

PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES

Naive Realism. As I understand it, naive realism is a belief in the real existence of ideas and of the objects these ideas are presumed to represent. Both the idea and the object have a word or symbol that has the common purpose of standing for each of them. Thus for the naive realist there is a trinity of realities: the mental image or idea, the physical object, and the word. The naive realist accepts the word "ball" to stand either for the idea of a ball or for an object having an existence that is independent of the idea.

The critical philosopher has much to quarrel with in the position taken by the naive realist. The naive realist has little to support him that does not rest upon a faith in the connected wholeness of things. And yet the naive realist can support his position indirectly, not by entering into a debate with the critical philosophers, but by taking note of the contradictory positions into which their critiques have led them.

Some have applied their critical faculties to the point of denying reality to all but the ideas. Seizing upon the incontestable position that mind can never come to grips directly with anything other than ideas, they therefore hold that ideas are the only real things for scientific study.

Some have applied their critical faculties to the existence of the material world to the exclusion of all else. An extreme form of materialism would make of thought itself nothing more than a subtle chemical or electronic action.

Some have stated that the only real substance for scientific consideration is language. The logicians, the semanticists, and the extreme logical positivists are examples of such.

The naive realist goes his way assuming that his thought is very real, that the things his thoughts are supposed to represent are real, and that the language attached to these realities is such that he can communicate about each of them with his fellow man.

Methodically all critical philosophers are naive realists when they argue in favor of their critical philosophy. They seem to argue from ideas they believe in, they express themselves by words, and they address these words to objects outside themselves, namely other men.

What Is Naive Realism? I was asked about the use of "naive" in the above notes. Suppose for example one says as above, "What of the naive realist, the one who has thought about the reality of mind and body as deeply as the critical philosophers who have excluded one or the other?" The question is, can one say that such a person is still naive?

I think there is a very useful sense in which one can be a naive realist without being naive in general. For example, a scientist believes in the very real existence of his thoughts and also of the objective world to which they correspond. His thoughts about the structure of matter may be anything at all but naive. Yet he may never have taken the time to consider the relation of his thoughts to his physical sensations, nor the relation of these in turn with respect to the things-in-themselves. In this sense he is a naive realist. The New Church man may believe uncritically in the existence of his mind, body, soul, the spiritual world, and of God. In this sense he is a naive realist. But at the same time he may think very deeply about the consequences of such beliefs upon a life of use. In this he is not naive. A mathematician may devote his whole life to the development of necessary conclusions from a certain set of axioms. Such a one is not naive. And yet he may be very uncritical with reference to axiomatics, or the fundamental logical nature of mathematics itself. As such he is a naive realist in his acceptance of the set of axioms and of the given logic which he uses.

The use of the term "naive realism" would not be necessary if one could use the term "realism" without ambiguity. But it is a fact that the term "critical realism" is a term that applies to the school of thinkers who press forward into questions that have to do with the relation between appearances and the things-in-themselves. Such realists are numerous and divide into different classifications. Some are dualists. That is, they separate the appearance from the thing-in-itself. Some are monists in that they believe that mind is in and a part of nature and thus discovers not effects but directly what is real in nature. (See, *e.g.*, *Philosophy*, Barrett, p. 142 *et seq.*)

And so, when the term "naive realism" is used, the intention is that it apply to those who accept certain realities uncritically in order to be about some other business. Everyone must be un-

critical or naive about something. Even Descartes who started on the road to doubting in order to arrive at a single certainty reminds us in his *Meditations* that one must set his house in order before embarking on such a perilous road. Presumably he accepted naively the existence of his physical being and of society even before he could subject his mind to the doubts that seemed necessary to arrive at certain epistemological existence involved in the concluding *cogito ergo sum*.

Authority. In the note on naive realism there was no reason offered why men are what they are in accepting certain philosophical positions. No one can answer satisfactorily the question why a man is what he is; no man can answer this question even about himself. Autobiographies of great thinkers leave much to be desired in this respect. But there is an interesting thought that came to me about these things. Every thoughtful man searches for an authority. Some individuals satisfy themselves that they have found this authority.

The idealist finds it in himself, in his own ideas. The materialist finds it in the empiricism of science. The logician finds it in the constructs of his systems. What of the naive realist, the one who has thought about the reality of mind and body as deeply as the critical philosophers who have excluded one or the other? Is not his search for authority divided between two paths? Possibly not.

Possibly he feels that there must be a relation between the two realities. It is the search for this relation that leads him to consider questions beyond the ideas and the objects themselves. This may lead him to ask about the why of them and the cause of them. Such thoughts introduce him into a concept that is beyond the comprehension of either the pure idealist or the pure materialist. This concept is correspondence. Having granted the reality of material objects and immaterial ideas related by correspondence, the naive realist is on the road to accepting still other realities. Is he then a mere dreamer? Perhaps he could be. But it seems he cannot remain just that if he searches yet for authority.

What sort of an authority does such a one need? His authority is one which unites all things that are real for him. And if he extends the number of realities from mind and body to soul and spiritual world he must call upon a Grand Authority indeed.

Correspondence. Many philosophers have considered the question, What is real? Some have accepted the criterion of the epistemological real, that is, only that which we can come to know. An extreme form of this is idealism. According to the idealist, since we can never know anything else than the contents of our thoughts, nothing else is real. The extreme view on the other side is materialism.

A very naive approach, and probably the correct one, is that both mind and matter exist. But in what way they both exist and in what way they can each become known remain problems. The person possessed of this naive approach has enough to do, once he is conscious that he has such an idea, to solve these problems for himself.

One of the solutions consists in the New Church idea of correspondence. This idea could be confused with an older philosophical idea that was generated around the term "copy." But it would seem that correspondence is something quite different than "copy." Such things as we say "correspond to good and truth" are in no way a copy of good and truth. The story of Genesis, being a correspondential revelation of creation, or of the Life of the Lord, or of man, is in no way a copy of any of these. All ultimates that correspond to something holy or something spiritual are, because they are ultimates, means by which man may be able to know something about that which is on a degree above the natural.

Why Probability? In these notes it has been stated many times that on the basis of modern physics the concept of "cause" is often regarded as an outmoded concept—that in physics cause and effect relations are no longer useful.

If someone would say that scientists no longer have use for meter sticks or test tubes or some other tool because other and better tools are now available, it would be interesting indeed but it would not follow from this that there is a change in the philosophy of science itself. But when cause and effect are challenged as useful concepts, the situation is different. Cause and effect have been categories of philosophy ever since the time of Aristotle. And though the classical concept of cause was challenged and limited by Hume, in 1748, scientists were not especially aware of this except in retrospect during the last half century.

Now the concept of probability is substituted by many as a

fundamental concept in the place of cause. In the nineteenth century probability was applied by Boltzmann and others. But these applications were clearly with an attitude of expediency in cases where ignorance prevented the application of Newtonian laws. Now, however, the interpretation of statistical results in science is becoming quite different. Now the attitude is that nature is so constituted that it acts according to statistical laws or according to probability.

Thus the question, "Why Probability?" refers to a fundamental philosophical question. Do probability calculations represent a fortuitous source of knowledge in lieu of exact knowledge; or on the other hand do such results arise because that is the way nature acts in principle? It will be useful to have some notes expanding upon this question.

Experience. When this word is used in science it usually means the kind of experience one has in the laboratory or such as is controlled in nature. Somehow the implication of what is objective as contrasted to what is subjective is always present.

As a consequence when the term "empirical" is used, a very narrow connotation is given to it. Experience represents any time sequence of events observed by the senses or the mind; that is, any sequence in which one thing follows another. This includes experiments which are controlled, or the ordering of thoughts so that one thing follows another as in mathematics.

Swedenborg discusses a broader meaning of the word:

Experience is a word of very broad signification. It not only involves those things that have been discovered by the learned in the course of ages, committed to writing, and made part of learning,—as the experience of effects, or observations made upon the three kingdoms of nature, the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal,—hence metallurgy, botany, chemistry, anatomy, and in general all physical and natural learning; but it also involves those particulars that concern societies of men, their forms of government, customs and laws; as well as many other things that properly belong to experience, by virtue of which (experience) we are enabled to deduce and discover those things that are hidden in nature, or that are comparatively remote from our external senses. Among the materials of experience may also be reckoned those products that have been developed by the skill and ingenuity of the learned from the things just enumerated; for after they are once proclaimed, they become materials that, like the others, are fixed in the memory; and when registered among the sciences, they serve as bases for further investigation. But experience, in its most general sense, comprehends the whole collection of those things that have been examined

by us, with the organs of the senses, from early infancy to adult age; in fact, that have been seen, heard, tasted, smelt, or touched; and that are fixed in our memories in the form of material ideas, and expressed by the formulas of words, of which speech is composed. For there are so many objects of the senses presented to every one from his early infancy. By means of these ideas, or these materials of primitive experience, we learn to comprehend and express the matters spoken of above; those, namely, that have been discovered by the learned world, and made part of learning. Thus whatever enters by the senses, and remains in the memory in the form of an idea, belongs to sensual experience.

The Animal Kingdom, Vol. II 460 (h)

Scientific Inductions as Philosophical Principles. It is a principle of New Church philosophy that one should look toward science for confirmation of truth. It is possible under that philosophy that one may derive truth from science, but this is unlikely unless one thinks from certain fundamental principles, for example discrete degrees.

The history of science is filled with inductions which in one age are regarded by many as "universal principles" but which are denied as such in a later age—denied, that is, by scientists, not by philosophers.

These notes in the past have referred to the second law of thermodynamics, which states that the net flow of heat is from hot bodies to colder bodies. If this law is regarded as a universal principle applying to the universe, it follows that the net flow of heat is from hot bodies to colder bodies throughout the universe. Crudely stated, gradually the parts of the universe would arrive at a state where everything is of the same temperature. Belief that this "heat death" was the inescapable fate of the universe predominated during the first twenty-five years of this century and is still being taught in some books used in schools. However, it is no longer regarded as a correct piece of scientific induction by scientific thinkers who have adopted statistical laws as laws of nature "in principle."

Two large classes of scientists who have adopted this latter line may be found among emergent evolutionists and quantum mechanists. According to the induction of these people, "If one could experiment long enough" or if in nature all kinds of random things happen for a long enough time, "heat would occasionally be found to leave the colder body of its own accord and increase the temperature of the warmer one." (See *The Rise of the New Physics*, A. D'Abro. Vol. I, pp. 16-17.)

Philosophy will not deny that in isolated systems the law of thermodynamics applies. Heat engineers use it every day, statistical thinkers and "modern scientists" notwithstanding. New Church philosophy will not deny the use of statistical laws as "laws." Insurance people, quantum mechanists, and theory of heat people use them every day—strict determinists notwithstanding.

What New Church philosophy does deny is that the law of increasing entropy following from the second law of thermodynamics, and the statistical laws, are universal laws in principle in creation. They are convenient means for the classification into categories of large classes of data. Many scientists will also accept this.

The source of true philosophy is beyond the limits of science. And if that philosophy holds that "existence is perpetual creation" it has as its problem to understand how this can be and what sort of mechanism or means is used in creation in its application. It may indeed look to science and to revelation and also to reason to solve such a problem. But it will not be much help to depend upon two contradictory scientific inductions from the laws of entropy or of probability for guiding light—except perhaps to see the contradiction in these two inductions as an indication to go beyond science for fundamental principles.

How to Describe Atoms? The explicit statement of the postulates of quantum mechanics and the logical development of the necessary conclusions by means of differential equations, or matrices, or symbolic methods—this is good enough as an explanation of atoms for most working scientists in physics and chemistry. The end results that are measurable are the energy states. Other results may be possible through the use of derived functions known as wave functions. But all this is very abstract and formal. Do the results defy explanation—an explanation in terms of words coined to deal with sensual experiences?

If the level of atoms is removed not continuously but discretely from the world of sensation, then why indeed should it be possible to describe it in sensual terms such as mass, size, shape, *etc.*? Is this not the battle that atomic physicists are fighting today whenever they try to describe the submicroscopic atoms in terms of everyday experience? And yet what other terms have we—unless

indeed we are content to remain forever with mathematical formalism? As it is put in one book,

Even now, though the quantum laws are represented by a finished formalism, the correspondence principle may be used to understand and visualize the laws that otherwise appear to be a mere set of formal statements. Any attempt to divorce quantum theory from the classical picture of particles and waves would destroy the significance of the correspondence principle and thus lead us into a field where one is not allowed to use the words in which our everyday thinking and experience is expressed. We do not believe that a theory is possible which in its final analysis is not based on these words and, therefore, on classical physics and common sense. (*The Structure of Matter*, Rice and Teller, p. 6.)

And yet later on the same authors give an example illustrating the difficulty.

It may be seen that, although an electron does not "move" in a stationary state, motion can be readily produced as soon as an electron is in a superposition of two stationary states. In this case however we can make only probability statements as to the energy of the electron.

It seems very tempting to identify the frequency $\frac{E'' - E'}{h}$ of the electronic motion with the frequency of the light emitted or absorbed. But we must not consider emission or absorption of light as a consequence of this electron oscillation, but rather as a phenomenon corresponding to it. Otherwise, we would obtain the result that a hydrogen atom which at the moment is with certainty in the first excited state does not move, does not oscillate, and does not emit light (p. 19).

The difficulty that besets the observer in nature is evident here. The only kind of measurements that can be made are of states. The only notice given to the probes of science into the atomic world is at such a time as there is a change of state *and when energy is emitted or absorbed*.

What the nature of this activity is and furthermore what is the nature of the activity while an electron is in a certain state,—these are completely unknown to us.

The last sentence in the quotation above seems to imply that in an excited state (or possibly even in a ground state) there is some sort of activity. But the authors will only go so far as to avoid denying that such an activity exists. They will not go so far as to state that an activity *does* exist.

Actually the authors cannot let themselves give a picture of the electron inside the atom in any other manner than in terms of what the wave function tells them, and this function itself is used only

as to its square, which asserts only a statistical relation. Thus they say:

An electron inside an atom will be described by a wave function, the square of which at a definite point is proportional to the probability of finding the electron at that point. Thus the original picture of electron orbits within the atom is replaced by a more uniform structure in space which can be considered as filling the whole atomic volume, in spite of the fact that the electron, when considered as a particle, is small compared with the atom (p. 4).

Nowhere in science do we find an explicit development of the doctrine of discrete degrees. But everywhere when we read of atoms and nuclei and the particles of physics, we can hardly help but feel that discrete degrees are being illustrated. And when authors are bold enough to go beyond the formalism as are the authors quoted above, one senses what might be termed tormenting problems.

Swedenborg was so bold as to go all the way back to the beginning of creation in his *Principia*. And there, admitting a system at the outset which depended upon discrete degrees, he was nevertheless beset with the same problem: how to explain what is hidden from the senses to a mind which depends solely upon senses for its language. He says in one place, "I could wish that some other person capable of the task, would favor us with a better or more just view of the subject." (*Principia*, Chapter II—19.)

The difficulties experienced by Swedenborg in the *Principia* are becoming more and more evident in recent times. Suppose that the atomic world is a discrete degree removed from the world of sensations. Then there must be something wrong—or at the very least incomplete—in adapting the words of our language coined on sensual roots to describe what is and what goes on in that degree.

The literature of physics has many such indications. For example,

In the adaptation of the relativity requirement to the quantum postulate, we must therefore be prepared to meet with a renunciation as to visualization in the ordinary sense going still further than in the formulation of the quantum laws considered here. Indeed, we find ourselves here on the very path taken by Einstein of adapting our modes of perception borrowed from the sensations to the gradually deepening knowledge of the laws of Nature. The hindrances met with on this path originate above all in the fact that, so to say, every word in the language refers to our ordinary perception.

In the quantum theory we meet this difficulty at once in the question of the inevitability of the feature of irrationality characterizing the quantum postulate. (*Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature*, Niels Bohr, pp. 90-91.)

Discrete Degrees. It is impossible to understand Swedenborg's philosophical works without the concept of discrete degrees. That the concept of discrete degrees is not easy to understand and that it is very unnatural that the scientific mind should come to it if unaided by anything else than empirical or sensual results, is shown by its almost total absence from the history of science.

The effect upon scientific thinking was considerable when people began to realize during the first quarter of this century that there was in nature, in submicroscopic nature, little "worlds" so to speak, which defied explanation in terms of models based upon properties known to us through our senses, such as for example mass, size, etc. Yet, as is well known, Swedenborg's doctrine of discrete degrees had led him over two hundred years ago to see in creation the existence of levels or planes or degrees which could not be explained in terms of those properties which are measured in the physical laboratory.

In the *Animal Kingdom* 17 Swedenborg explains that in order to come into some idea of the soul it is necessary to adopt procedures and doctrines that have not previously been used.

Because of this one can immediately label such an effort as transcendental to science. And yet his transcendental philosophy is not the same as other metaphysical speculations of philosophers. The reason for this is that what he proposes to discover about the soul must be related in some manner with sensible nature, that is with properties in ultimates only, that the mind can come to grips with through the senses.

To relate what transcends ultimate nature in the soul with what is in ultimate nature is the purpose of his doctrines of forms, of communication and influx, or correspondence and representation, and of modification (see *Animal Kingdom*, No. 17).

Discrete Degrees and Causes. It appears that by the time Swedenborg was giving us the Writings his concept of discrete degrees had become a concept prior to that of cause. In fact he states that only through a knowledge of degrees is it possible to know the causes of things. He says,

A knowledge of degrees is like a key to lay open the causes of things, and to give entrance into them. Without this knowledge, scarcely anything of cause can be known; for without it, the objects and subjects of both worlds seem to have but a single meaning, as if there were nothing in them beyond that which meets the eye; when yet compared to the things which lie hidden within, what is thus seen is as one to thousands, yea, to tens of thousands (DLW 184).

In another place in the same work, by omitting any reference to degrees, he states that causes cannot be known from effects:

Yet from effects nothing but effects can be learned; when effects alone are considered no cause is brought to light; but causes reveal effects. To know effects from causes is to be wise; but to search for causes from effects is not to be wise, because fallacies then present themselves, which the investigator calls causes, and this is to turn wisdom into foolishness (DLW 119).

Swedenborg's Search for the Soul. It is the purpose of this note to give evidence that Swedenborg did not arrive easily at the ideas upon which are based the remarks quoted in the above note from *Divine Love and Wisdom*.

Swedenborg does not pretend that the mere listing of these doctrines is all that is necessary. What is necessary is their development and application. This still remains a problem for us and those who follow us who are concerned with New Church philosophy.

The road was long and tormenting for Swedenborg. And he does not claim success in all his efforts. For example he says:

Not very long since, I published the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, a work divided into distinct treatises, but treating only of the blood, the arteries, and the heart, and of the motion of the brain, and the cortical substance thereof; and before traversing the whole field in detail, I made a rapid passage to the soul, and put forth a prodromus respecting it. But on considering the matter more deeply, I found that I had directed my course thither both too hastily and too fast,—after having explored the blood only and its peculiar organs: I took the step, impelled by an ardent desire for knowledge. But as the soul acts in the supreme and innermost things, and does not come forth until all her swathings have been successively unfolded, I am, therefore, determined to allow myself no respite, until I have run through the whole field to the very goal—until I have traversed the universal animal kingdom, to the soul. Thus I hope, that by bending my course inwards continually, I shall open all the doors that lead to her, and at length contemplate the soul herself: by the divine permission. (*The Animal Kingdom*, no. 19.)

Thus after writing two full volumes, the *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, Swedenborg realizes as no one else the serious nature of the problem. Then he says further :

. . . the human intellect cannot penetrate or know itself even; how then should it penetrate the soul, which inhabits a still higher or superior region? For those things that are superior, inhabit a light inaccessible to the inferior; . . . (No. 20).

And later he returns to difficulties in language and the limitations of sensual knowledge he has already expressed elsewhere (and which I also have emphasized in many places in these notes in discussing the atom) :

Add to this, that the idea that might apprehend the soul, and the speech that might express her, are both wanting; for nothing that is adequate to body and matter, is adequate to the soul; she is neither corporeal nor material; consequently, she is entirely above that species of intelligence which receives its notions by means of the forms, predicates, and adjuncts of matter—as is the case with the human intellect; and expresses them by the same means—as is the case with human speech (No. 20).

And yet, because he has a belief, Swedenborg does not give up. His belief has two parts. The first is a belief in the existence of soul. The second is a belief that the soul can be related to the external body, which is a representation of the soul in nature.

Whence possibly it may be inferred, that it is unprofitable, and absolutely foolish, for any one to attempt ascending thither. But these arguments may properly be met by a few opposite ones. Inasmuch as the soul is the model, the idea, the first form, the substance, the force, and the principle of her organic body, and of all its forces and powers; or, what amounts to the same thing, as the organic body is the image and type of its soul, formed and principled to the whole nature of the soul's efficiency, it follows, that the one is represented in the other, if not exactly, yet quite sufficiently to the life; and that an idea of the soul is suggested to the mind by elevating the forms of singulars, and extracting from them a higher meaning, and by analogies and eminences, as will be seen in our doctrines of forms, of order and degrees, of correspondences and representation, etc. Thus, by the body, we are instructed respecting the soul; by the soul, respecting the body; and by both, respecting the truth of the whole: and in this way we are led to an ample knowledge of the animal kingdom (No. 20).

E. F. A.