

THE NEW PHILOSOPHY

VOL. LXXI

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1968

No. 3

TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

SEVENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

SWEDENBORG SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION

The Seventy-first Annual Meeting of the Swedenborg Scientific Association was held at the Civic and Social Club, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, on Monday, May 27, 1968. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 p.m. by the President, Mr. Donald C. Fitzpatrick, Jr.

The minutes of the last annual meeting were adopted as printed in the NEW PHILOSOPHY of July-September, 1967.

The Chairman announced the appointment of Mr. William R. Cooper as Committee on the Roll. 51 members and 26 guests were present.

The President asked Mr. Kenneth Rose to take the chair and to give the report on nominations. No nominations had been received. Mr. Rose presented the following slate:

For President: Mr. Donald C. Fitzpatrick, Jr.

For Members of the Board of Directors:

Rt. Rev. Elmo C. Acton

Mr. Lennart O. Alfelt

Mr. Edward F. Allen

Mr. E. Boyd Asplundh

Mr. Charles S. Cole, Jr.

Rev. W. Cairns Henderson

Dr. Hugo Lj. Odhner

Mr. Joel Pitcairn

Mr. Tomas H. Spiers

A motion was passed that the Secretary cast an unanimous ballot for the nominees. Mr. Fitzpatrick noted that while Mr. Kenneth Rose and Miss Morna Hyatt are no longer on the board, Mr.

Rose will continue to assist in preparing copy of the NEW PHILOSOPHY for the printer and Miss Hyatt had consented to run for Secretary.

The Treasurer's Report was accepted as circulated.

The Report of the Board of Directors was read by the Secretary.

The Report of the Editor of the NEW PHILOSOPHY was read by Mr. Fitzpatrick in the absence of Mr. Allen.

The Annual Address, entitled "Some Aspects and Implications of Evolution," was delivered by Dr. Grant R. Doering.

The meeting adjourned at 10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

MORNA HYATT, *Secretary*

EVOLUTION

DR. GRANT R. DOERING

The topic of this address is Evolution. We will consider it in a somewhat different way than is currently vogue, and in a way that one hopes will be fitted to the interest of this group.

Evolution as a word may be applied to many things; for example, one speaks of the evolution of an idea or of a culture. These usages imply an advance to a situation from something previous which contained the germ of the later situation. This germ developed within the context of time and space to produce—indeed to evolve—the idea or culture presently extant.

The same idea applies to the concept of evolution of the created world. One formal definition states as follows: "The view that present day species of plants and animals have originated by descent with modification from pre-existing species. The development has been through a series of progressive changes leading from simpler and more generalized forms to the complex and more specialized forms, although there has been some retrogression and degeneration as in parasitic forms."¹ This definition is satisfactory to me, because I have for some time existed with the problem and idea contained within these words. It may be quite nearly meaningless to a listener who has little information on this

¹ *The New Gould Medical Dictionary*, New York, 1956.

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subject from which to think, and who has spent little time in a "self-conscious" attempt to understand evolution.

Let me try a different approach: evolution is to me a human conceptualization, which deals with the human himself, how he got here, and why. Evolution as normally thought of makes no attempt to get at a final cause. Further, the scientist who considers problems of evolution as a scientist *fails* in his function when he states a final cause; fails, that is, as a scientist, not as a human being. He errs as much when, or if, he denies that there can be a primary or final cause. What I am saying here is that science does not properly deal with final causes; *that is not its job*. Science is concerned about secondary causes. Philosophers *may* deal with final cause, but in fact final cause is what religion *is all about*.

Next I will forward some assumptions, *hopefully* held in common, certainly held by me:

(1) There is a God. This is a point of faith. God may be known through His revelation. This essential knowledge of God may be strengthened by our observations of nature.

(2) God is not capricious in His actions toward creation; on the contrary He acts according to His law as explained to us in revelation and in nature.

(3) Nature may be understood; the laws of nature are constant. Experience verifies this, if experience is valid.

(4) There is an understandable relation between God and the universe.

With these assumptions stated we can move on to a model of evolution. In science when we say model we do not mean a paragon. We mean a kind of mockup of a theory that can be looked at, picked apart, rebuilt, discarded, or accepted as a good approximation of the apparent truth of a thing.

The question to model from is not whether there is a God, or whether creation exists, but rather, since there is God and creation, How has God created, and how does creation subsist from the Creator? We read in the first chapter of Genesis that the Lord created in a stepwise fashion. The model here proposed similarly uses sequential steps starting with the Creator and ending in man.

Figure 1 represents this model as a start. Undoubtedly it can be corrected and developed; that is what it is good for.

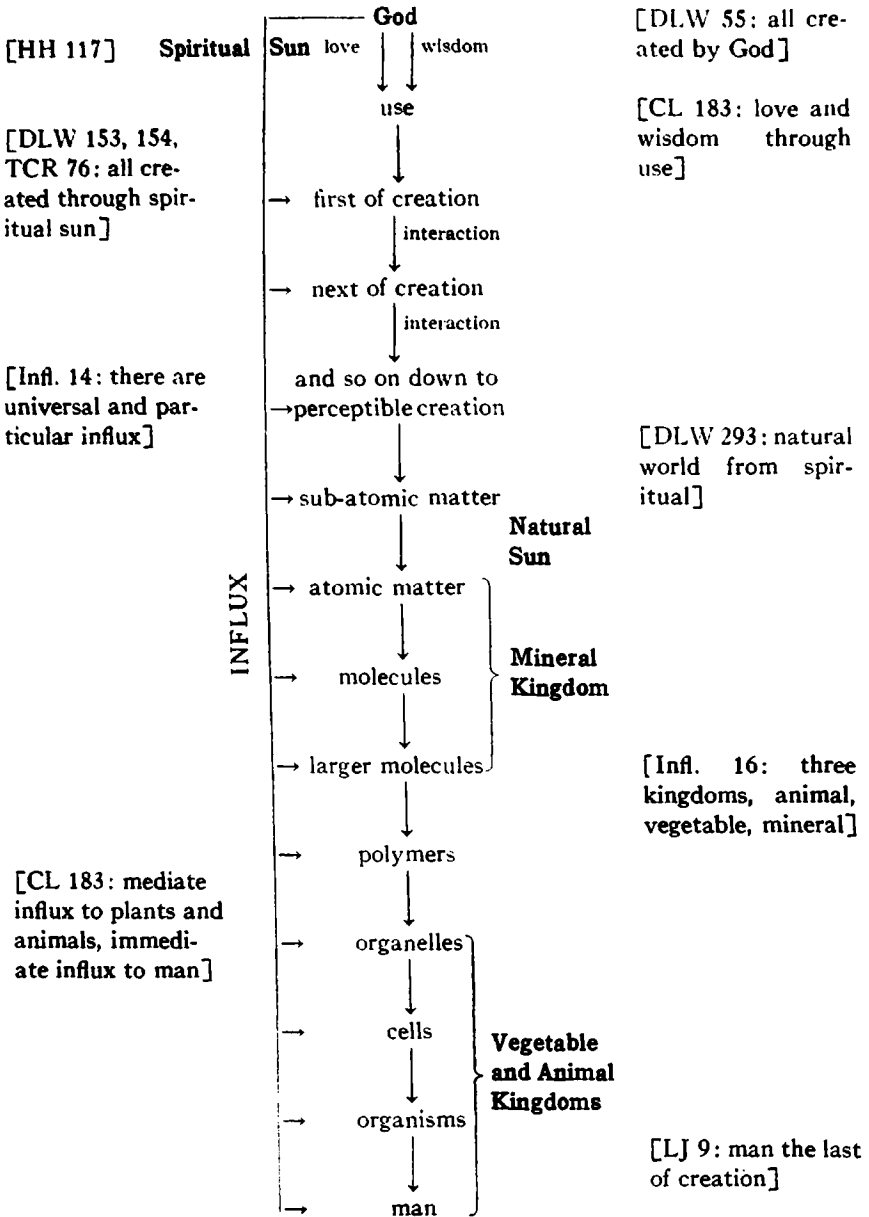


Figure 1. A Pictorial Model for Evolution.

What is seen is a series of vessels, each so created as to receive influx and perform uses as such, but also able to interact with other vessels of its same or a lower discrete degree to form another vessel of a different degree receiving an influx according to the new vessel's capacity and thus be able to perform discretely new uses.

This illustration starts with God because this is clearly taught in all revelation. See specifically DLW 55: “. . . all things of the universe were created by God.” The next step shows His love and wisdom going through Divine Use (CL 183).

Note also the steps in the model. These illustrate the act of creation going through a series of discrete degrees, for if creation were of continuous degrees, then it would be an extension of the Divine and so in fact God.²

In the first step the entirety of God's love acting through wisdom forms the first created stuff. Then this created substance, from the Divine but not Divine, has within all potential for everything that is, or will be, in nature. After this, and following the *Principia* idea³ essentially, one has a series of interactions. By the interactions within one discrete degree, another substance, a discrete degree removed, is produced.

This concept is verified by pragmatic scientific findings when one has moved far enough down the scale of creation to perceive the behavior and nature of created substance. That is, an atom is functionally and structurally the sum of its parts, and there is, also, a little more which may be predicated only of this new substance, the atom. The result is that there are many kinds of atoms, from only a handful of sub-atomic particles. It is the various arrangements and combinations of the sub-atomic things that allow for the large variety of atoms. Yet *in the few of the prior degree* lay all the vast potential of the succeeding degree. Similarly a very few atomic elements are combined together to provide the material for our own—in appearance—living world. In the individual atoms are the combining potential; from the combination exist new forms of matter, capable of receiving mediate or immediate influx of the Lord's love and wisdom.

The central portion of Figure 1 is very similar to the clockworks creation of the 18th century with God as the prime mechanic, or clockmaker.⁴ Further, if one removed God from the top center of the diagram, what remained would be a sort of statement of materialistic creation. It is essential for our presentation to introduce the parallel left hand sets of lines representing a continuing flow of love and wisdom from the Divine into His creation.

² DLW 55 and 56 specifically instruct in this regard.

³ E. Swedenborg, *The Principia*, Rendell & Tansley, London, 1912.

⁴ Loren Eiseley, *Darwin's Century*, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, 1958. Chapter 3, section 5.

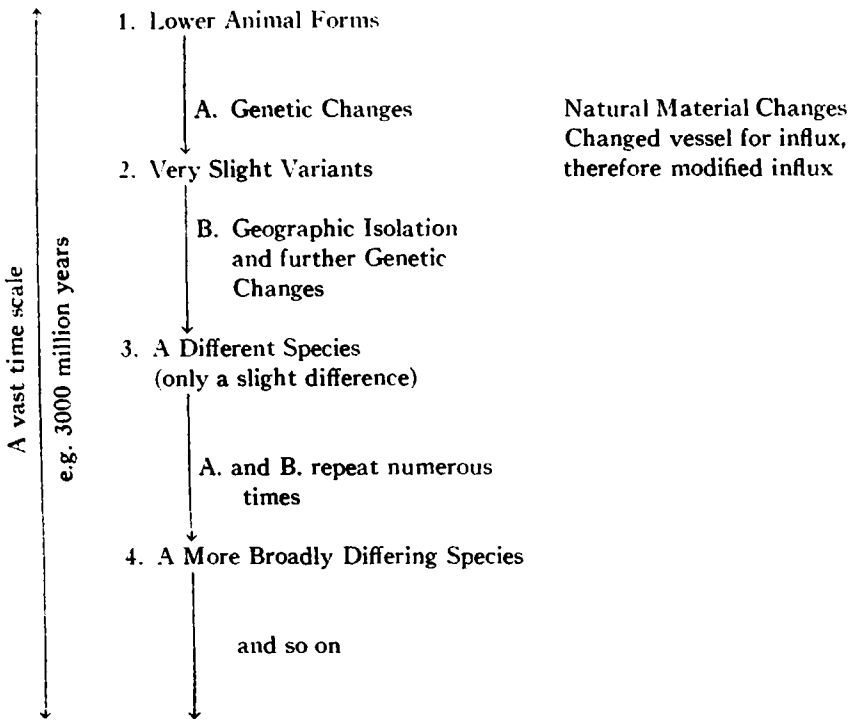


Figure 2. The Evolutionary Process.

The idea that a vast period of time is involved is indicated by the line on the left side of the figure. During this vast period of time extremely small genetic changes are made, accumulated, or rejected. These changes result in organic variants of slightly different form (which receives a modified influx). These new organisms may, or may not, be isolated by geographic factors from other similar creatures. Further genetic change may take place after the isolation and gradually (imperceptibly to man, but as the blink of an eye in the time of the Infinite God) a new species is formed. The point is that the vessels receptive of the influx of life are not static and with a change in the recipient form there is a corresponding change of the influx.

What I would like to do next is look a bit more closely at the modes whereby forms of life not man could become man. The fact is often mentioned in the Writings that the *only life* is God and that we are merely organic vessels— with an appearance of life. Why then does the New Church man hesitate to accept the idea that this world of non-life follows non-living material laws? What is being materially governed is dead matter, not the spiritually substantial which is governed by spiritual law.

The next *illustration*, Figure 2, deals essentially with material questions. It illustrates the fact that species are not fixed and that two forces, genetic change and geographic isolation, bring about this lack of fixity.

Now let us focus and narrow our attention to the last step of Figure 2—the problem of man evolving from non-man. This may not have happened, yet there is a great deal of evidence that we have not always been as we now are. Further there is evidence that evolution as outlined in Figure 2 is real.⁵ It is therefore by inference that we make the preceding statement. That man can *easily become* non-man is clear when we consider the evil. They reject and close themselves to the very influx from God that *makes* one a man. The Writings frequently speak of men as like, or worse than, beasts. If man can fall from manhood, it seems reasonable that something can grow to attain it, even as a child becomes an adult. It is important, however, to remember at all times that beast is not man nor man beast. This the Writings frequently teach. Nevertheless, they teach that man may become a beast or as a beast. Again we note that a child is not an adult, but may become one. A man is not an angel, but may become one.⁶

The problem becomes even more interesting when you realize the total interdependence of spirits on men and men on spirits. LJ 9 states that “no angel . . . subsists without man, and no man without . . . angels.” But who played these roles before there were angels? And there could be no angels without men to have

⁵ Barghoorn and Schopf, *New Scientist*, May 19, 1966, p. 456.

⁶ DP 75.

Zygote



In an embryo each day's development builds, prepares, and allows for the next. The result of the series is vastly different from the beginning.



Man

Anthropoid four-footed



Genetic Changes

More upright form. The eyes raised. Thus the view, the outlook is expanded

allows for entry of a human soul

Idea of a creation could now be harbored, resulting in the typically human reciprocal conjunction:

Humanoid



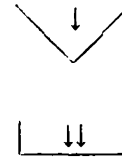
Man

A few of these may think, or feel beyond immediate space and time.

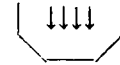
God



Man



Influx changes as the vessel which allows for further minute vascular changes



a still further modification of the vessel, and thus of the influx

Figure 3. The Development of Man.

Even as the egg changes many times before it becomes man, so too does the history of the race. It changes many times eventually giving birth to man. The structures on the right of the diagram represent vessels of influx. The arrows represent influx.

died and become such. I suggest that the first thing capable of conjunction with God and thus eternal life was a beast of sorts—a beast so naturally modified that it faced up and out, and thought, only the tiniest bit, of matters not entirely worldly. Now the influx to this creature would be changed and so would its reproductive cells, which the Writings teach are governed by the reception of good and truth. These gametes would as to internals as well as genetic externals carry a more potentially human character. Thus one would have some early man types who would die, go to heaven and form bridges of communication between the spiritual and natural world, allowing for still more men. Previous to this the influx to the human precursor must have been of a general sort,⁷ and the essential change was a removal of the attention of the love and will from its entire concentration on things of the world. The use for man is obvious, that is to conjoin with God and respond to His love, and we read in AC 4223 that “use existed before organic forms of the body came forth; and . . . the use produced and adapted them.” An anthropoid animal was in my opinion the form which use adapted and modified.

It is claimed here that this postulated ancestor would be upright and outward-looking, in other words, in the form of a man. CL 152 notes that man without instruction is neither a man nor a beast, but a form which can receive by instruction that which makes one a man. The point is, since we are not conceived or born men but only potentially such, could not the primeval ancestor have been in the same boat? This creature may not have been very human, and may have had only the most primitive idea of anything aside from here and now, yet it could have made it. For AC 3647 notes that men who have merely earthly ends and uses are almost in the position of animals and after the death of the body appear in the other world to have so little life that it seemed to Swedenborg impossible for them to receive eternal life, yet spirits insinuated into them the life of good and truth, and they were led to human life. (Figure 3 attempts to bring the technique of diagram to bear on these thoughts.)

⁷ AC 5850.

In Figure 4 three parallel ideas illuminate this problem. The first column indicates the Evolution of man, the second the Embryologic development of man, and the last the Regeneration of man.

TCR 584 points out that regeneration is comparable to the conception and embryology of man. The observable facts of nature show that man during his embryology goes through some physical forms highly reminiscent of other animals. And AC 3633 notes, ". . . the soul endeavors to form a man although this primitive is not in the form of a human body." Therefore it might be extrapolated that evolution itself is a vast representative of the process of regeneration. There is in creation an endeavor to form true man, and this endeavor is clothed variously so that other forms useful to man will be developed. The endeavor gave rise to the race, and to man specific, and it drives man to perfection.

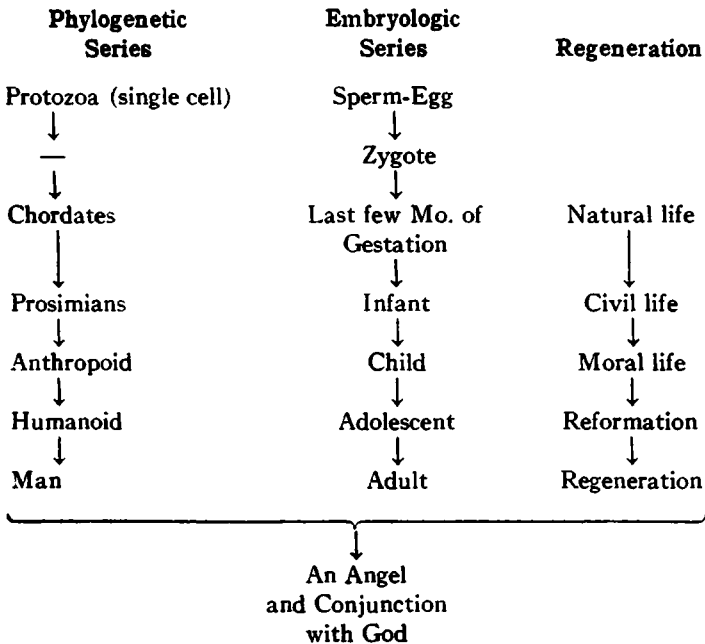


Figure 4. Three Creative Series

A comparison of the development of organic forms to man, man's embryologic development, and the development of true man by regeneration. This is intended suggestively. Close parallels and equivalencies are not intended.

As a conclusion I would like to bring in the idea of central values. Mr. Edward F. Allen introduced me to this idea when he invited me to be a guest lecturer in his Philosophy 1 course at the Academy of the New Church. In those lectures I drew three central values from a theory of evolution: Scientific, Theological, and Religious. Let me present them to you in that order.

The Scientific central value of the theory of Evolution is that it has provided the scientist with a framework upon which to build, and with a unifying principle that orders and makes sensible a vast amount of information concerning the biosphere.

The central value Theologically is man's free will—that is, man's ability to choose between right and wrong, between good and evil. How can this be, you ask? And my response is, without a theory of evolution that can be interpreted antideistically, man is trapped inextricably into a belief in a god as creator. With evolution and its evidences we can choose a no-final-cause materialism or we can accept freely the Lord. And in this acceptance under these conditions we are all unfettered, freed from the need to invent some kind of a god simply to solve part of the problem of origins. Creation as I see it *could be* entirely undirected and purposeless. In each step we can see a possibility for mechanism to reign. Yet if we accept God freely—not as a *deus ex machina*, but as Pure Love and Pure Wisdom—then we see the entire *schema* in another light. Creation now does not force a belief in God. Rather God makes creation sensible and intelligible.

The Religious central value has to do with vision and insight. Evolution is the central law of Biology, and when this law is appreciated in the illumination of nature and the Word, one sees a new vision of what God in fact is and does. To phrase this differently, Evolution, rightly seen, is a second avenue toward truth; a useful testament and revelation.