

Translator's Corner

J. Durban Odhner, Editor

Two queries regarding the translation of passages from Swedenborg's *Spiritual Experiences* (formerly *Spiritual Diary*) have reached us in recent months: one from the Rev. Patrick Rose concerning the expression "rational philosophy" in number 767, and the other from the Rev. Willard Heinrichs concerning a Swedish term, *yrhet*, that appears in a problematic segment of number 3153. We appreciate having these members of the Academy of the New Church Theological School contribute their textual investigations.

Mr. Jonathan Rose offers further data on words containing *-oe-l-ae-* (see "Caecus, Coena, Coenum" in the October-December 1982 issue of *The New Philosophy*); and Mr. Richard Goerwitz replies to Rev. Dr. Gutfeldt's article in the last issue.

"Rational Philosophy"—Favorable, or Unfavorable?

The first query came in a letter to "Translators Corner" dated December 16, 1982:

Dear Dr. Odhner,

With regard to the misleading translation of SD 767 in the present English edition, I believe it would be useful to the readers of *The New Philosophy* if you could comment, in the "Translator's Corner," on the correct meaning of the original Latin. Not only would this demonstrate the real value of a new translation of the "Diary," but it would also give readers occasion to reflect on the proper role of philosophy within the New Church.

Sincerely yours,
(Rev.) Patrick A. Rose

The expression "misleading translation" is a kind way of saying "wrong translation." But first let us quote the Latin text of ES 767 (emphasis ours, here and in the subsequent translations):

DE SCIENTIIS VARIIS QUOMODO MENTEM HUMANAM OCCUPANT,
ET QUALIFICANT

767. Cum spiritibus eram in sermone de variis scientiis, quomodo

mentes humanas formant, sicut de philosophia, et de aliis.

Quod philosophiam attinet, quaecunque ejus pars hactenus non aliud fecit, quam quod adumbraverit mentes, et sic clausuravit viam ad intuitionem interiorum, turn etiam universalium, nam in solis terminis, et de iis, litibus consistit, *praeter rationalem philosophiam, quae ita coarctat ideas, ut mens nihil haereat nisi in particularibus, et sic in pulvere*; praeter quod non solum obstruat vias ad interiora, sed etiam occoecat, et fidem prorsus adimit, sic ut philosophus in altera vita, qui multum similibus inhaesit, seu indulsit, sit stupidus, et prae aliis indoctissimus.

—which we would render provisionally as follows:

ABOUT VARIOUS SCIENCES—HOW THEY TAKE POSSESSION
OF AND LIMIT THE HUMAN MIND

767. I was talking with spirits about various sciences, how they form human minds: like philosophy, and others.

As for philosophy, every aspect of it up till now has done nothing but cast shadows upon minds and so, close the way to a contemplation of deeper matters, as well as of universals, for it consists solely of terms, and of disputes about them—*also rationalistic philosophy, which constricts ideas in such a way that the mind becomes fixed in nothing but trivialities and, consequently, in scholastic dust*; besides which, it not only obstructs the channels to deeper things, but also causes blindness, and completely banishes faith—so that in the other life, the philosopher who had clung or given himself up to such things is stupid, and the least knowledgeable in comparison with others.

The Bush translation (James Speirs, London: 1883) renders this number in a style perhaps only appropriate to a readership 100 years old, but with a basically similar interpretation:

CONCERNING VARIOUS SCIENCES,—HOW THEY OCCUPY THE HUMAN
MIND, AND QUALIFY IT.

767. I was discoursing with spirits concerning different sciences as to the [various] manner in which they form human minds; thus, concerning philosophy and other like [studies].

As concerns philosophy, its every department has had no other effect than to darken mens minds, and thus to close the way to the intuition of interior things, at the same time also of universal [truths], for it stops short (*consistit*) in mere terms,

and in disputes concerning them; *besides rational philosophy [so called], which so confines the ideas (alios)¹ that the mind cleaves only to materialisms (particularibus—note, 295); thus to mere dust; besides which, it not only [in like manner] obstructs the way to interior things, but also blinds the mind, and utterly banishes faith, so that in the other life a philosopher who has dwelt much on, or indulged in such [studies], becomes stupid, and, beyond all others, ignorant.*

¹ The text reads—*alios*, but the true reading we believe to be *ideas*, independently of the similarity of the two words as they appear in writing.—TR.

A. W. Acton (Swedenborg Society, London: 1962), however, interpreted the italicized passage quite differently:

CONCERNING THE VARIOUS SCIENCES, HOW THEY TAKE HOLD OF
AND QUALIFY THE HUMAN MIND

767. I was conversing with spirits about how the various sciences, such as philosophy and other sciences, form human minds.

As regards philosophy, every phase of this subject has hitherto done nothing else than darken minds, and so has closed the way to the intuition of interior things and also of universals, for it consists of terms alone, and of disputes concerning them. *Contrary to a rational philosophy, it so constrains ideas that the mind sticks fast only in particulars, and thus in dust.* Besides which it not only obstructs the way to things interior, but also blinds [the mind] and entirely takes away faith. Therefore, in the other life a philosopher who has cleaved so much to such things and indulged in them, is stupid, and less learned than others.

We submit that this is an erroneous translation: for while the term *praeter* can mean "contrary to," in this passage it is used as in the following, almost opposite definition from Lewis & Short:

...—b. Of that besides which there is something else in addition, *besides, together with, in addition to*: ut praeter se denos ad colloquium adducerent, Caes. B. G. 1, 43: praeter imperatas pecunias, id. B. C. 3, 32: ut praeter auctoritatem vires quoque haberet, id. ib. 3, 57: praeter illud commodum, quod, etc., turn etiam, etc., Col. 4, 18....(*A New Latin*

Dictionary, Harper & Brothers, New York: 1882)

To take anything but *rationalem philosophiam* as the antecedent of *quae* in this passage is not defensible for a structure of this kind. Swedenborg was clearly referring here to philosophies arising from human reason rather than faith.

"Yrhet" in *Experientiae Spirituales* 3153

Our second query concerned the Swedish word *yrhet* and the segment in which it appears in ES 3153, reproduced and transcribed hereunder:

3153 ^{con}
 Oppositum ejus est supra caput, ubi nihil nisi tale existit, quod facit
 hominem quasi vesanum esse, sicut cum juvenos in ~~yrhet~~ inde,
 quod se manifestat per talia quae existierunt in Temerario prius
 dicto, qui in sua adolescentia talis fuit, ut nusquam insanius alius?
 quod erat extremum prorsus insaniam in similia in extremis seu ultimis corporeis
 erumpentis; sicut notum esse potest ab iis qui insaniunt ex
 talibus, 1748, 14 Sept.

3153. Oppositum ejus est supra caput, ubi nihil nisi tale existit, quod facit hominem quasi vesanum esse, sicut cum juvenos | in (s-) yrhet inde, quod se manifestat per talia quae exstiterunt in Temerario prius dicto, qui in sua adolescentia talis fuit, ut nusquam insanius alius, quod erat extremum prorsus insaniam in similia in extremis seu ultimis corporeis erumpentis; sicut notum esse potest ab iis qui insaniunt ex talibus, 1748, 14 Sept:

observations:

- 1) Although *juvenos* is wrong, Swedenborg is thinking accusative.
- 2) There is a faint line looking like an insert stroke after *juvenos*, indicating the intention to supply an addition, which was not followed up.
- 3) He started a word with s- (possibly *saevitiam*) before *yrhet*.
- 4) The index under *Lascivia* at this number reads: "Supra caput sunt quoque qui vesani sunt ex amore venereo, ut apud juvenes, qui inde insaniunt."

interpretation:

sicut [amor venereus,]¹ cum 'juvenes [agat] in² yrhet^a inde

¹ cf. *indicem ad Lascivia*

² *ms.* juvenos (*sic!*) ' in s[aevitiam](?)

^a = *lasciviam (vox suecica)*

comment:

Yrhet means "wildness" and also, as in this context, "wantonness" "lasciviousness." The word *saevitia*, while meaning "wildness," lacks the sense of "wantonness"; hence, perhaps, the use of Swedish, which Swedenborg often reverted to when uncertain which Latin term was appropriate. However, the number is indexed under *Lascivia*, a word that does not appear in the paragraph itself, but means "wantonness." Under "wild" in Cassel's, we find both *saevus* and *lascivus*.

translation:

3153. The opposite of this province is above the head, where nothing else comes forth but that which crazes man—like erotic love, when it drives young men into wantonness—and which results in the kind of things that appeared in the foolhardy spirit spoken of previously [3135-41, 3149-50], who was so far gone that no one was ever more insane—a case of the absolute limit of insanity breaking out into that sort of behavior in bodily extremes or ultimates. This is a familiar occurrence with people who become insane from such things. 1748, 14 Sept.

In addition to the numbers referred to which speak about this reckless spirit, the reader should also see number 3177.