

Swedenborg's Philosophy as a Whole

I

417. *From Aristotle to Wolff to Swedenborg on "the whole."* Since 1979, the philosophical notes have been devoted to *whole* regarded as a philosophical term. Only some of the notes have been directed to Swedenborg's philosophy, but it is intended for the future, beginning with this set, to point to some things that give a continuity and coherence to Swedenborg's principal philosophical works from 1734 to 1744. But before entering that subject, it would be well to know that although "whole" came to me as a philosophical term, it did so not by way of the philosophers, but through a realization of what an encompassment is required to think about the Big Bang theory of the creation of the universe; for so much happened at its beginning during the first minutes, even seconds, even in less time than seconds, namely in nano-seconds (10^{-9} sec), within the microcosmos, the atom. Going to the macrocosmos, the time of the event itself was of the order of twenty billion years ago. What a challenge to positivism in this bracketing of time! (*New Philos.* July 1979, Jan. 1980).

Even as a boy, before hearing about positivism, I wondered about the attitude that limited what can be known to things that can be sensed, by sight, for example. At the beginning of geometry there is the notion of parallel lines. We were told that two lines in a plane are parallel if they never meet. I asked myself, "Who is going to be able to check that?" While studying geometry, suppose one is on the equator. Draw two parallel lines pointing north with a pencil. If limited to the earth's surface they become circles of longitude, and they meet in two places, first at the north pole, then again at the south pole, and continued from there, they come back to the equator where each meets itself after meeting the other twice! And moreover, even as any school boy may wonder when the teachers explain the calendar's dependence on the earth rotating on its axis once a day and traveling in an orbit around the sun once a year, what is the path of the pencil point that draws those two "parallel" lines in the geometry of space of the entire solar system?

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In short, "whole," when applied only to school geometry, geography, and astronomy becomes a term to wonder at. Aristotle, many years ago, told us that "to wonder" was a characteristic that set philosophers apart from others. Before going on with Swedenborg's philosophy as a whole, let us begin with "whole" as formally described by that respected philosopher:

'A whole' means (1) that from which is absent none of the parts of which it is said to be naturally a whole, and (2) that which so contains the things it contains that they form a unity; and this in two senses—either as being each severally one single thing, or as making up the unity between them...' Of these things themselves, those which are so by nature are wholes in a higher degree than those which are so by art...in the case of unity also, wholeness being in fact a sort of oneness. Again (3), of quanta that have a beginning and a middle and an *end*...(Metaphysics 1023b27-1024a3).

But as we shall learn, definitions by themselves are not worth much in philosophy, even of the word "philosophy" itself. Examples of what philosophy is are what are important, not its definition. And so in the first book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, there are related theories on the nature of reality from Thales, who attributed all to water, Heraclitus to fire, etc. When Aristotle arrived at the Pythagoreans and how they acknowledged reality by number, he wrote that for them:

...all other things seemed in their *whole* nature to be modelled on numbers, and numbers seemed to be the first things in the *whole* of nature, they supposed the elements of numbers to be the elements of all things, and the *whole* heaven to be a musical scale and a number. And all the properties of numbers and scales which they could show to agree with the attributes and parts and the *whole* arrangement of the heavens, they collected and fitted into their scheme; and if there was a gap anywhere, they readily made additions so as to make their *whole* theory coherent. E.G., as the number 10 is thought to be perfect and to comprise the *whole* nature of numbers, they say that the bodies which move through the heavens are ten, but as the visible bodies are only nine, to meet this they invent a *tenth*...(Metaphysics 985B2598^a12, emphasis added).

Since C. Wolff was responsible for much philosophical language in Swedenborg's time, some attention should be paid to him about

the relation of whole to philosophy. In order to understand what he and others say about "whole" it must be known that to know about a "whole" is not to know everything about the thing to which whole is applied. Wolff wrote:

He is a greater philosopher who can give the reason of more things, and he is a lesser philosopher who knows the reason of fewer things.... The number of possibles is so great that no one man can perceive the reason of all things. Now only he is a philosopher who can give the reasons in all things which are or can be.... Therefore, no man is a philosopher in all things. Indeed, if anyone would wish to examine himself in the light of this norm, he will see how small a philosopher he is. (Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy in General, p. 28, being the Blackwell translation of Introduction to *Philosophia rationalis sive logica*....)

So Wolff wrote about what relates a person as a philosopher to the whole of philosophy.

To give examples of philosophical usage of "whole" in Swedenborg would fill pages, but here is one example. In speaking of the wonders in nature and especially in the heavens and the human body:

The sun, a planet, a satellite, our own specific earth, any part of any one of them, would more than exhaust our space and time. Nay, there is not a part that is not necessary to the rest as to the *whole...and* for perfection of the *whole...[W]hat* wonder should not overcome us in considering the causes of the *whole* and of the parts.

...we will also contemplate the structure of the human body, and show therefrom, that there is nothing throughout it but is necessary to the parts and the *whole*, or but is of use to the subsistence of the *whole*:....*But* as we are about to treat...on these subjects in our Theory of the Intercourse between the Soul and the Body, we will here confine ourselves to a general account of the use which the several parts appear to perform for the *whole* (Infinite, 1965 printing, pp. 45, 46; emphasis added).

Each time whole appears there is a subject introduced to wonder about. And so in notes to follow, we will be wondering about the meaning of Swedenborg's philosophy as a whole.

418. *Purpose and Outline of This Set of Notes.* First more generally it is my present purpose to devote future Philosophical Notes toward an outline of Swedenborg's philosophy regarded as a whole. The contents of the principal books written from 1734 to 1744 will be the source. Swedenborg's philosophy is not out of the blue—by the sampling in the previous Note we can see that there is a history of regarding philosophy as a whole. The philosophies of Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibnitz, and others might have been added as further examples.

While coherence and continuity are criteria for judging a philosophy to be a whole as to structure, as to subject a whole philosophy has three parts: (1) A consideration of the natural world; (2) A turning from the world to man; (3) The subject of man himself. The whole of Swedenborg's philosophy clearly satisfies both the philosophical direction that is tested by its coherence and continuity, and as well by the tri-part division of subjects: (!) A consideration of the natural world in the cosmogony of the *Principia*; (2) A turning from the world to man in *The Infinite and Final Cause of Creation* and its companion *The Mechanism of the Operation of Soul and Body*; (3) The subject man is presented by Swedenborg in what he called "the search for the soul."

The present set of notes begins the survey of the whole in the first chapter of the *Principia*, entitled "Means Leading to True Philosophy, and the True Philosopher," and consists of three parts. The first part depends on the title and first paragraph of the chapter. There are beginnings of subjects in these two places that will remain as subjects throughout the whole course of the notes to follow. It is convenient to call them threads of the fabric of Swedenborg's philosophy. As the notes continue, each of these threads will reappear from time to time, and new threads will also begin (Notes 419-423). The objective of the second part is to show from quotations within the chapter how important geometry and mechanics are to the philosophy as a whole, and to do away with the notion that it is exclusively geometrical and mechanical (Notes 424-426). Finally, in the third part it is shown that not a notion only, but a downright error is introduced into philosophy when the means leading to true philosophy are enumerated as three in number, that is, as experience, geometry, reason. It is an error of omission (Notes 427-429).

The notion about geometry and mechanics on the one hand, and the error about the means leading to true philosophy, are

obstructions to the development of an understanding of Swedenborg's philosophy as a whole. Others will be referred to as the notes develop. How Swedenborg turned from cosmogony to man has not always been clearly understood. Hopefully, the hints on threads of continuity that begin in the first paragraph of the *Principia* will help toward establishing a connection between the nature of the world and that of man in the works from the *Principia* to the *Five Senses*, that is, the principal works by Swedenborg written from 1734 to 1744.

419. "*Means Leading to True Philosophy and the True Philosopher.*" This is the title of the first chapter of *Principia*. It contains three parts: (1) Means Leading to True Philosophy¹; (2) True Philosophy; (3) True Philosopher.

The first expression, "Means Leading to True Philosophy," is the best known of the three parts of the title because of its repetition by those commenting on the *Principia* (see Notes 427-429). "True Philosophy" is referred to very early in the chapter but under different names, and again later, under still other names. The terms true philosophy and true philosopher point to a hoped-for ideal with the author on one hand and for the reader on the other hand. The reader is a partner with Swedenborg because Swedenborg's philosophy is an activity or process of thought, and is not written as a series of conclusions, but as a series of reasons leading to conclusions. Therefore the reader should think along with Swedenborg the philosopher, and to the extent he does so, is himself a philosopher.

As noted, the term true philosophy has a number of variants. For example, the following paragraph where the three means leading to true philosophy are enumerated for the first time, begins:

By philosophy is here understood the knowledge of the mechanics of the world...(p. 2).

Whereas in the second enumeration of the means leading to true philosophy:

¹ Page references in these notes are to the Clissold translation of the *Principia*. However, the title using "Leading" instead of "Conducting" is from the Rendell and Tansley edition. For detailed comparison of the two translations see Alfred Acton "The New Edition of the *Principia*", *New Philosophy* 16:3:64-88, 1913).

Now the means which more especially conduce to a knowledge philosophical are three in number.... By philosophy is here understood the knowledge of the mechanism of our world, or 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 (p. 2).

There is a difference between "true philosophy," "knowledge philosophical," and "By philosophy is here understood...." Each of these names presents a particular aspect of "true philosophy." An aspect is what can be seen at some particular time from some particular place. The *means* are three in number—that is one aspect of true philosophy. "Philosophy" as 'the knowledge of the mechanism of our world..'—that is another aspect. Each aspect as a *part* of true philosophy deserves its treatment under true philosophy. Every aspect of something can be true to it, but is only a part of the truth about what that something is. At the end of the treatment of *Experience* another aspect of "true philosophy" appears as "philosophical wisdom."

Passing now to "true philosopher." According to the title of the chapter, "true philosopher" is a separate subject, or at least an extra subject to the means leading to true philosophy. And indeed after the enumeration of the three means and after each is treated of in the order listed, a fourth section is added that is devoted to true philosopher. It begins:

By a true philosopher, we understand a man, who, by the means treated of above, is enabled to arrive at the real causes, and the knowledge of those things in the mechanical world which are invisible and remote from the senses; and who is afterwards capable of reasoning *a priori* or from first principles or causes, concerning the world and its phenomena...(p. 32).

To *reason* from the geometrical and mechanical things is itself other than either geometry or mechanics. We may wonder, is reasoning about causes (that is, "to arrive at causes") either geometrical or mechanical? What is more, to follow this in the opposite way, that is, the descending way of reasoning from principles or causes to effects, is that geometrical or mechanical? All such reasoning is philosophy (see Notes 424-426). Philosophy is an activity of thought, and the subjects to which that activity is applied will appear in good time, not by definitions, but by philosophical examples themselves. If all such

things could appear as defined, there would be no need for philosophy, only for a dictionary.

Notwithstanding all the attention given by Swedenborg to what is geometrical and mechanical (see *Principia* pp. 15-25 and Note 426), when he arrived at section four on "true philosopher," other things begin to appear. Bringing together true philosophy and true philosopher, he wrote:

No man seems to have been capable of arriving at true philosophy, since the age of the first mortals...before the existence of vice.... All who are governed by a right mind, aspire after, nay, are intensely desirous of arriving at the same degree of wisdom, as at something which we have lost; but how far it is possible to succeed, none but a true philosopher can see...(pp. 34-35).

Geometry, at least the Euclidean kind, is ancient for us, yet it is far more recent than the "age of the first mortals." So "true philosophy" and "true philosopher" must be terms having to do with much more than what is geometrical and mechanical because in time they came far before the geometrical and mechanical sciences. That is not all. The first mortal is also referred to as a "man in a state of integrity" who is "made a complete philosopher," and even further:

...without the utmost devotion to the Supreme Being, no one can be a complete and truly learned philosopher. True philosophy and contempt for the Deity are two opposites...(p. 35).

I have copied enough to show that far from definitions there is a progressive development within the philosophy of this chapter about what philosophy is. Development is itself a criterion for philosophy to *be* philosophy which cannot at the outset be defined in a fixed manner. Thus, in this the first chapter of the first principal book in Swedenborg's philosophical period is the first thing said in Swedenborg's philosophy as a case history that reports his philosophical activity, (see W. F. Pendleton *The Science of Exposition* about "first thing said"). Already, we have seen by illustration of the development of the meanings of true philosophy and true philosopher, how philosophy is a seeking, or process activity. I shall return in the next set of notes to how Swedenborg used man in a state of integrity—the true philosopher—in an effort to establish a connection between Chapter I and Chapter II of the *Principia*.

420. First Things Said in the First Chapter of the *Principia*.

If the mind [*animus*] be well connected with the organs of the senses, or in other words, if man be truly rational, he is perpetually aspiring after wisdom. The soul is in the desire of being instructed by the senses, and of continually exercising its perception from them, as from a source distinct from itself; while the senses in their turn desire to exercise their perception from the soul, to which they present their several objects for contemplation. Thus each performs and contributes to the same common operation, and tends to one ultimate object, the wisdom of the man. For this purpose there exists a continual connexion between the soul and body; for this purpose also reason is added to the senses, and hence the desire after wisdom becomes the peculiar mark and characteristic of man: unless however he desires and attains to a knowledge which lies beyond or above his senses, he is far from being truly rational, nor is there a due connexion between the senses and the soul. The senses and their various organs can receive but grossly, and in an imperfect measure, the phenomena of the world. Now there are no animals beside man who possess any knowledge beyond that of the mere senses, and of their organs disposed in the pia meninx of the brain. They are unable to penetrate further; and, from the want of a more subtile and active power, cannot refer the objects presented to their senses to a higher or more distinct principle. But truly the wisdom of man cannot be said to differ from theirs, if we refer the objects or operations of the world upon our senses, not to the soul and its reason, but to the same principle as they do. The sign that we are willing to be wise, is the desire to know the causes of things, and to investigate the secret and unknown operations of nature. It is for this purpose that each one consults the oracle of the rational mind, and thence awaits his answer; that is, he is eager to acquire a deeper wisdom than merely that which is proffered to him through the medium of the senses (pp. 1, 2).

421. *Animus, the Third Word of the Principia*. After the *Principia* Swedenborg uses both *animus* and *mens*. When this is done, *animus* is next to the bodily senses in the ascending series from the body to the soul; the *mens* or rational mind is higher. But by acknowledging this, we have advanced beyond the beginnings of things in the *Principia*.

And we note that at that point there is not yet any language distinctive to Swedenborg.

In unabridged Latin-English dictionaries, several columns are devoted to *animus*, but somewhat less space to *mens*. Typical for *animus* are the mind: (a) As opposed to the body, the mind or soul as constituting with the body the whole person, (b) As including the *mens*, (c) And as the immortal part of a person...And so it should not be surprising that *animus* is associated with "if man be truly rational" in the first sentence when Swedenborg begins to present himself to his readers as a philosopher. For the purpose of reading the *Principia*, this sentence is directed both at the author and the reader for the sake of the subject of the work. In general, the subject is the physical universe; it is not man and his rational mind. Yet *animus* as the third word of this chapter is the beginning of a thread that weaves through the whole of Swedenborg's philosophy.

422. *Mind as a Thread in the Fabric of Swedenborg's Philosophy.* As the Notes develop on Swedenborg's philosophy as a whole, it will become more and more evident that his philosophy is a fabric that contains many threads that give to it a wonderful continuity. Each of several of the threads might well result in a volume if fully treated—and in fact that is what Swedenborg himself actually says in some cases. To trace out threads in the beginning would be inappropriate, as it would be necessary to anticipate many things in advance of the reasons for their appearance. Nevertheless, it might be useful to give a few indications on mind as a thread, selecting them in chronological order, and illustrating the variety of meanings which "mind" takes on. Early in the first chapter of the *Principia* with regard to the education of the mind we read:

...it is only by means of experience received through the medium of the [sense] organs, and thence transmitted to the mind, that we are capable of becoming wise.... Suppose a person, destitute of education, left wholly to himself with wild beasts.... What kind of brute would he be?... What would be the operation of his higher aura or (*animi*) mind.... Man is made and formed, and distinguished from the brutes, by education alone; in the process of which, the organs that mediate between mind (*animi*) and the body, being brought into exercise...(p. 7).

We must not be misled by this early explanation of the mind as being acquired exclusively by education. Swedenborg returns again and

again to mind with increasing encompassment as to its meaning.

Shortly after the above on the nature of the mind, something follows about pleasures of the mind. It is well known that the senses may enjoy pleasures by what they receive, but it is less well known that human endeavor leading to doing does itself lead to pleasure. There is an expression, "The throat that sings has received its own reward," so it is with the mind that thinks. This is illustrated early in the *Infinite*:

...where the human mind is not hindered by circumstances, or oppressed with cares, it ever loves to rise and mount; the steeper the difficulty, the more heartily the mind engages with it; for it burns to possess denied knowledge, and to tread forbidden ground.... The pleasure of the pursuit lives and feeds upon itself, and dallies with the labouring soul, winning it over to its side; and this continues until the mind has found what it sought, or else in sheer weariness, is forced to leave it as hopelessly inexplicable; although even in this case it is not without reluctance that the philosopher can consent to forego his enterprise (pp. 9-10).

Although it is at this time a leap into the future of Swedenborg's philosophy to mention rational psychology, there is an important point to make now. Rational psychology is an important part of Swedenborg's philosophy. What it is and how it is studied is almost identical with his search for the soul. As philosophy, it depends upon personal experience in thought, as is illustrated in the above quotation by "pleasure of the pursuit," "feeds upon itself," and, as well by "weariness" when forced to leave "a thought," and yet "not without reluctance." All these are personal sensations of the mind (feelings, they may be called). They are experiences which Swedenborg himself felt. One who has not felt these things for himself cannot really understand them. He may think he knows, but perhaps his own weariness may arrive so soon that he really knows nothing about the real nature of a pursuit enjoyed because "forced to leave it." Seldom does reporting on a successful search appear in science and philosophy. Successful text books do not usually explain the trials that led to the completion of their subjects. The High School student who with difficulty has finally passed geometry may feel some solace by looking through Heaths *Elements of Euclid* (3 volumes), where in footnotes and interpolations the publisher explains how the finished article, namely Euclid's geometry, was a

long time coming, and only possible because of concurring efforts of a number of good minds. So although in reading Swedenborg's philosophy we may feel an amazement over its quantity and quality, yet we may do so without much feeling for the actual nature of Swedenborg's determination and work. The reader can appreciate it only indirectly, and then only if he thinks along with Swedenborg. It is proper to anticipate an important example.

In the *Economy*, Swedenborg testifies that he had attempted to conduct his search for the soul wondering if indeed the Human Soul was accessible to any reach of the mind either from the senses—that is from affection, in anatomy—or by reasoning. The one is empirical, the other is *a priori*. As we shall see, it was because each let him down that he was led to introduce the Doctrine of Series and Degrees that makes use both of inductions from effects in anatomy and reasoning from prior causes to effects as a principle of faith for his philosophical method. This doctrine turned for application on the very part of man that inaugurated it into philosophy, namely, the mind. Already one important result has been referred to, namely, the difference between *animus* and *mens* (Note 421). Thus the philosophies of rationalism and empiricism were not scientific for Swedenborg, learned from books; they were experiences that failed to support his search for the soul. As a result, his search was directed elsewhere until he came upon the doctrine of series and degrees. This doctrine will be a very large part of future notes.

By this introduction to rationalism and empiricism, two important philosophies of Swedenborg's time, he was affected by a philosophy that made mind itself the source of philosophy, and also he was affected by a philosophy that placed mind in second place, by appealing to sensation. I think enough has been said to suggest that when philosophy is regarded as an activity that makes philosophy possible, the mind turns on itself, and in consequence becomes a source of scientific for philosophical reflection.

423. *How the Soul and Body Each Contribute to a Common Operation.* If as much attention were given to other things in the opening sentences of the first chapter of the *Principia* as to its third word *animus*, the whole of the search for the soul—that is, what constitutes the whole of Swedenborg's philosophy beyond the *Principia*—would be anticipated. Therefore I shall try to be more brief than with mind, and yet say something useful to the reader. Not the subject of the *Principia*, but what comes after, namely, the search for the soul, is referred to in very general terms in the first paragraph. Here appear

three clauses: First, "The soul is in the desire of being instructed by the senses"; Second, "the senses...desire to exercise their perception from the soul." Third, "...each performs and contributes to the same common operation," the one ascending from the senses to the soul by desire in the soul, the other descending from the soul to the senses by desire of the senses. There is added the conclusion, "For this purpose there exists a common connexion between the soul and body...."

Those three clauses together constitute the gist of Swedenborg's expressed determination "to search for the soul," when, after the *Principia*, he turns from cosmogony to man. The first paragraph, contains a few other things: (1) There is an aspect of the thread of the difference between man and animal in the words, "there are no animals beside man who possess any knowledge beyond the mere senses...." (2) There is reference to the quality of the philosopher, to which references will be made in the future. Aristotle, whom Swedenborg on more than one occasion referred to as "our philosopher," listed three attributes of a philosopher: the desire to know, the desire to know causes, and to wonder. In the first paragraph the second is brought forward in the words, "The sign that we are willing to be wise, is the desire to know the causes of things, and to investigate the secret and unknown operations of nature." (3) Finally, there is again reference to the rational mind, in the words, "It is for this purpose that each one consults the oracle of the rational mind, and thence awaits his answer...." It strikes me that it is almost as if Swedenborg had completed his search and is summarizing that search in as few words as possible. That of course is not the case. What is the case is this: that in order to engage in a theory of the physical universe as a fit place for the soul and its body to exist and move, and further, to search for the soul itself, it is necessary that living and intelligence themselves be exercised and applied so as to be in the spirit of philosophy:

...that each one consults the oracle of the rational mind, and thence awaits his answer; that is, he is eager to acquire a deeper wisdom than merely that which is proffered to him through the medium of the senses.

What is "proffered to him through the medium of the senses" is not sufficient. There is also appeal to the higher source, the rational mind. Yet as we shall learn, not as it is in itself but assisted by philosophical doctrines.

424. *An Attitude about Swedenborg's Philosophy to Beware of.* Because of the preponderant use of geometry and mechanics in the *Principia*, and in later anatomical works, the use of geometry and mechanics in them—and to anticipate the next note, that in the minds of some, geometry is the only part of the second means leading to true philosophy—some have felt the pressure to believe Swedenborg's philosophy is exclusively geometrical and mechanical. Already (Note 419) a number of questions were raised to illustrate how there are many things in philosophy that are not geometrical or mechanical. Even the reasoning power of the mind that gives to us the subjects of geometry and mechanics is an example. There is much said in the first chapter of the *Principia* that negates the notion that all is geometrical and mechanical, beginning with the words:

But though the world is constituted in a mechanical manner...there are innumerable things which are not mechanical, nor even geometrical...(p. 25).

Examples will be abundant in the next note showing that geometry is given rational philosophy as its partner in describing the second means, and in succeeding notes a host of non-geometrical and non-mechanical things appear in reporting on the search for the soul.

425. *That the Three Means Leading to True Philosophy Contain an Error of Omission.* Its origin is in the following from the *Principia*:

...he who wishes to attain the end, must wish likewise to attain the means. [Those] which more especially conduce to a knowledge truly philosophical, are three in number,—*Experience, Geometry, and the Faculty of Reasoning* (p. 2).

Following the section on Experience, Swedenborg began the section on the second means as follows:

The second medium leading to wisdom, by which the arcana of visible nature may be unlocked or revealed, is geometry and rational philosophy... (p. 14).

We might, as in proof-reading, simply add "and rational philosophy" in the first enumeration. This would cancel the two notes that follow. The detection would be a proof-reading detection. However, since I believe that a careful reading of the section on Experience provides a philosophical detection by Swedenborg, therefore the two notes following are important.

426. *How Philosophical Errors can be Corrected.* Ortega y Gasset, a Spanish philosopher of the first half of this century, has given a useful rule with regard to errors in philosophy. According to that rule "errors must contain some element of truth." An error results when it is detected. An error revealed is an error not because it is "untrue but not true enough." More completely it reads:

It is impossible for a philosophy to be an absolute error. The error must contain some element of truth. Moreover, it was proven an error as the result of detection. This makes it evident that [1.] *it contained no small measure of truth if it was able to substitute for it so well...*[2.] In the final analysis it is revealed to be an error not because it was untrue, but because it was not true enough... *Origin of Philosophy*, p. 25, emphasis added.

The error referred to in the previous note is an error of omission. The omission of rational philosophy occurs in major articles on the *Principia* I have checked in this journal. I know of no expressed detection of the error that was used to show the wholeness of Swedenborg's philosophy. Hence, in the minds of most persons, the truth is that the three means leading to true philosophy are *Experience*, *Geometry*, and the *Faculty of Reason*. This note is an effort to relate the error once detected to other things in Ortega's rule, that 1) "it contained no small measure of truth" and that 2) "In the final analysis it is revealed to be an error not because it was untrue, but because it was not true enough." Detection of the error is considered separately in the next note. How it is "proven an error as a result of detection" is important to future sets of notes. (1) It is said that: "*it contained no small measure of truth if it was able to substitute for it [i.e. truth] so well.*" In descriptions of the *Principia* theory, it is a common practice to pay little attention to the first chapter or at least to treat it in such a way as to depend solely upon geometry as the second means. I do not wish to make these notes a polemic, and that is what would happen if I referred to examples. I refer the reader to check on this matter for himself. If I knew of any detection of the error, I could simply refer to it and save myself the burden of this note. That there is no small measure of truth in the statement "experience, geometry, and the faculty of reason" is indicated by the actual presence of essays on the *Principia* which do not refer to or make use of *rational philosophy*. It is not suggested that the articles are all erroneous. But they are limited to some special aspect of the *Principia*, whereas these notes are directed to an understanding of Swedenborg's philosophy *as a whole*.

(2) "In the final analysis it is revealed to be an error not because it was untrue, but because it was not true enough." I do not think it requires any explanation to see that "geometry" as the second means is only a part of "geometry and rational philosophy." It does require an explanation to see what rational philosophy is and how rational philosophy adds to make possible a philosophy as a whole. This brings us to another point, namely, that if there are means leading to true philosophy according to the title of the chapter, then if rational philosophy is a part of one of the means, rational philosophy must be a part of true philosophy. True philosophy is introduced in note 419. The consequence of adding "rational philosophy" to the second means within the *Principia* itself will be explained in the next set of notes. Adding "rational philosophy" has enormous consequences to Swedenborg's philosophy as a whole.

While within the content of this note, it must have become evident that because "philosophy" has a variety of usages, especially when modified by "true," "rational" or other terms, certain clarifications are required from time to time. A general clarification is hereby given: There is a difference between philosophies (i.e. the plural of philosophy) and parts of a philosophy. Philosophies are illustrated by the philosophy of Aristotle, of Descartes, of Swedenborg, etc. Rational philosophy is a part of philosophy itself, but is a term not often to be found. I have one reference to it by Leibnitz. However, rational philosophy plays an important part in one of Wolff's large volumes. If time and space does not run out, some things will be introduced later in the notes. But whether it be Wolff, Aristotle, Descartes, or Locke, (philosophers who affected Swedenborg in one way or another) to make a comparison with anyone would at least require the understanding of Swedenborg's philosophy. But why single out these philosophers? A casual glance at the list of philosophers referred to in *The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, not to forget *The Philosophers Note Book* will give convincing evidence that Swedenborg knew his way around in philosophy. My own theory about the importance of Wolff to the study of Swedenborg's philosophy is largely due to Wolff's influence on the language of the time in which Swedenborg wrote.

As to the term *rational philosophy*, that is the subject of the next set of notes. For now, it is sufficient to recall what was said above, that rational philosophy is a *part* of philosophy in general. If the reader is one of those concerned about the relation of Wolff to Swedenborg, it is sufficient to note that Wolff's philosophy and Swedenborg's

philosophy are quite different philosophies. So it is reasonable to expect that rational philosophy as a part of philosophy will not be the same in the cases of Wolff and Swedenborg.

427. *To Correct a Philosophical Error the Error Must First be Detected.* If the error had been detected and this detection printed earlier, succeeding articles on the *Principia* would have acknowledged that. But that did not happen; furthermore, its detection as a mere matter of proof-reading *will not do*. None of the translators (nor others, it seems) have noted the error of omission, much less, by its correction, demonstrated the effect on understanding Swedenborg's philosophy as a whole. Added to this, Swedenborg himself passed the matter over while seeing the *Principia* through the press. He had an advantage over the average reader, as emphasis (italics in the printed word) were included in the Latin in both enumerations of the three means. Unfortunately, this is lost in the translations, but for him they would appear rather close together in a single page as the emphasized sentences and phrases were read successively. It is very likely they were so read by Swedenborg. Far from being an oversight, or that it might be an error, there can be quite a different cause that rational philosophy was omitted in the first case, namely, that its importance had not yet appeared. Geometry, regarded as the form of bodies, was what was on Swedenborg's mind; just as geometry would be on the mind of a surveyor or, as in Swedenborg's own case, in the mind of a metallurgist. Originally, Swedenborg was a surveyor of the metallurgical particles of which the universe was formed. "Forming" is what is described in Part I of the *Principia* which, strictly speaking, begins in Chapter II. That is what gives the *Principia*, as philosophy, its place in the trilogy, with the other two works on *Copper* and *Iron*. But as the description of experience in Chapter I got under way, that form from geometry proved insufficient. Reason, the third means, was called in, but reason required something to work upon, other than geometry. That was rational philosophy; so it became a demand, even as the description of experience got under way, and before the second means was described.

What is related by the senses to a rational thing, in the mind that is, from an activity of the exterior senses to an activity of an interior sense, is precisely what Swedenborg describes under *Experience* (pp. 4-14). Let us scan this development to determine how rational philosophy becomes introduced. The first statement on Experience is:

Experience may be defined to be the knowledge of everything in the world of nature, which is capable of being received through the medium of the senses...(p. 4).

Experience is not only our experience, but the collected experience of ages.

...Let it not however be imagined that any knowledge derived *a priori*, and confined only to one man, or even to one age, is sufficient for explaining the hidden paths of nature.... The sciences...have for some thousand years been adding to our experience...(p. 4).

The very variety of it can also be a danger:

For a countless variety of phenomena might be mentioned.... Nature branching out into such varieties of modifications, may be compared with the arteries and veins of the animal body.... Let us then suppose a person ignorant of the fountainhead and origin of the blood...desirous to explore it by means of experiment...; in such a case he would scarcely commence with the smaller capillary vessels, and there institute a tedious course of dissection...[and be] misled by their numberless intricacies, before the great and regal aorta would terminate the search.... Nature may be also likened to a labyrinth, whose intricacies you are anxious to explore...(pp. 5, 6).

And more is said about the possibility of being led "into a maze" and confused by "endless variety." And yet;

In the state of ignorance in which we are at the present day, we can derive knowledge only through experience; not merely our own individual experience and that of our own age, but the experience of the whole literary world and of numerous ages.... All the sciences we possess, we have received from experience. By experience we know how to discharge the duties of a citizen, and to live with others in moral society; we learn to be prudent, we learn to be philosophers... (pp. 7, 8).
...We are indebted to experience therefore for all our knowledge, while experience itself is indebted to the senses....

Note "we are indebted to experience...for all our *knowledge*.." And yet knowledges are not all; they are only the beginning, for:

...by means of which objects are subjected to ratiocination of the mind, and thus we are finally enabled to acquire wisdom... (p. 8).

The reason for which we are to acquire knowledge by means of experience, and to investigate the nature of objects and set them in a distinct point of view, by subjecting them to the operation of the reasoning faculty, is that we have an active and most subtle principle and soul, to which the subjects of our inquiry can be submitted...(p. 9).

Herein is the appeal to reason while still describing experience: which shows that the three means leading to true philosophy are not independent. We should not permit the reference to the "active and most subtle principle and soul" to pass us by too easily, for therein is the beginning of the most important thread of philosophy.²

Although for the present, the subject is about experience, yet to explore experience itself, reason is required, and also required is the acknowledgment of an active principle of the soul. Let us proceed, by repeating in part:

...by subjecting them [i.e. the means of experience] to the operation of the reasoning faculty, is, that we have an active and most subtle principle and soul, to which the subjects of our enquiry can be submitted; whereby we are enabled, through the comparison and series of many phenomena, to form a judgment respecting them; and by considering their equations, similitudes, analogues, and analyses, to discover their causes by a course of geometrical and rational investigation (p. 9).

Herein by the introduction of "rational investigation" a fourth element is added to the three already mentioned, namely,

² The thread is on the nature of the soul. From time to time enough has appeared by way of inductions so that Swedenborg takes out the time to give a report on the search for the soul. The nature of the soul will take on not only an active principle but also a passive one. An entire language develops around these two principles. "Concur" and "determination" may be the most obvious related to passive and active respectively. "Understanding" and "will" are quite far removed at this time, but they will certainly be given command appearances in philosophy before other activities take over Swedenborg's mind in 1744 that will lead not to true philosophy but to revelation of the nature of the human spirit.

experience, geometry, reason. The question arises, what is meant by rational investigation? Swedenborg describes it as reason applied to "equations, similitudes, analogies, and analyses," and, *nota bene*, "to discover their causes by geometrical and rational investigation." But we also note that rational investigation does not exist by itself; it is a companion with geometry. It is not the same as geometry, because, among other things, it brings forward causes, something not involved in geometrical forms alone. Further, it is not like reason such as it is by itself. It is reason applied to something. The things of rational investigation are given: equations, similitudes, analogues, analyses, and causes.

Therefore within the essay on experience, a demand arises for rational investigation in addition to experience, geometry, and reason. There are further involvements with the senses, among which is the difference between man and animals.

...our sole distinction [from animals] consists in that invisible or reasoning faculty, that more subtle active principle, to which we are enabled more inwardly to refer objects.... It cannot be denied that there is a connexion between the organs of the senses and the soul, and that the affections of the organs of the senses can be in a moment transmitted to the soul by means of that connexion... (pp. 9-10).

Now that "rational investigation" has been added, we may well ask, to what else does it refer within the essay on experience? It clearly is not experience alone, not even reason alone. Perhaps this may open the way to answer the question just asked.

Although, however, we acquire wisdom by experience alone, it does not therefore follow that they are the wisest who are the most experienced, or who retain a great deal in their memory;...(p. 12. Emphasis added as per the Latin).

Examples follow to illustrate how a painter, a maker of musical instruments, and "the historian who has turned over a multitude of books," each of these in his respective field has learned many things by experience. And yet:

Nor is he even then wise, unless he has previously penetrated, by means of rational philosophy, into the causes and principles of things...(p. 14).

Here we *detect* 'rational philosophy' 'penetrating' into causes and principles of things like earlier "rational investigation" as devoted "to discover...causes." Further, shortly after, also on page 14:

Hence it follows, that he who retains all the natural experience of the world laid up in the storehouse of the memory, is not on that account a philosopher, and capable of knowing the causes of things, and of reasoning a priori; for to do this, he must know moreover how to digest all things analytically by means of geometry and rational philosophy; and must possess the faculty of reasoning philosophically....

Here rational philosophy is explicitly joined with geometry. As suggested, the purpose of this scan through the pages on Experience is to show how reason itself brought Swedenborg beyond experience, not to geometry alone, but also to rational philosophy. The final sentence on Experience begins:

Hitherto we have treated of the first medium leading to philosophical wisdom....

Immediately following that sentence, discussion on the second medium begins:

The second medium leading to wisdom by which the arcana of nature may be unlocked or revealed, is geometry and rational philosophy....

This reading is about how treating of experience, Swedenborg is led to geometry and rational philosophy as the second means. It shows that the omission of rational philosophy in the first enumeration is not merely a matter of poor proof reading that can be corrected by the second enumeration as in note 427. For to do so would be to ignore the progression of thought by Swedenborg who is writing a philosophical essay on the order of his thinking, not merely giving a list of conclusions. This is an example, I believe, in which, in this first chapter, a case history of philosophy is beginning.

What follows, as I hope to show by a variety of threads of philosophy, gives rise to inductions and analyses based on a rational philosophy devoted to the causes of things. How it is with the nature and application of rational philosophy within the first chapter and introductory to the second, is the subject of the next set of notes. Further, the addition of what can be interpreted as rational philosophy will greatly affect the entire progress of the search for

the soul. So much is this so, that without rational philosophy the search could not have been conducted by the way in which it was. Therefore, by this chapter there is introduction to Swedenborg's philosophy as a whole. But before entering the search for the soul, it must be shown how in the second chapter of the *Principia*, rational philosophy is the means by which Swedenborg enters his theory of cosmogony.

A caution must be observed. Above is the phrase "threads of philosophy, giving rise to inductions and analyses based on a rational philosophy devoted to the causes of things" *Induction* is in anticipation of the headings of certain sections of *Economy of the Animal Kingdom*. *Analysis* is in anticipation of certain sections of *Animal Kingdom*. The caution arises when "a rational philosophy" is applied to these. It is a *rational philosophy* because it is his rational philosophy applied to his philosophy. If time and space permits, I will show that even as his philosophy is not the same as Wolff's, so his application of rational philosophy is not the same as Wolff's rational philosophy.

In concluding this set of notes, I wish to express a wonder. I wonder if the omission by Swedenborg of rational philosophy in the first enumeration is really an error. There is evidence that Chapter I was written after the *Principia* was completed, hence on the verge of a new state leading to the search for the soul. If a philosopher in the beginning of a new state were to go back and change (correct?) earlier philosophical statements, he would destroy his earlier writings as philosophy. These notes have arisen from first things said in the *Principia*. This expressed wonder leaves open the consideration of what Swedenborg might have meant later in the *Principia* and after that by "search for the soul," either when on occasion "rational philosophy" was used, or by its presence even if not by name.

(To be continued)

ON EXISTENCE

Moreover nothing is possible in the created world that has not a correspondence to the things in the spiritual world, and therefore that does not in its own manner represent something in the Lords kingdom. From this comes the existence and subsistence of all things. If man knew how these things are circumstanced, he would never as is his wont attribute all things to nature (AC 2999).