

There must be a difference in meaning between these two terms, otherwise why would they so often be used together in Swedenborg's theological writings? If they both meant the same thing, that would be a redundancy.

Throughout this paper I will be using the term *scientifics* for what are usually translated "memory-knowledges" or even "facts;" and *cognitions* for what are usually translated "knowledges" or "Knowledges."

### Definitions and Distinctions

We first encounter the two terms in number 24 of *Arcana Coelestia* in the explanation of "the waters above" and "the waters beneath" the expanse, where it is said that "a distinction is at that point made between the internal man and the external man, and so between cognitions, which are with the internal man and scientifics, which belong to the external man."

Note the language: cognitions are "with the internal man [the internal mind]" (*apud hominem internum*), but scientifics belong to the external man. In the Swedenborg Concordance, Potts got it right; he translated *apud* as *with*. But in the *Arcana*, he (or his editor) chose instead *in* the internal man. Elliot went even further, using "reside with." The sense seems to be "associated with," rather than "residing in." We will see a reason for that later.

However, *scientifics* are always in the external or natural man. That is the universal teaching. (AC 3019, 3020, 3293, 3294, 3309, 4967, 9918, 9922). They never reside in the spiritual or internal man. In fact, scientifics are in the light of the world—ideas derived from sense experience; consequently they are confused and obscure when compared to those things which are in the light of heaven—the enlightenment from the internal mind which

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receives influx from the Lord—thus the things which are in the external man in contrast to those from the internal man (AC 2831). Nevertheless, they may serve, together with cognitions, to open the internal man, and the internal man may flow into scientifics and enlighten them.

Those things are called scientifics which are in the external or natural man, and its memory, but not those which are in the internal or spiritual man (AC 3019, 3020, 3293, 3309, 4967, 9918, 9922). Scientifics are learned from “experience, either one’s own or that of others” (AC 6386). They come from outside of us, and are based on sensory observation. From what we sense of the objects in the physical world, we may *conclude* scientifics. As we read in *Arcana Coelestia* 5774: 2:

Things of sense are one thing, scientifics another, and truths another. They succeed one another in turn; for scientifics come forth from things of sense, and truths from scientifics; for the things which enter by the senses are laid up in the memory, and from them the man *concludes* a scientific, or perceives from them a scientific, which he learns; from the scientific he then concludes truths, or perceives from them truth which he learns. Every man so progresses as he grows up from childhood. When he is a child he thinks and apprehends things from things of sense; when older he thinks and apprehends things from scientifics; and afterward from truths. This is the way to the judgment into which man grows with age. (AC 774: 2; emphasis added)

In a word, scientifics are conclusions or generalizations based on sense experience. They include what we today call the “laws of science.” But they are not limited to the physical sciences, as explained in this passage:

In the natural there are scientifics of various kinds: there are scientifics about earthly, bodily, and worldly things, which are the lowest, for these are immediately from the things of the external senses, or of the body; there are scientifics about the civil state, its government, statutes, and laws, which are a little more interior; there are scientifics about the things of moral life, which are more interior still. But the scientifics that belong to spiritual life are more interior than all the former. These latter are

truths of the church, which insofar as they are only from doctrine with a person, are nothing but scientifics; but when they are from the good of love [from the internal mind], they then rise above scientifics, for they are then in spiritual light, from which they look at scientifics in their order beneath them. By means of such degrees of scientifics a man mounts to intelligence, for by means of these degrees, scientifics open the mind so that light from the spiritual world can flow in [via the internal mind]. (AC 5934)

We learn some important teachings from that passage; not only that scientifics reside in the natural mind; and that they are of many kinds; and that truths of the church are nothing but scientifics if they are only doctrinal things; but also that they may change their quality if “they are from the good of love, “ in which case they are in spiritual light and rise above mere scientifics.

Clearly, there is a difference between, on the one hand, where things reside; and, on the other hand, what their quality is. A thing may reside in the natural and also be natural in quality; or it may reside in the natural but be *spiritual* in quality. For example, there can be natural charity or natural conjugal love; and there can be spiritual charity or spiritual conjugal love. It all depends on the presence or absence of spiritual light flowing in from the internal man into the natural.

Even scientifics, therefore, which for the most part are focused on the things of this world, can become of a spiritual quality, if bathed in the light of heaven, if the internal man flows into them. The well-known teaching in *Divine Love and Wisdom* § 46 would be an example of that: “Thought from the eye closes the understanding, but thought from the understanding opens the eye.” A spiritually-minded scientist sees the love and wisdom of God reflected in His creation—*His creation!*

But what does this do to our original definition that whereas scientifics are in the external man, cognitions are with the internal? Now we find that *scientifics* also, under certain circumstances, can be with the internal, can be in spiritual light! Are they both the same, then? It is true that scientifics and cognitions have certain things in common:

- They are both “receiving vessels,” receptacles for the goods and truths of the internal, spiritual man. (AC 1469, 1496, 3068, 5489, 6004, 6023, 6052, 6071, 6077, 7770, 9922).
- They both reside in the natural. (AC 1895, 1896. 1900-1902).
- They are both from outside of us. (AC 1902).
- They both lodge in our exterior memory (AC 5212, 9922).
- They both have to be learned, since, unlike the animals, we have no innate knowledge (AC 1902, 6323, 6325).

One passage even *identifies* “interior scientifics” with “cognitions.” “It is said ‘by means of the cognitions of good and truth,’ because by these cognitions are meant interior scientifics such as are those of the church concerning faith and love” (AC 9945; see also *NJHD* 51, which says that “for distinction’s sake, those [scientifics] that relate to the spiritual state and life, are called cognitions, consisting principally of doctrinals).”

Yet there are obvious differences. Cognitions are things known about *good and truth*. By far, the most common expression is “knowledges [cognitions] of good and truth *from the Word*,” which occurs thirty times in the Writings.

“From the Word.” That provides the clue to the essential difference between scientifics and cognitions. Scientifics are based on sensory experiences; cognitions are based on the Word. Here we see the two foundations of truth (*SE* 5709).

The foundation from the Word is for the universal heaven, thus for those who are in the light [lux] of heaven; but the foundation from nature, for those who are natural and in natural light [lumen], thus for those who have confirmed themselves from the letter of the Word in things not true. (Ibid.)

For example, the belief from Genesis I that the earth was literally made in seven days is a “thing not true.”

We have already learned that cognitions are “principally doctrinal things” (*NJHD* 51). What, then, is the relationship between cognitions and doctrinal things? There is a passage that sheds light on this by giving a more specific definition, as follows:

*Doctrinal things* are those which are from the Word; *cognitions* are those which are from doctrinal things on the one side and from *scientifics* on the other; and *scientifics* are those which belong to experience, either one's own or that of others. (AC 6386)

As we all know, the letter of the Word consists in general of two kinds of literary material. For the most part, there are historical narratives, sociological laws, and poetic songs, that is, "things external, which belong to nature, and which appear before the eyes" (AE 98: 5). But besides the sensory imagery, there are also doctrinal teachings, in which the spiritual sense stands forth plainly in the letter. These teachings are from "the interior things of the Word" (AC 1164: 3) and are called the "doctrine of genuine truth" (SS 55). Everything that concerns our life, and thus our salvation is openly declared there in the doctrine of genuine truth (ibid.).

If doctrinals are from the sensory imagery of the letter of the Word, then the cognitions that come from them are very little different from sensuous scientifics. They could be fallacies of the senses or even outright falsities. This is the origin of false cognitions (AC 1163). For example: that God is angry, vindictive, revengeful, punishes, casts into hell, or that there will be a final general judgment at "the end of the world." On the other hand ("on the other side"), if doctrinals are from the interior things of the Word, from the doctrine of genuine truth, then they are realistic cognitions, capable of being raised up out of the natural into the light of heaven. In other words, they may become "receiving vessels" for the truths and goods of heaven. When applied to life, they become true things, the truths of faith, for then they can be internally acknowledged. There is something from the internal man present in them. They are seen in the light of heaven.

In this way we may understand why it is said that "cognitions are from doctrinals, on the one side, and from scientifics on the other" (AC 6386). We have already seen that scientifics are based on sensory experience.

Cognitions, of course, as well as scientifics, must always reside in the natural man or mind and in our exterior memory (AC 5212, 9922), otherwise we would never know them or remember them. But, as we have seen, their quality may change.

## The Uses of Scientifics

Scientifics, if enlightened from the internal man, can provide proofs or confirmations of Divine truths. With those people who

... have applied all things to the use of life, and have also acknowledged the Divine, loved the Word, and lived a spiritual moral life, the sciences have served as a means of becoming wise, and also of corroborating the things pertaining to faith. (*HH* 356)

Scientifics are like mirrors in which the truths and goods of the internal man appear, and are perceived as in an image (*AC* 5201). It is allowable for those who are in the affirmative [principle] concerning the truths of faith, to confirm them intellectually by scientifics (*AC* 6047). To enter from the truths of faith into scientifics is according to order, for spiritual influx is through the internal man into the scientifics and cognitions, which are in the external (*AC* 1940, 8005). But to enter from scientifics into the truths of faith is contrary to order (*AC* 10, 36).

There are scientifics that admit Divine truths, and others that do not (*AC* 5213)—because they are empty. Those are empty scientifics which have for their end the loves of self and the world and confirm them, and thus draw away from love to the Lord and love towards the neighbor—because they shut up the internal man, so that the person is not then capable of receiving anything from heaven (*AC* 1563, 1600). In other words scientifics are the means of becoming wise, and the means of becoming insane; and by them the internal man is either opened or shut; and thus the rational is either cultivated or destroyed (*AC* 4156, 8628, 9922). The rational is cultivated and becomes heavenly to the extent that the internal man is opened, so that we are *affected* by what is true and see it in the light of heaven (*AE* 208: 3).

Scientifics make it possible for us to understand the natural world, to think about it and reason about it—even to think about true things (*HH* 425, 455). But thinking *from* the truths of the Word can go beyond mere scientifics, because when enlightened by cognitions that have been applied to life, they become truths of faith.

We have been discussing scientifics as an indispensable basis for cognitions and the understanding of spiritual life. But they may also perform another use—in the application of truth to life. The scientifics of moral life, the things known of the moral virtues, are instruments for applying the doctrine of charity to life situations. Our love of the neighbor must eventually come down to the application of what is fair and just.

The scientifics of moral life may also provide protection (for a young person particularly) while undergoing states of doubt and confusion about doctrinal matters. Many a young person in that state has been saved from falling into an evil life by clinging to the moral virtues, which are scientifics.

But scientifics have their limitations. In themselves they give an understanding of only this world and life. For a total salvation, they need to be infilled with the light and warmth that only a life according to the cognitions of good and truth from the Word can provide. *While cognitions depend on scientifics as a basis for the growth and upbuilding of the natural mind, scientifics depend on cognitions (ideas that are lived) for true enlightenment and understanding.*

### The Uses of Cognitions

Cognitions open the way to the internal man, and then conjoin it with the external according to uses (AC 1563, 1616). This conjunction leads to conjunction with the Lord (AC 1616: 3) Just how indispensable cognitions are is established by the teaching that “cognitions are the first things of the church; for no one can be initiated into faith and charity, which constitute the church, except by means of knowledges from the Word that pertain to the church” (AE 96).

However, the *cognitions* of faith are not faith itself.

Faith is by no means the cognition of the things that are of faith, or that are to be believed. This is only science; whereas faith is acknowledgment. There can however be no acknowledgment with anyone unless the principal of faith is in him, which is charity, that is, love toward the neighbor and mercy. When there is charity, *then* there is acknowledgment, or faith . . . When charity is present, which is the goodness of faith,

then acknowledgment is present, which is the truth of faith. When therefore a man is being regenerated according to the things of knowledge (*scientifica*), of reason, and of understanding, it is to the end that the ground—that is, his mind—may be prepared for receiving charity; from which, or from the life of which, he thereafter thinks and acts. Then he is reformed or regenerated, and not before. (AC 654)

Likewise, the cognitions of charity are not charity. They are not even truths in the mind of one who “knows” them—until they are lived.

Cognitions are nothing else than the truths of the natural man, but which have not yet been made his own... Cognitions do not become truths in man until they are acknowledged by the understanding, which takes place when they are confirmed by him; and these truths do not become his own *until he lives according to them* [emphasis added]; for nothing is made man’s own except what becomes of his life, for thus he himself is in the truths, because his life is in them. (AC 5276)

Similarly, a life according to cognitions leads to understanding (or what is the same, intelligence—see AR 244), as we learn from the signification of “a flying eagle” in the Apocalypse: “By ‘eagles’ various things are signified, and by ‘flying eagles’ are signified cognitions from which understanding is derived, because when they fly they both know (*cognoscere*) and see; for they have sharp eyes that they may see clearly, and by “eyes” are signified the understanding” (AR 244).

In connection with “seeing clearly,” the teaching is that “cognitions make a general and obscure idea distinct; and the more distinct the idea is made by means of cognitions, the more can worldly things be separated” (AC 1557).

In a word, cognitions of truth and good from the Word lead to charity, understanding, (intelligence), confirmation, conscience, acknowledgment, faith, and wisdom; but of themselves they have not arrived there until they are lived.



## The Science of Cognitions

Nothing makes clearer the difference between scientifics and cognitions than the term “the mere science of cognitions.” It signifies the state of mind in which the goods and truths of the Word are learned with no regard for life, but solely for natural reasons, such as reputation, honor, or gain, that is, when cognitions are made merely matters of memory—for the sake of discussion or argument. In that case the cognitions of faith and charity are nothing else than empty, dead, scientifics. This state is represented in the Word by the great enemies of Israel, the Philistines (AC 497, 1162, 1197, 1198, 1461, 1462, 3420).

The question of translation of these two terms is a study in itself. The problem is that in both cases there is no one English word that is an equivalent. “Knowledge” is indeed currently used in ordinary conversation, but not “knowledges.” That is the weakness of Potts’ usage in the Swedenborg Concordance, that is, knowledges for *scientifica* and Knowledges for *cognitiones*, distinguishing the two words but not showing what the difference is. “Memory-knowledges” for *scientifica* is cumbersome (especially in “the memory-knowledges of Knowledges”) and also fails to recognize the understanding involved in scientific laws. They go beyond mere memory or memorizing. Both words mean “things known, “but that is not always a suitable translation, nor does it bring out the differences in meaning. The same may be said of “pieces of information.” “Facts” for *scientifica* sounds too much like truths (“It’s a fact”). Besides, what about *false* scientifics? False facts?

Perhaps the best solution is to use *scientifics* and *cognitions* with a brief footnote explaining the difference.

Much, much more could be said about scientifics and cognitions, for there are enough references for a series of studies or even a book. However, our hope is that enough has been presented to question this statement in J.C. Agar’s footnote to the extracts from the *Arcana Coelestia* in his translation of *Heaven and Hell*:

In these extracts *scientia*, *scientificum* and *cognitio* are alike rendered knowledge, because any distinction between them intended by the author is not sufficiently obvious to be uniformly indicated in English.—  
Tr.” □