

### Swedenborg's Philosophy as a Connected Whole

#### VII. An Introduction to "Rational Psychology" *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* Volume I Chapter VIII.

471. A quick review of the Notes so far on Swedenborg's philosophy as a connected whole. The *Principia* theory is a cosmogony described by rational philosophy and geometry, and guided by the faculty of reason, beginning by a process of finition within the infinite God. That theory is given in Part I of *The Principia* under the spirit of words on the title page "First Principles of Natural things, Being New Attempts Toward a Philosophical Explanation of the Elementary World." As a Christian philosopher Swedenborg opens *The Infinite*:

In order that we may be favoured and happy in our endeavours, they must begin from the Infinite God, without whom no undertakings can attain a prosperous issue.

He wrote of the mainstream of philosophers that have what he called the philosophical temper, as follows:

It [i.e. the philosophical temper] holds that it is living in a state of nature and in utmost freedom, and is bound to acknowledge no superior but him that can command its reason, who alone has the forces to tie its hands. I am now speaking of things as they are, not as they ought to be; *de factis*, not *de jure* (*Infinite* p.8).

The first hundred pages of *The Infinite* are devoted to an argument leading to acknowledging that the Infinite God is the Final Cause of Creation. Along the way what is named "divine end" is introduced and also man as the final finite effect in whom the divine end can be obtained. Early in *The Infinite* it is stated "*The infinite is the difficulty of philosophy*" and this difficulty appears to a marked degree in the CONCLUSION to *The Infinite* where Swedenborg proposes to define *natural* and *divine*. Things go nicely with regard to what is natural until he comes to what is immediately next to the divine, and not mediate in things natural. The reasoned nexus in the argument in *The Infinite* is within the infinite. Hence an analogy is proposed. Its first part is the relation between what is infinite and the first finite thing. The second part, also a relation, is between the soul and the

body. That part is amenable to exploration because both soul and body are finite. But then:

Analogical instances illustrate although they cannot demonstrate. (*Infinite* p. 137.)

And so the comparison produced by analogy is such that

Thus by the comparison of the soul and the body it seems possible to gain some little light while respecting the connection of the Infinite with the world (*ibid.*).

Thus Swedenborg's philosophical temper differs from the philosophers he referred to. To settle for a little light is not the same as to settle for things *de facto* not *de jure*.

The second chapter of the book of which *The Infinite* is the first, is named *Mechanism of the Intercourse between the Soul and the Body*, and consists of three parts. And herein is expressed his philosophical intention.

Part I consists of nine questions on the propriety of philosophically exploring the way to the soul, the ninth question being "Is the soul immortal?".

Part II is devoted to a three way argument devoted to answering Question 9. "Is the soul immortal?".

Part III is devoted to thirteen "general propositions" that must be explored in the pursuit of the stated intention:

The main end of these our labours will be, to demonstrate the immortality of the soul to the very senses (*ibid.* p. 230).

Since the popular expression about Swedenborg's philosophy from here on is well known as the "search for the soul," although it does not fully describe Swedenborg's intention, I shall continue to use it in the Notes. However, it must be obvious that in order to understand his philosophy as a connected whole the question of immortality must arise from time to time.

**472. Early promises in *The Economy* for a description of the Doctrine of Degrees to be given in Chapter VIII.** Although the "Doctrine of Series and Degrees" is the subject of the eighth and final chapter of Part I of *The Economy of the Animal Kingdom*, its application appears in *The Principia* theory; it is implied in the thirteen general propositions to be explored in the search for the soul which are enumerated in "The Mechanism of the Intercourse Between the

Soul and the Body;" and it is promised and applied in chapters preceding the eighth in *The Economy*. Here are some instances where there are explicit references to either Chapter VIII or to the "Doctrine . . ." or both.

... there exists an aura purer than the common air; as the reader may see confirmed in n. 67 and 68, and in Chapter VIII of the present part. (54; see also nos. 105, 133.)

And the language of "The Doctrine of Series and Degrees" begins to develop along with explicit promises:

When the rational mind, from the effects presented to its notice, institutes an analytical inquiry into their causes, it nowhere finds them, except in the subordination of things, and in a coordination of things subordinate . . . That all... things in the mundane system, and its threefold kingdom, distinguish themselves into similar degrees and orders, the reader will see confirmed in Chapter VIII of the Present Work, in which I have entered upon an explanation of the Philosophy of Degrees. (67.)

The two principal series that report on Swedenborg's search for the soul contain in each of their titles the words "Animal Kingdom" (*Regni Animalis*). Essential to all future philosophy of the animal kingdom are the terms "subordinate" and "coordinate," and it will develop more generally to include not only the animal kingdom but other things as well, such as the terms "successive" and "simultaneous." (See ahead n. 582 in Chapter VIII.) So in each of the headings of numbers 249, 250, 251, "successive" is required.

There are many other terms that form the language of "The Doctrine of Series and Degrees," and wherever those terms appear (too numerous even in the early chapters of *The Economy* to illustrate here) it is that doctrine whose application is applied in that place. There are three terms in the name of the doctrine: "series," "degrees," and "doctrine" itself. The first two are defined in the next Note but "doctrine" must be considered here as promising itself in the very first number of *The Economy*, which is:

The animal kingdom, the economy of which I am about to consider anatomically, physically, and philosophically regards the blood as its common fountain and general principle. In undertaking, therefore, to treat of this economy, the *doctrine* of

the blood must be the first propounded, although it is the last that is capable of being brought to completion.

I have emphasized *doctrine* because that is what Swedenborg means, that is, doctrine, not science. The blood that is important to Swedenborg's philosophy is not red blood, for it is composed of three kinds of blood. And in reference to them there is also a promise to Chapter VIII and the doctrine:

That all parts of the blood are thus conjoined into one in the most intimate manner, the reader will see explained in Chapter VIII, on the Philosophy of Degrees, and also in n. 96 (n. 92).

Our subject is a "promise" in regard to the doctrine explained in Chapter VIII, but Swedenborg's reference to the "doctrine" of the blood instead of the "science" of the blood deserves consideration. In maintaining continuity in his philosophy, Swedenborg is quite capable of using "science" because when he begins Chapter VIII, it is as follows:

Psychology is the science which treats of the essence and nature of the soul, and of the mode in which she flows into the actions of her body; consequently it is the first and last of those sciences which lead to the knowledge of the animal economy.

Evidently there are two things in the animal kingdom that are first and last, the doctrine of the blood and the science of psychology. But philosophy such as it is in itself in Swedenborg's case will depend on distinguishing between doctrine and science, although each is a part of his philosophy. In no way can we assume that Swedenborg had forgotten that he began *The Economy* by reference to the *doctrine* of the blood, because 564 pages later, in the very last sentence of Chapter VII, that is in the sentence immediately before saying that "Psychology is the first and last of those sciences..." he wrote "that the doctrine of the blood, although the first to be stated, is nevertheless the last that is capable of being brought to completion."

**473. Nine Inductions of Chapter VIII.** (Swedenborg's Inductions are presented here in full, without the usual indentation for quotes.)

I.

580. By the doctrine of series and degrees we mean that doctrine which teaches the mode observed by nature in the acting she has

prescribed for herself. Series are what successively and simultaneously comprise things subordinate and coordinate. But degrees are distinct progressions, such as when we find one thing is subordinated under another, and when one thing is coordinated in juxtaposition with another: in this sense there are degrees of determination and degrees of composition. In the mundane system there are several series, both universal and less universal, each of which contains under it several series proper and essential to itself, while each of these again contains series of its own; so that there is nothing in the visible world, which is not a series, and in a series. Consequently, the science of natural things depends on a distinct notion of series and degrees, and of their subordination and coordination.

## II.

588. To the intent that we may advance from the primary sources of existence, we shall begin with substances, which are the subjects of accidents and qualities. These substances are manifold; nevertheless, of all that are in the universe, there is only one from which the rest flow, and on which, as their first principle, the principles of natural things are impressed by the Deity. Each series has its first and proper substance, which substance nevertheless depends for its existence on the first substance of the world.

## III.

593. The first substance of every series is its most simple and only substance, which reigns through the whole individual series. From it, and according to its nature, flow all things which have a visible determination in the entire series. For from it, by order of succession, and by connecting media, are derived substances more compounded, which are its viceregents in the ultimates of the series, and thus give determination to the things existing in that series. By the determination of these substances are formed others more compounded, which may be called mediating and subdetermining substances; by which the essential and proper series, which constitute the entire series, are compacted and connected together. By determining substances, through the medium of such as are subdetermining, one thing is so perpetually connected with another, that an unconnected part is not proper to the same series; consequently, there is a coestablished harmony. The establishment of this harmony is the more perfect, in proportion as the more simple substances are more distinctly discriminated from the more compound, and

substances of the same degree, from their associates, their essence and attributes remaining the same: consequently there exists a harmonious variety.

IV.

607. By this process the corporeal system is constructed and perfected; in which one thing remains fixed in such a state of subordination to, and coordination with, another, that all individually respect and depend upon each other; in such a manner, that the more simple substances are rendered conscious of every change which takes place in the compound series and substances; and whatever is determined into act, is effected by the more simple; either determining, or concurring, or consenting. Moreover this is accomplished according to natural order, proceeding from an inferior substance to one proximately superior, or from a superior to one proximately inferior; but not from the supreme to the ultimate except by intermediates.

V.

612. Simple substances, and those which are less and more compound, which are the determining substances of the things in their own series, are, according to their degrees of simplicity or of composition, prior and posterior; superior and inferior; interior and exterior; more remote and more proximate; and, amongst each other, are as efficient causes and effects. Those which are prior are also more universal, and in every quality are more perfect than those which are posterior. The prior also can exist without the posterior, but not the posterior without the prior.

VI.

618. Such as are the substances, such likewise are their essences, attributes, accidents, and qualities; or all their adjuncts. Of these also it may be predicated, that they are series, and are in a series; of the adjuncts, that some are more or less simple, prior, superior, interior, universal, and perfect, compared with others; just as is the case with the substances in which they are, and from which they flow. It may be predicated further, that the superior enter by influx into the inferior, and *vice versa*, according to the mode in which the substances are formed, and in which they communicate by connection with

each other. But those which occupy a superior place are incomprehensible, and to the sensory of things inferior appear as continuous; whilst those which occupy an inferior place are comprehensible, and appear to the sensory of things superior as contiguous. Yet such is the co-established harmony of all things in the same series, that they mutually correspond to each other, without any difference but that of perfection according to degrees; wherefore the inferior regard the superior as their analogues and eminences.

VII.

628. Aggregate entities of the same degree and series have reference to their units, as to their most simple parts, with which they are homogeneous. From the form, nature, and mode of acting of these aggregates, are discoverable the form, nature, and mode of acting of the parts. Consequently, a general and particular experimental knowledge of the things which at any time reach any sensory, will point out the essence of the most minute things of the same degree, as also of the corresponding things of the still more simple or superior degrees. Wherefore we are led into the inmost knowledge of natural things by the doctrine of series and degrees conjoined with experience.

VIII.

633. The most simple and the only substance of the animal kingdom is the spirituous fluid; which is most perfectly determined by the first aura of the world; whence it obtains such a nature, as to be a substance capable of forming its own body; and to have in it life and consequently soul, which is the principle of the things existing in the whole of that series.

IX.

639. If we would explore the efficient, rational, and principal causes of the operation 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; which is a work demanding both a knowledge of facts and skill in judging of them. For in proportion as nature ascends by her degrees, so she raises herself from the sphere of particular and common expressions to that of universal and eminent

ones; till, at length, in the supreme region of the animal kingdom, where the human soul is, there is no corporeal language which can adequately express its nature, and much less the nature of things still superior. 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. Such a philosophy, if well digested, will be, in a manner, the one science of all the natural sciences, because it is the complex of all.

**474. Definitions of "Doctrine," "Series," and "Degrees" from Section I of Chapter VIII.**

*By the doctrine of series and degrees we mean that doctrine which teaches the mode observed by nature in the subordination and coordination of things, and which in acting she has prescribed for herself. This doctrine constitutes a principal part of the natural sciences; for everywhere in nature there is order, and everywhere the rules of order. It is a doctrine which expounds the nature of the veriest form itself, without which nothing which is predicable of anything can occur. If the form of which we may be treating be the veriest form itself, and things be regarded as the subject-matter, in this case the subject-matter joined to the form perfects the science; thus, for instance, in the anatomy of the animal body, everything we meet with is a subject matter of science, while notwithstanding if the veriest form of the whole and of every part be not known, the science is not perfected (581).*

In other words, that statement is an enumeration of three aspects of "doctrine" as teaching about series and degrees.

1. Doctrine teaches the mode observed by nature in the subordination and coordination of things—
2. Doctrine teaches about order in nature; in fact later Swedenborg gives to the "Doctrine of Series and Degrees" the alternate name of "Doctrine of Order."
3. Doctrine teaches about the veriest form itself (*ipsissiam formam exponit*).

The veriest or most perfect form is described:

The most perfect order in the mundane system is that which reigns in the animal kingdom; so perfect, indeed, that it may be

considered as the living exemplar of all other things in the world which observe order. Consequently the doctrine of series and degrees ought to teach, not only in what manner things are successively subordinated and coordinated, and in what manner they coexist simultaneously in subordination and coordination, but also, in what manner they are successively and simultaneously determined according to the order thus impressed, that they may produce actions, in which may be causes, between which actions and causes there may be a connection, so that a judgment may be formed respecting causes from the order in which they exist (581).

The full statement on "series" is:

*Series are what successively and simultaneously comprise things subordinate and coordinate.* Subordination indeed and coordination properly have respect to order in causes, of which also they are commonly predicated; but whereas there is nothing in the animal kingdom, which does not, in some way, act as a cause, it is all the same, whether we call the several things in this kingdom successive and coexisting or simultaneous, or whether we call them subordinate and coordinate. When the things themselves are subordinate and coordinate, thereby distinct from other things, their whole complex, in such case, is called a series, which, to the end that it may coexist, must exist successively; for nothing in nature can become what it is at once, or simultaneously: since nature, without degrees and moments, whether of time, velocity, succession, or determination, and consequently without a complex and series of things, is not in nature (582).

And what is written about the meaning of "degrees" is:

*But degrees are distinct progressions, such as we find when one thing is subordinated under another, and when one thing is coordinated in juxtaposition with another; in this sense there are degrees of determination, and degrees of composition.* With philosophers, degrees are quantities of qualities; as degrees of heat, of gravity, of colors, and of many other things; thus they constitute relations. But degrees are properly progressions and determinate steps; thus, for instance, in the case of ourselves, when we walk forward, we measure out with our feet determinate distances, and not only so, but in climbing a ladder, the very ladder itself has its separate steps or

gradations. Hence it is that degrees never exist but in things successive. In things coexisting they are conceived to exist, for which reason they may also be predicated of them; since upon reflection we perceive that they exist within them, because without succession, and thus without degrees, they could not have coexisted (n. 582). Hence we say that a series, or coordination of several things, is to be considered as distinguished into its degrees; for we do not, because it coexists, deprive the mind of its idea, that it existed or came into existence; since otherwise there would be no distinct perception of the efficient cause, and of its effect (583).

As can be seen, the "Inductions" collected in Note 474 are abstract, and so are the definitions of "doctrine," "series," and "degrees" given in this Note. To go further in explaining the "Doctrine of Series and Degrees" (and hence "doctrine," "series," and "degrees") requires applications which abound in the treatments that follow the "Inductions," sometimes sentence by sentence, sometimes clause by clause. Because there is an important special meaning of "doctrine" in the Writings, a note on doctrine is added.

**475. Some things about doctrine.** If one knows anything at all about Swedenborg's philosophy it is that he explains the means leading to true philosophy in the opening paragraphs of *The Principia*. The means are three: experience, geometry and rational philosophy, and the faculty of reasoning. The stated purpose of the "Doctrine of Series and Degrees" is to provide a method whereby those means can be carried forward by beginning in effects, reasoning inductively to causes, and then to causes of causes. In the search for the soul effects for the most part are to be discovered in the science of anatomy, but also important are effects observed in physical nature, especially the atmospheres air and ether. Geometry and rational philosophy have bothered some, but only those who do not understand how those two activities of mind contribute to *thought*; or they have been persuaded into a kind of nihilism about philosophy because of abuses of both mathematics and rational philosophy. Mathematics has been abused by associating proof in mathematics in the wrong way, ignoring the principle of every argument in mathematics expressed by "if—then—," with dependence for reasons upon certain postulates that are assumed. That is a long way from proof in an absolute sense. As to rational philosophy, consider

the history of philosophy itself where philosopher after philosopher—not the really great ones, but those of the so called "schools"—has led unsuspecting persons into skepticism, positivism, idealism, and other isms, each of which is an exclusive position that denies the affirmative. Each of the isms can be "proved" as the saying goes by gathering together things on its side. Skepticism itself has a value, as Ortega y Gasset has written:

At all times and in all places numerous men have existed who did not believe in anything . . .

That is to say, Ortega might well have said about those Greeks who supported skepticism (a school in the history of Plato's Academy) that that statement applies to skepticism when later he wrote:

It is impossible for a philosophy to be an absolute error.

As his argument turns from a series of negatives, it arrives at the following affirmative:

In the final analysis it is revealed to be an error not because it was untrue, but because it was not true enough.

It turns out that within Swedenborg's own philosophy there are three means as described in *The Principia* which lead to true philosophy. This itself is true but not true enough, but that lies ahead in our study of Swedenborg's philosophy as a connected whole. I want to point out two things at this point: *First*, how the nature of the "Doctrine of Series and Degrees" fits into the triad of means in *The Principia*; *Second*, how "doctrine" does or does not agree with doctrine in revelation in the Writings. The first case is, I believe, easy to understand if we think of geometry and rational philosophy as existants or examples of ordered thought. Geometry had only one example in Swedenborg's time. It was Euclidean geometry as is well known. The number of geometries has increased from only one to several. Aristotle's philosophy, as described in his *Metaphysics*, for over 2000 years has been a prominent example of rational philosophy both used and abused. Used by two Christian philosophers: Thomas Aquinas and Emanuel Swedenborg, each of whom referred to Aristotle as "our philosopher." Many hundreds of years of philosophy between Aristotle and Descartes led in Descartes to a philosophy of a very different kind. That, too, is a rational philosophy, so rational in fact as to be exclusively so and as such led to a school governed by rationalism. Descartes devoted many pages to the

development of a faith in having a philosophy as certain as geometry, and that thinking led to the single theory from which all the rest followed: *Cogito (or dubito) ergo sum*.

How completely unrationalistic, how completely different, is that philosophy that depends on experience, geometry and rational philosophy and the faculty of reason, that includes more than what is in the rationalism of Descartes. *The Principia* theory itself at first sight may look like rationalism. I will come to the theory itself, but first let us observe that in fact Part I of *The Principia* was only a part of the whole as published. Part II was an extensive reference to experience in magnetic phenomena, and Part III to applications to the structure of things in the world, water, air, ether and even the solar system.

Now as to the theory itself. Unfortunately so often it is identified with geometry, but Swedenborg appeals to rational philosophy in preliminary paragraphs of Chapter II before he mentions geometry and likeness there to, in a hypothesized, imagined point or *conatus* in the infinite. Now what kind of philosophy is that "rational philosophy" that Swedenborg refers to? It is certainly not *cogito ergo sum*, but what is it? I wonder if Descartes himself referred to what he was doing as "rational philosophy." Swedenborg did not. If we use rational philosophy with regard to each of their philosophies, it must be that we acknowledge what they did as rational philosophy. Swedenborg at least named it "rational philosophy" (see "rational philosophy" in the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth and seventh paragraphs of Chapter II on "The First Natural Point," as printed. Geometry is mentioned in the fifth paragraph). Although he did not name it, let us mention some of the expressions used that refer to its nature: P. 1. "... that the first ens, as also all other entities in successive derivation from it, of which the world is composed" (see connection with rational philosophy); P. 2. "Rational philosophy itself acknowledges a certain connection and succession... succession, and series of things ... successive progression of causes... that things composite derive their origin from things simple;" P. 3. "It was before observed, that all finite things came into existence successively—" Is that not enough to know, on reflection, that the "Doctrine of Series and Degrees," if not as a named doctrine but as to thought, is an important example of Swedenborg's philosophy itself? And it is a Christian philosophy because it affirms devotion to the Supreme Being as a requirement to be a "truly learned philosopher" (*Principia* p. 35.); there is belief in the Only Begotten so that

the broken connection between man and things in creation (p. 34) can be restored (p. 45); he begins his endeavors "from the Infinite or God" (first paragraph of *The Infinite*); he pronounces "that God is the provider of all contingent circumstances..." (*Infinite* p. 75.); and in many other places in *The Infinite* and succeeding works he published in philosophy. But let us give one case more fully. It occurs at the end of his reasoned argument that there is a nexus within the infinite that connects what is infinite and what is finite, after which he wrote:

... let us see, whether there be any source besides mere reasoning [i.e. reason used but not alone], from which we can know the existence of the nexus. To illustrate what we mean . . .

Following that explanation, Swedenborg steps outside experience of things in nature, any kind of geometry or rational philosophy, even reason itself, to belief:

I wish then only to draw this conclusion, that if anyone tells me something that I myself have arrived at, I am bound to believe him on the simple ground that I believe myself. Let us now see whether God Himself, or the Infinite, has not been pleased to reveal to us this very thing; for He tells us that He had from eternity an only-begotten Son, and that this only-begotten Son is infinite, and is God, and that the connection between the Infinite is effected by the only-begotten infinite and God; and that the Father and the Son are one God; both infinite; both the Creator of the finite universe; that both concurred in the work of creation, yet that the two are so distinct that the one is the Father, the other, the Son; the one the First Person, the other the second; wherefore in respect to the names of Father and Son, and in respect to the word Person they are indeed two but in infinity and divinity they are one and the same (*Infinite* p. 100-101).

Spoken like the Christian philosopher which he was from 1734 to 1744. If we have any quarrel with this in reflecting from the Writings, let us read the seer's treatment of the Athanasian Creed in *Arcana Coelestia*. The subject in this Note is "doctrine" and not to point out the nature of philosophy and the nature of revelation, but only in one respect, and that is with regard to "doctrine." The above is sufficient to indicate that Swedenborg the philosopher did have

faith in God and the Word, the essential teaching of the doctrine of faith.

*The only true faith is faith in the Lord God, the saviour Jesus Christ; and this faith is held by those who believe Him to be the Son of God, and the God of heaven, and earth, and one with the Father (TCR 379).*

Further, faith in the Word is united with the faith in the Lord:

*Those in Christendom have no faith who reject the Lord and the Word, although they live morally, and speak, teach and write rationally, even about faith (TCR 384).*

Now let us see what is said about the doctrine of faith.

The case with doctrine is thus:—So far as there is what is human and rational, as a basis for belief in doctrine, so far there is no doctrine; but so far as what is sensuous, scientific, and rational is removed, that is, so far as doctrine is believed without these things, so far does the Divine flow in (AC 2538).

But how can "The Doctrine of Series and Degrees" be regarded otherwise than "sensuous" (beginning in anatomical observations as effects), "scientific" and "rational," how in fact can such a "doctrine" so called be the principal guide to "Inductions" in *The Economy* series and "analyses" in *The Animal Kingdom* series?

Let us compare the "Doctrine of Series and Degrees" not with the doctrine of faith but the "Doctrine of Discrete and Continuous Degrees" in Part III of *Divine Love and Wisdom*. This induction is in Section I of Chapter VIII of *The Economy*:

*So that there is nothing in the visible world, which is not a series, and in a series (I EAK 586).*

In the Writings there is this heading:

THERE ARE DEGREES OF BOTH KINDS IN THE GREATEST AND THE LEAST OF ALL CREATED THINGS. (Heading over nos. DLW 222-229).

In the philosophical case the application is to all things in the visible world, whereas in the revealed case it is to all created things. Since all created things include all things in the visible world there is no variance with later revelation so long as only "visible things in the world" are the subject. And since that is so we have but to look at the treatment of "Successive Order. . ." in *Divine Love and Wisdom* (nos.

205-221) where, among other things, there is "order of degrees as applied to fibres, every muscle, the fibres of nerves, the fibres of little vessels in all the viscera and organs, every seed in every fruit, in every metal and stone."

Neither the faith in himself and God expressed by the philosopher, nor the doctrine of faith described by the seer interfere either with "The Doctrine of Series and Degrees" in philosophy nor "The Doctrine of Discrete [Height] and Continuous Degrees" in revelation on the other hand. There is this difference—the belief in one's self is human as is the case in philosophy: the belief in God and the Word is in what the Incarnate Lord said and the Word.

**476. Among partial notes on efforts to describe Chapter VIII briefly I came upon this one to myself: "Divide and Conquer: I. Define Method and explain the doctrine; II. Then as introduction to "Rational Psychology" give examples."** It was a long time ago I wrote that, and I know no better way today. The principal subject of Chapter VIII is "The Doctrine of Series and Degrees." Applications given are to the subject rational psychology. Understand the meaning of the doctrine first, then apply it. But is that not a paradox! How to give meaning without application? Well, let us see what the fact is as to Swedenborg's intention in his method of exposition of Chapter VIII. Let us scan the inductions to see how the subject of Chapter VIII is broken down into nine parts.

Section I. "By the doctrine of series and degrees we mean that doctrine which teaches the mode observed by nature in the subordination and coordination of things, and which in acting she has prescribed for herself." Where in that statement is there reference to a concrete example? And although "nature," "mundane system," [everything] in "the visible world," and "science" may refer to things concrete, there is nothing specific enough to be regarded as concrete. The whole induction is abstract unless "successively and simultaneous" and "subordination and coordination" are illustrated. Concrete examples must wait for the discussion that follows each induction.

Section II. "To the intent we may advance from the primary sources of existence, we shall begin with substances, which are subjects of accidents and qualities." Even to understand Swedenborg's treatment of this the reader should go back twice to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (still a remarkable book in philosophy today) not because of applications to things visible to the eyes in Aristotle's day,

but because his *Metaphysics* is written in abstract terms, hence continues to be applicable in philosophy today. Heidegger, a philosopher who is certainly not classified among the ancients, tells the story that an interrogator of his asked him to describe "being" and other things in his philosophy. Heidegger told him to go study Aristotle for ten years and then come back for the answer.

Both Swedenborg and the leading acknowledged Christian philosopher, Thomas Aquinas, referred to Aristotle as "our philosopher." Although Swedenborg refers to Aristotle many times he did not write such a sustained work on Aristotle as did Thomas. It takes two large volumes to translate into English Thomas's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*. (See the *Encyclical Utters* to ministers and teachers of the Catholic Faith *Aeterni Patris* published August 4, 1879 advising them to use the philosophy of Aristotle.) Again the language is largely abstract and further elevated into terms special to the style adopted by such communications by a Pope. But what I am trying to emphasize is how abstract statements lead the way in documents that have perennial value.

For the rest I will only give a few words from the beginning of each section in Chapter VIII. III. "The first substance of every series is its most simple and only substance. . . ." IV "By this process the corporeal system is constructed and perfected. . . ." Because "corporeal system" comes closer to referring to what may be considered concrete I will add a note later in Section IV. V "Simple substances, and those which are less and more compound. . . ." VI "Such as are Substances, such likewise are their essences, attributes, accidents and qualities; or all their adjuncts." VII "Aggregate entities of the same degree and series have reference to their units, as to their simple parts, with which they are homogeneous." VIII "The most simple substance. . . of the animal kingdom is the spirituous fluid. . . ." May I interrupt here to say that although the human body is the principal object to which Swedenborg's philosophy is directed in its relation to the human soul, in order to get there he uses anatomy of the chicken, the silk worm, the tortoise, the louse and some other animals. [Think about this when later I refer to a statement made by Swedenborg as Revelator: "variety obscures."]. IX "If we would explore the efficient [cause?], rational [cause?], and principal causes of the operations and effects of the human body...."

Is that not enough to give the opponent of philosophy enough ammunition for awhile? But what of the style of the Writings when it comes to explaining something; is it specifically by what is concrete

or by what is abstract? It must be known that when the internal sense of the letter of the Word is given, especially in *Arcana Coelestia*, *Apocalypse Revealed*, and *Apocalypse Explained*, the introduction begins in each case with what something *signifies*, or *represents* or *corresponds to*, and what is given is concrete. Names, for example, signify something concrete, but in the internal or innermost sense. For one not indoctrinated, even these things are abstract: good and truth, will and understanding, even God, Jehovah, Messiah and the Lord.

Allow me to pause here to give two examples. Kierkegaard, who certainly cannot be regarded as irreligious in the Christian sense, refers in one place to understanding the Lord by the mathematical term "incommensurable." To those who lived in the time when the Lord was on earth, the idea of the Lord was commensurable. Think of how Mary and Joseph, the followers of Jesus, and others of his time, even Pilate, thought of him. I cannot express my reaction by any term better than *shock* when, while reading an account by St. Justin (reciting a variety of reactions to persons who called themselves "philosopher"), I came upon the words "He lived in the world one hundred fifty years ago."

If I am not mistaken, Swedenborg made an important visit to London in 1710. One hundred years later the Swedenborg Society was founded in London, the 26th of February, 1810. One hundred years later than that, that is two hundred years after the visit by Swedenborg, in 1910, there was an International Swedenborg's Congress, held in connection with the celebration of the Swedenborg Society's centenary in London, July 4 to 8, 1910. And whose picture is on the frontispiece of the report on that celebration? Answer, His Majesty Gustav V, King of Sweden. And rightly so, because for benefit of the public it must be concrete. But before referring to the concrete religious persons Kierkegaard, St. Justin, and the kings in their time, Pilate and Gustav, what of what Swedenborg wrote and published from 1744 to 1772, specifically in 1763. In English translations it is named, *Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Love and Wisdom*. Now in Note 476 I compared a statement Swedenborg made about the "Doctrine of Series and Degrees" (one of the inductions he made in Section I of Chapter VIII, EAK) with a heading in *Divine Love and Wisdom* Part III which is devoted to "The Doctrine of Discrete and Continuous Degrees." In the former case, that is in philosophy, the application is to all visible things in the world; in the latter case it is in application to all created things. Let me repeat that heading.

THERE ARE DEGREES OF BOTH KINDS IN THE GREATEST AND THE LEAST OF ALL CREATED THINGS.

It is as if Swedenborg had before him his own word from Section I Of Chapter VIII of *The Economy*, that is, to repeat them here:

*So that there is nothing in the visible world, which is not a series, and in a series* (n. 586).

Then immediately following the heading in *Divine Love and Wisdom* he wrote:

That the greatest and the least of all things consist of discrete and continuous degrees, that is, degrees of height and of breadth, cannot be illustrated by examples from visible things because the least things are not visible to the eyes, and the greatest things, which do stand out, do not appear to be distinguished into degrees. And on this account this matter does not allow of demonstration except by universals. And because angels are in wisdom from universals, and from that in knowledge of particulars, it is allowed to bring forward their utterances concerning these things (222).

The utterances follow in n. 223 and things named are "degrees of both kinds" in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, ether, air as receptacles of heat and light, spiritual heat and light as receptacles of love and wisdom, affection, thought, "degrees of both kinds which are in Him distinctly" and in what is Divine, with numerous references. In n. 224 love and wisdom are explained in connection with form and substance as also affection and thought:

For to separate love and wisdom, or affection and thought, from substance in form, is to annihilate them . . .

Number 225 refers to greatest things in which there are degrees, enumerated: as the universe in its whole complex, the natural universe in its complex, the spiritual world in its complex, every empire and kingdom, everything civil, moral, and spiritual in their complex, completed as in n. 223 with what is Divine.

May I pause to reflect that when, in the conclusion to *The Infinite* Swedenborg had difficulty in defining *natural* and *divine*, revelation is here giving the reason why. It is to his credit as a philosopher to recognize the difficulty. Number 226 goes on concerning greatest and least things but our subject here is not the content of nos. 222-227; I have only given the above outline to show the nature of

this subject. As to concrete and abstract and limitation to "visible things" as expressed in the induction from *The Economy*, I include here the whole of nos. 227 and 228.

It is also a matter of angelic wisdom that the perfection of the created universe comes from the likeness of generals and particulars, or between greatest and least things to those degrees. For then one thing regards another as its like, with which it can be conjoined for every use, and can present every end in effect (227).

That statement is really a resume or as we might say in journalistic language of a physics journal today, it is an abstract which always precedes the article itself. Now to number 228 in *Divine Love and Wisdom*.

But these things may appear paradoxical because they are not shown by application to visible things. Yet abstract things, because they are universals, are usually better comprehended than things applied, for these are of perpetual variety, and variety obscures.

And variety obscures"; is that exactly what has happened to some readers of the philosophical works? His philosophy begins in visible things, most prominently in anatomy as effects. So some may see nothing in *Economy of the Animal Kingdom* or *Animal Kingdom* except anatomy, but if one stays with Swedenborg he will discover that philosophy leads Swedenborg to the subjects of affection and thought, and when it happens in his treatment of sensation, (albeit beginning in the sense of the body when affecting the imagination, deposited in the memory, and recalled by thought in the understanding) he will refer to this understanding as "*inmost sensation*, which first perceives generals, then distinctions between generals, afterwards parts of generals . . . "

We should remember that Swedenborg in his published works wrote for persons living in universities at the time he wrote. How well he knew that can be known from what he quoted from Andreas, professor of Theoretical Philosophy at Lund:

The SENSES are external, internal and inmost... the *internal senses* are imagination and memory . . . The inmost or *mental sense* is intelligence, and a good mental taste . . . [This and more collected by Swedenborg in his *Philosopher's Note Book* p. 10 footnote, and pp. 59-60].