

I offer no comment on this, but instead appeal to a common experience of my readers if they try to answer this question: How often did you speak, and about what subjects, before you first used a dictionary?

## COMMUNICATION

---

To the Editor:

Dr. Aubrey T. Allen's contributions<sup>1</sup> on "Sight, the Visual Process and Doctrine" gave me great delight. They stimulated many thoughts and questions. Some of the latter which arose from reading the first essay were answered in later parts. Sherrington's lyrical comments, for example, delightful and true as they are, now need amplification and some slight degree of correction, and this is applied in part II (1982). It was clearly impossible to deal fully with each facet in one place because the whole subject of the correspondence of sight and light, of eyes and the brain is so rich and complex. It deserves deep and prolonged study, and it is rewarding to read and re-read Dr. Allen's papers as one whole. The following thoughts occurred as a result of such reading.

1) The suggestion that the retina represents the celestial heaven made me pause, for we are used to thinking that "to see" means "to understand" and therefore that the eye corresponds to the understanding and we do not usually distinguish the separate parts of the eye. However, confirmation is easily found, for the retina receives the relatively inert image formed by the focussing of the light and "gives" to the image its life. This is exactly parallel to what we read in *Arcana Coelestia* 3863:2, namely "...that good is essentially the firstborn and...is insinuated by the Lord through the internal man, in order that it may adopt and receive the truth which is introduced through the external man;...in good there is life from the Lord." Good is of course the celestial quality.

2) We read in part I (1981) that the macula represents the Writings and in part II (1982) that when the Word is rightly approached light is brought to a focus on the retina and with the effort to understand, on the macula which represents the Writings. But, it seems to me, our understanding does not focus "light" merely as illumination, on the Writings. It appears more as though the

<sup>1</sup>Aubrey T. Allen, "Sight, the Visual Process, and Vision," *New Philosophy* 84:1 & 2: 35-42, 1981; 85:4:138-147, 1982.

Writings illuminate our understandings. On the other hand it was suggested<sup>2</sup> that truths are like objects and "light" from the Divine Truth is what illuminates them, in which case the Writings would not be a source of light but of truths (AC 8707). Neither would they be the receptacle of an image, as the retina is. Moreover, Dr. Allen suggests that the retina corresponds to the celestial heaven<sup>3</sup>, which would indicate a predominance of love or will rather than of understanding (though we must realise that the celestial quality includes a very clear comprehension though not relying in such a degree as the spiritual on an understanding of truths). All these considerations, however, still do not force us to dismiss such an obviously fitting idea as that the macula corresponds to the Writings. They rather make us think about it in more detail. First it is quite clear that light, sunlight, corresponds to the Divine Truth, but note that spiritual light is not said to *be* the divine Truth but *from* the Divine Truth (AC 8707). We then ask a few more questions:

What is light without an eye?

What is an eye without light?

What are the Writings without an understanding?

What is an understanding without the Writings?

We say the Writings are the Word but they are not really the Word until understood (in part) and accepted and the Lord comes in to dwell in what is His own. Thus the Writings are only really and properly themselves when they are loved, it is, I suggest, this love to which the macula corresponds. Into this love the Lord can flow with life, and this love can in its way *be* the Writings for it accepts into itself (its own idea of) the objective truth of the Writings "seen" in "light" from the Lord just as the retina, and especially the macula accepts an image of illuminated objects, and converts it into activities of living nerves. This agrees with the celestial correspondence suggested for the retina as a whole. We also read "the man does not see the Lord from himself but he sees Him from the Lord with him" (AC 9397).

3) I wondered about motor fibres which are connected with organismic parts on a lower level in animals than in man, and I imagined that this means the same as the statement in part II that "in man volitional movement has been separated from the understanding, and transferred higher up into the nervous

<sup>2</sup>N. J. Berridge, "Thinking from Correspondences," *New Philosophy* 83:3:118

<sup>3</sup>Aubrey T. Allen, *loc. cit.* 1981, p. 30.

system,"<sup>4</sup> but I did not know what is meant by "higher up into the nervous system." Perhaps "higher up" is the integrative process i.e. the involvement of whole brain, rather than any particular section. I happened to read on the same day "that no one knows the states of any one in particular but he who knows the general state of all, for the one depends inseparably upon the other" (AE 299:2 in reference to the Lord alone knowing the states of each individual because He alone knows the states of all). The conclusion that it must be the same in the kingdom of each individual soul seems inescapable.

It would seem that in animals, response to visual images is almost automatic but in man is subject to the control of the integrated activity of the whole brain. But the connection with ocular deviations is not clear unless it is because what is "seen" depends on the output. This leads me to ask how do we know what ocular deviations are in animals? Presumably by their reactions; but we cannot say what the animal sees. Whereas stimulation of the visual cortex in a human may lead merely to "seeing" flashing lights, and the subject will say so, an animal may "see" the same and be terrified. Possible this again shows that in the human, the response is integrated by the whole brain which knows the circumstances of the experiment. Thus I am suggesting that "higher up in the nervous system" means the whole brain which includes the regions that are sensitive to spiritual influx, bearing in mind, however, that this very sensitivity may well be a function of the integrated whole rather than of any particular region. I wonder if Dr. Allen would agree with such a meaning for "higher up."

4) In some ways it is easier to think about the representation of the retina if we use the terms good, or love, or will. Detailed exposition leads to further thoughts about the similarity in the representations of the eye, and of the heart and lungs. Some of the things said about the will and understanding in *Divine Love and Wisdom* (Part V) can be illustrated by the eye as well as, if not better than, by the heart and lungs. A brief indication of how the correspondences can be similar was given in part VIII of "Thinking from Correspondences,"<sup>5</sup> but when we think of the retina as representing the will, further parallels follows. For example, how the will does nothing without the understanding is clear from the limited ability of the retina to distinguish any objects without the cooperation of the iris and lens. These parts are like the lungs in that

<sup>4</sup>Aubrey T. Allen, *loc. cit.* 1982, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup>N. J. Berridge, *loc. cit.*

they introduce the light as the lungs introduce air, and the retina is like the heart, for it changes the light into its own stream of nerve impulses which it then sends to the brain, as the heart sends oxygenated blood to the body. If we accept that the blood vessels and capillaries, and indeed the blood itself, belong to the kingdom of the heart, then the parallelism between the heart and the retina is very close indeed, for it is the heart's capillaries and blood which incorporate oxygen into the hemoglobin pigment, as it is the retina's visual pigment and neurones which incorporate the images into the stream of nerve impulses.

It is also remarkable that the heart cannot stimulate the lungs to respire more deeply or more frequently except by pumping blood rich in carbon dioxide to the respiratory centre in the brain which then commands the muscles of the diaphragm and chest. Similarly, the retina cannot command the iris to change its aperture except by "messages" via the mid-brain. A parallel to focussing and the movement of the eye and head for looking at specific objects may not so easily be found in the heart and lungs but this is probably because quite often such movements involve a choice by the whole man, and the parallel may be an individual's choice of fresh air.

5) The inability of the retina to control the rest of the eye and of the heart to control the lungs except by appeal to higher centres, leads to thoughts about the separation of the old will and the formation of a new will in the intellectual part, and one might think from correspondences that the heart should be destroyed and replaced by a new one. "For when man's will part had become wholly corrupt, the Lord miraculously separated the proprium of his intellectual part from that corrupt proprium of his will part, and in the proprium of his intellectual part He formed a new will, which is conscience, and into the conscience insinuated charity, and into the charity innocence, and thus conjoined Himself with man, or what is the same, made a covenant with him. So far as the proprium of man's will part can be separated from this proprium of the intellectual part, the Lord can be present with him, or conjoin Himself, or enter into a covenant with him. Temptations and the like means of regeneration cause the proprium of man's will part to be quiescent, to become as nothing, and as it were to die" (AC 1023). However, it is to be noted that the old will is not actually destroyed, but "separated," or caused to "be quiescent, to become as nothing, and as it were to die," thus not actually to die. Moreover, we also find that "though the will part of man is opposed, yet it cannot but be present" (AC 1044:2).