SWEDENBORG'S PHILOSOPHY OF CAUSALITY

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CHAPTER II

SWEDENBORG DEVELOPS HIS OWN THEORY

It was noted earlier[1] that with the publication of his *Principia* (1734), Swedenborg's reputation as a scientist and natural philosopher was established in Europe. The work is a lengthy one, and the writing style leans toward the ornate. The first chapter, which runs to some fifty pages in English translation, is titled, perhaps a bit pompously, "The Means Leading to True Philosophy, and the True Philosopher." As might be expected, however, the chapter does state in full detail the presuppositions concerning causality held by the author at this time.

For example, early in the chapter he states:

> The sign that we desire to be wise, is the wish to know the causes of things...Now the principal means which lead to truly philosophical knowledge are three in number—experience, geometry, and the power of reasoning...By philosophy we here mean the knowledge of the mechanism of our world, or of whatever in the world is subject to the laws of geometry; or which it is possible to unfold to view by experience, assisted by geometry and reason.[2]

The thought pattern of the British Empiricists is clearly echoed when, for example, Swedenborg writes:

[1] *Cf.* p. 239 *(supra).*

[2] *Principia,* Vol. I, p. 2 [1912 ed.].

> By experience we mean the knowledge of everything in the world of nature which is capable of being received by the senses.[3]

His second means to philosophical knowledge just as clearly reflects the impact of the Continental Rationalists. The Cartesian emphasis on mathematical reasoning as the basis of scientific knowledge may well have come to Swedenborg's attention during his student years at the University of Upsala. Descartes' importance as a pioneer in the field of analytical geometry was surely known to him, even though his later references to a *mathesis universalis* relate the concept to Wolff, Locke and Leibniz, rather than Descartes. Wolff and Leibniz, of course, gave full credit to Descartes as the father of the idea of applying the method of mathematics to philosophy.

The Swedish philosopher, however, even in his *Principia,* does not limit his thoughts on mathematical method to those of the Rationalists. He observes that

> the mechanism of the world consists in contiguity, without which neither the world nor its mechanism could exist...Every operation takes place by contiguity. Without a perpetual connection between the end and the means, there would be no elementary nature, and no vegetable and animal natures thence originating. The connection between ends and means forms the very life and essence of nature.[4]

Here again, the traditional, medieval view of efficient causality seems to assume precedence, our author bent on showing the harmony between the earlier views and the modern mechanistic ones. It is perhaps for this reason that he digresses to take account of the non-geometrical factors in the world—those which are more or less directly relatable to the Infinite—before going on to discuss his third means to knowledge. Thus he states that

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 4.

[4] *Ibid.,* p. 22.

> there are innumerable things that are not mechanical, nor even geometrical; such as the Infinite, and whatever is in the Infinite. Geometry treats only of the finite and limited things and of the forms and spaces originating from these, together with their several dimensions; but that which is Infinite is beyond and above the sphere of geometry, being regarded by it as its origin and first beginning...There is then an Infinite, which can by no means be geometrically explored, because its existence is prior to geometry, as being its cause.[5]

Among the things which he distinguishes as defying geometrical analysis is: "that intelligent principle which exists in animals, or the soul, which, together with the body, constitutes their life." His speculation on this phenomenon is brief at this juncture, but leads him easily into a precis on "the rational principle" and then to:

> The third means by which we may arrive at a true philosophy in cosmology, and at the knowledge of hidden nature,...the faculty of reasoning.[6]

Here, perhaps unwittingly but surely transparently, Swedenborg places himself in that long line of philosophers extending back at least to Aristotle; that tradition which sees the philosopher as a breed apart. He states unhesitatingly:

> Knowledge without reason,...the possession of the means without the faculty of arriving at the end, does not make a philosopher: the maids of Parnassus will not entwine any laurel-wreath, plucked from the sacred hill, around the brow of him who is destitute of this talent...But [the] *faculty of reasoning is not given*, and at this day cannot be given, *to all*[7]

[5] *Ibid.,* pp. 27-28.

[6] *Ibid.,* pp. 31-32.

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 32, (emphasis mine).

He goes on to justify this stand by calling attention to the fact of observable instances of mental deficiency through disease or heredity. But even those with no natural defect but who are deprived of a proper education may prove unable to acquire any talent for reasoning. Finally, there is one overriding factor, the absence of which precludes the possibility of one's being a "true philosopher." The positive thesis is stated simply: "without the utmost devotion to the Supreme Being, no one can be a complete and truly learned philosopher."[8] The antithesis is described in these words:

> They...are mere children, and have reached scarcely the first threshold of true philosophy, who ascribe to nature the origin of all things, to the exclusion of the Infinite; or who confound the Infinite and nature together; when yet the latter is only an effect, or thing caused, the Infinite being its Generator and Cause.[9]

It is not necessary to pursue further the argument of this early work. The causal premise which remains fundamental is that "nothing that is finite can exist from itself, that is, without purpose and cause."[10] Thus one does not hypothesize as to whether this is a purposeful and causal cosmos; one assumes it, and turns his energies to discovering, through experience, geometry, and the power of reasoning, the causal laws operative in this world of law and order.

This pursuit, however, proves to be complex, leading one to follow a variety of trains of thought, only some of which prove lastingly significant. For example, one of his earlier explorations involved a tentative study pointing hopefully towards a *mathesis universalis.* Perhaps it would have been strange if a scholar who knew Wolff and Leibniz as well as Swedenborg did, had not seriously sought to implement the idea of a universal calculus by projecting a methodology by which one might invent a *characteristica universalis* or universal language expressed by characters or letters. At any rate, his thoughts

[8] *Ibid.,* p. 38.

[9] *Ibid., p.* 39.

[10] *Ibid.,* p. 51.

did quickly turn in that direction, prompted as it happens by the exigencies of his inquiring into "that analogue of will which determines the will to action."[11] His tentative conclusion—which we shall note momentarily—has much broader application, being referable primarily to causal relationship (if such there be) between matter and spirit, or between manifestations of matter at discernibly different levels. The idea in back of this early conclusion ultimately involves that basic causal relationship which seems to permeate life; that which is noted in the *Principia* as involving "contiguity"; that cosmic upheaval which led Swedenborg and others to formulate a nebular hypothesis; that which formed the core of a series of studies by the Swede on the interaction of soul and body in man.

His tentative conclusion in the early work on the brain [1736] reads as follows:

> We are exceedingly rich in words whereby to signify the things that fall within the sphere of the body, the external senses, and the ultimate world; but we become poorer and poorer in proportion as we strive to a higher sphere; and poor indeed when we strive to a sphere still higher—the sphere of the soul herself...
>
> What then shall we do? There is nothing else but to found an entirely new ontology and philosophy applicable to the degrees of which we have spoken—a philosophy which may be called a *Universal* or *Philosophical Mathesis;* a true rational analysis; a mathematical and analytical philosophy of universals degrees, indefinites; the significative or technical speech or art of the soul; or the basis or science of sciences...[12]

There are at least four more major passages in the scientific and philosophic writings of Swedenborg which either express the need of, or which actually attempt to devise a way of stating, a *mathesis universalis.* For example, in his two-volume work of 1740, *Oeconomia*

[11] *The Cerebrum,* Vol. I (written 1736, pub. post.), n. 267.

[12] *Ibid.*

Regni Animale, in a chapter on rational psychology (which we shall have occasion to refer to again), he writes:

> Wherefore a mathematical philosophy of universals must be invented, which, by characteristic marks and letters, in their general form not very unlike the algebraic analysis of infinites, may be capable of expressing those things which are inexpressible by ordinary language.[13]

He then quotes approvingly a statement from Wolff's *Ontology* [n. 755] in which the wish is expressed that the learned would turn their attention to devising such a language, adding this commentary:

> It was for this end that I was here disposed, as a preparatory step, to offer the doctrine of series and degrees, since without a previous knowledge of the general and particular form of nature's government, in vain should we exert the powers and labors of the mind in composing such a philosophy, since it is no other than that of the soul itself.[14]

Despite these several and enthusiastic statements regarding a universal mathesis,[15] by the time he drafted his own *Rational Psychology,* in 1742, Swedenborg concluded that the "science of sciences" is *not,* after all, a *mathesis universalis* but *scientia correspondentiarum.*[16] The former phrase nowhere appears in his later writings (1749-1771). This, however, by no means invalidates the several correlative and introductory doctrines developed during the years up to and including 1745.

[13] *Op. cit.,* n. 651. (Hereafter referred to as EAK.)

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Cf. The New Philosophy* (hereafter referred to as NP), Jan. 1931 and Jan. 1932 for two detailed studies of this concept in Swedenborg's writings.

[16] This latter phrase is typical of Swedenborg's terminology in his mature theological writings.

They simply lead to a different *scientia scientarum* or universal science than the one originally foreseen.

Therefore, it will be quite in order to turn at this point to a consideration of those several subordinate doctrines, the need of which is mentioned several times by Swedenborg. We shall see, however, that the development of them varies greatly, both in intensity and in frequency. From this and other factors we shall be able to ascertain to some degree the relative importance of the several concepts to the over-all causal theory we are investigating. In at least three different manuscripts,[17] Swedenborg speaks of a number of new doctrines which he finds necessary to the development of a full philosophy of causality. The most detailed of these reads:

> We may not however climb immediately from effects to principles, from the body to the soul, and from the material world to the immaterial. And therefore, in order to [make] this ascent, I have been obliged to as it were conceive from an ovum, form, and bring forth new doctrines, which shall lead me from lowest things to higher; doctrines which I term the doctrine of *forms,* the doctrine of *order and degrees* and also of the *society* of *coordinates,* also the doctrine of *representations and correspondences,* and lastly the doctrine of *modification.* [Emphasis mine.]

Both here and in the last major published work of his scientific period, *Regnum Animale* [1744-45] he promised to present all these doctrines in a single volume titled, *An Introduction to Rational Psychology*. This projected work never appeared, however. Those events which were to lead to the transition from scientist and natural philosopher to theologian and seer began in 1744, and opened up a whole new field of labors for the fertile brain of the great Swede, but of course at the same time halted any further work along the line he had been pursuing. One should not infer, however, that we have been left with no explanations of any of these projected subsidiary doctrines. While we do not have the compact treatment envisaged by the author, we do

[17] Only one of these was published by the author——AK [n. 17]. The others are *The Senses* [n. 489] and *Generation* [n. 357]. This latter one is the one quoted below.

find several of the doctrines treated at length. Not all of them turn out to be of equal significance, especially as regards Swedenborg's philosophy of causality. However, none of them should be completely ignored; so, let us first enumerate them—compiling a list from the several varying citations—and then briefly consider each in turn.

The "new" doctrines mentioned are:

1. Forms.
2. Order and Degrees.
3. Series and Society (also called Society of Coordinates).
4. Correspondence and Representation (also called Representations and Correspondences).
5. Influx (also called Communication and Influx).
6. Modification.

We shall find both the list and the titles pleonastic. The list of doctrines will prove reducible to three at the most—correspondence, degrees, and influx. And when the full implications of the doctrine of correspondence are understood, it will be seen that degrees and influx are simply necessary components of the one doctrine. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

1. The Doctrine of Forms

The Doctrine of Forms is really a specialized application of the Doctrine of Degrees. It has been suggested that one of its prime uses, to one interested in Swedenborgiana research, is the further light it sheds on the doctrine of auras and their forms and motions as set forth in the *Principia.*[18] But even though this material is somewhat relevant to Swedenborg's cosmology, this application of the doctrine of forms involves a move backwards in time. Of wider interest is the relationship of this doctrine to the philosophy of man. Let us then examine it from that point of view.

[18] *Cf.* editorial notes, NP, Oct. 1912, pp. 134ff.

There are several abstracts of the doctrine, but only one detailed treatise explaining it; that is found as part of a posthumously published manuscript which was written in 1741 or 1742, known as ***The*** *Fibre.* Treatment of this doctrine comprises thirty-two pages of chapter XVI. It delineates six levels of form, from the most imperfect—the angular—to the circular, the spiral, the vortical, the celestial, and the spiritual. The author apologizes for the imprecision of the terminology and goes to some pains to define his usages.

These forms are related to human and divine life in several different ways. The lowest form—the angular—always involves the bodily, the physical, the corporeal. The highest form—the spiritual—is applied strictly to the divine, being eminently the form of deity. The highest human form—the celestial or heavenly—is that of the human soul. But in this case," soul" is construed in a narrow sense, to include only that reception area in man which is capable of receiving a continual influx of life from God. The "faculties" of the soul are then differentiated on a discretely lower plane. Thus, the second-highest human form is the "intellectual," the third the "sensory," the fourth the "animate" (with special stress on the organs which circulate the blood), and the fifth the bodily.

Both ancient and modern philosophers are cited to verify certain points of the argument. For example, "the Philosopher" [Aristotle] is quoted in support of the contention that the circular form is superior to the angular:

> A circle is perfect, but no straight line is ever perfect; for neither is it boundless, since it must have a term or bound, nor is any manner of things bounded perfect. *(De Coelo,* lib. I, cap. ii.)[19] [269a20]

Christian Wolff's *Ontologia* is referred to frequently. But perhaps of most interest, aside from the several citations of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Sapientia Divina Secundum Aegyptios,*[20] is the use made of the Platonic

[19] *The Fibre,* n. 261.

[20] *Cf.* notation re this work in Chapter I, p 24, NP, Jan-Mar, 1990.

idea of the One or the Receptacle. In his efforts to explain the form which he designates as the highest human form—the celestial—Swedenborg calls to his aid a number of esoteric philosophic concepts. His reason for doing so is stated as follows:

> The qualities which are predictable of the celestial form can hardly be expressed by terms or expressions applied to inferior forms, except by way of analogy or by eminence.[21]

Such forms are by their very nature paradoxical. One would expect them to be exceedingly complex; whereas they are, when compared to most natural forms, utterly simple, devoid of figure, extension, magnitude, gravity, and levity, and therefore are immaterial. Yet by this very nature they are ideally suited to receive all lesser forms.

Having thus demarked the celestial form—patently a somewhat obscure line of demarcation—the "authorities" are now invoked to lend credence to the concept:

> "It is necessary [says Plato] that that which receives forms of all kinds should itself be void of all form." He calls this form "an invisible form void of figure and yet capable of all figures,—a form which is perceived with difficulty" *(Timaeus,* pp. 50-51 in my copy[22]). He is speaking of what he calls the One, or what Leibnitz calls the Unit or Monad, and Wolff Simple Substance. Plato calls this One also the First and Smallest *(Parmenides,* p. 153) and by it he means the nature of simple substance (Ibid., p. 166). "The One [he says] is in itself void of magnitude and of smallness, and it neither exceeds itself nor is exceeded." (Ibid., p. 150.) "The simple ens [says Wolff], has no parts,...is not extended, is in visible... is endowed with no figure... is void of size,...can fill no space;...in it no intrinsic motion is possible; to it can be attributed no properties which belong to a compound

[21] *The Fibre,* n. 266a.

[22] Swedenborg's copy of Plato happened to be the Stephanus edition (which has become the standard for citations); thus his page references coincide with contemporary scholarly references to Plato's works.

as such, that is, which are attributed to a compound by virtue of its definition" *(Ontologia,* pp. 673-679, 683.).[23]

This method, of proof-text educing, is continued for another page or two. Then, following the setting forth of the highest or divine form, philosophers ancient and modern, together with some theologians, are called in to underscore the basic premises.

The complexities of this doctrine, as has been noted, seem particularly applicable to the working out of a doctrine of man. But even in this application it remains a specialized form of the doctrine of degrees, which is our next concern.

2. The Doctrine of Order and Degrees

In his published work of 1744, the *Oeconomia,* n. 250 of volume 1 sums up a number of previous allusions to order and degrees, and at the same time acts as a herald for the development of the concept into a doctrine in the final chapter of the volume, some 450 pages later. Because of this pivotal nature of the paragraph it is here quoted in its entirety:

> 250. *For whatever coexists must become extant successively.* For the cause must exist before the thing caused, the efficient before the compound; the engraver before the seal, and the seal before the impression; the prior before the posterior, and the universal before the particular. Thus all things take place by degrees and moments, into which also nature herself is introduced the instant she is introduced into the world; such being the will of the Deity. Therefore, before anything is coordinated, it must be subordinated: which shows the truth of what we said above (n. 67), namely, that the rational mind, in analytically tracing out causes from their effects, nowhere finds them, except in the subordination of things, and in the coordination of things subordinate. For this reason we must mount through orders and

[1] *The Fibre,* n. 266a.

degrees, in order to pass from the sphere of effects into the sphere of causes.

Notice that Swedenborg here reaffirms the basic philosophic stance of his key 1734 works, the *Principia* and the *Infinite,* that this is God's universe, created and ordered by Him, and that all of nature therefore is part of an over-all purposeful plan characterized by law and order. That God is the end or first cause in the endlessly repeated series of end, cause and effect, is a thesis which our philosopher will cling to to the end of his long life. Thus this doctrine now under consideration—which later will be called simply the doctrine of degrees—will prove to be one of the enduring ones. In his pre-theological period, the concept is most fully developed in the aforementioned chapter of the *Oeconomia.* The chapter runs to some 60 pages. What follows here is a condensation, in part quoted and in part paraphrased, of the doctrine of order and degrees. Even in the case of direct citations, quotation marks and ellipses will be omitted in the interests of ease of reading.

After some preliminary remarks the basic purpose of such a doctrine is stated: it ought to teach how things are subordinated and coordinated, how they coexist simultaneously, how they effect causal actions, and why such actions can be defined as causal. The distinction between series and degrees is then noted: series are what comprise subordinate and coordinate things, both successively and simultaneously; degrees are distinct progressions. Degrees, in fact, never exist except in things which involve succession. In contrast to this, the various kingdoms of the earth—mineral, vegetable, animal—are properly distinguished as series. And in each case there are series within series. The application is really so broad that series, or series of series, constitute all branches of philosophy, *viz.*, arithmetic, geometry, physics, physiology, et cetera. In short, the science of natural things depends on a distinct notion of series and degrees, and of their subordination and coordination.

In order to advance in thought from the primary sources of existence, one might begin by considering substances. Aristotle defines substance as an *ens* which subsists *per se* and sustains accidents. Wolff adds the thought that substance is the subject of intrinsic, constant, and variable determinations. Substances are further definable as the subjects of accidents and qualities. A subject is the sum of all things that can be predicated of it. Accidents are the things thus included. Qualities are

predicated of substances considered as the subjects of accidents, *e.g.* the quality of form, figure, magnitude, et cetera.

Although substances are manifold, nevertheless there is a first substance from which the rest flow. It is able to subsist by itself and does not sustain accidents, because nothing can be categorically predicated of that which is above nature.

Each series, in turn, has its own first and proper substance, which substance depends for its existence on the *materia prima* or first substance of the world. Our author would be willing to allow that the first substance of any series be denoted as absolutely primitive and simple, if anything in nature would thereby be rendered capable of explanation. But since such denotation does not permit of such explanation, he concludes that he should not make such an admission.

Perhaps the most that can be affirmed at this stage is that if the first substance of every series is assumed to be dependent on the *materia prima,* then Wolff's observation would be correct, that every state of every element involves a relation to the whole world.

Swedenborg then proceeds to illustrate how the first substance of every series "reigns" throughout the series. Thus the spirituous fluid in every individual of the animal kingdom is the living substantial fluid of all and every part. The vegetable kingdom also has its own formative and plastic first substance, diffused throughout the whole of each individual member and stored in the inmost bosom of their seeds. From it (the first substance in each series), according to its nature, flow all things which have a visible determination in the entire series. From it, by order of succession and by connecting media are derived substances more compounded, which in turn become the viceregents of the ultimates of the series. Thus the first substance gives determination to all things in the series. Successive determinations involve a threefold progression: in addition to an agent and a patient, an intermediate is required, one which has some discernible reference to both. This is readily illustrated by the vital fluids of the body. One fluid in its place may act as a cause, another in another place as another cause, yet all together conjointly constitute one cause. There exists a harmonious variety in this way.

By harmonious variety is meant that all the differences, taken collectively, which can exist between individuals of the same genus or species do not nullify the common form and nature, or the essence and

its attributes; these remain the same. Mention is made that a number of ancient philosophers have held similar views on this subject, *e.g.* Anaximenes, Diogenes, Anaximander, Pythagoras, et cetera. In line with this tradition, one is led to look with favor on the concept that the animal microcosm, or little world, is similar to the macrocosm, or world at large.

Whatever is determined into act is effected by the more simple, either determining or concurring or consenting. Moreover, this is accomplished in an orderly sequence, from an inferior substance to one proximately superior, or vice versa, but never from the supreme to the ultimate except by intermediates. Further, in every series there is a kind of circle, in the sense that the first has reference to the last, and the last to the first. Substances, amongst each other, act as efficient causes and effects. Those which are prior are also more universal and more perfect. This is typical of simple substances, which are prior both in order and time. Thus a simple substance may be considered a cause. A prior substance, also being more universal, has respect not only to substances as giving determination, but also to series as receiving determination from them; for there is nothing in the whole system of the world which has not respect to something more universal. Further, the prior can exist without the posterior, but not vice versa. Thus, for example, the soul will survive after the decease of the body; for the body consists of mere accidents.

Forces, viewed abstractedly from substances, may be said to flow; i.e., influx may be predicated of them. It may be further predicated that the superior enter by influx into the inferior, and *vice versa.*[24] Such is the co-established harmony of all things in the same series, that they mutually correspond to each other, the only difference being that of perfection by degrees; the inferior regard the superior as their analogues and eminences. One may sum up by saying that essentials belong to substance, attributes to essentials, accidents to attributes, and qualities to accidents. Of substances it may also be predicated that they are series, and are in series. By units is meant the most minute

[24] Swedenborg was later to change his mind about this two-way interaction theory; at least, as it applied specifically to the mind-body commerce. He later showed sympathy for Augustine's one-way interaction concept. *Cf.* Chapter V, footnote 24 (to be printed in a later edition).

constituents in each degree of any series. It is important to have a distinct idea of units, both of their quantities and qualities, in order to form a distinct idea of degrees in the progression of things. This concept of units seems most harmonious with the Pythagorean philosophy of units which, having their harmonies and concords, it compares with the units of numbers.

Finally, there is nothing in any series which does not contain the cause of all that is subsequent to it, and refer itself to all that is antecedent. Thus the nature of the efficient cause is made manifest from a careful examination of the effect.[25] Wherefore, we can achieve the inmost knowledge of natural things by means of the doctrine of series and degrees conjoined with experience.

3. **The Doctrine of Series and Society**

The reader will have noted that although the second new doctrine was titled, "The Doctrine of Order and Degrees," the definitive treatment of the subject used the title, "The Doctrine of Series and Degrees." It was noted earlier that pleonasm characterized both the list of proposed new doctrines and their various treatments. This would seem to be the case especially in regard to the doctrine now under consideration. It is variously referred to as the doctrine of series and society, the doctrine of society of coordinates, and the doctrine of association and series. Yet one searches in vain for an exposition of such a doctrine.

There is at least a partial explanation for this omission. "Society" and "association" and "order" are all terms which, both in their Latin and English forms, are often so closely allied in meaning as to be interchangeable in certain contexts. A fourth term, uncommon in English but of frequent use in Latin—consociation—might be added to this list, for it, perhaps more strongly than any of the others, carries the connotation of association on the same general plane. This level of

[25] This, too, is a view Swedenborg will firmly deny during his revelatory period. At this stage, however, it apparently seemed quite natural to infer that a knowledge of effects would lead to a knowledge of causes. But it was on this same premise that he was to be so sadly disappointed in his search for the human soul by means of exhaustive examinations of the human body, *i.e.,* the soul's "effect."

association came to be referred to in Swedenborg's later writings as "continuous degrees," as contrasted with "discrete degrees." These differences are also noted by the contrasting terms, degrees of breadth and degrees of height. In short, the projected doctrine of series and society was subsumed in the doctrine of degrees. But our author was apparently not able to foresee this, or the logic of it, until he actually entered on the development of the several doctrines. Because the distinctions of degrees above noted did not become critical until later in Swedenborg's philosophic concepts, it will be more orderly to reserve further discussion of degrees for a later chapter in this work.

4. The Doctrine of Correspondence and Representation

Mention was made early in this study that the quest for the human soul became the avowed purpose of the vast studies in human physiology, psychology, and anatomy which occupied our author during his "middle" or truly philosophic period. He hoped not only to discover the "seat" of the soul and the nature of the soul, but also how it managed to communicate with the physical body. One of the fruits of this period was what became gradually identified in his mind as a law or doctrine of correspondence. It proved to be a multifaceted concept. In its most basic form it has been aptly designated as "the law of communication."[26]

> The doctrine of correspondence is the name which Swedenborg gave to that mode of intercourse whereby the soul communicates with its physical environment—a communication which is not affected by continuity and confusion of substance, but by contiguity and modification of state. As Sewall says...: "By correspondence things totally different in degree and substance are nevertheless so adapted that the motions or tremulous

[26] *Cf.* article by Rt. Rev. Willard F. Pendleton, *New Church Life,* Dec. 1951, pp. 532ff.

vibrations in one may be continued through the other or converted into some modification of the other's state."[27]

The realization that this mode of communication was so orderly that its operation could be formulated into a law became clear only gradually. Characteristics of things of higher and lower degree were noted and compared. As early as volume I of the *Oeconomia,* what is called a rule for relating such entities is cited:

> For according to our rule, everything is still more perfect in the superior degree, so perfect indeed as to be considered as it were the analogue, the eminent and unassignable correspondent, of the similar qualities, powers, faculties, and modes of the inferior degrees.[28]

Although several important factors are noted here—as that those powers, qualities, etc., of superior degree are so basically different from clearly similar ones of lower degree that they are relatable only by correspondence—nevertheless one would hardly hold this statement up as a definite "law" of communication. A simple rule has been formulated; but far more inquiry will be necessary before a doctrine or law is set forth.

One specific instance of this further inquiry occurs in the chapter which we summarized for the most part in setting forth the doctrine of degrees above. There we read:

> If we would explore the efficient, rational, and principal causes of the operations and effects existing in the animal body, it will be necessary first to inquire what things, in a superior degree, correspond to those which are in an inferior degree, and by what name they are to be called.[29]

[27] *Ibid.* ("Sewall" is the Rev. Frank Sewall, D.D., author of several books and articles on Swedenborg's philosophy.)

[28] EAK I, n. 176.

[29] *Ibid.,* n. 648.

He then proceeds to draft five rules that one might apply to determine the correspondence (or lack thereof). That this is not his final word becomes clear when we find in volume II that he has reduced the same rules from five to four. That even this is hardly the ultimate set of conclusions one senses by the cumbrous terminology:

> In order to discover and recognize what in a superior degree corresponds to a given thing in an inferior, we must thoroughly understand: (1) Whether the thing in the superior degree be a reigning universal in many of those things which are under it; or not only in the one which is proximately inferior, but also in those which are below it. (2) Whether it be so distinct that it can exist together with it, and can exist also separately by itself without it. (3) Whether it be so distinct that it has to be signified by an entirely different name. (4) To constitute it an entity, superior or inferior, of a given series, there must be a connection between the two by means of substances, and an influx according to the connection; otherwise there would be no dependence of the one upon the other, and no mutual relation between them.[30]

One who reads this in the perspective of history, and with some degree of knowledge of the later assured doctrine of correspondence, readily senses that at this date our author was still groping for the key to this relationship. At this time [1740] he was by no means ready to promulgate the doctrine which would one day be proclaimed not only as the universal law of communication but also as the universal law of causation.

By the time he gets to his next major published treatise, *Regnum Animale* [1744]—and it seems appropriate to note that in the interval from 1740 he had *also* produced at least six *other* book-length manuscripts (most of which have subsequently been translated and printed)—he was prepared to share with the reading public a most daring and unique hypothesis. Readers of Swedenborg get somewhat inured to stumbling on such insight in, to say the least, unusual

[30] EAK, II, n. 281.

contexts. Such is the case here. The subject in hand is an analysis of the physiology of the kidneys and ureters. A curious blend of science, religion, and philosophy emerges. Mention has been made before that during this period of his life particularly, Swedenborg's writing style tended toward the rococo. Thus one is not entirely nonplused when he reads:

> There [in the "coat" surrounding the kidneys] the lymphatics joyfully receive their new guests, beset them with their little lips, load them with kisses, and congratulating them on their rescue from the unworthy serum..., etc., etc.[31]

After all, it must get tiresome writing page after page of meticulously detailed anatomical and physiological descriptions! Still, one is not quite prepared for what he is to read in the very next paragraph. It begins prosaically enough, with a long series of dependent clauses, nothing very unusual in Latin construction—but it is only when we come to the main clause that we realize that this is more philosophy than physiology:

> As the blood is continually making its circle of life; that is to say, is in a constant revolution of birth and death; as it dies in its old age, and is regenerated or born anew; and as the veins solicitously gather together the whole of its corporeal part, and the lymphatics, of its spirituous part; and successively bring it back, refect it with new chyle, and restore it to the pure and youthful blood; and as the kidneys constantly purge it of impurities, and restore its pure parts to the blood;—so likewise Man, who lives at once in body and spirit while he lives in the blood, must undergo the same fortunes generally, and in the process of his regeneration must daily do the like. Such a perpetual symbolical representation is there of spiritual life in corporeal life; as likewise a perpetual typical representation of

[31] AK, I, n. 292.

> the soul in the body* In this consists the *searching of the heart and reins,*[32] which is a thing purely divine.[33]

This essentially theological sentiment, making use of the context simply to constitute it a vivid example or type of a religious process, leads then to the bold conjecture adverted to above. It comes in the midst of a rather lengthy footnote (its immediate point of relevance being indicated by the asterisk in the above-cited paragraph). Again, in order to catch the full impact of the disclosure, it seems pertinent to quote the entire passage:

> In our Doctrine of Representations and Correspondences, we shall treat of both these symbolical and typical representations, and of the astonishing *things which occur,* I will not say in the living body only, but *throughout nature, and which correspond so entirely to supreme and spiritual things, that one would swear that the physical world was purely symbolical of the spiritual world* [emphasis mine]: insomuch that if we choose to express any natural truth in physical and definite vocal terms, and to convert these terms only into the corresponding spiritual terms, we shall by this means elicit a spiritual truth or theological dogma, in place of the physical truth or precept; although no mortal would have predicted that anything of the kind could possibly arise by bare literal transposition; inasmuch as the one precept, considered separately from the other, appears to have absolutely no relation to it. I intend hereafter to communicate a number of examples of such correspondences, together with a vocabulary containing the terms of the spiritual things, as well as of the physical things for which they are to be substituted. This symbolism pervades the living body; and I have chosen simply to indicate it here, for the purpose of pointing out the spiritual meaning of *searching the reins.*[34]

[32] *Cf.* Psalm 7:9, Jeremiah 11:20, Revelation 2:23, etc.

[33] *Op. cit.,* n. 293.

[34] *Ibid.,* footnote.

Just before the close of this philosophic period of his life, Swedenborg wrote a short work—in 1744, as nearly as can be determined[35]—obviously intended for publication, but set aside like so many other of his scientific and philosophic studies because of the changes in his life and interests which began about 1744-45. This booklet has been accurately described as the only one of his works in which he deals with the doctrine of correspondence *ex professo.* This short work with a long title—*A Hieroglyphic Key to Natural and Spiritual Arcana by way of Representations and Correspondences*[36]—may rightly be considered to be the one referred to in the quotation above. Although it is only about thirty-five pages long comprising some twenty-one "examples," it manages to set forth the central ideas of the doctrine of correspondence, ideas which the author adhered to for the remainder of his productive life.

The gist of the doctrine is found in the writer's own terminology, at n. 53:

> It follows then that there is some correspondence and harmony between all things, that is, between natural things and spiritual, and *vice versa;* or, that in universal nature there is not a thing that is not a type, image and likeness of some one among spiritual things, all which are exemplars.

This would seem to underscore and corroborate the bold conjecture quoted above from *Regnum Animale,* n. 293. That the general theme of *Clavis*—that nothing exists in nature which is not a representation of something spiritual—was consistent with his later development of the concept is attested to as follows:

[35] *Cf.* Editors Preface, *Psychological Transactions,* pp. xx-xxviii re dating of *Clavis Hieroglyphica.*

[36] Hereafter referred to as *Clavis.* Note: Although Swedenborg did later (1766) offer to explain the Egyptian hieroglyphics (cf. *Tafel's Documents Concerning Swedenborg,* Vol. Ill, pp. 751-155, Document 300)—an offer which was never acted upon—it seems clear that in this 1744 work before us, the word "hieroglyphics" is used in the general or literal sense of "sacred characters." Thus, at this date the author more likely had the proposed *mathesis universalis* in mind.

> The unity of the doctrine of correspondences as given in this work, with the doctrine as given in the theological writings, was so apparent to the early students...that some...supposed the *Hieroglyphic Key* to have been written after the author's illumination. Internal evidence, however, to say nothing of extraneous facts, plainly contradicts this supposition.[37]

Although, as we have noted, Swedenborg did not publish *Claris* himself, he did find occasion to quote from it at some length in his next published work, *The Worship and Love of God* [1745].[38] Of the several passages thus put to use, the following one may best serve to illustrate the trend of the author's thought at this critical transition period of his life.

The wording of *Clavis*—quoted below—is slightly altered by the author in citing it in *The Worship and Love of God.* He also introduces an editorial comment in the latter work between two quoted passages. This is included below and is indicated by enclosure in square brackets:

> The sun is the fountain of all light in its world; nor is it the cause of shade; but shade is the privation of light. The sun is never deprived of light, but terrestrial objects hinder its light from penetrating; hence darkness. [This sentence, by a change in the form of expression, reads thus in a spiritual sense:] God is the fountain of all wisdom in His heaven; nor is He the cause of unwisdom: but unwisdom is the privation of wisdom. God is never deprived of wisdom, but the loves of the body and of the world hinder God's flowing in with wisdom; hence insanities.[39]

It seems almost prolix to "point out" the symbolic relationships here noted. However, it may be worthwhile to risk the charge of prolixity, as these particular symbolic relationships or "correspondences" are among those which Swedenborg will use over and over again in his

[37] *Psychological Transactions,* Preface, p. xxi.

[38] *Cf.* Introduction, p. 17, NP, January-March, 1990 for a brief description of this work.

[39] *Clavis,* n. 45. *Cf. Worship and Love of God,* n. 64 [note].

later theological writings. Thus one might tabulate the relationships noted in the above quotation as follows:

The sun corresponds to God.
Light corresponds to wisdom.

The world corresponds to heaven.

Shade corresponds to unwisdom.

Terrestrial objects correspond to loves of
the body and of the world.

Darkness corresponds to insanities.

Some of these symbolic relationships will be handled in a considerably more sophisticated way in his later writings. At the same time, they will be related almost exclusively to the occurrences of terminology in the Sacred Scriptures. Nevertheless, the germ of the idea is clearly in mind at this date. Later it will be developed quite positively that these are not just metaphors or examples of figurative language. The correspondences are true causal relationships. For example, it will be insisted that the ***cause*** of the sun—with its life-sustaining combination of heat and light—is in the love and wisdom which constitute the essence of God, natural heat corresponding to His divine love, natural light corresponding to His divine wisdom.

Some of the above-listed correspondential relationships will not lend themselves so neatly to being cited as examples of the laws of causation. One of the more recondite of the above-claimed relationships, for example, is that which links correspondentially terrestrial objects with loves of the body and the world. Our philosopher seemed to be sensitive to the arcane overtones of such a linkage when he wrote in explanation as follows:

> ***Terrestrial objects, corporeal and worldly ends, loves of the body and of the world.*** Ends are always the objects of the understanding or thought, and these ends are the same as the loves; for we regard as an end that which we love. That these ends and loves

> hinder true intelligence and wisdom from flowing in and operating, is well known, for hence comes all human insanity.[40]

Here, in his explanation, he blurs—or blends, if you prefer—the terms "terrestrial objects" and "darkness." But he might easily have argued that to insist on maintaining a clearcut distinction would be both pedantic and redundant. However, in his later writings, one finds that he is usually considerably more precise in differentiating these relationships.

What is most important to establish and maintain at this juncture is the observable fact that the core ideas of the doctrine of correspondence were unquestionably both seen and set forth by Swedenborg before he entered upon his revelatory period. That this very doctrine of correspondence became in his mind not only the law of the communication of the soul with the body but also the universal law of causality will be the burden of the remaining portions of this dissertation.

5. **The Doctrine of Influx**

The concept—or, more properly, concepts—of influx found over a period of several years in the writings of the Swede is exceedingly complex. There are a number of contributing causes for this complexity. First, the concept has to do with a process; essentially, the process by which the human soul communicates with the human body. It is well known that philosophers and anatomists have puzzled over this process from time immemorial. A process, by its very nature, involves parties to the process; in this case, at the very least two: a soul and a body. This leads to the second cause of complexity: our author's ideas of the nature of the soul and the body—particularly the soul—grew and developed and changed. As his ideas about the nature of these parties to the commerce changed, so did his ideas as to *how* they communicate, *i.e.,* his ideas about the nature of the process of influx. A third complicating factor, more prevalent in the later writings than the ones now under consideration, was the inclusion of God in the chain

[40] *ibid.*

of process, together with the question as to whether the influx from God is mediate or immediate, et cetera.

In one of the later works of this period, the complexity of the subject is noted as follows:

> The mode in which the soul communicates with the body can never be investigated until search has been made as to what the soul is, and what the body; what sensation, imagination, thought, the pure intellect, and the spiritual; what will and action; and what the nature of the sensory and motory organs, both internal and external, and the connection of the organism; besides an infinitude of other things.[41]

What follows here will be simply a brief outline of what appear to me to be the most cogent and significant factors and hypotheses which lead to the author's final determination of a doctrine of influx. This will in no sense be a complete account; nor does it make any pretense of being so. It will be a patently selective summary, but hopefully a fair and definitive one.

Let us then first take note of the position taken in the 1734 work, *The Infinite.* The second of the two parts of this book is titled, "The Mechanism of the Intercourse between the Soul and the Body." This is the first of at least four direct and announced treatments of this subject.[42]

In a discussion in which he links belief in God with belief in human immortality, concluding that both beliefs are surely true, Swedenborg includes—apparently quite unintentionally—a revealing definition of "soul." The pertinent part of the passage reads:

> We may also deduce and conclude analytically and rationally from the nexus of natural beings and things in the world, that the *soul or subtlest part of the body* must be immortal. For as *the*

[41] *Rational Psychology*, n. 159.

[42] *Cf.* an article by H. L. Odhner, "Mind and Body," in *New Church Life,* Oct. 1930, pp. 633-659. On p. 634, Dr. Odhner annotates ten such treatments in the early writings of Swedenborg.

> *soul is in the purer and more perfect realm of nature,* and the body in the less perfect, it follows that the soul cannot be obnoxious to change like the grosser bodily parts...[43] [emphasis added]

It is immediately granted that if this were all one could turn to to base an argument on what a man believed the soul to be at a given time in his life, it could readily be dismissed as poor evidence indeed. For it is true that from this statement I shall contend that in 1734 Swedenborg envisaged the soul as being material, albeit the subtlest sort of material substance, but nonetheless material. But it is not alone from this passage that that inference is drawn. It begins, in fact, with the very title of this section of the book, which in the original Latin reads, *"Mechanismo operationis animae et corporis"* Later he will not speak of this process as a mechanism. At this time, however, his *Principia* concept that "the mechanism of the world consists in contiguity"[44] apparently dominated his thinking, and so, in true Cartesian fashion, he seemed to view the human body as a perfect machine, with this mechanical perfection characterizing even the soul/body relationship. Thus a few pages further on he is able to write:

> ...if in our explanation of special principles we can demonstrate that motion is the cause of sensations through the external sensory organs, and if motion passes through the *contiguum* towards the subtlest sphere on its way to the soul, and if all perception, understanding, and memory, and the like, can be mechanically and geometrically explained, then perhaps the reader will not be so ready to deny that motion is carried *per contiguum* towards the soul, and that there is motion in the soul, most distinct, however, and most subtle, and yet like that in the grosser parts.[45]

[43] *The Infinite* (1902 ed.), p. 175.

[44] *Cf.* pp. 1-3 *(supra).*

[45] *Op. ext.,* p. 189.

Eight years later he will say, just as clearly, that the soul is "without parts and without motion."[46] Therefore, I feel on quite safe ground to insist that at this date the concept of influx held was essentially that of physical influx, a stance which he was soon to abandon and to which he never returned.

It does not seem, however, that the change in view was either precipitous or even particularly dramatic. It was apparently so gradual in fact that it led to the writing of a number of abstruse if not out and out ambiguous statements in the next few years. Further, the next crucial work which tackles the problem adds to it a variety of other intricate presuppositions. The work in question, the 1740 *Oeconomia,* Vol. II (a work referred to a number of times before), is largely concerned with the human soul.

The first added complexity will be apparent in the following passage:

> Now, since the soul does not flow into the actions of its body, except by intermediates; nor by a continuous medium, but as it were by a ladder divided into steps; there can be no such thing as Occasionality of Causes and Physical Influx[47]...it then follows that there can be no influx from the moral state into the mechanical state of the body, except by the rational state, and thence by the physical, or by two intermediates.[48]

Here the question—left unanswered—is not whether there is commerce between soul and body, but what are the means or media which serve to make that communication possible. Apparently it has now been concluded that soul and body are at least two distinct steps apart. But that is a relatively minor complication compared to the next one this work introduces. In a chapter titled, "The Human Soul," one of the places in which he speaks of the necessity of a *mathesis univer*

[46] *Action,* Chap. XXVII (in *Psychological Transactions).*

[47] Elsewhere *(De Commercio Animae et Corporis* [1769], n. 19) these doctrines are attributed to Descartes (Occasionality) and Aristotle (Physical Influx) respectively.

[48] EAK n. 649.

salts, and which also includes a humble disclaimer of any thought or hope of personal honor or emolument, he proceeds to set forth what he describes as the "first fruits of my psychological labors."

What first emerges is a concept which seems to echo one of the astonishingly durable Second Century medical ideas of Galen, that of the "animal spirit." One of the careful and devoted scholars of Swedenborgiana, in a two-part article in *New Philosophy*[49] makes a good case for inferring that Swedenborg's knowledge of the idea may have come through the writings of Paracelsus, modified in part by those of Descartes. The reader interested in those details is referred to that study. For our purposes, it should suffice to point out that the "three-fluid" theory which Swedenborg develops at considerable length has some ancient and honorable forebears. It perhaps should also be noted that a great deal of Swedenborg's anatomical information was admittedly second-hand. He quite openly relied on the findings of distinguished anatomists. Thus when he uses such phrases as, "We clearly perceive," it may well be a perception based entirely on knowledge of the laboratory experiments of others together with his own carefully reasoned inferences from those findings.

With that as preface, let us look at one introductory paragraph (which the author then treats seratim) which packs together several key, and often startling assertions:

> From the anatomy of the animal body we clearly perceive, that a certain most pure fluid glances through the subtlest fibres, remote from even the acutest sense; that it reigns universally in the whole and every part of its own limited universe, or body, and continues, irrigates, nourishes, actuates, modifies, forms, and renovates everything therein. This fluid is the third degree above the blood, which it enters as the first, supreme, inmost, remotest, and most perfect substance and force of its body, as the sole and proper animal force, and as the determining principle of all things. Wherefore, if the soul of the body is to be the subject of inquiry, and the communication between the soul and the body

[49] *Cf.* issues of July 1932 and Oct. 1933, article by Rev. Hugo Lj. Odhner, D.Th., "The History of the Animal Spirits and of Swedenborg's Development of the Concept."

> to be investigated, we must first examine this fluid, and ascertain whether it agrees with our predicates. But as this fluid lies so deeply in nature, no thought can enter into it, except by the doctrine of series and degrees joined to experience; nor can it be described, except by recourse to a mathematical philosophy of universals.[50]

This "most pure" fluid is more or less identifiable with the venerable "animal spirit," although Swedenborg seems to prefer to term it "spirituous fluid." However, what is germane to our inquiry is that while the above paragraph would appear to opt for the existence of a most pure fluid which performs indispensable functions, there seems to be no hint that this fluid should be identified with the soul. However, just a few pages further on, an argument is introduced to try to establish a path of communication of life and intelligence into human beings. It is pointed out that these could not flow into any substances except those properly accommodated to the beginning of motion and the reception of life. The only substance which qualifies is the most simple, universal and perfect substance, *viz.*, the purest fluid. Thus the conclusion is reached:

> On account of the influx of this life, which is the principal cause in the animate kingdom, this purest fluid, which is the instrumental cause, is to be called the spirit and soul of its body.[51]

Yet earlier in this same volume this spirituous fluid had been described as the means by which the soul "is able to flow into the actions of its body."[52]

What is even more puzzling is the concept that very meticulous anatomical investigations really are the key to the nature of the soul and its communication—this despite the several assertions that the soul

[50] EAK II, n. 219.

[51] *Ibid.*, n. 240.

[52] *Ibid.*, n. 109.

and / or the spirituous fluid is / are beyond even the keenest perceptions of the senses. Thus, as we near the end of this volume we find this "formula" for inferring the nature of the intercourse between the soul and the body:

> If the operation of the spirituous fluid be the soul [another refinement?]; and if the operation of the soul in the organic cortical substance be the mind; and if the affection of the entire brain, or common sensorium, be the animus; and if the faculty of feeling be in the sensory organs; and the faculty of acting, in the motory organs of the body; *then a rational anatomical inquiry must show the nature of the above intercourse)* and must prove that the soul can communicate with the body; but through mediating organs; and indeed according to the natural and acquired state of such organs.[53] [emphasis added]

This hopeful optimism was to continue for a few more years, leading eventually to near complete frustration, a frustration to be overcome only after the philosopher became a seer and theologian. Meanwhile, he did seem to succumb to a very human foible, that of voicing a plea or apologia. This appears even further toward the end of the work:

> ...it must be confessed, that without the aid of a mathematical doctrine of universals, and the most ample experience from the posterior sphere, we can never procure any other than the obscurest idea of the subject; an idea approaching nearer to the darkness of ignorance than to the light of knowledge.[54]

Perhaps we should let him rest his case in the *Oeconomia* on this matter at that point, and move on for a glimpse at the studies of the year 1742. Early in that year a series of six "psychological transactions" were composed. Some of them are referred to elsewhere as "soon to be

[53] *Ibid.*, n. 300.

[54] *Ibid.*, n. 315.

published." The exact order of their composition is not known and can only be inferred from internal evidence. Some are fragmentary, and none was published by the author. Two in particular, however, contain statements which bear importantly on the doctrine of influx.

One is avowedly on the topic, being titled, *The Harmony between Soul and Body*.[55] Toward the end of this fragmentary work the following statements appear:

> ...the soul is in the world, and...by the mediation of nature she is in connection with her body and in harmony with her purest world or heaven; that is to say, that she is within the limits of nature, and is finite, being on the one hand, bound in with her microcosm, and, on the other, contiguous with heaven, and dependent on the heavenly aura; consequently that she is an entity both of the purer and of the grosser world...[56]

Here the philosopher is still groping for that nexus, searching for the terms to express the peculiar role of the soul as a sort of citizen of two worlds. On the following page he adds the following thoughts:

> ...there is nothing in the body but has a continuous and contiguous connection,—continuous by means of membranes of divers kinds, and contiguous by as many liquors and fluids,—the soul carries the office of agent, efficient and modifier, that is, of principle and cause, and the body the office of patient, principiate or causate.[57]

Here the age-old problem of finding a principle of mediation seems to be plaguing him. At this point he would seem to be trying to solve the dilemma without such a medium or intermediary. However, in

[55] In *Psychological Transactions,* First Transaction, pp. 23-64.

[56] *Op. cit.,* n. 77.

[57] *Ibid.,* n. 79.

another of these transactions, titled, *The Animal Spirit*,[58] also incomplete, the animal spirit or spirituous fluid is described as fulfilling that office. The proposition of Chapter IV is "that the animal spirit is an essence midway between soul and body; consequently that it is a mediatory substance, to the end that there may be a communication of operations." Then, the argument of Chapter V—comprising a single paragraph—is:

> The essence which is midway, or mediatory between soul and body ought to take its nature from both. The soul is spiritual while the body is material. Hence it follows that this animal humor is both spiritual and material; otherwise the spiritual could never operate upon the material or *vice versa.* But how natures so diverse can be united in one subject, remains to be shown. That they are united, is evident from the body, its viscera, and motory and sensory organs all which though material, are yet animated.[59]

Here our author would seem to have progressed a step further: he now has a candidate for the office of mediator, but is as yet not cognizant of how it performs its function. One therefore looks, hopefully to the next opus—also a product of the year 1742—posthumously published as *Rational Psychology,* with the thought that perhaps here one may find that definitive doctrine of influx which has eluded us thus far. Instead, one comes upon an unexpected and discomfiting turn: in this work the writer seems intent on abandoning the influx theory altogether. Almost a third of the way into the book, the first warning occurs:

> (1).. .the fact that we move and live and have our being in our body is due to our soul, which alone is the beginning of motion, the life, and the essence of our body.

[58] In *Psychological Transactions,* pp. 75-92.

[39] *Ibid.,* n. 5.

> (2) The communication itself appears as though it were an influx;...But lest the appearance deceive us, let us penetrate by rational consideration into the actual connection of things...[60]

The first "rational consideration," which immediately follows, centers on the well known fact that by the use of descriptive words, one is able to conjure up a mental image of particular objects or places. Thus, through a complex psychological process, words are changed into "ideas similar to the visual, that is to say, into so many images." But this communication, he insists, is neither influx nor harmony but something entirely new to us—an "acquired correspondence" *[correspon-dentia acquisita].* By this he means that the correspondence exists essentially because of usage. For example, one might describe the same scene in a half dozen different languages, using entirely different words, and still evoke the same mental picture, provided of course that the hearer understood the language being used in each case.

There follows a somewhat complex argument which seeks to establish a link between this new term, acquired correspondence, and the more usual "natural correspondence" *[correspondentia naturalis].* But this is ancillary to our immediate main concern, which is the question of why the word "influx" is suddenly dropped in favor of "correspondence" to describe the body / soul communication.

Some help is offered a few pages later where the consideration being treated is the question of defining the communication of the soul with the pure intellect.[61] Again, the communication is defined as a correspondence, rather than an influx, the reason being given that communication at this level is such that the soul understands of herself, without practice and experience, what those changes are to declare...This sounds a bit mystical, implying some special or occult powers with which the soul is endowed, making it unnecessary for any *flow* of power or essence or fluid, et cetera, and in that sense obviating the use of the descriptive term "influx."

[60] *Rational Psychology*, n. 159-160.

[61] The "pure intellect" is the highest manifestation of mind, directly below the soul in the hierarchy of mind. *Cf. Rational Psychology*, n. 123ff.

Nor is one's disquietude eased much by the following tentative conclusion:

> From the above, it now follows that the commerce between the bodily senses [and the soul] is not effected by any influx, still less by a physical influx, unless by influx we wish to understand natural correspondence, but then it is an influx of harmony and not an influx of the entities that form the harmony.[62]

But then the floodgates open; and at long last a likely reason for this heretofore puzzling abandonment of the term "influx" flows from the author's pen, exposing a plausible rationale for this new cautious stance. The author is at pains to distinguish his doctrine of the mind/body relationship from those of a number of other philosophers, ancient and modern.

Back in 1734, in the second part of his *The Infinite*, he had aligned himself with the position of Aristotle and the schoolmen, that which he designated Physical Influx. Here, in this 1742 work, he wishes to make clear that he not only no longer accepts that thesis, but that he also has some difficulty with the position of Descartes—which he denominates Occasional Causes—and also the theory of preestablished Harmony of Leibniz. This is a concern about which he is to write again some twenty-seven years later, reaching a quite different conclusion.

At this point in his life, he seems intent on adopting a conciliatory attitude toward the thoughts of his distinguished predecessors, writing that

> ...when the paths, the modes and the differences of the communication are rightly understood, the writings of the three schools are seen to be concordant. Because of this concordance, I would prefer that this commerce be said to be effected by correspondence. Thus, the hypotheses themselves also mutually correspond to each other.[63]

[62] ***Op. cit.*, n. 167.**

[63] ***Ibid.***

Probably few philosophers of the modern period have so charitably—some might say myopically—characterized these three radically different ideas of how the soul communicates with its body. But, as we have indicated, this is not Swedenborg's last word on the matter. That, however, must wait for a later point in this study.

What is perhaps equally astonishing as the attribution of mutual correspondence to these three schools is the fact that the author next picks up the thread of his earlier argument as if there had been no *excursus* whatever.

We leave this work, and look next at the next product of this amazing mind, a further study in the monumental series on anatomical and physiological subjects—known, as posthumously published, simply as *Generation*—being a study done in 1742-43. The closing chapter of this work, the one from which we chose to quote on page 7 *(supra)* to introduce this section on the "new" doctrines that Swedenborg considered necessary to his development of a full philosophy of causality, is titled, "General Remarks on the State of the Embryo and Its Initial Stages." Before calling attention to the above-mentioned list of needed new doctrines, our author again mentions the need for further study on the mind/body problem. And here, he seems to have no compunctions about referring to it as involving influx. He writes:

> Then at last we come to inquire how the soul institutes its intercourse with the body; what is the nature of the harmony between them, and what is the nature the disharmony; also, what is their influxion,[64] regarded both from the body's side as physical and from the soul's side as metaphysical. Influxion does indeed involve something material, when yet, whatever is material, is inapplicable to the soul which is immaterial and a spirit. But nevertheless influxion must be predicated by way of analogy; for it is an evident fact that there is here a communication and harmony.[65]

[64] Here Swedenborg chose to use a slightly different Latin word, *influxio,* rather than the more usual *influxus,* and the translators carefully follow his Latin. However, the words appear to be synonymous.

[65] *Generation* [1912 ed.], n. 355.

Here then, we not only seem to have restored to good standing the concept that the commerce of soul and body involves the doctrine of influx, but have the added reward of a positive statement that the soul is "immaterial and a spirit." The reader may recall an earlier citation[66] which defined the soul as "an entity both of the purer and of the grosser world." Further, there is no mention at this point of an animal spirit or spirituous fluid to act as mediator. Thus there seems to be a trend toward simplification of the concept of influx.

The next major study—also left in manuscript—is also one in the anatomical series, being on the five senses; in the translated and published form it is generally referred to as *The Senses.* This is clearly a first draft, written hurriedly during 1744. It is mentioned here simply to show that the author continued to project for himself the task of formulating a doctrine of influx. In a chapter on "Sensation in General," he promises three times to treat of "these things" in "the doctrine of influx,"[67] and again in a chapter on "The Sense of Touch."[68]

Finally, in his last major published scientific study, *Regnum Animale,* 2 vol. [1744-45], a work characterized by many lengthy footnotes, he reiterates his intention to expound in a separate treatise certain of these new doctrines (notice that the list has dwindled):

> We can never arrive at a true knowledge of the animal kingdom, unless we entertain a distinct idea of the subordination and succession of efficient causes, and unless we have a distinct conception of the nature of the prior and of the posterior sphere, or what amounts to the same thing, of the interior and of the exterior, and of the difference between them; for the prior and the interior are also the more perfect and the more universal. The progression from the prior to the posterior,—*a priori ad pos-teriora,*—or from the interior to the exterior, is identical with the progression from the soul to the body; but the progression from the posterior to the prior,—*a posteriori ad priora,*—or from the

[66] *Cf.* p. 315 *(supra).*

[67] *The Senses,* nos. 586, 588, 638.

[66] *Ibid.,* n. 733.

> exterior to the interior, is identical with the progression from the body to the soul. I intend to expound again in the sequel the Doctrine of Order and Degrees, as well as the Doctrine of Influx, in order that we may have a just intellectual comprehension of the above scale of progression.. ,[69]

Looked at in isolation, this passage might seem to have been too zealous in telescoping the list of doctrines, for we note that the fundamental doctrine of correspondence is not mentioned. However, one has only to recall that what was perhaps the main citation under our consideration of that doctrine was also from *Regnum Animate.* Or, one could read on for a few pages and come across this philosophic apothegm:

> If we wish to invite real truths, whether natural, or moral, or spiritual, (for they all make common cause by means of correspondence and representation*) into the sphere of our rational minds, it is necessary that we extinguish the impure fires of the body, and thereby our own delusive lights, and submit and allow our minds, unmolested by the influences of the body, to be illuminated with the rays of spiritual power: then for the first time truths flow in; for they all emanate from that power as their peculiar fountain.[70]

The asterisk (above) leads to an author's footnote which begins: "The reader will find this explained in our Doctrine of Correspondences and Representations." Thus, the key doctrine is not at all neglected, nor is one left in any doubt as to the drift of the author's attitude. In this work which will stand as the last in his impressive and significant works in natural philosophy, he reaffirms his conviction that the path to truth cannot be traversed successfully by man alone. One must be "illuminated" with rays of spiritual power. This dictum was to prove prophetic of the subsequent life of the author.

[69] AK, n. 456, note (c).

[70] *Ibid.,* n. 463.

6. **The Doctrine of Modification**

For all practical purposes we now have before us the rudiments of Swedenborg's causal theory, even though we have yet to consider briefly the doctrine of modification. This doctrine, we shall find, was never formulated into a concise format; however, the idea behind it is of great significance since it connotes all the modes of communication throughout nature. In the realm of hearing it involves that which we know as the modulation of sounds. In seeing, modification refers to the division of light into the color spectrum as well as the gradations of dark to light. It would probably be safe to say that it is most directly related to the area of sensation. Swedenborg was clearly aware of this when he wrote that he had made up his mind to "scrutinize diligently the organs of the senses" before constructing a doctrine of modifications.[1]

However, that it was not limited to the sensory level of life, he was also aware, as witness this text:

> Before we consider the general topics of this chapter [the human soul] in detail, we are bound to inquire whether any modification, or what is the same thing, whether any idea, ever extends beyond the continuity of substances, or beyond the continuity of their fluxion...[He concludes that] the perfection of modification increases with the perfection of substances. If no modification goes beyond the sphere of substances, so neither does any idea; every idea being a modification of the purest animal fluid participant of life.[2]

The modification of thought (or truth) into ideas is, of course, **a** major—if not *the* major—mode of communication.

That this doctrine is intimately related to the others under consideration was attested to by our author in his manuscript on *The Senses*, in

[1] *Ibid.,* n. 359, note (e).
[2] EAK II, n. 293.

which he wrote that we cannot explore modifications "except by means of the doctrines of forms, of order and of series, finally of influxes."[73] A succinct passage in *Clavis* defines modification by means of analogy:

> What in the atmospheric world is called modification, that same in the animal kingdom is called sensation, imagination, thought; for as soon as modification touches the sensory organs, or organs of the animated body, it becomes living,—which is the reason why sensation is said to be effected by modification.[74]

Finally, the concept is stated in the broadest possible terms in *Regnum Animate:*

> Nature manifests herself,—she shows what she is,—by modifications alone; into them she has transferred herself, and if we may be allowed the expression, her nature...[75]

Thus, by his own statement, Swedenborg would seem to validate my prefatory judgment, that modification connotes all the modes of communication throughout nature. However, the reader will recall an earlier statement in this study, to the effect that the doctrine of *correspondence,* as set forth by Swedenborg, has been called the law of communication. If this hypothesis be true, then we should properly expect the concept of modification to be subsumed, along with that of forms, order and degrees, series and society, and influx.

In the study of specific applications of Swedenborg's causal theory, projected as Part II of this dissertation, the effort will be made to illustrate this subsumption in a variety of examples.

Mention has been made more than once in the above pages that Swedenborg unquestionably planned to write a treatise in which he would draw together his thoughts on these several doctrines we have

[73] *Op. cit.,* n. 266.

[74] *Op. cit.,* n. 55.

[75] *Op. cit.,* n. 359, note (e).

been considering. It has also been remarked that the circumstances of his life altered unexpectedly, and the promised work never appeared. Thus we search in vain for a complete formal treatment of what I have called his philosophy of causality. Nevertheless, a methodical and consistent causal theory does permeate his later writings, even though one must piece it together, a bit from here, a bit from there.

Swedenborg's doctrine of causality includes the following primary principles:[76]

1. The bodily form of everything in nature, animal, vegetable, and mineral, is derived from a sort of soul. These "souls" are the creations of God, each intended to serve a logical use.
2. It is in conformity to these uses—foreseen and provided for in the mind of God—that everything which exists is generated and grows or takes form.
3. In the human mind, uses are called ends, because they are freely willed and intended by us, and therefore are living. The sum of the ends or goals of any individual may be thought of as the sum of the parts of his soul; potential until activated, actual when embodied by being acted upon.
4. Thus, everything that exists in nature, or on the worldly plane, is a type or representation of its "soul," which in turn has its origin in God's realm.
5. Therefore, if we "unfold" natural things, and in their place transcribe celestial or spiritual things, corresponding truths will be revealed.
6. Evil uses, though not from God, are permitted due to the inviolability of human freedom of choice. These "uses" correspond to hellish rather than heavenly forms.

These six points may not exhaustively cover the philosophy of causality held by Swedenborg in 1745, but the rudiments of the later, more fully developed doctrine are there. It may be noted in passing that the principles listed, either implicitly or explicitly, reflect the

[76] Most of the points enumerated are explicitly stated in one remarkable footnote in *Worship and Love of God*, n. 64(g) [Rotch ed.]. *Cf. Ibid.*, n. 91 [3] re "evil." See also *Clavis*, n. 54, re the use of evil.

notions of form, order and degrees, series, correspondence, influx and modification.

Had the course of his life remained essentially unchanged for the next few years, one can only conjecture what use he would have turned these studies to. But that the thrust of his labors altered dramatically, beginning in or around the year 1745, is historically attested to. What this change was, and in what ways it affected the productive efforts of the great Swede is what we plan to outline briefly in the next chapter.

(To be continued)