Translator's Corner

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From a threefold preoccupation—first, with *The New Philosophy's* paramount theme, philosophy; second, with the re-editing and subsequent retranslation of Swedenborg's diary, *Spiritual Experiences;* and finally, with the acquisition of material appropriate to this department of our periodical—I have enjoyed working on the project with which this issue of "Translator's Corner" commences: a new translation of an entry in that work dated March 20, 1748 and titled as shown.

On Useful and Useless Philosophy

1602. Certain spirits were thinking that everything called "philosophical" is to be rejected entirely—perhaps because philosophy or human wisdom is condemned—therefore likewise, terms which savor of philosophy: and to show me how greatly they abhorred philosophy, they represented a wild boar with blood sprinkled on its back, implying that I was like this because I have intersprinkled philosophical terms, or have formed ideas philosophically.

1603. But they were instructed that my philosophical expressions were nothing but certain ideas uttered in simpler terms. For example, when I say "subject and predicate," this means that predicates or the things which are predicated should be applied to what is meant by the "subject": as when something in the Prophets is being discussed, it can be applied to some article of faith, to faith itself, to man's more inward mind, also to his inward mind, to the Church, to heaven. Thus whatever is assumed or understood is called the "subject," and the rest of the things that are then said and are to be brought to bear, are called "predicates"; so that predicates are to be applied to a subject.

This same thing can also be expressed in a different way without such terms, and be understood in a similar way, and afterwards uttered. Thus they are only ideas, true ones, brought together under such formulas, or terms. So, they were told, it is a kind of philosophic language, more succinct

than other speech, because otherwise the same matter must be expressed in round-about ways *(ambages).* This is what is usually done by people who do not know those terms, and these in fact express it more clearly than those who do—unless the terms spring from a perception of the things themselves. It is the same in other questions, like what "form" is, what "quality" and conceptions like these, which are only ideas of truths that are serviceable to those who wish to express inward, and more inward, things, in short ways.

1604. But the abuse is that philosophers remain in terms, and dispute about them, and do not come to agreement. Because of this, every idea of the matter perishes, and man's understanding becomes so hedged-in that he ends up knowing nothing but terms. Consequently, when they wish to grasp hold of the matters by means of their own terms, they only heap up those terms and obscure the matter in such a way that they can understand nothing whatever—so blind becomes their nature-given discernment. This is why a person who is not learned has much broader ideas, and more readily sees what is true, than the philosopher: for the latter remains in his mire like a swine—for which reason such a swine or boar was represented to me—and becomes a wild animal in the woods, for he wanders (=errs) like a wild animal in truths, which he tears apart, and kills.

1605. When, therefore, a person sticks only in terms, and from them reasons and puts together meanings—so that they are nothing but scholarly words stuck together—then all of that remains unknown which such persons imagine their terms enfold within them: and it is more hidden from them than from those who do not know any such formula. So the person comes to doubt about everything.

1606. Other philosophic things that obscure human minds are the types of reasonings which are reduced to made-up rules, even though truths are so self-evident that anyone can see them clearly without such rules. These reasoners then limit and darken intellectual matters to the point that even inwardly sensed truths are subjected to continual doubts.

1607. By philosophy or human intelligence are also meant fables and nonsense, especially the kind characteristic of Rabbinical writers past and present, which are numberless; also is meant the magic of the Egyptians.