

PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES ✓

222. *The Variety of Approaches to Free-Will.* Free-will is so important that it is possible to construct the whole philosophy of man around it as a concept. From the Writings of Swedenborg we learn that the very nature of man depends so much upon his will that when properly understood "will is the man himself." (DL XVII, 4)

It will be the purpose of this set of notes to extend the understanding of the nature of free-will beyond that which I have discussed earlier in a paper in the NEW PHILOSOPHY.*

It will be useful to mention some of the approaches to free-will, with a comment here and there to indicate whether the approach discussed is involved either in the paper or in these notes.

1. In the paper I outlined how naturalists look to some element in nature where freedom becomes possible, for example: the "swerving ever so little" of the Lucretian atom; the revival of animism in present day thought.

2. In the paper I also emphasized that on the natural plane there are order and cause and effect relations—this is called "determinism." I held that this is not inconsistent with free-will—in fact it makes free-will possible. For example, man's body and mind must be healthy and in order so that he can think in an orderly way.

3. On the spiritual plane I suggested that the will and understanding are cosmological principles; that is, they are substantial. Like those realities on the natural plane such as the atoms, the will and understanding are substantial realities on the spiritual plane.

4. In the paper I considered the atoms of the natural world and the will and understanding of the spiritual world as substantial realities, and represented these as the seat of a will in each case, natural or spiritual. I call this the "cosmological" approach to free-will. (I do not therefore advocate animism on the one hand, nor consider my treatment of will and understanding as complete on the other hand. I only refer to these as historical facts illustrating ways by which free-will has been approached.) Also I

* See "A History of the Concept of Free Will," NEW PHILOSOPHY, July-Sept. 1967, pp. 411 et seq.

need not expand the generic Greek term "atom" into its complexities because of the many particles of modern physics other than atoms. Note for example that the animism of Lucretius was in an "atom"; in modern physics perhaps it is in an "electron." Passing over to the spiritual plane, the cosmological principles can be extended by regarding the will, for example, as a "receptacle" of love—the will being a "recipient form" which is "substantial." (See DL XVIII)

5. Not developed, either in the paper or in these notes, is the moral and spiritual approach to free-will based upon considerations of good and evil.

6. Another approach is based upon discrete degrees. There is an order which is proper to each degree. For example, there are Divine order, spiritual order, and natural order. There is some use made of this approach both in the paper and in the present notes. See item 9 below.

7. In a deeper sense there is the approach based upon the relation of truth to good by way of relating knowledge and understanding to wisdom and will. The Writings give extended accounts of *these*. This can hardly be summarized in a sentence or two. Swedenborg refers to this as a "complex." He writes,

. . . the complex of these in the ultimate is good; and this has in itself an external form from truths in the thought and an internal form from the love of the will. (DW XI. 4)

This approach is not developed either in the paper or in these notes. From the New Church point of view this approach might be more important than any of the others.

8. The previous approach is possible only through the Writings. What of other approaches based upon revelation? The paper discussed the Augustinian approach. Earlier Christian approaches were based upon literal interpretations from the Bible. A basis for this can be seen in the following:

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8: 31-32)

9. In the present set of notes from 223 to 233, I will briefly recapitulate how the question concerning free-will originates in philosophy and becomes a problem in Augustinian philosophy.

Then it is indicated that the problem does not exist when the doctrines of order and degrees from the Writings are used.

10. "Spontaneity" of artistic creativity is recognized by some as a manifestation of the existence of free will. In numbers 234–237 I illustrate how this is evident in the language of contemporary artists. The selections chosen emphasize order rather than spontaneity, and so I believe illustrate free-will as described in the earlier numbers of the notes better than some "feelings" that are a part of modern art, some of which depend upon "accidental" renderings rather than planned or orderly ones. Artistic creativity, I believe, illustrates the presence of free-will in a wonderful way. It is included in these notes only as an illustration. There are others.

The manner in which man, as a scientist and engineer, exploits the application of the laws of nature is another illustration. The manner in which man conducts his life according to moral and spiritual laws is of course the most important illustration.

Two degrees of freedom are manifest in each illustration. The first of these is the choice between goods and evils that are applicable in each case: art, science, and life, respectively. The second is the freedom that results if the application is according to order.

223. *Plan of these Notes.* These notes are intended to show how determinism and order go together in a complementary manner with freedom. Omnipotence which is of Divine order is complemented in humans by free will—or in the language of the Writings, there is a correspondence between omnipotence and free will. God is all powerful. The power of man rests on his free will.

Does the explicit use of "will"—hence of free will—begin with Aristotle? Discussion of this question is followed by a series of notes that try to show that Augustine's question of relating the denial of man's freedom to the omnipotence of God does not exist if one traces the series of relations from omnipotence, which is in Divine Order, to the degrees of rationality of man that are in order, thence to his loves and their corresponding wills—and to the sense in which those wills are free. No pretention is made to answer all questions that have pestered mankind for over 1200 years concerning free will. A proper question in New Church philosophy is associated with the nature of the as-of-self—what is man?

224. *Plato and Free-will.* The *Syntopicon* states that Plato did not use the word "will." It says,

Though [Plato] does not use the word [will], the role he assigns to spirit as the auxiliary of reason corresponds to the function performed by what the later writers call "will." (*Syntopicon*, Vol. II, p. 1072)

From this I conclude that Plato did not use the term "free will" either.

225. *Aristotle and Freedom.* Although the idea of free-will is not evident in Plato, it appears in the writings of his pupil, Aristotle. Aristotle speaks of potencies of things that are not rational and of things that are rational. The non-rational potency admits of only one outcome, for example, an acorn to become an oak—not a pine tree. In the rational being there is a potency that can produce either of two contrary courses. (See discussion in *The Way of Philosophy*, Wheelwright, p. 245.)

If what is quoted from the *Syntopicon* in the previous note is correct, then the origin of the concept of free-will in Aristotle is important. I therefore give two quotations from him.

Since some such originative sources are present in soulless things, and others in things possessed of soul, and in soul, and in the rational part of the soul, clearly some potencies will be non-rational and some will be accompanied by a rational formula. This is why all arts, i.e. all productive forms of knowledge, are potencies; they are originative sources of change in another thing or in the artist himself considered as other.

And each of those which are accompanied by a rational formula is alike capable of contrary effects, but one non-rational power produces one effect; e.g. the hot is capable only of heating, but the medical art can produce both disease and health. The reason is that science is a rational formula, and the same rational formula explains a thing and its privation, only not in the same way; and in a sense it applies to both, but in a sense it applies rather to the positive fact. Therefore such sciences must deal with contraries, but with one in virtue of their own nature and with the other not in virtue of their nature; for the rational formula applies to one object in virtue of that object's nature, and to the other, in a sense, accidentally. For it is by denial and removal that it exhibits the contrary; for the contrary is the primary privation, and this is the removal of the positive term. Now since contraries do not occur in the same thing, but science is a potency which depends on the possession of a rational formula, and the soul possesses an originative source of movement; therefore, while the wholesome produces only health and the calorific only heat and the frigorific only cold, the scientific man produces both the contrary effects. (*Metaphysics*; Book IX, 2)

Aristotle brings in "will" explicitly as follows :

Since that which is 'capable' is capable of something and at some time and in some way (with all the other qualifications which must be present in the definition), and since some things can produce change according to a rational formula and their potencies involve such a formula, while other things are non-rational and their potencies are non-rational, and the former potencies must be in a living thing, while the latter can be both in the living and in the lifeless; as regards potencies of the latter kind, when the agent and the patient meet in the way appropriate to the potency in question, the one must act and the other be acted on, but with the former kind of potency this is not necessary. For the non-rational potencies are all productive of one effect each, but the rational produces contrary effects, so that if they produced their effects necessarily they would produce contrary effects at the same time; but this is impossible. There must, then, be something else that decides; I mean by this, desire or will. For whichever of two things the animal desires decisively, it will do, when it is present, and meets the passive object, in the way appropriate to the potency in question. (*Metaphysics*, Book IX, 5)

226. *Augustine and Free Will.* The philosophical consequences of his understanding of the meaning of the "omnipotence" and "omniscience" of God caused Augustine to arrive at the conclusion that, since Adam, man does not have free-will.

In the *True Christian Religion*, no. 463, Swedenborg discusses the existence of this denial of free-will in "the present church," that is, of his day. He quotes at length from the *Formula Concordiæ*, Leipzig edition of 1756. In the subsequent numbers, Swedenborg discusses the teaching to the New Church concerning free-will. (See Chapter VIII, nos. 463-508.)

The number 508, which concludes this chapter, contains the words so well known to New Church men :

"Now it is allowable [*nunc licet*]" ; which signifies that now it is allowable to enter intellectually into the mysteries of faith.

Since Augustine's time men have argued, and they still argue, about what is meant by free-will. In *The Way of Philosophy*, Wheelwright suggests that there are only two views possible, namely determinism and libertarianism. This is true perhaps in the main.

The case of Locke, however, is different enough to warrant mention. He objects to speaking of free-will because for him it is a fact that man has will, and also that man is free to act in one way or another. Therefore, as Frost puts it,

To ask whether a man's will is free or not is, according to John Locke, a foolish question. "It is as insignificant," he writes, "to ask whether a man's will be free as to ask whether his sleep be swift or his virtue square." This is true, he argues, because the will is the power of an individual to think his own actions and to prefer their doing or not doing. If one is able to think about his actions and is able to prefer one action over and above another, he has will. On the other hand, freedom is also a power, the power to do or not to do any particular thing in terms of what he wills. (*Basic Teachings of the Great Philosophers*, S. E. Frost, Jr., pp. 142-143)

It appears as a rule in modern philosophy that it is as Wheelwright puts it, namely that belief in determination and belief in freedom are mutually exclusive.

The Writings teach concerning end, cause, and effect. They also teach that man has free-will. Moreover, they teach of God's omnipotence. How can all these things be?

227. *Man's Freedom Depends Upon His Loves.* It is significant that the chapter in TCR on free-will ends with the number that includes the *Nunc Licet* statement. What is meant by entering *intellectually* into the mysteries of faith? The following series of notes, I believe, is an illustration of what this means.

Certainly, Augustine entered intellectually into the mystery of faith concerning the consequences of sin in the Garden of Eden. Yet, this entrance led to error. Would it not appear presumptuous for us, therefore, to try again? The remarks of the previous note, however, indicate that there is a need to do so. Why?

We believe that there is an internal consistency in the Writings. According to the Writings God's omnipotence does not preclude man's freedom. How can this be?

We ask first what is meant by "freedom." Second, we ask what is meant by God's omnipotence? It says in the *Arcana Coelestia*,

Few know what freedom is, and what non-freedom is. All that which is of any love and its delight appears to be freedom, and that which is contrary to these, non-freedom. What is of the love of self and the love of the world, and of their cupidities, appears to man as freedom, but it is infernal freedom; while what is of love to the Lord and of love toward the neighbor, consequently of the love of good and truth, is freedom itself, and is heavenly freedom. (AC 2870)

Thus we see that man's freedom is linked with man's love. The kind of freedom man has depends upon his loves. To deny man's freedom is to deny that he may act according to his loves.

228. *Omnipotence is a Mystery. Nunc Licet*; now it is permitted to enter into the mysteries. . . . Yet God's omnipotence is a mystery.

That omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence pertain to the Divine Wisdom from the Divine Love, but not to Divine Love by means of the Divine Wisdom, is a mystery from heaven which has never entered into the mind of any one. . . . (TCR 50)

It is impossible to go fully into this in these notes. We only note that the teaching that God is omnipotent is a part of the mystery. It says,

But this mystery will be made clearer in what follows and in the meantime let it stand as a general principle. That God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. . . . (*ibid.*)

For Augustine and others of the Christian Church, "omnipotence" was interpreted from the Bible. The language is different from that in the revelation of the Writings. In the Bible it says,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. (John 1: 1, 3 quoted in TCR 50)

To a slight extent with Origen (A.D. 185-254), to a larger extent with Augustine (A.D. 354-430), and to an extreme extent with Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274), philosophy was introduced into religion. By the time the Writings were given (A.D. 1747-1772), philosophy had almost swallowed religion. Clearly from historical retrospect it was time for a revelation in which freedom to enter into mysteries of faith is permitted.

This permission is of order. So that it may be of order it was necessary to know what is meant by order itself. And so, in that revelation immediately after the above discussion in TCR 50, relating omnipotence in particular to a mystery of faith, there follows a discussion on order.

229. *God is Omnipotent—What Does This Mean?*

God is omnipotent, because He is able to do all things from Himself, and the power of all others is derived from Him. (TCR 56)

Except in things Divine the all-powerfulness that God has is not exclusive. God is also Creator. On lower planes there are "others." These have power—a power that "is derived from

Him." He in no way deprives Himself of His Divine powers through giving powers to His created beings.

An example can be seen on the natural plane involving only human beings. An all-powerful king of his country does not lose any of that power if he is a good king and bestows upon his subjects certain freedoms. If these freedoms are according to the order of his kingdom, his kingdom will grow because of these freedoms rightly exercised.

The same thing can be seen with omniscience by thinking of a good and wise teacher who loses no wisdom through good teaching. On the natural plane both the king and the teacher grow in stature through such things. In God's kingdom which is heaven, there is also a growth in good uses, and a growth of the Grand Man of heaven.

Also, God's omnipresence does not mean pantheism, nor does it mean non-existence of created things—in particular of man! One or the other of these two would seem to follow by ascribing to God conditions or attributes with which we are familiar only in space and time. To think this way is to conclude only that two bodies cannot exist in the same place at the same time. To think this way is to conclude that things created and the Creator either are the same or are mutually exclusive. Space and time do not have a bearing on things Divine. That omnipresence of God means more than that God is in heaven only, see AE 1224.

230. *What is Order?* As already suggested, the permission to enter intellectually into a mystery of faith depends upon knowledges originating in revelation. Order defined by revelation is given in TCR 52:

But here we will first explain the meaning of order by a general definition of the term. Order is the nature of the disposition, determination, and activity of the parts, substances, or entities, which constitute the form of a thing, whence is its state; the perfection of which is produced by wisdom from its love, or the imperfection of which is occasioned by the madness of reason from lust. In this definition mention is made of substance, form, and state; and by substance we at the same time mean form, because every substance is a form; and the quality of a form is its state, the perfection or imperfection of which results from order. But because these things are metaphysical they will necessarily appear dark and obscure, until illustrated by references to particular examples, which will be done in the following pages.

The order that is to be explained pertains to "metaphysical" in the sense of spiritual and Divine things. There are only general teachings in the Writings concerning natural things. But there is considerable agreement between Swedenborg's philosophical works, especially the *Principia*, and the Writings when correspondences are applied. By applying correspondences here we enumerate the things corresponding rather than giving a *modus operandi*. See "The Doctrine of Correspondences," Willard D. Pendleton, *NEW CHURCH LIFE*, 1951, p. 532; Translator's Introduction, *Rational Psychology*, Sewall Edition.

The idea of discrete degrees is one of the important ideas developed in some detail in the *Principia*. Within each degree there is order. From the Writings we learn that there is spiritual order and there is natural order. Likewise from revelation we learn of Divine order. Order within any degree in no manner disturbs order in any other degree. Far from there being disturbances, there is correspondence between the order in one degree and that in another.

It is the failure to know this that caused a confusion between the omnipotence of God and the power of man that is called freedom. God's omnipotence is of order—it is of Divine order. Man's freedom is also of order—it is of an order that is associated with his rationality. Man's freedom and rationality are God's gifts to man, which in no way deprive God of any powers which are of Divine order.

In TCR 52-54, there is a discussion of order—specifically "the nature and quality of order into which the universe was created."

231. *Freedom and Rationality.* As God's omnipotence is of order, so man's freedom is also according to order. Freedom is possible through man's rationality. What is rationality? And what is the nature of its order?

By rationality is meant the capacity to understand what is true and thereby what is false, also to understand what is good and thereby what is evil; and by freedom is meant the capacity to think, will, and to do these things freely. (DLW 264)

The orderly development of these "capacities" does not come naturally but only through regeneration (DLW 425). (To see

how an evil man also enjoys these capacities: DLW 266.) The relation of true freedom to regeneration is through love.

First, however, it should be known that all freedom is of love, insomuch that love and freedom are one; and as love is the life of man, freedom also is his life. (DP 73)

Loves that are developed through regeneration are the loves that are of order.

232. *The Several Freedoms.* In *The Way of Philosophy*, Philip Wheelwright divides the freedoms into empirical and metaphysical.

Empirical freedoms may be trivial as with a spoiled child and "his way with trifles." They may be important as with those guaranteed by the American Constitution. There are others relating to health, economy, labor-saving devices, different forms of entertainment, travel, etc.

Empirical freedoms, however, are not the ones usually meant in philosophical discussions—except of course when the discussion is specifically directed toward government, social conditions, etc.

In AC 2870, quoted above (227), it was stated that freedoms depend upon loves. According to Wheelwright, to the extent that loves beyond natural ones are meant, our concern would be with metaphysical loves and hence with metaphysical freedoms.

In the Writings we read that there are a great variety of loves, thus:

Now, since there are many kinds of loves, some in harmony and others discordant, it follows that there are likewise many kinds of freedom; but in general there are three, natural, rational, and spiritual. (DP 73)

Natural freedom is from inheritance, and "from it man loves nothing but self and the world. . . ." "*Rational freedom* is from the love of reputation for the sake of honour and gain." "*Spiritual freedom* is from the love of eternal life."

On each of these levels, natural, rational, and spiritual, there is a dependence of freedom upon the power of the mind to think on that level. If we call that power in each case "rationality," then on each level

. . . man has the faculty of understanding, which is rationality, and the faculty of thinking, willing, speaking and doing that which he understands, which is liberty; and that these two faculties are from the Lord, in man, . . . (DP 73. References are added to DLW 264-270, 425; DP 43, 44.)

233. *Freedom and the As-of-Self.* The New Church philosopher proceeds from the understanding of omnipotence which is according to Divine Order down to man's freedom which is his love that develops with him as his rationality grows and he progresses in regeneration.

The question as seen by Augustine does not exist. God's omnipotence does not mean that man is deprived of powers that are according to the order of creation.

We should at this point expect to seek a new question that is proper in New Church philosophy. What is it?

Whatever a man does from freedom . . . provided it be according to his reason, appears to be his own. (DP 74)

Whatever a man does from freedom according to his thought, is appropriated to him as his own, and remains with him. (DP 78)

Thus, we are introduced to the doctrine concerning the as-of-self (DP 88). It is according to order that man does appropriate what appears to him from his freedom (DP 86).

234. *Freedom and Composing.* I shall illustrate in the following numbers how freedom is manifest in the creative activity.

Leonard Bernstein in one of his television programs for children was explaining the importance of a certain note in a composition he was going to play. He spoke of the freedom of a master composer such as Beethoven to choose that note. One not trained in harmony and other forms that enter composition would not be free. The master needs all this and more. He needs to have the willingness in his choice to set aside *all* other possibilities.

235. *Freedom—One Artist's View.*

Every project would be vain were we not free; but are we? Many deny it: they believe in determinism: according to them, life is not amenable to our wills.

Determinism implies causality. Causality and determinism are mere words. Words often deceive us. They lead us to suppose they must stand for reality, when they often merely adorn lay figures. As peremptory as a fiat from the Vatican, they go back to a time when Man believed he knew something, and that, some day, he would know all: they are the moulds in which faith is stored. Take, for instance, the word "solve," which so duped the philologist Renan when he said "science will solve the enigma of the

universe," thus insinuating that a solution existed. But the statement itself is a "problem." The problem of causality quite simply leads back to the existence of causality.

Our logic cannot admit any effect without a cause, either remote or immediate. It reasons thus: "The universe exists, there must therefore have been some first cause, some impulsion." This is how that God was discovered, explained, or invented who is so variously denominated Prime Cause, Self-Created, the Sublime Architect of the Universe, The Prime Motor. But must God necessarily exist because we should like Him to?

We might just as reasonably think that the conception of causality depends entirely on the construction of man's spirit. In effect, transcendently it may be that events behave so impolitely as to dispense with causes. God, in such an event, would be a creation of mankind, a dressing for a perpetual wound, a stop-gap for a hole in our souls.

All of which does not mean that God is non-existent.

From the logical point of view, the theistic solution and the atheistic negation have equal significance. Is either entirely satisfactory?

No, since we cannot logically make up our minds that God does or does not exist!

We can therefore reasonably take it that Reason has no validity in such matters. Yet there is one *rational* prerogative we can claim, that of faith. And divest ourselves of determinism, which is itself a belief.

. . . in favour of freedom there is one feeling that pleads and wins the cause: the feeling that we are free to make our own decisions. (*Foundations of Modern Art*, Ozenfant; p. 189-190)

Concerning order he says,

Our problem is how to attain happiness, that happiness which we alone can build for ourselves: the terrestrial paradise in which our joys are consequent upon the ordering of our acts and their adequacy. We should always give ear to our elemental voices, though they may lack co-ordination and often suggest mutual antagonisms. Only the perfect co-ordination of our acts can unite them into one solid lucid structure, as coral is solid among weeds, which are at the mercy of every passing current. The Currents are the thousand possibilities which, at every moment, open to us, and from among which we have to make our choice. The Corals are the ordering of our voluntary acts: the tokens of their quality and adequacy. (*ibid.*, p. 190)

There is law, form, and a causal relation to order, but there is freedom too:

To try and live by the light of geometry saves us from expecting the possible co-operation of Chance, a god who generally deserts his devotees. Such a discipline, like all disciplines, is an ethical system which bestows certain values. Its help is precious, for we are free, but only relatively so: because every significant act influences our subsequent acts. (*ibid.*)

236. *Order in Nature.* Is order inextricably linked with determinism? Does determinism preclude freedom? The intention of these notes is to indicate how there is order, how there is determinism, how there is freedom. The intention of these notes is to show their complementary nature, not their mutual-exclusiveness.

Above I noted Ozenfant's observation, ". . . in favor of freedom there is one feeling that pleads and wins the cause: the feeling that we are free to make our own decisions."

A Christian philosopher and also a writer on art has referred to a similar testimony in favor of art. Etienne Gilson is speaking of qualities.

There is a deep truth hidden in the old Greek anecdote about the painter who, not finding another one at home, left him, as a visiting card, a simple hand-drawn straight line. No painter has anything more personal than the touch of his hand. (*Painting and Reality*, pp. 253-254)

We are accustomed to think of a straight line as a certain order—say of points, of a continuum, of a boundary, of the shortest distance between two points under certain conditions, etc. But in the anecdote, within the meaning of "a simple hand-drawn straight line" there is something more than any of these. It is an order that is a quality, not quantity. Gilson says further:

The kinds of qualities we now have in mind belong to quantitative wholes as such, and they are being actually perceived when such wholes are being actually apprehended by sight. Nature is abundantly provided with such wholes. What child has not found himself unconsciously fascinated by the perfect geometrical beauty of certain pebbles, sea shells, crystals, tree leaves, etc.? Why are most people so fond of flowers, not always for their colors, but often enough for the amazing perfection of their forms? The only reason for their admiration is that they are apprehending by sight the presence of a certain order among parts within a whole. Certain sea shells are so perfectly regular that their shape could be expressed by the algebraic formulas applicable to similar curves, but even such formulas do not make us see the curve; they only let us know why each one of the points of a curve, or of the lines of a surface, has to be found where it is. And just as the law of a geometrical curve is intelligible only to a mind, so also the order of its parts within their whole is perceptible only to such a sense as human sight. The order proper to each quantitative whole apprehended by sense perception is its quality. (*ibid.*, p. 254)

The naturalist, the determinist, may so isolate—yea, abstract—his attention to the atoms and their laws. This is *an* order. Even

granting with Lucretius that they swerve ever so little, why in that swerving does the order of quality appear?

There is order in nature that is of quantity, of quality, and of many other things—relations, for example. Some of these things, more often observed than others, Aristotle called categories. What is there about determinism that leads necessarily to the presence of all of these in one whole being?

Not only that, but where does this thing called order come from? Quantity, quality, relations, etc., do not exist within a whole by themselves, however simple or however complex. There is an order of quantity; there is an order of quality; there is an order of relations.

237. *Evolution—Utility—What comes Natural.* Of what relation are these terms to freedom? These do not always lead to a determinism that challenges freedom's existence. But they may lead to setting it aside.

Evolution may gradually set up a condition where the possibilities of freedom may not even be appreciated—as in the evolution of a habit. The evolution of an idea may so overcome one as to close his mind to others. Does evolution in nature involve strict determinism—as applied, say, to “natural selection”?

Whenever “what comes natural” comes to mind, I also think of Lucretius' atom which perhaps “swerved ever so little.” In the days of Lucretius, following Aristotle, the natural motions were toward the center of what was then the natural “universe.” But today we “explain” such motions by “gravity”! What is more natural than gravity?

It is out of date to refer to Aristotelian “natural motions.” But there is something about the past that makes some of its contents come popping up in the present.

Santayana, the philosopher, in his *The Sense of Beauty*, has this interesting paragraph involving “natural selection” and gravity—both ancient and modern. There seems to be a determinism about what is “going on in nature”—the way in which hills are built, after which the Egyptians fashioned their pyramids:

Utility (or, as it is now called, adaptation, and natural selection) organizes the material world into definite species and individuals. Only certain aggregations of matter are in equilibrium with the prevailing forces of the environment. Gravity, for instance, is in itself a chaotic force; it pulls all particles

indiscriminately together without reference to the whole into which the human eye may have grouped them. But the result is not chaos, because matter arranged in some ways is welded together by the very tendency which disintegrates it when arranged in other forms. These forms, selected by their congruity with gravity, are therefore fixed in nature, and become types. Thus the weight of the stones keeps the pyramid standing: here a certain shape has become a guarantee of permanence in the presence of a force in itself mechanical and indiscriminating. It is the utility of the pyramidal form—its fitness to stand—that has made it a type in building. The Egyptians merely repeated a process that they might have observed going on of itself in nature, who builds a pyramid in every hill, not indeed because she wishes to, or because pyramids are in any way an object of her action, but because she has no force which can easily dislodge matter that finds itself in that shape. (pp. 155-156)

In what shape do we find ourselves—and for what reason? Not as pyramids, but as men, we have not a base but feet—two of them. Two feet which in a manner of speaking go their own way—always each is doing something different than the other, if indeed, we are going anywhere.

So, if we not only stand at one time but walk at another, we must be different from the pyramid. The pyramid is as it is because of gravity; man is as he is in order to stand and walk, and also to run and dance and kick, etc. Man does all of these things with his two feet because of the way they are built to operate against gravity, even as the pyramid is built to support its weight against gravity. What is the relation of the deterministic laws of gravity to standing, walking, dancing, kicking, . . . ?

Santayana is a philosopher speaking on aesthetics. Ozenfant, as an artist who gets his hands as well as his mind into things, seems to be more familiar with his relation to gravity than is Santayana.

Ozenfant speaks of "tropisms." These are "constants" in time. The "top-hat" is for him a tropism. It appears on the head of the Negro in central Africa and on the head of the Britisher walking by Westminster; and the Russian variety took the place of the cap in order to make the revolutionary parades more dignified. So, Ozenfant says,

A top-hat is solemn in the eyes of every man on earth: Tropism of a shape. Mankind is attracted to love like iron to the magnet; all react to given conditions, temperature, electricity, gravity, or deeds: Tropisms. I have made a generalisation of this term because to me it seems fecund, comprehensive, comprehensible. It reveals our gods, physical, metaphysical. (*Foundations of Modern Art*, Preface, p. XIII)

With this as a background, consider for a moment the difference in the determinism held over a player when in an orchestra and when playing a solo—what freedom?

Man is a soloist in the universal orchestra, but he is free to play true or false, that is, in harmony with his "constants" or in disharmony with them. It does not seem to me derogatory to know I am subject to the laws of gravity, a crystal shaped by superior power, directed by the impalpable and rigid threads of the forces that govern the universe. It is a joy to feel myself a messenger-pigeon, an arrow that undeviating returns straight to its loft. And yet, above all things, liberty is most important to me. If the loadstone that draws me is clearly apprehended by me, surely then I can encourage its love for me. But also I can, if I wish, resist it, derail my tropisms, so to speak. Clearly then, it is of my own freewill I switch over, and in this fashion we are free. (*ibid.*)

E.F.A.