disenchantment itself represents the limits of thought that Enlightenment philosophy, for all its successes, can no longer conceal, and which were contained in it from the beginning. Its intent in terms of its borders of application is revealed, although it cannot have been aware of it nor intended it. This may seem like a contradiction, but that is part of the paradoxical nature of freedom that will become apparent in due course.

It is not easy to accept that this may be the case, especially in the light of what may appear to be hard-won freedoms from tyranny that the Enlightenment represents and which are no doubt still cherished. However, it is inevitably the case that any system of thought runs through its program of intentions only to find at the end what was implicitly contained at the beginning. Why should this be so difficult to accept or understand? After all, in terms of New Church thinking, this pattern of development is well known in terms of the evolution of different church states. Consider, for instance, what Swedenborg wrote with respect to the Christian church:

In the beginning, they are zealous, as it were, for the Lord, the Word, for love and faith, and especially for the salvation of men. But in that zeal lies hidden the fire of ruling, which in process of time, and as dominion increases, breaks out, and the degree in which it comes out into act, the holy things of the church become the means, and dominion itself the end. (AE 1029)

Given the dominion of secular thought in our times, we do well to consider briefly just exactly why there should be an aversion for all matters spiritual, which has little to do with the fear of a return to religious fundamentalism. At a crucial point in time, we find the philosopher Kant establishing the base for the onward march of secularism, even though he himself may have been an ardent and practising Christian. (After all, the cause of atheism was originally instigated unconsciously by Christian thinkers.) In *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, (a book little regarded as significant yet which contains in seed form the instigation of the whole Enlightenment

movement) Kant sets down the means of progress along the lines of apparent intellectual segregation, achieving this by mimicking a well-established method of correspondences, well-known in his own time but virtually disregarded in our own, in order to invert order, thereby wresting power from a religious autocracy to a secular and rational democracy. He does this by appearing to affirm the spiritual dimension by noting that its means of operation takes place via a “secret cause” which cannot be known. This use of the phrase “secret cause” became very significant for Kant. It was difficult to argue against the tyrannies of a corrupted autocracy when its motives could easily be concealed behind the workings of a “secret cause” (not to be confused with the notion of Divine Providence as Swedenborg outlines it).

But as luck would have it, Newton provided Kant with a mirror image of this secret cause in the rational camp, for he noted that Newton’s mathematical formulation of gravity was not an explanation but a description. This powerful equation could be used to calculate all future positions of the moon and planets, yet it too was propelled by a secret cause. Here was a doubled correspondence: what made the heavens move also made the apple fall to earth. “As in the heavens, so also on the earth.” But now, just as the spiritual world had secret causes beyond the bounds of reason, so also the natural world was motivated by a “something-I-know-not-what” principle of action. In both spheres, the limits of human knowledge had been found and the metaphors of description were to carry the day; we were not to stretch our wings beyond the limits defined by these marker stones but rest satisfied before them. Those “wings” could clearly be identified in Kant’s day as anything pertaining to spirituality, and he clearly intended to have them folded away as his description of knowledge was defined as “styptic,” a word meaning exactly that process.

From our position today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a somewhat difficult consequence. What Kant is arguing for can be accurately described as the virtue of ignorance. Of all the mysteries of existence that surround us, it seems incredible that we do not know the reason why an apple falls to the ground. The force of gravity is a hypothesis that amounts to a form of words that does not actually explain anything since it is a descriptive term, yet we are to remain satisfied with it. It represents the limit defined by the marker stones of reason and we are to remain satisfied

by its modelling capacity. In this way, a constriction to thought is made to appear expansive. It is this quality of satisfaction, concealed behind a host of successes easy to point at, that is the secret cause of disenchantment.

It is those very successes that compound the problem. Just as the representation of gravity as a mechanical model described mathematically sufficed to satisfy the new kind of rational mind with the semblance of an explanation, so representation itself—the ability to construct a “picture” of reality in conceptual form—has become the “all” of understanding. If it looks, walks, and squawks like a duck, that appearance itself is enough to suggest that the likeness is the reality. This is a serious problem on at least two levels. A picture of a tree is not a tree—as the famous pipe in Magritte’s painting of it declares in words that “This is not a pipe”; any picture picks out only certain aspects to represent the tree. That is to say, we never experience the reality in represented form, and it is that quality of experience that eludes representation.

Ironically, the same is now made to apply to the spiritual realm. As illusory as representation may be, nonetheless there is a sensory input that gives the conceptual form of the picture an inkling of realism, and it is that slight apparent connection that gives the concept its feel of substance. But because there is no sensory input that can lead to spiritual understanding, there is no way to represent it. Since representation devoid of feeling has now become king, so the spiritual realm has no content and therefore no representative form. There is no data that can be collected that can be employed to construct such a representation. One is eventually forced into a kind of blind faith based on an inexpressible intuition that is the very disenchantment spoken of earlier which suspects that there may be more to reality than such thinking can contain.

However we may choose to think about empiricism, epistemology, rationalism, or spirituality, it is not difficult to see how our attitudes can be plotted back to Kant and *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* where the secret cause in both camps becomes the “unknown.” Ultimately, it is a circular form of reasoning that never touches base, however much our concept forms appear to be successful. The only way out is to mark the limit of this kind of thinking, and then to give more consideration to that which is excluded and which is part of experience.

This is not as difficult as it looks at first sight. It merely has the appearance of difficulty since we have become so accustomed to our own habits of thought operating in an exclusive way which we hardly realise we are entrenched in them and encircled by their boundaries. But the clue lies in that perception, for it is a kind of emotive insight that senses the constrictive character of the “bound” way of thinking. What needs to occur is an inversion of polarities which enables to have an emotive perspective, one that is more fundamental in its own terms of reference (and therefore more expansive in its reach) that is capable of inferring different and more significant meanings. What can be assumed about the meaning of this phrase “emotive perspective”? It is easier to adopt a *Via Negativa* approach to begin with and say what it is not. But it would help at the outset to pose the kind of question to which the emotive perspective might possibly be able to provide an answer that the rational perspective alone cannot.

What is the meaning of life?

Immediately, one can sense a translation of this question into “What is the purpose of existence?” The vague word “meaning” suddenly becomes a specific thing, a purpose, while life becomes existence. The translation of one into the other occurs to make it more accessible, because both “life” and “meaning” are unmanageable as ideas in their own right from an entirely rational perspective. An answer to the second form of the question then becomes flippant or a cliché—to eat drink and be merry, or to live for the moment (which can be both hedonistic and non-hedonistic), to seek happiness, or simply to find the question unanswerable or reduced to relativism (“It is what you make of it.”), or meaning leaning on the perspective of an overall chaos or randomness containing no notion of a purpose. In every instance, however, any answer is plotted back to an entirely rational source which seeks realisation in some kind of objective, universal language, something that can be applied across the board and made visible as any other representation that has become the hallmark form of rational thought. But because the question itself is couched in terms that are only able to recognise a conceptual solution that rests ultimately in a materialist creed, it would be useful to consider the ground from which an emotive perspective arises that is different from this.

A way forward is to search out a metaphorical base as a point of access. Consider the statement “God is One.” This is very different from the notion that there is only one God. The latter leads to the usual discussions concerning the theology of monotheism over polytheism and so on. But this is not the point that is implicitly contained in the statement “God is One,” for the One, being capitalised, expresses both a perfection and also a flaw. It is the flaw aspect that is least discussed and which can open the way.

Begin with a metaphorical situation. Most people know the story of King Midas, the king whose touch would turn everything handled into gold. Here one might imagine a kind of perfection if one considers the symbolism of gold and its association with the inmost heaven, or the business end of God. It is a type of oneness, yet the flaw is immediately apparent—when such a king reaches for a drink, as it touches his lip or his hand, it becomes undrinkable as it turns into gold. Consequently, the problem situation for a One is precisely that it is One, with nothing separate or separable.

### NOW TO INFLUX

Keeping this metaphor in mind, consider that Swedenborg highlights this at the beginning of *Divine Love and Wisdom* (§ 4). Speaking of the Oneness as the uncreated and the infinite, he writes:

No one can be created directly from the Uncreated, the Infinite, from Reality itself and Life itself, because what is divine is one and undivided.

So how does the Uncreated set about the business of establishing something separate? Here, one can assume that the gold of Midas has a deeper significance as a boundless love, which is what is meant by God as the veriest Life that is all Life. Consequently, it is in the nature of such a love to desire something into which to pour itself and give itself, which can only be something that is separate and which is not-God and not-infinite. This in turn implies something both temporal and temporary, and which we easily recognise as that which lies all about us through our senses and experience. Here we find the conditions that satisfy the need

for a separate kind of existence, the source in metaphorical terms of influx, where the non-temporal pours into the temporal and which Swedenborg describes in the very next sentence of the same section:

We must be created out of things created and finite, things so formed that something divine can dwell therein. (Ibid.)

Given this to be the case, we discover in the Bible a form of imagery that is exclusively concerned with the establishment and maintenance of a relationship between the non-temporal and the temporal, or as the Bible puts it, between heaven and earth. This relationship is not immediately apparent but evolving. When considering the word “created” in the Bible’s opening line, that state of evolution is more accurately translated as “prepared” as we find in Young’s literal translation: “In the beginning of God’s preparing of the heavens and the earth . . .” Straightaway one can sense a meaning far removed from the translations which seem to be unaware of this deeper sense of something infinite pouring into the finite. *In other words, it is the beginning of influx.*

Of course, it is a little more complicated than that, for when we think of things temporal in relation to the non-temporal, the thoughts that would be more appropriate concern the realisation of that influx in physical form. When we read the meaning of “earth” in Swedenborg, we discover its meaning to be far more than a mere reference to a planet. All words relating to earth, whether land or dust or ground, and including the name “Adam” which means ground, all these have reference to a state of the reception of that influx. Here we begin to see the source of the meaning of correspondences. The earth is a receiver of light, heat, and rain, and it is in such soil that seed can be planted and made to flourish. This is discussed in depth in many places in the *Arcana*, and is defined in one short line in *Divine Love and Wisdom* following the two previous quotations:

*Since we and angels are of this nature, we are life-receivers.* (Ibid., added emphasis)

Without this notion of reception, or indeed of the nature of One as Life itself or Love itself, we become embroiled in the endless scholastic dis-

putes of how the infinite can have an influence over the finite and so on. But what we find in Swedenborg is the very sense of meaning that the “purpose of life” question is unable to approach, let alone resolve. Whether we use the word purpose or meaning, clearly there is an intention in the One and the intent carries into the temporal in a way that is almost obvious. It can be put simply—the intention we find in all things temporal is a sense of becoming *more*. In all things living (which is just about everything) there exists the means in every particular thing for promulgation of itself. Here one should not limit oneself to the notion of sexuality alone as an end-in-view, but that this is an aspect of it. But even if we were to consider just this one aspect, when considering the constant references to fruitfulness and multiplication, the imagery of seeds and ground in both the Old and New Testaments, it cannot be overlooked.

Yet this is only one aspect of this sense of becoming more than oneself. There is the acquisitive tendency deriving from the same source which Swedenborg refers to as the *proprium*, a word that has proved notoriously difficult to translate into an English equivalent, and which is at the heart of desire. It is a sense of a particular kind of self, one whose being is characterised by the drawing to itself of whatever is deemed attractive (much like gravity!), and can be thought of more appropriately as a driving force, an endeavour, or a “conatus” as Swedenborg describes it. It is this tendency which longs to draw things to itself persistently, in effect mimicking a oneness. It is for this reason also that eating and drinking figure so largely in the Bible, for it is by this very means of consumption that different types of hunger and thirst are assuaged, and which Swedenborg defines as the means by which things are made our own. That ability is an expression of a universal principle and at the same time a presence in particular things, different in each person, and the source of variety.

The significance of this has been stated already: “in effect, mimicking a oneness.” We see in the temporal a pale shadow, so to speak, of the real Oneness, and it is this that is at the heart of correspondences. As a rule of thumb, it is easier to think of it like this: it is *like* it, but it is *not* it. Everything in the physical world bears the hallmark of a potential for becoming more than what it is, whether one chooses to see it in our sexuality, or in desire generally.

But since so little if anything with a spiritual reference can find its way into forms of expression pertaining to the natural world, this notion of “more” becomes muted, for the natural world is one perceived as a total reality composed of entirely random motions, forces, accidents, and things. Words like “desire” and even “consciousness” receive little, if any, attention as actual components in the fabric of reality, for it is still very much the case that any talk of spirituality is tainted by the notion of the ghost in the machine.

Without dwelling too long on these matters, *these kinds of conclusions represent an exhausted end-state, representing the limit of modern, rational thought, that allows itself to be informed by the senses alone.* This is hardly surprising, and in fact it is a position that Swedenborg was well-aware of. Indeed, he predicts the necessity of such conclusions as a matter of inevitability when the natural mind, dominated by the senses, takes on the character of a rational mind, yet which is in the service of a purely earth-bound direction:

He has no notion of what exercising intelligence, exercising wisdom, having ends in view, or giving direction to means may be unless all these activities are being spoken of as natural ones; and when they are spoken of as such, his idea of them is like that of one designing a machine. (AC 5094-4)

It does not matter how intricate or sophisticated modern views have become on the nature of mind, it is fairly clear that these are all, generally speaking, seeking explanations that are free of spiritual reference. In these views, it is far more agreeable to think of consciousness, for instance, as the by-product of complexity, and it is still very much an active program to create computers that can mimic awareness. Yet this is little more than the product of representationalism, the modelling procedure that is key to such rational programs which are devoid from the outset of any “active” element as that suggested by “desire.”

Why should this brief discussion be relevant to the subject of influx? The answer is almost too obvious: the two key elements of love and wisdom which operate in the Divine must at some point find a route through to the human person. As Swedenborg puts it so forcefully many

times, there is no such thing as an influx without affection. Yet the Enlightenment program since the time of Kant has executed such a complete hatchet job on the feeling state from which “affection” is derived, that it is thought of as little more than an emotion one might show to one’s dog. It is clear that this meaning is designed to totally underrate the scope of its meaning in a much wider field of operation. However, we should also take note that the key theme re-enacted over and over throughout the Bible is that of the notion of a usurpation in which the very name of Abel already suggests its own demise at the hands of the principle of acquisition that is Cain. (Recall the deep significance of names, and how very often deeper structures are evoked merely through the use of names). Consequently, the proprium of Eve places sensory matters at the forefront of concern, since it is this proprium that “sees” the tree of knowledge in the centre of the garden. It is this process of mental positioning that is the equivalent of the low status of the emotive in the rational sphere, for by the same token, the tree of life which represents influx is virtually put away to one side, and ignored. In effect, just as Cain represents a kind of loveless faith, what we find in the secular domain is the equivalent of faith alone. Without affection to fire it, it is no faith at all, yet it carries all the trappings of a belief system. And this is why it is virtually impossible to discuss influx in the secular world it has placed other things in its path to baulk it and which provide it with its own form of satisfaction expressible as machinery of one type or another, whether organic or inorganic, and not a hint anywhere of anything that might motivate it all as a state of inner endeavour, which by the very notion of self-motivation is an emotive, or affective, state.

Generally speaking, Swedenborg tends to use the terms “affection” and “desire” as more or less correspondential, in that our desires are what affections pour into. In this way, he establishes the path for correspondences by making a distinction between spiritual intent and human wants. Consider just this one quotation:

The reason wisdom and intelligence exist within love is that all influx takes place into the love, or what amounts to the same, into the good, and so into the life itself of man. (AC 2500:3)

Notice in this way of thinking the equivalence of “life” and “love,” that our own sense of life centres around what we love, and that it is into this that influx (which is Divine love) pours, or makes its presence there a felt state. For this reason, one finds in Swedenborg a tendency to use the word “affection” where the Divine is concerned, and “desire” where humankind is concerned, as in this passage in which the meaning of the “faces” is the focal point:

This is clear from the meaning of “faces” as the interiors in respect of the affections and resulting thoughts there . . . and since “faces” means affections, it also means desires. Consequently, “that evil is on your face” means that no good resides in their affections, that is, in what they desire. (AC 7666)

It should not be assumed that this distinction is a hard and fast rule, but rather that it is a way of maintaining a view on the relevance of correspondence. When considering “desire” as the referent of “affection,” this is expressed at a fairly general level. When the level is more particularised, “desire” becomes the affection, while “craving” becomes the desire. “Desire” then acts as the affective component since it is one level up from the appetitive, while the sensuality of that appetite is referred to as “craving,” as in this passage concerned with the “selav,” or quail (as found in many translations), which fell upon the Israelites in the wilderness:

It is called the delight that goes with craving when the delight belonging to any bodily or worldly love becomes dominant and takes possession of the whole person to such an extent that good and truth of faith residing with him are annihilated. (AC 8452:2)

However, when a reading of Scripture demands a higher kind of understanding of states of hunger and thirst, then at such times, Swedenborg refers to “desire,” as in these passages:

“To the thirsty bring water” (Isaiah 21:14) stands for giving instruction in truths to one desiring them . . . “To empty the soul of the hungry one, and

to cause the drink of the thirsting one to fail" (Isaiah 32: 6). "The hungry one" stands for one desiring good, and "one thirsting for drink" for one desiring truth. (AC 8568: 5)

With this distinction in mind, there is then a basis for discussing influx in a deeper way; our desires are like affections since both are motivated by loves of some type and degree, and both have the effect of "drawing towards." But keeping in mind that our desire is "like" affection, that resemblance is not the actual love, but provides the basis of some correspondence existing between our natural life and a deeper, spiritual life.

The advantage of this distinction relates to the earlier question concerning the meaning of life, for while the normal interpretation is couched in terms that suggest rational purpose, in actual fact the true direction of the question is aimed at a notion of "moreness" that is beyond the reach of such a rationale, yet quite within the grasp of a more innate intuition that recognises the pursuit of "more" in many forms as a matter of experience, and experience is essentially "wilful," that is, oriented to action expressive of desire. It is quite clear to anyone reflecting on their own lives that the pursuit of emotive ends have actually superseded purely rational considerations, finding expression in countless ways in human endeavour as the spiritual nature of it becomes enfolded in the natural. The desire for wealth and property, for power over others, for fame or notoriety, even if expressed in our own time as the "famous for 15 minutes" desire, all of these and countless others represent by and large the motivational core of existence, and as startling as it may seem to many, it is this that is linked to the Divine, deeply enfolded in the "God is One" principle desiring to be many.

In fact, while rational argument tends to ignore any notions of desire, it is far more realistic to perceive the sense of the spiritual as a sense of "moreness" in the way it filters down to the ultimate levels of human life, in which the very fact of mortality drives people to feel they need to leave a mark, much like a tombstone, as something more lasting than mere mortality can convey. In the very process of existence, we find this dependence upon "being" in that one pours into and informs the other, and the other feels that inpouring in a manner peculiar to each individual, but which reflects that influx in some kind of state of immortality through an

equivalent. To that end, it is quite startling to discover in Swedenborg's diaries certain statements that are quite up-to-date in their reflections of human motivation, particularly with regard to the "famous for 15 minutes" syndrome that is currently sweeping the world via TV programs and reality shows dedicated to this end:

But as happens in everything else, every such influx is circumstanced in its subjects or objects, according to their disposition, nature, form, so that although such continual incentive flows into some, with certain it is changed, according to their lives or cupidities, into passion alone; with others it occurs differently; *with many it is changed into the lust of fame, merely for the attainment of their loves*; with some it scarcely makes its appearance. In a word, it is circumstanced according to their lives, that is, according to cupidities and desires. (SD 2149: added emphasis)

But now, in looking at the larger picture the Bible provides, it becomes quite clear what is represented by the tree of knowledge, in that an inversion of order takes place such that the belief arises that no influx is necessary from a higher level to attain some kind of immortality by means of one's own proprium, and this, too, is an intention in human affairs that is cited in the *Spiritual Diary*:

I commenced thinking that there are men who long for the immortality of fame by exploit, writings and the like, as also by sepulchral statues and many other things, from which it is plain that something impelled them to the desire of immortality, though they knew that they were to die, and the greatest part of them could scarce credit that they were to live after death . . .

It was granted me to consider whence came such desire, because without an influx of a superior cause it could not be given; and I conversed about the same matter with the celestials, and thus perceived that the cause was that the Lord infuses into every one the perception of immortality, to the end that it may be hidden from nobody that they are to live after death, and that this is a common influx flowing into all, just as *storgé*, or the affection for children, is common influx from the Lord; apart

from him it could by no means exist. So it is with the desire of fame and of interior fame, that is, of immortality after death. (SD 2147)

Consequently, when we read the Bible, it is an essential component to see within the actual concrete images of animals, of stones, of trees and shrubs, something that always has reference to this notion of affection that we eventually come to see residing within ourselves. In that form, the Bible ceases to be concerned with earthly matters such as its creation and so forth, but with a different kind of evolution that is entirely to do with our spiritual welfare and health. Swedenborg often hints at this by showing how separate entities outside ourselves are often used as a kind of theatrical device (of spiritual proportions) that reflect back on the state of individual spiritual evolution. It is only in this way that we can come to terms with some of the difficult statutes and ordinances referred to particularly in Leviticus, but which are found in many places in the books of Moses. For instance, after the Ten Commandments are presented to the Israelites, there then follow many more that seem quite strange at first glance. Consider, for instance, the rule concerning a man who strikes the eye of his male slave. “Striking the eye” is to damage the understanding which carries truths, but what is more interesting is that while we perceive two people in this instance, a man and a male slave, we should keep in mind that this idea of separate people is a natural perception. Swedenborg, however, points out that this is not the spiritual perception of this apparent separation, for as he wrote:

... in the internal sense, in which a “man” is the internal man, and “male slave” is the external man, they exist in one person. (AC 9058)

But when considering why this emphasis on the individual is expressed in terms of a plurality of persons, it is clear that the spiritual content is always and unerringly fixed on affection and desire:

Interiorly, furthermore, a person is nothing other than affection, one who is good being interiorly an affection for good and consequently for truth, and one who is evil being an affection for evil . . . (Ibid.)

Spiritual existence does not operate with masks on, and this constant reference to affections demonstrates how everything in the natural world finds a counterpart within us since we are little more than affective creatures, possessed by our own beasts of burden that represent our bodily desires and appetites and little else, something Swedenborg constantly refers to, adding the following:

When an animal is called a “beast of burden,” it means merely bodily affections, which in themselves possess little reason; for the more that a person’s actions spring from the body, the less they do so from reason. This is because the body lives in the world, and so is remote from heaven, where true reason resides. (AC 9140)

One should not imagine that this is somehow synonymous with the notion of a “soul” that is eternal and a “body” that is mortal, and that the life of the former begins only when the life of the latter has ended. The relationship is far more intimate than that and is entirely constructed around the emotive. What this means is that, despite the intricacies of modern science in its ability to analyse the human body down to its constituent parts, this ability does not at any point concern itself with the emotive, and is therefore incapable of perceiving that the body itself is essentially an instrument of desires and lacks and wants, partially driven by needs but for the most part innate processes of acquisition and appropriation, and it is this ability that is meant by the word “proprium” upon which correspondences are founded. It is for this reason that the beginnings of life within us are compared to those of animals, and it is on those impulses that influx acts. Notice, therefore, the absence of reference to anything other than the emotive in reference to animals when Swedenborg refers to them, as in this passage:

The reason why such things are meant by beasts is that the external or natural man is endowed with affections and inclinations similar to those that beasts possess, and also with similar appetites and similar senses. But the difference is that the human being has within himself what is called the internal man. And the internal man is so distinct and separate from the external that it can see things that arise in the external,

rule them and controlling them. The internal man can also be raised to heaven, even up to the Lord, and so be joined to Him in thought and affection, consequently in faith and love. Furthermore, the internal man is so distinct and separate that it is parted from the external after death and lives on for evermore. These characteristics mark the human being off from beasts. But they are not seen by people who look at things on merely the natural level and the level of the senses; for their internal man is closed towards heaven. They draw no distinction therefore between the human being and a beast other than this, that the human being has the ability to speak, and even thus is considered to be of little importance by those seeing things on merely the level of the senses. (AC 9231)

It should be apparent from this last quotation why there is so little awareness today of any notion of influx, and what this entails, since our own age is encapsulated by the spirit of the last sentence in this quotation. In our time, the prejudice in favour of an exclusively natural reality with no internal dimensions is encapsulated in the plethora of studies comparing man to apes right down to the level of DNA, where very often only a slight difference in that structure is taken as evidence of our entirely sensory existence. The methods that enable such comparison, often very precise and complex processes, are held up as the iconic means of discrimination that do not allow for any other kind of perception. It is hardly noticed that this methodology itself is derived from an entirely physical prejudice that is designed to conclude what it already assumes. Nor is there any awareness that the Bible actually warns against this kind of narrow view:

Alas to those who go down to Egypt for help and who rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong . . . Isaiah 31: 1

This “Egypt” is the natural mind trusting only in itself and its own conceptual forms that are entirely physical. Yet the reference to the fact that “they are many” actually points to the fact that for the most part we are persuaded by those matters because they currently predominate, and the effect of this is to deny that the rational mind actually possesses the

means to look in another direction entirely and which is encapsulated by the end of the sentence in this quotation “. . . but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord.” Far from being a prescription warning against losing the external trappings of religion, it is in fact a veiled warning that we will leave ourselves prone to the only affections left operable. Because these affections are entirely physical, these are then portrayed in the Bible as inclinations and dispositions bereft of influx. Because these affections are acquisitive, by virtue of the nature of being separate and temporal beings, they are the means by which we make things our own. This process of ownership is represented in a number of different ways, but the most relevant to us is the symbolism of eating and drinking, for it is by these means that what is external to our bodies becomes internalised and made into them. That in itself is what “influx” means on a purely physical level, and why it is so effective a means to learning what spiritual influx means. Consequently, we find that the cost of turning away from the internal within ourselves is actually expressed in terms of this kind of appetite in several places in the Bible:

If you will not obey me . . . I will let loose wild animals against you, and they shall bereave you . . . and though you eat, you shall not be satisfied. (Leviticus 26: 14, 22, 26)

The people did not turn to him who struck them . . . for those who led this people led them astray...They gorged on the right but still were hungry, and they devoured on the left but still were not satisfied. (Isaiah 9: 13, 16, 20)

I will punish them for their ways, and repay them for their deeds. They shall eat, but not be satisfied. (Hosea 4: 9–10)

Therefore I have begun to strike you down, making you desolate because of your sins. You shall eat but not be satisfied, and there shall be a gnawing hunger within you. (Micah 6: 13–14)

We can speculate here why it is that quotations such as these are off-putting to the modern mind, steeped in traditions no longer familiar with

the symbolic tradition. After all, the context of these quotations reads very much like a list of punishments for the crime of turning away from an almighty God who threatens with starvation, bereavements, sicknesses and miscarriages and so on. It is hardly surprising that the Bible, taken at its face value, is so little read.

Yet if ours is the age that more or less defines man as a tool-maker or speech-maker and little different from an animal in a separated and literal sense, clearly what is absent in the predilection for such definition is the notion of man as a receiver. It is that very absence that reduces meaning to such literalism, as though all of reality must comply with such surface definition. Ironically, being abandoned to literalism is in many ways the price paid for such a turning away, for it is the deliberated closing down of that facility which seeks deeper dimensions.

Notice the dilemma we are both those who seek, and also those who are satisfied. For instance, the eating of food represents the means by we make things our own, effectively stamping everything consumed with our own DNA. That is the element of the level of satisfaction. This is an acquisitive process more than it is a rational process, and it is at that level that influx is pitched, for the notion of the “moreness” of God finds itself ultimately resting upon, and identifying with, our own accretive processes since they bear the hallmark of resemblance through that very state of growth. That is why there are so many references to food in the Bible, and why therefore there are correspondences, for both are representative of change and why also regeneration begins at such a grass roots level. In other words, the closing down of the “seeking” element leaves us prone to the motivations of our own acquisitive tendencies, and it is these that dominate the rational mind, turning every thought in its own direction. It is this that is expressed as the process of eating, and the appetite that can never be quelled by it.

Ironically, the literal view is one that the modern rational mind is averse to, expressing that aversion as a rejection of religion as the public face of a more private impulse that demands more from it. Aversion that is more deep-rooted reflects the desire for understanding in terms of the thinker as originator of the thought. That level of aversion is far more difficult to deal with. Even so, the rewards that come with such aversion are just as consumable as food in the sense that there is never an

acknowledgement of influx, as though it were itself self-generative, like Pharaoh standing in his river declaring that he made himself. In either case, it is not difficult to see the appropriateness of these quotations as symbolic of our own times. The tragedy is that for all the apparent triumphs of our own endeavours in the last few hundred years, and the last hundred in particular, the turning away from spiritual concerns (which is the meaning of being cursed by God) has left us entirely at the mercy of our powers of acquisition at virtually every level which are reflected in our philosophical, political, economic and social structures as an underpinning infrastructure.

One can sense this in the terms of opposition which refer to the evils of capitalism, the profit motive and even the general cliché that refers to materialism. Such criticisms tend to be regarded as “leftist” or socialist views. Since, however, such criticisms are expressed in secular terms, they are largely ineffective since the true problem is the lack of spirituality, or stunted growth. “Stunted growth” is the fact that all human life begins from exactly this position of self-interest and self-awareness which is prompted by basic desires. Growing to maturity means that at some point other processes begin to develop for which these are “kicking off” points, when a different kind of influx begins to operate. The current human condition, however, is one that refuses to “grow up,” and the pursuit of such primitive desires become the all.

Returning to these warnings of lack of satisfaction, and the proliferation of wild animals, what these actually mean should now be seen in a completely different way. Far from being images of starvation and destruction, what they actually refer to is excess and its blind pursuit. It would be almost an over-simplification to point at the images of over-eating that are held up as representative of first world philosophies and the various disorders that stem from this. Yet in terms of what is visible in a thoroughly external form, does it not reflect the effects of the tendency for excess in all its forms. Indeed, the fact that it is ongoing reflects the very lack that these warnings declare. Ironically, it is only when they reach their peak that certain other biblical statements begin to resonate in a totally different way, and one can virtually perceive the wild animals of self-pursuit whose only regard is for their own consumptive tendencies and the pleasure that such momentary satisfactions assuage.

The solutions sought in terms of purely human understanding can never grasp the true scale of the problem, since these are effectively the imposition of rule of law trying their best to curb the notion of free market forces that favour the acquisitive tendencies of those best able to pursue them. The pursuit of limitless gain also conceals the fact that it is a pursuit that also demands that gain for little effort. Ultimately, this becomes enshrined as a principle of least action for maximum return in the language of business practice, and this in turn becomes reflected in the fact that maximising profit is directly linked to the elimination of human participation. In effect, the concept of work is one that carries within itself its own removal, much like a bomb that is designed specifically to end itself, except that what is ended is mankind in the sense that the perfected form of work is one which perceives human participation as superfluous to requirements. Consequently, however loud the voices within the political strata declaring the need to shorten the lists of unemployed, it is effectively a losing battle since the problem of unemployment is one that is built into the philosophies of economics to begin with. It is not a problem, but the natural end-state of a philosophy of pursuit. Here one should be able to surmise the inverted form that any philosophy of utility takes. It is in what we do that expression is given to the meaning of life, yet the removal of work as an essential ingredient in that expression reveals the thoroughgoing acquisitionism that actually holds this world in its thrall.

But as political as these comments may sound, they are in fact reflections on a form of reality that is man-created that has completely separated itself from any kind of influx. Influx is founded upon principles of uses, and so the whole question of the meaning of life finds itself embroiled in a battle that throws out the notion of use in a culture that is fast distancing itself from any kind of correspondence, since it is use-less. As a consequence, it should be apparent that a different kind of reading of biblical text reveals exactly this kind of world in which the pursuit of gratification on an extremely basic level becomes the all. The notion of eating and not being satisfied is an uncannily precise prophecy which our age reflects. The fact that it has come to fruition can be demonstrated like this: while it may sound like a dire warning of a dreadful condition, it has actually become the norm as though it were not that awful. After all, is it not the case that we need to eat to live? What is so awful about this natural state of

things? And in these comments, it is plain that reality is reduced to an even lower level of literalism.

It is for this reason that exploring the notion of influx is no mere exercise or intellectual pursuit. Rather, it should be clear by now that what we currently experience is not the result of any particular individual or movement, whether political or social, that has brought the world to this state, but that the forms of spirituality themselves have become largely redundant since by and large they ignore the importance of the natural level in the larger picture of salvation and regeneration. We are more than wild animals of the field, but those animals are within us and the stuff of which is the focus of interest in the process of regeneration.

The reason for this should by now be apparent, for we are created as separate entities with feeling states that are entirely godless and avaricious. Psychologically, it is the only way that God can create something that is not directly Himself as it is the only way to create some other-than-Himself. In other words, we can see in this the whole principle of action implicitly contained in the notion that God is One. And it is for that reason that our most basic desires become the focus of interest in influx since they are the means by which we also make things one with our own selves. We can see in this a pale imitation of God's own Oneness, yet because it is endless, it reaches right down to our most basic levels in order to turn them around, and show how much more there is to know and feel if we choose to turn around. Since "turning around" is actually a very technical term with regard to spiritual things and regeneration generally, perhaps this now becomes a good staging point at which to consider the nature of influx itself. However, in summary, the preceding pages in terms of their emphasis are neatly summarised by Swedenborg in his spiritual diary, and we should note here this emphasis on the role played by desire in human life, and that it is at this level that the regenerative process is ultimately framed:

Certain species of beasts and fishes eat beasts and fishes of the same genus and species, but that is when they are pressed by hunger, in which case they are furnished from this source with food, thus preventing a too rapid multiplication; but when they are satisfied, they betake themselves to repose. Man, the more blood he sheds, the more he filches of his

neighbour's goods, the more he desires, being never satisfied; his cupidity grows and increases till he comes to aspire at the possession of heaven itself, which desire is in fact involved in the least spark of self-love. (*SD* 2029)

In general there are intellectual things of faith, rational things of faith, and factual things of faith. In relation to one another they accordingly pass from more interior to more exterior. The inmost things of faith are called intellectual; those which pass down from them or from there are the rational things of faith; and those in turn which pass down from these are the factual things of faith . . . It does indeed seem to man as though the factual degree of faith is first and that the rational then arises from that, and after this the intellectual from that, for the reason that this is the way a human being develops from childhood onwards. But in fact the intellectual is constantly flowing into the rational, and the rational into the factual, though man is not directly conscious of it. In childhood the influx is obscure; in adult years it is more noticeable; and when at length the individual has been regenerated it is quite manifest. (*AC* 2504:2) □