

THE RACIAL MAN AND
THE HUMAN FORM OF SOCIETY

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“Religion has long taught that it is our duty to love our neighbor and to desire the happiness of others rather than their misery. Unfortunately, active men have paid little attention to this teaching. But in the new world” [which science is ushering in] “the kindly feeling towards others which religion has advocated will be not only a moral duty but an indispensable condition of survival. A human body could not long continue to live if the hands were in conflict with the feet, and the stomach were at war with the liver. Human society as a whole is becoming, in this respect, more and more like a single human body; and if we are to continue to exist, we shall have to acquire feelings directed toward the welfare of the whole in the same sort of way in which our feelings of individual welfare concern the whole body and not only this or that portion of it. . . .” “In the body of a more developed animal, each cell remains in some degree a separate creature, but it cannot prosper except through the prosperity of the whole. In cancer, a group of cells engages in a career of imperialism, but, in bringing the rest of the body to death, it decrees also its own extinction. . . .”

These statements are not our own. Nor are they cited from Plato, or from any of the Writings of Swedenborg. They were written by Bertrand Russell in an article on “The Expanding Mental Universe,”* in which he shows the expanding scope also of our moral obligations. “Until we have set our own house in order,” he says, “I think that we had better leave the moon in peace.” It would be a “doubtful victory” to make our follies cosmic.

We have cited these opinions to illustrate the fact that the perception that society is in the human form is indeed what Professor George P. Conger calls a “philosophical perennial” which pops up in unexpected places simply because it contains an irrepressible truth. This same concept has manifested itself in widely different forms, some of which were so fantastic and grotesque that many

* *Saturday Evening Post*, July 18, 1959. The citations are from pages 93 and 92.

sensible men have become blind to the original truth within; or so couched in myth or fable as to be unrecognizable.

The pragmatic modern mind—overloaded with facts—is easily made contemptuous of metaphor, and underestimates the value of what the Writings call *representative truth*, the type of truth which speaks in correspondences and allegories, and is addressed rather to the heart than to the brain. Yet this type of truth is the first form of human communication—older than speech or words. The men of the “Golden Age” are said to have communicated by gestures, actions, and sounds rather than by articulate words. And the power of rituals, representing spiritual powers and spiritual processes of salvation from evil, became in time abused and turned into magical practices; while underlying truths were turned into myths no longer understood.

In the *Arcana Coelestia* (1766) Swedenborg was inspired to write about certain principles, or universals of thought, which are of primary importance for the interpretation of the Word and the understanding of the doctrine of love to God and charity towards the neighbor. He specifically refers to the science of the ancients as being entirely different from the science or philosophy of the present day and which started especially with Aristotle. The key-science of the ancient church was that of the correspondences of natural things to the things of the spiritual world. Nowadays the use of emblems and metaphors is of course universal, but the learning of the ancients led them into a science of spiritual and heavenly things, and at this day these are scarcely known to exist. To quote: “The knowledges which succeeded in place of those of the ancients, and which are properly called ‘philosophy,’ rather draw the mind away from the knowledge of such things, because they can be applied to the confirmation of falsities as well. And they also bring the mind into darkness when truths are confirmed by them, because for the most part they are bare terms (*voces*) . . . which are grasped by few and concerning which even those few disagree. From this it is evident how far mankind has receded from the erudition of the ancients which led to wisdom.”

There are many suggestions in the Theological Writings that it is the task of the New Church to recover the pre-philosophical doctrines of the Ancient Church from the chaos of the lore of

antiquity. In 1769 Swedenborg apparently sent to the Rev. Mr. Hartley and Dr. Messiter a short paper on the correspondences of the Word, as an Appendix to his published treatise on *The White Horse*. In concluding this paper, Swedenborg wrote:

“Since with the Ancients this science of correspondences was the science of sciences and was their wisdom, it is a matter of importance for some one of your society to devote his labor to this science, which can be done more especially from the correspondences in the *Apocalypse Revealed*, and there demonstrated from the Word. If this be desired, I am willing to unfold the Egyptian hieroglyphics, which are nothing but correspondences, and to give them to the public; which cannot be done by any one else. E. S.”

What Swedenborg offered was not a translation of the alphabets of the hieroglyphic language since made possible through the discovery of the Rosetta stone, but aid in interpreting the many symbols which compose the religious inscriptions covering the walls of Egyptian tombs and temples. The only attempts to follow up his injunction seem to have been made by John J. Garth Wilkinson late in the last century, and by the Rev. C. Th. Odhner in his *Correspondences of Egypt* and *The Mythology of the Greeks and the Romans*.

Among the things brought out by Professor Odhner was the apparent fact that the Greeks personified the legendary Golden Age as the god *Ouranos*, or “Heaven.” Or, reversely, ‘heaven’ was conceived of in the human form—as a Grand Man or as a goddess leaning over the earth. Similarly, the Silver Age or the Ancient Church was personified in *Zeus* or Jupiter and his pantheon.

Many problems attend the effort to understand the way in which ancient truths are suggestively present in the myths—since these are never consistent but are differently conceived or reconstructed from age to age. Yet brilliant rays of light break out which show that behind the confused stories of the way of gods and men lie perceptions of spiritual laws and representations of a wisdom now lost. One persistent strain of thought was to personify the virtues, such as Justice, Love, and Wisdom, as gods in human form living with men.

A common feature of many mythologies was the idea that the world was created from the substance of a primeval giant or Grand

Man, which was hewn asunder to form our world. To quote from the Scandinavian saga, the world was made from the giant Ymer after he had been slain by the three chief gods :

Of Ymer's hulk
 The earth was shaped.
 His blood made billows.
 His bones made bergs.
 The hair formed bushes ;
 And heaven high
 From his skull was made.
 Next, from his eyebrows
 The mighty powers
 Midgard made
 For the sons of men.
 But of his brains
 Were made the baleful
 And gloomy clouds
 Of the lowering sky.

This concept, found in varying guise in Chaldea and India, survived by taking on—or reassuming—a philosophical, spiritualized form, in various theories of pre-Christian Greeks, who thought of man as a microcosm, a least replica of the entire creation. In Plato we find the “world-soul”—conceived as intermediary between the “world of ideas” or of prototypes and the phenomenal world of experience—pictured as a “living creature.” In his *Republic* he parallels the tripartite State with the three components of man's soul which are the appetitive, the spirited, and the rational. Aristotle may have been the first to use the term microcosm. But the idea of a parallelism between man and society seems to have pervaded ancient thought. The Stoics for instance taught that “the place which God has in the world, the soul has in man; that which [in the world] is matter, is in us body.”* The soul in both was conceived as Reason. And Seneca suggests that as everything that is to happen in a man is already bound up in the embryo, so it is with the world which eventually will turn into its elements in a cosmic conflagration.

With the Jews, the truth was preserved since the beginning of their history that man was created in the image of God. And through the Epistles of Paul, Christians came to adopt the concept

* Cited by G. P. Conger, in his *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms*, Columbia Un. Press, 1922.

that the Church, as a society, was in some sense the Body of Christ—Christ being the head, and the faithful being “members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27). This general idea is approved in the Writings, after the cruder aspects of it are explained away. For the Body of Christ is not made up of persons. “What is the Body of Christ, but Divine good and Divine truth?” (TCR 372). The Divine is not the head of the Grand Man of heaven, but its life.

The Writings apply the universal idea of the Grand Man in many ways. In one sense the Grand Man is the Divine proceeding as the pattern of infinite uses in which the angels serve finite functions. In another sense the Grand Man consists of angelic uses actually performed in the heavens. But since the whole of creation reflects the human form of its Creator, the church on earth is before the Lord as one Man; and the same holds true of each society. (AE 1222) In such a case the angels make the interiors of that man, while the church on earth makes the exteriors—the cartilaginous and bony parts; because in men “the ultimate spiritual is clothed with the natural.” (*ibid.*)

No one earth or solar system could make up the *Maximus Homo* in its widest sense. Innumerable earths are needed. (EU 5, 9; SD 1145:3.) Yet the church on our globe has had successive states similar to those of a man who is conceived, born, instructed, and reformed. (TCR 762; AE 641:4.)

Because the human race on each earth develops its own characteristic qualities and uses, and because the entrance of evil can affect them differently, the whole race on each is seen in the Lord’s eyes as one grand man. Thus we read in the *True Christian Religion*:

“The church appears before the Lord as one man; and this *Maximus Homo* must pass through several ages, like an individual man, namely, from infancy to youth and through this to manhood, and at length to old age; and then, when he dies, he will rise again. . . .” (TCR 762.)

And in the *Apocalypse Explained*:

“As regards the successive states of the churches on our globe, they have evidently been similar to the successive states of a man who is being reformed and regenerated, namely, that to become a spiritual man, he is first conceived, next is born, then grows up,

and is afterwards led on further and further into intelligence and wisdom. The church, from the most ancient times to the end of the Jewish Church, progressed like a man who is conceived, born, and grows up, and is then instructed and taught; but the successive states of the church after the end of the Jewish Church, or from the time of the Lord even to the present day, have been like a man increasing in intelligence and wisdom, or becoming regenerate. For this end the interior things of the Word, of the church, and of worship were revealed by the Lord when He was in the world; and now again, things still more interior are revealed; and in the measure that things interior are revealed can man become wiser; for to become interior is to become wiser, and to become wiser is to become interior." (AE 641e.)

In the *Arcana*, the progress of the human race from the Preadamites on is noted. Those before Adam are said to have "lived like wild things (*ferae*) but . . . at length became spiritual men"; after whom followed "those who became celestial men, and constituted the Most Ancient Church." (AC 286.) The Preadamites seem, in AE 641, to answer to pre-natal life, and the regeneration of the racial man is pictured to begin with the Christian Church.

The Racial Man which the Writings here present must be conceived together with the heavens of the after-life. For the Writings are concerned only—or mainly—with the Church, and thus with the growth of the spiritual life of the race on this earth. The successive dispensations or churches are however inwoven in the cultural tissue of our race. The relation between spiritual and cultural development on earth presents one of the fascinating fields open for study to future New Church men.

Civic society, as well as the church, is organic—patterned to the human form. This is something which is not categorically elaborated in the Writings, but is implied throughout and which follows as a logical corollary from the doctrine of the Grand Man. (Char. 72, 80) So, for instance, it is said that riches in the commonwealth are like the blood in the human body. (TCR 403) In 1760, Swedenborg, in an address to the Swedish Diet, opposed the use of "fiat paper money," saying: "The currency in a country is like the blood in the body, upon which depends its life, health, strength, and defences." (Tafel's *Docu.*, vol. I, p. 503.) But the application of this principle to the body politic is a philosophical task and carries little authority from the Writings.

Even before Swedenborg's time there had been attempts to visualize society as an organism. (DLW 24, TCR 412.) The Platonic image of the prototypal World-Soul as an 'animal' or 'beast' or living creature, never entirely faded from Western thought. Thomas Hobbes, a contemporary of Descartes, in 1651 wrote a book called *Leviathan*, in which he describes the commonwealth as an 'artificial man.' The soul of the country, he claimed, was the sovereignty, which gives life and motion to the whole. The counsellors of the king were the memory of the body politic; its nerves were the rewards and punishments by which the government could move every joint and member, namely, the officers of the judiciary and the executives. Strength consisted in the wealth and riches of the various members of the commonwealth. Taxation was the blood stream! Concord gave health, sedition sickness, civil war death. The formation of colonies was like the procreation of offspring.

Hobbes was a materialist, and a believer in the Divine right of kings. The society he visualized was not the proper picture of the ideal man. Some later philosophers, with Henry James, Sr.,* have felt that "Society is the redeemed form of man." But man must be reformed before society. Legislation and enforced order cannot regenerate a people, any more than an organization of nations can bring peace and blessing to the human heart. It is recognized by many that the data on which sociology rests are not like the exact data of mathematics such as have aided the formation of other sciences. For sociology has to do with a realm influenced by human freedom—by the personal equation.

Nevertheless, far better attempts than that of Hobbes have been made to draw a parallel between the data of physiology and those of sociology. It is worth while for New Church students to read such books as one by Professor Adolph Elwyn** which was first published under the facetious title, *Yourself, Inc.*, but later as *The Story of the Human Body*. And it is interesting to note the use which Professor Very makes of De la Grasserie's elaborate parallelisms.***

* *Letters*, 1879.

** Published by Grosset & Dunlap, New York, 1930.

*** De la Grasserie, in *L'Humanité Nouvelle*. Cited in Very's *Epitome of Swedenborg's Science*, Boston 1927, vol. II, pp. 343 ff.

From such sources, and from our own imagination, we shall call your attention to some ways in which society can be reflected in the human body. And we should note that many of the terms used reflect new data not known as such by Swedenborg's contemporaries.

The body is organized of cells, as a society is constituted of people. The varieties of tissues and organs depend on the varieties among the constituent cells. The first *germ cells* are like the parents or early settlers from whom a people increases by varying rates of birth and mortality. By specialization of uses, groups of citizens form communities like *organs*, and the various uses are represented in specialized tissues. It can be said that the likeness between society and organism is not one of morphology but of correspondence of *uses*. And this is why the Writings, when describing the correspondence between the human organs and the provinces of heaven, can suggest innumerable parallels to civic uses.

Take the *bones*. What would we do without those people of rather crude intelligence, who are set in their social habits and political opinions; who are yet of use—perhaps as unskilled laborers, doing routine uses in machine-like, perfunctory ways, their efficiency for mechanical response being easily measured by various mental tests?

Perhaps a mechanical civilization is in danger of producing too many of such types, when it encourages blind loyalties, cut and dried education along uniform lines, hard and fast systems, and tasks devoid of creative joy or individual initiative and enterprise; when freedom is limited, reflection discouraged, and even philosophy is turned into a tiresome tabulation of logical alternatives. This ossification of ideas is a danger in any field of learning. Yet systematized science is the skeleton on which all knowledge and intelligence and thus all uses rest.

And what would happen to us if we had no bones? There is an important protective value in the presence in society of narrow minded and bigoted elements, for they form an opposition to impulsive changes, and stabilize all fields of use. Without such an element society would be in a state of constant ferment and would be spineless as a jelly fish.

The economy of the body is under a benevolent monarchy—a central government which thoroughly understands its people's

needs, abilities and desires. The *brain* and the nervous system represent that government, with its intricate networks of communication, and its legislative, executive, and judicial branches, its institutions and its records.

The *lungs* purify and recreate the blood. The breath of the body politic is public information and knowledge, which give freedom and autonomy to its component parts. Free speech and press within the limits of decency and justice provide the elements which make men *conscious* of their social and national obligations, and of the unity of their traditions—thus fostering intelligent patriotism. Even so, man's consciousness of his individuality and existence rest on his breathing.

The voluntary nerve fibers directed by the *cerebrum* govern the deliberate actions of the body as a whole, even as the central government executes the foreign policy of a nation and also regulates its imports. The *sensory nerves* represent the educational and intellectual uses within the country; the *cerebral cortex* represents its thinkers and planners; the *cerebellum* stands for its more or less unconscious moods and the moral background of the country. The *motor nerves* answer to its skills and graces, which are the result of training as well as inheritance. The *sympathetic system* suggests uses of an aesthetic, creative, impulsive, warlike, and artistic type, while the *parasympathetic* nerves suggest uses of a conservative nature, demanding prudence, foresight, reticence, and insurance.

The food and fuel industries of a nation are its *digestive system*. Its stomach and mesentery serve as factory and field for gathering and refining the products needed, and preparing them for the market, while the colon freights the rest away.

The *bloodstream*, like a nation, employs transport workers who distribute merchandise, mail and food to their destinations. The *epithelia* of the capillaries are the distant freight or passenger stations or the terminal loading docks. The bloodstream provides the main routes and markets—the wealth and riches from which all individuals draw their necessities and delights—the “common good” to which they must all contribute.*

The *fat deposits* are warehouses—where superfluity assures the continuance of uses—a form of capitalism which is needed, yet which can be abused. They serve as buffers in times of need.

* Char. 127 ff.

In the *red bone marrow* we find a vast maternity hospital for the breeding of ever new blood cells. In the *spleen* and *liver* are the mining areas for the iron and other minerals which are basic for the body's as for the nation's subsistence.

Each type of cells has its correspondence in the commonwealth. Connective-tissue cells (or fibers) represent the building trades, and fibro-blasts are like retired experts ready to do reconstructive work when needed. Gluttonous *macrophages* and *leucocytes* act as a watchful police force, as immigration officials and soldiers, who often die in their effort to rid the body of foreign elements or bacteria. Some also serve as garbage-collectors, but also salvage useful minerals. The white blood cells combine the functions of quarantine officers, doctors, and pall bearers.

The control of industrial life is not entirely in the hands of the conscious planners, any more than the nerves or the brain alone rule the moods or states of the body. For as Swedenborg pointed out, long before it was known by modern science, every tissue produces its individual secretion into the blood stream. These *internal secretions* from various glands and tissues serve as messenger-substances which secretly regulate many organic functions. By these internal secretions the body parts express their needs and ambitions, and thus enjoy a limited suffrage. The law of supply and demand which the mail service of an industrial country lays bare, is in the long run more powerful than deliberate legislation.

Yet it must be realized that the marvelous economy of a healthy body finds no real parallel except in an ideal society in which all units are moved by a love of use.

Many a problem will attend any attempt to apply the doctrine of the Grand Man. The question occurs, for instance, how far the Racial Man on this earth can be said to have a continuous identity, such as a person on earth, or as a nation, or a commonwealth. What makes an individual out of the countless trillions of cells in our body is the individual *consciousness* to the existence of which they all contribute and which they all serve. Is there in a nation, a society, or a church anything which could be likened to a higher consciousness—a soul or a spirit?

Here we must heed the warning in the Writings that doctrine is not gathered by correspondences, for these can only illustrate and

corroborate doctrines drawn by the analysis of open teachings. (SS 56.) For analogy or correspondence is never identity.

The most that I would say is that the conatus to the human form is present everywhere in creation, and urges to the likeness of that form. Yet the reality can be fulfilled only in the individual human mind, which rests in the body on some eleven billion nerve cells which do not undergo cell division but remain from birth to death. Consciousness—freely responsive to the Lord's inflowing gifts—is individual. But where human beings coöperate in societies, there is a growing community of wisdom, and a deeper sharing of common loves. And thus the individuals of a society can be borne up in a common sphere which seems as the spirit or soul of the society.

AN INNER ASPECT OF HISTORY

The worshipper of himself and of nature confirms himself against Divine providence when he reflects according to his perception that victories are on the side of prudence, and sometimes not on the side of justice; and that it makes no difference whether the commander is an upright man or not. Victories seem to be on the side of prudence, and sometimes not on the side of justice, because man judges from the appearance, and favors one side more than the other, and that which he favors he is able to confirm by reasonings; nor does he know that in heaven there is a spiritual justice to a cause and in the world a natural justice, as has just been said, and that these are conjoined by means of a connection between things past and things future that are known only to the Lord. (DP 252:1)