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EDITORIAL NOTES

“The world is geometrical or mechanical. Nature modifies herself by mechanism, that is, by her own rules. Therefore, the beginning of the world must be laid down as being the same as the beginning of geometry. The same point is the first of the world, which is the first of geometry; or, it is the first of geometry because it is the first of the world. Geometry is the law and attribute of every individual thing in the world, that is to say, of the whole world; and mechanism is the mode by which the world acts or is actuated. This point is common to both because both flow from the same origin. Thus, each acknowledges some entity prior to itself and outside itself and as a kind of seed of itself, from which it has been conceived and by which it afterwards exists and subsists” (*Principia*, chap. II, 7).

In reading this passage, emphasis must be laid on the words “prior to itself and outside itself.” Euclid realized that the beginning of geometry must be something prior to and outside geometry, and therefore necessarily beyond the comprehension of human thought, save in this respect, namely, that human thought can see that it is but not what it is. The beginning he laid down as a point, without length, breadth, and thickness. Further than this he did not go, for his only concern was geometry.

Swedenborg saw that the creation of the natural world—a world of time and space—was also the creation of geometry, and with Euclid he saw that the beginning of this geometry was itself above geometry. Of this beginning, we can see that it is, but not what it is.

But Swedenborg went further than Euclid; for his concern was not the beginning of geometry but the creation of the world for the sake of man and thus of heaven. And when in his theological works he condemned the doctrine that creation was from points, it is the Euclidian point that is condemned. This does not mean a condemnation of Euclid's definition of the beginning of geometry. It means a condemnation of those who make this point "without length, breadth, and thickness" the beginning of the creation of the world. "It is believed," he says, "that the first substance of the world can be likened to a point *which is of no dimension*, and that from an infinity of such points arose the forms of dimension" (*Div. Prov.* n. 6). Elsewhere he condemns those who think "of the creation of the world, that the origin of its substances and forms is from points and then *from geometrical lines*, which having no predication, are thus in themselves not anything" (*True Christ. Rel.* n. 20).

This is not the *point* with which Swedenborg commences in his *Principia*. Swedenborg's point is motion in the Infinite—a motion, as it were, of the Infinite will to create. "This natural point," he says, "is purely motion in the universal infinite; consequently, it is pure and total motion—a motion which cannot be conceived of geometrically. . . . Because it cannot be conceived of geometrically but rationally, it is not therefore nothing" (chap. II, 12).

Here we have a definition analogous to Euclid's definition of the point, "without length, breadth or thickness." But as stated above, Swedenborg goes further and postulates that his point is not only a motion in the Infinite but "it supposes something willing that it be produced; something acting which produced it; something intelligent that it was produced thus and not otherwise and in this mode and no other; in a word, something infinitely intelligent, provident, acting and producing" (*ibid.* n. 5).

Objection has been made to Swedenborg's naming his point "the first *natural* point." The objection is not valid. Swedenborg is treating of the creation of the natural world, and his "point" is in truth the first of that world. Indeed, the same nomenclature is implied in his doctrine of creation as given in the theological writ-

ings. There he says: "God first finited His infinity by substances emitted from Himself, from which exists His first ambit which makes the sun of the spiritual world; and afterwards by that sun He perfected the other ambits even to the ultimate which consists of things quiescent, and thus finally the world, more and more by degrees" (*T.C.R.* n. 33). Certainly Swedenborg could not have called his point the first spiritual point, any more than the first of a fetus can be called the first mental point, i.e., the first point or beginning of the mind. It is the first point or beginning of the body, for the mind does not yet exist. The first of the mind is when the child sensates. So, the revelation of the uses willed by the "Infinite Intelligence" begins not with the first natural point but with the first organism formed from matter.

In *The Infinite*, Swedenborg no longer uses the expressions "point" or "first natural point," but instead he calls the first of creation "the simple"; nor does he use these terms in his later philosophical works; and it has been thought that this indicates that Swedenborg abandoned the terms because he thought them inadequate. Such a supposition, however, is wholly untenable in view of the fact that *The Infinite* was written almost contemporaneously with the *Principia*. In that work, he does not use the term first natural point, because he is here treating, not of the creation of the natural world, but of the human mind and soul. The term first natural point or even first point would therefore have been not only inadequate but misleading. Nor, so far as I know, does he use the term point elsewhere in his philosophical works, for in none of them save the *Principia* does he deal with the doctrine of creation.

REVIEWS

CREATIVE LOVE, by George T. Hill, M.A. The New Church College, London; pp. 22. Price, cloth 2s 6d, paper 1s 6d.

This is the Fourth Annual lecture delivered to the New Church College in London. A thoughtful and thought-awakening brochure, worthy of the attention of New Church students. In reading it, I was particularly impressed with Mr. Hill's simple but profound development of the theme that love is substance.