

SWEDENBORG'S PHILOSOPHY OF CAUSALITY

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CHAPTER V

TOWARD A SOLUTION OF THE MIND/BODY PROBLEM

In Chapter II, in the section tracing the development of the doctrine of influx, considerable attention was given to the subtle changes in the concept of the soul which are discernible in the scientific and philosophic works of Swedenborg, as well as the concomitant modifications in his ideas of the mechanics of the commerce of soul and body. It would be both unnecessary and tedious to rehearse here all the details given there, except that it may be useful to reiterate that our author moved completely away from his early positive stance toward a theory of physical influx, first to a tentative approval of the concept of two-way interactionism, but then to a general thesis that spiritual influx, or so-called one-way interactionism—from soul to body only—seemed the most plausible.

This is not to say that his opinion was in any sense fixed by, say, the middle of the 1740s. But that was the trend of his thinking up to that time.

In our examination of his thoughts in his *Rational Psychology* (written in 1742 but published posthumously) we were preoccupied with the singularity of his sudden abandonment of the term “influx,” finally satisfying ourselves as to the probable reasoning behind that particular move. But little was done with the overall concept of the soul which that work reflects. Because it is a psychology, however, it is peculiarly well adapted to our present needs: that of getting an accurate picture of the author’s preconceptions (prejudices would hardly be too strong a word) about the soul just prior to his illumination.

One might say (or perhaps pontificate) in preface that he suffered from a mental syndrome attributable to a congeries of doctrines, traditional beliefs, and dogmas, all more or less accurately labeled as “Christian.” In short, the religious faith of the author obtruded, coloring his opinions and affecting his philosophic instincts. The following selected short passages from the 1742 work will, I believe, amply illustrate my surmise:

[1] Oh how miserable we would be if after death we were to live with our rational mind, our imperfect intellect, and our inconstant will...

[2] But let us dismiss these matters as among things wholly unknown; to wit, whether the human animus [the physical mind] is to survive the life of its body until the Last Judgment, when single things are to be resolved into their principles by a most pure elementary fire. But into these arcana, let us not penetrate...

[3] What the soul is has been defined and described above, to wit, that it is immaterial, devoid of extension, motion, and part; and consequently contains in itself nothing that will perish...

[4] We Christians...not only believe the soul's life to be immortal, but also that there is a state of felicity or heaven, and a state of infelicity or hell...

[5] Is the angelic form like the human form? This indeed, I do not think will be the case, namely, that we are to put on the human form, such form being solely for the sake of use in the ultimate world...

[6] When we live as souls, we shall perhaps laugh at ourselves at having conjectured so childishly.¹

Of these six brief statements (arbitrarily numbered for ease in reference)—all found within a span of less than twenty pages toward the end of the work—only the ideas contained in two, numbers [4] and [6] will survive in the theological period. And of these only [4]—belief in a life after death in either heaven or hell—is of significance, although assuredly the author must indeed have laughed at himself, not after death but in a few short years, for some of the ideas he held at that time.

The other four can be categorically dismissed, since his view on the idea and/or the concept behind it was completely reversed in each case.

[1] That our rational mind, our imperfect intellect, and our inconstant will do indeed survive the grave—although then subject to important mutations—is the sole theme of his 1758 *Heaven and Hell*, and occurs *passim* in practically all his theological writings.

¹*Rational Psychology*, n. 494, 495, 498, 511, 521, 524.

[2] That one rises from death in the world of the spirit very shortly after the demise of the earthly body is not only a concordant theme with the one above, but, as it radically alters the "traditional" view of eschatology, two short works dealing specifically with the question of the Last Judgment were published by Swedenborg, one in 1758 and one in 1763. The rethinking of this idea also is treated in many places in the theological corpus.

[3] and [5] can really be commented on together, for the abandonment of the widely held view that the soul was immaterial (hence ethereal in the original sense of resembling ether) and devoid of extension, motion, and part, occurred concomitantly with the new realization that the human form is not only the angelic form but also the divine form. Of this we shall say more later.

A person who elects to write on the thought of one who is self-identified as a seer (which is one of the ways one might classify Swedenborg) faces special methodological problems. This may be even more acutely true of one who, as is admittedly the case with the present writer, is himself a zealot in regard to the works of the seer. Perhaps his most nearly overwhelming temptation is to indulge, wittingly or unwittingly, in inappropriate zeal. Or, almost as troublesome, is the seductively plausible idea of determining to be "objective" by suppressing one's zeal, deliberately cloaking one's enthusiasm.

It is the present writer's hope that he may be steering a path somewhere midway between these undesirable extremes. However, the reader who is aware of the author's predisposition toward his subject is perhaps more readily able to form a judgment than otherwise as to whether or not any seemingly overenthusiastic assertions are due to predilection rather than scholarship. Now, having made my apologia, let us get on with the matter of the steps taken by Swedenborg toward a solution of the mind/body problem.

First, there is no point in underplaying the one decisive factor in our author's mature statements on the nature of the soul, and of how it communicates with the body. He tells his readers repeatedly that this knowledge was *revealed* to him—not once, or twice, or fleetingly from time to time, but, as he wrote, for example about 1754,

As I have been now continuously for nine years in company with spirits and angels, I have carefully observed how the case is with regard to influx.²

This is only one of many such direct statements as to the intensity and duration of his other-world awareness. In fact, the last paragraph of his last published work (*True Christian Religion*, 1771), contains such an assertion; here it is prefaced with an explanation of the purpose behind this prolonged psychic experience:

For it has pleased the Lord to manifest Himself to me, and to send me to teach those things which will belong to His New Church, which is meant by "the New Jerusalem" in the *Apocalypse*. For this purpose He has opened the interiors of my mind or spirit, whereby I have been permitted to be in the spiritual world with angels, and at the same time in the natural world with men and this now during twenty-seven years.³

One who has little or no previous acquaintance with either the works or the claims of the remarkable Swede may wonder at the apparently studiously detached air of the foregoing citation. Can one seriously make a claim so astounding in such a cool, matter-of-fact tone? The clue to the answer, of course, is that by this time, the mellow 83-year-old man, whose monumental literary output alone testifies to the sober, scholarly mien of his life, has had ample practice at making such claims. In one sense, everything he wrote from the initial eight-volume theological work, *Arcana Coelestia*, up to the present (i.e., 1771), testified to or hinged on this same assertion.

Quite different is the tone of some of his early exuberant, ingenuous statements about these strange experiences. In Chapter III, passing mention was made of an elaborate exegetical work produced during the transition period, a work which has since been translated, annotated and

²*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 6200. This large work was published serially between 1749 and 1756. This paragraph appears in a volume published in 1754.

³*Op. cit.*, n. 851.

published in a 10-volume set called *The Word Explained*. In Volume I, in an article titled "Concerning the Kingdom of God" interjected in his treatment of Genesis 28,⁴ he leads cautiously up to his "hidden agenda" (as some psychologist has dubbed this sort of *excursus*) by asking first what may be the nature of the kingdom of God. The reader is then told (although it is germane to note that Swedenborg never published this work) that the kingdom will come to view for a person when the superior way of his mind is opened.

This "superior way" is quite other than the usual route of knowledge through the physical senses. But unfortunately, since the time of Adam and the fall of man, the superior way—immediately from heaven through the soul—has been closed in all but a few highly favored men. The Scriptures indicate who these have been: Abraham, Isaac, and others such as the prophets—all of them men who were given special tasks by God.

This experience of receiving knowledge by this superior way, he continues, is not only remarkable, but has unexpected features. For example,

The speech is exactly like the speech with one's associates on earth, but it comes from heaven, from above, from every side, from far away, from nearby, and also internally; and it is so plain that it is heard in the same way as the speech of the lips, but in such manner that none of the bystanders hears or perceives anything of it, and this even in a company whether consisting of many persons or few.⁵

Very much the same can be said for the sensations of sight and touch. There is nothing obscure about it. It is so completely manifest that the kingdom of God is plainly perceived. How are you so sure of this, Mr. Swedenborg?

But lest men reject these statements as among fables, I can bear witness, and this in sacred earnestness, that I have been

⁴*Op. cit.*, n. 475.

⁵*Ibid.*

admitted into that kingdom by the Messiah himself, the Savior of the world, Jesus the Nazarene; and have there spoken with heavenly genii, with spirits, with the dead who have risen again...and this now for a period of eight months almost continuously...⁶

Anyone confronted with statements such as this obviously has a problem. If he happens to be one keenly interested in psychic phenomena, his curiosity, if not his credibility, may be sufficiently aroused to induce him to read on. If this is not the case, it is more likely that he will close the book, put it aside, and conclude that this is fancy or delusion. But such a judgment, in the case of Swedenborg, has been often and ably challenged as both unfair and unreasonable. One such defense, which is a marvel of concision, confronts the reader, in part, with this argument:

It is clear that if Swedenborg did not come into contact with a real world external to himself and with real people there, and yet had the firmest conviction that he did, he must have been the victim of delusions so sustained and consistent as to constitute a psychological marvel unprecedented in history. This is not a case of occasional apparitions, but of a consistent dual life lived during more than a quarter of a century. Nor was he a hysterical or excitable person, but a singularly composed, sedate thinker and investigator of mature years, who retained his habits of careful and methodical research in this strange and unforeseen sphere of labor. The theory of delusion requires us to believe that hallucinations of the most convincing and consistent kind can exist continuously during twenty-eight years in a mind to all appearance calm, logical and systematic...⁷

This able defender then goes on to cope with the possibility that the entire theological output might be an ingenious and intricately devised fiction. But this option would require labeling the author a deliberate fraud, a charge which his whole life seems amply to deny. It is further

⁶*Ibid.* Note: the editor is able to date this writing as being composed in December, 1745.

⁷J. Spalding, *An Introduction to Swedenborg's Religious Thought*, pp. 16-17.

noted that it might also seem possible that the man's own musings and imaginings were honestly mistaken by him as revelations. But would not such an unbalanced person be apt to hasten to proclaim his find? Yet Swedenborg took nearly five years to get the first volume of his purported revelations in print, hardly the pace one would expect of a fanatic.

These, then, are some of the lines of defense that have been drawn by Swedenborgian disciples of the past. They are affirmatively recommended to the reader of today by the writer of this treatise.

That Swedenborg apparently expected to be taken seriously in his claim is attested to over and over again, often with what to many has seemed such a degree of naïveté that one becomes uneasy on that account also. This would seem to be true of the continuation of the passage quoted in part above, for it reads:

Hence the reader can now know that there is a kingdom of God, and also, from what is to be said later on, both here and elsewhere, what is its nature. Here it is granted only to add that, in a certain manner, I have been admitted into heaven itself, not only with my mind but also with my whole body, as it were, or with the sense of the body, and indeed when I was fully awake. This may seem so remarkable that one cannot but call it into question; but since I have seen and heard it, and have experienced it with the very senses of the body, I must needs now confirm it and give my testimony, and this by leave.⁸

Down through the centuries scores of adventurous men have made discoveries of things previously unknown. Some of them have particularly caught the public's fancy, as for example Christopher Columbus, or John Glenn. In the physical sciences there have been pioneers such as Marie Curie and Louis Pasteur. The list could be extended to a great length. The purpose in mentioning such trailblazers is that they have been precisely that—inspired people who have gone ahead of humanity, but who have been able to mark a path which others could follow.

⁸*The Word Explained*, n. 475.

Not so our solitary Swede. His most astonishing discoveries have had to remain unshared, and to that extent unverified, not only by his contemporaries but also by all succeeding generations. To date, his prolonged "voyage" into the great unknown has remained unique. Its credibility, ultimately, must rest on the record made and published by the lone experimenter. This he seemed well aware of himself, for a test which he seemed to suggest to his readers was that of logical consistency within the corpus itself. For example, he once (in beguiling understatement) wrote:

...I foresee that when you read this, some doubts may occur to your mind; but read to the end, and afterwards recollect, and the doubts will disappear.⁹

This was certainly the tack used by many of his disciples and defenders, who, almost to a man, urged that a complete reading be given of the man's work before any attempt to reach a judgment. Even an openly hostile biographer felt impelled to write as follows:

There is, I apprehend, one way and no other whereby Swedenborg's communications can be ratified as Divine.

We know God appointed bread to be eaten, *because* it nourishes the body. Higher or better proof than this of Divine appointment we can neither demand nor imagine...

To this test must Swedenborg's teachings be brought; *à priori* none can tell whether they are Divine...In the matter of truth, quite as much as in pudding, the proof is in the eating. Any one who reads Swedenborg, and finds his life nourished and strengthened, may safely shut his ears to vilifiers...¹⁰

The seer, himself, however, seems more apt to put the test more on the level of the mental or moral state of the reader; i.e., his consistent stand is that these writings are unquestionably both revealed and true. Thus, for example, he writes:

⁹*Divine Wisdom*, iii, 1.

¹⁰Wm. White, *Emanuel Swedenborg*, pp. 153-154 (1868 ed.).

...there are many who believe nothing unless they know from reason that it is so... These persons cannot possibly receive faith unless they first comprehend in some measure how it can be so, and this is why these things have been explained.¹¹

This statement, occurring in an early volume of the theological period, would seem to “set the course,” so to speak, that a primary purpose for the writing and publishing of these works was to satisfy the demands of those who insisted on understanding their religious beliefs. At the same time it is somewhat disconcerting to realize that this state of mind is apparently not considered to be the most desirable, for he continues: “They who believe the Word in simplicity have no need to know all these things, for they are already in the end to which the others just described cannot come except by a knowledge [*cognitionem*] of such things.”¹²

In a work written a few years later, the emphasis seems to have altered somewhat; at least, if one rightly construes from the above citation that the simple good neither comprehend, nor need to comprehend, the intricate reasons behind many religious beliefs. In short, one might interpret the foregoing to mean that if one already has faith, such knowledge is undesirable. The later writing states:

...I am aware that to many these things seem to exceed their comprehension; but the reason is that it is not the delight of their love to know them; if it were the delight of their love, not only would they perceive them clearly, but they would also be eager to know much more of such things...¹³

Here the test of understanding seems to hinge on the moral state of the individual. This, as a fact, becomes a dominant theme in the later writings. It may not be immediately apparent to the reader why it is being brought into a discussion which is ostensibly on the mind/body problem. It is germane in this sense: in the mature and final position taken by Sweden-

¹¹*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 2094.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³*Apocalypse Explained*, n. 92.

borg on how the mind or soul communicates with the body, any explanation which attempts to describe the process in purely mechanistic terms is rejected as inadequate. Thus the very terminology used earlier (*mechanismo*, or even *harmonia*) is for the most part eschewed, in favor of such terms as *commercium* (generally translated as “intercourse”) and *influxus* (influx).

Further, it is hoped that what may have appeared to be an *excursus* in the last several pages may serve to prepare the reader for the radically different way of setting forth views on the linkage of soul and body which appears and becomes characteristic of all the writings of the late or theological period. The tone is no longer speculative or tentative; it is consistently dogmatic or doctrinaire, and not infrequently a bit overbearing. With that thought as a proem, it will be our practice to present the author’s mature thoughts either in paraphrase or verbatim without apologetic comment.

The first critical change in thinking on this subject had to do with the nature of the soul. Our author’s first reports of the “other” world, *ex auditis et visis*, are of men and women who, to all outward appearance, are identical, in appearance, abilities, faculties, and mannerisms to those in this world. Among them were persons recently deceased whom he had known in the flesh—and he immediately recognized them because they appeared to him to be unchanged. They talked to him; he talked to them; they understood each other. Furthermore, their “spirit” bodies proved to be both tangible and substantial. He therefore concluded that the soul or the spirit is the *real* person, and that even on this earthly plane we are spirits clothed with bodies. At death, merely the “clothing” is put off. Thus he writes that

...when a man comes into the other life he is not aware that he is in that life, but supposes that he is still in this world, and even that he is still in the body. So much is this the case that when told he is a spirit, wonder and amazement possess him,...because he finds himself exactly like a man, in his senses, desires and thoughts...

A second general fact is that a spirit enjoys much more excellent sensitive faculties, and far superior powers of thinking and speaking, than when living in the body, so that the two states scarcely admit of comparison, although spirits are not aware of

this until gifted with reflection by the Lord.

...In short, they possess everything that men possess, but in a more perfect manner, except the flesh and bones and the attendant imperfections.¹⁴

His experience, in short, seemed to bear out the words of the apostle, "If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body,"¹⁵ wonderfully filling in the full details, assuring the seer that flesh and bones—the body of which we are sensibly aware—in no way constitutes the "person" or "being" of a man. The intuition that man *has* a soul was seen to be an imperfect truth; man *is* a soul. Experience taught him what philosophic speculation had been unable to fathom. Looking now at the mind/body problem from a completely reversed idea as to the definition of "soul"¹⁶ he commented from time to time on the reasons he now saw why others' ideas of the soul were faulty. Those who are "immersed in bodily, earthly, and worldly things" are incapable of such insights; nor would they believe if told the truth.

...I am also well aware that those will not believe who have thought much and investigated much about the soul, and who have not at the same time comprehended that the soul of man is his spirit, and that the spirit is the man himself who is living in the body;...And this is especially the case with those who...are inflated with a persuasion of their own preeminent wisdom.¹⁷

With this belief firmly implanted in his own mind, however, our philosopher-theologian is now able to reappraise the whole mind/body relationship, tracing it all the way back to the moment of conception.

For in the semen from which every man is conceived there exists a graft or off shoot [*tradux seu propago*] of the father's soul in

¹⁴*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 320-322.

¹⁵I Cor. 15:44 (RSV)

¹⁶Cf. his definition in 1742, cited on p. 408 (*supra*).

¹⁷*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 4622.

its fulness, within a sort of envelope framed of elements from nature; and by means of this his body is formed in the mother's womb.¹⁸

Together with this passage one should also read the following passage (although it was written first chronologically) in which, unexpectedly, our author begins by suggesting that *this* idea is already in the public domain.

It is known that the soul or man commences in the ovum of the mother, and is afterwards perfected in her womb, and is there encompassed with a tender body, and this of such a nature that through it the soul may be able to act in a manner suited to the world into which it is born.¹⁹

Probably the idea referred to which "is known" is the traditional Christian doctrine that a new soul is created by God at the moment of conception. However, what is not intrinsic to that doctrine is that the soul assumes primacy right from the start; thus, it not only precedes the body in point of time, it is actually the effecting means through which the body is formed.²⁰ This does not, however, belie another strongly held thesis, *viz.*, that despite its seemingly independent formative powers, the soul is not a "spark of the divine," *i.e.*, a source of life itself. It, like the body, is only a receptacle of life—although the highest of such forms—dependent for its apparent life on the one Source, God. This Swedenborgian idea provides the philosophic background for this passage:

As the rudiment of man is seed, and this is a *double receptacle of life* [emphasis mine], it is clear that the human soul is not life from life, that is, life in itself, for there is but one life, and that is God...And as there is a continuation of these receptacles from the brains through the fibers into all parts of the body, it is also clear that there is a continuation of the reception of life into these parts,

¹⁸*True Christian Religion*, n. 103.

¹⁹*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 3570[4].

²⁰*Cf.*, *e.g.*, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, n. 400.

and that thus the soul is not here or there, but is in every form derived from these, just as the cause is in the things caused, and the principle in its derivations.²¹

It is my conclusion that what he means by saying that the seed is a double receptacle of life is that it not only contains the "offshoot" of soul but also the potential of body. Then, it is specifically stated that the soul forms and therefore is "in" every part of the body. Elsewhere he prefers the terminology that the soul "clothes itself" with a body. Or, as in the following quotation, these two are sometimes referred to as the "internal man" and the "external man."

Before any statement can be made about influx and the operation of the soul into the body, it must be well understood that the internal man is formed according to the image of heaven, and the external man according to the image of the world...

...in man the spiritual world is conjoined to the natural world, consequently...the spiritual world flows into the natural world in so vivid a manner that he can notice it, provided he pays attention. All this shows the nature of the intercourse of the soul with the body, namely, that properly it is the communication of spiritual things which are of heaven, with natural things which are of the world, and that the communication is effected by means of influx, and is according to the conjunction.²²

In one sense there is only one new thought here; for linkage of heaven-spiritual-soul is readily seen, as is that of world-natural-body. "Life" flows from the former into the latter. But that this influx is "according to the conjunction" involves a concept that has been given only passing notice thus far. It is of a piece with the philosophy behind the brief citation on page 415 (*supra*) which led to the comment that the test of understanding, *i.e.*, the level and degree and extent of communication, seems to hinge on the moral state of the individual.

²¹*Divine Wisdom*, iii, 2.

²²*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 6057.

This is precisely what is implied by the closing words cited above. "Conjunction" is his technical term used to denote the degree of empathy—or more properly, correspondence—between the beliefs and desires or loves of an individual human being, and that which is correlative in God: divine love and wisdom.²³ This line of thought also served to make decisive another revision of viewpoint, *viz*, that the influx or flow of vitality is always from higher to lower, never *vice versa*.²⁴

...for there is one only life, that of the Lord, which flows into all, but is variously received, and this according to the quality which a man has induced on his soul by his life in the world.²⁵

This twofold thought is reiterated and underscored a number of times and in several different ways.

The truth is that the life of every one, both of man, of spirit, and also of angel, flows in solely from the Lord, who is life itself; and diffuses itself through the whole heaven and also through hell, thus into every one; and this in an order and series incomprehensible: but the life which flows in is received by each according to his disposition. Good and truth are received as good and truth by the good; but good and truth are received as evil and falsity by the evil, and are also turned into evil and falsity in them. The case with this is comparatively like the light of the sun, which diffuses itself into all objects of the earth, but is received according to the quality of each object, and becomes of a beautiful color in beautiful forms, and of a disagreeable color in disagreeable forms.²⁶

...it is an eternal truth that influx is spiritual and not physical, that is, influx is from the soul, which is spiritual, into the body, which is material, or from the spiritual world into the natural world; also that as the Divine from itself and through that which proceeds

²³Cf. my treatise on *Love in Action*, *op. cit.*, for a fuller discussion of this chapter.

²⁴Cf. p. 298 (*supra*).

²⁵*Arcana Coelestia*, n. 6467.

²⁶*Ibid.*, n. 2888.

from itself created all things, so it sustains all things; also that sustenance is perpetual creation, as subsistence is perpetual existence.²⁷

For it is a universal rule that nothing can subsist from itself, but from and through something else, consequently that nothing can be kept in form except from and through something else, which may also be seen from everything in nature. The case is the same with man. In respect to his external, man cannot subsist except from and through his internal. Neither can the internal man subsist except from and through heaven. And neither can heaven subsist from itself, but only from the Lord, who alone subsists from Himself. Influx is according to existence and subsistence, for all things subsist by means of influx.²⁸

This last citation in particular sums up the mature doctrine of influx. Not only is there an unbroken chain of cause/effect dependence from God all the way down to the lowliest earthly existent, this flow is always from higher to lower. Our author says elsewhere that he was told that it is contrary to order “for the posterior to flow into the prior, or the grosser into the purer; thus for the body to inflow into the soul.”²⁹ Thus the positive conclusion is reached that there can be no such thing as so-called physical influx, *i.e.*, from lower into higher. In man this means that the sensations received by the bodily senses cannot, contrary to this law, flow into and either affect or effect the thoughts and intentions of his spirit. The only flow allowable is from the thoughts and intentions of the spirit into the body and into its actions and sensations.³⁰ The body and all the bodily apparatus are, by definition, on the plane of effects only; at best being merely representative of the “real” or causal plane, that of the soul. The soul releases or radiates conatus—strives for “uses” or teleological goals. The body is the “tool” or “machine” employed by the soul to perform or

²⁷ *Apocalypse Explained*, n. 1215^e [Note: ^e means at the end.].

²⁸ *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 6056.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 3219.

³⁰ *Cf. Apocalypse Explained*, n. 846^e.

carry out these uses. And the effects thus produced are representatives of, or correspond to, the uses which are the causes. The uses or ends of the soul, in turn, are representative of higher principles which have come down through the chain of command to it, according to the doctrine of correspondence.³¹

But, one might properly interject, how are we really any better off in terms of understanding the *process* of soul/body communication? True, we have disposed of the hypotheses of physical influx and two-way interactionism, which at the same time rules out preestablished harmony as a possible explanation. The process is now strictly limited to the one “orderly” way, that of so-called spiritual influx. Thus of the three schools of thought Swedenborg refers to in particular on this matter—the Aristotelian, the Leibnizian or Wolffian, and the Cartesian—the first two are eliminated, apparently leaving only the idea attributed to Descartes as viable

...Besides these three opinions concerning the intercourse of the soul and the body, no fourth is possible, for either the soul must operate on the body, or the body on the soul, or both continually together.³²

Still there proves to be a noteworthy ambivalence toward the *whole* Cartesian doctrine of soul and body—only one phase of it proving to be acceptable, that of the direction of flow. And this concept is virtually prescinded from the scheme of Descartes and attributed more broadly to all the “wise in the learned world” who, according to our author, prefer the theory of spiritual influx to the other two hypotheses since it is “from order and its laws.”³³ But even here not much credit for philosophic acumen is granted, for

...there are three things that involve this hypothesis in shade: ignorance of what the soul is, ignorance of what the spiritual is,

³¹Cf. *Arcana Coelestia*, n. 1807[3].

³²*Influx*, n. 1.

³³*Ibid.*, n. 2.

and ignorance of what influx is...But these things cannot be explained except by one to whom it has been granted by the Lord to associate with angels in the spiritual world and at the same time with men in the natural world.³⁴

Perhaps needless to say, that limits the field to himself. The relatively low worth assigned to the conclusions reached by his predecessors manifests itself again in these words:

That at the present day nothing is known concerning the union of soul and body, is proved by the hypotheses of the learned concerning the soul; especially by that of Descartes and others, [who maintain] that the soul is a substance separated from the body, in some place or other³⁵; when yet the soul is the inmost man; consequently, is the man from the head to the foot.³⁶

We have already taken note of Swedenborg's revised view of the nature of the soul (one of the three concepts which have kept the hypothesis shadowy); we have also taken note that "the spiritual" is a complete world, more complete than the natural world if anything; existing on a discretely higher plane and serving as the efficient cause of all observable effects on the earthly plane; and we have seen that influx is a one-way transference of power or life or force from the higher or spiritual world to the lower or natural world. But still the specific knowledge of the process eludes us.

Nor do we seem to be helped much by the introduction of new factors—new psychological details—in the picture; although, the picture will prove to be even more incomplete if certain emphasized factors are omitted from consideration. So, before seeking a final answer to the puzzle, let us here note the strong intrusion into the total philosophy of Swedenborg of *trines*, and then look at some of its extrapolations. Like his

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Cf. A Philosopher's Note Book*, pp. 84, 172, 213, 419, for evidence of Swedenborg's awareness of Descartes' conjecture that the "seat" of the soul was in the pineal gland.

³⁶*Invitation*, n. 13.

great medieval predecessor Augustine, Swedenborg became convinced that the world is characterized by “unity in trinity” and “trinity in unity.” In the case of each man, the compelling factor behind this principle, and the acceptance and use of it, is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in God. It may be fair to say that the Swede rivalled the Berber in the sheer ingenuity and profusion of applications of this “trinity hypothesis.” Also, in the tradition of his worthy predecessor, the 18th Century philosopher was not careful (nor, for that matter, concerned) to keep his trines mutually exclusive. Thus we find that some of the same “parties” or factors occur both in different trines and in different contexts.

Some editorial comment will be made (when it seems appropriate) concerning some of the more confusing examples of intermingling of terms. First, let us take note of the most obvious and persistent third factor introduced into the soul/body discussion.

There are three things of which every man consists, and which follow in order with him, the soul, the mind, and the body. His inmost is the soul (*anima*); his intermediate is the mind (*mens*); and his last is the body. All that flows into man from the Lord flows into his inmost which is the soul; and descends thence into his intermediate, which is the mind; and through this into his last, which is the body.³⁷

In order that it may be known that there are correlative communication levels, to which these three levels of man correspond, it is then related that the spiritual world has three degrees, as has the natural world. These are not to be confused with the three overarching levels of reality, *viz.*, God, heaven, and earth (which are also identified as celestial, spiritual and natural). These are rather degrees within degrees; and there is almost no end of the complexity.

In the present instance, mention is made of three heavens (highest, middle, and lowest; or, celestial, spiritual, and natural), and also of three atmospheres (all spiritual) which correlate with the three physical atmospheres comprising aura, ether, and air (which our philosopher accepted

³⁷*Conjugial Love*, n. 101.

as a fact of physics).³⁸ Just as the three natural atmospheres are carriers of heat and light in differing ways for differing uses (*cf.* the brief discussion of the doctrine of modification, *supra*, pp. 322ff) so the three spiritual atmospheres transmit that which corresponds to heat and light, *viz.*, love and wisdom, in three degrees adapted to the receptive powers of man in his basic trinitarian divisions.

But here one gets into a bit of an anomaly if he tries to link these influxes with the divisions already noted: soul, mind, body. Instead one finds a more apt trine to receive this sort of influx is the threefold division of the mind, ambiguously (but almost unavoidably so)³⁹ designated as "spiritual, rational, natural." Here "soul" and "mind" seem almost to blend into one. If the context demands it, "soul" is sometimes identified as the highest stratum of "mind." Where this is not strictly required, the two terms are sometimes used as synonymous. One instance where this occurs is in a context which speaks of the three essentials of the church as "God, charity, and faith." After identifying charity with divine good, and faith with divine truth, the following conclusion is drawn:

...And this is why there are three things in man in respect to his internal, namely, soul, or mind [emphasis mine], will, and understanding. These three are the receptacles of the three universals; the soul itself, or the mind, is the receptacle of the Lord; for it lives therefrom; the will is the receptacle of love or good; and the understanding is the receptacle of wisdom or truth.⁴⁰

Many more complexities and intertwinings of parties to or components of trines could be adduced; but what has been presented may suffice to illustrate the premise that the universe, reality in its totality, is, through and through, a three-level affair. All of creation (or more accurately, all of

³⁸*Cf.*, e.g., *Influx*, n. 16; *cf.* also *Principia* for his early detailed ideas of this concept. *Cf.* two thoughtful articles in defense of Swedenborg's higher atmosphere theory: *NP* July, 1936, "The Problem of Higher Atmospheres," by Charles R. Pendleton; and *NP* Jan., 1957, "Is There an Ether?" by Wilfred H. Howard.

³⁹*Cf.* *Love in Action*, Chap. II, where this psychology is described in some detail, including notice of some of the terminological problems.

⁴⁰*True Christian Religion*, n. 712.

reality—for “creation” might be construed as not including the creator) is distinguishable into trines, each of which in turn is logically relatable to the basic series of end, cause, and effect. Not just the soul/body communication is characterized by the chain of end (from God), cause (through the soul or mind), and effect (to the body)—*everything* is trinitarian by its very nature.

To illustrate this universal applicability of the concept, however, some further crossing of lines is required. To generalize the law, the components are identified as “soul, body, and spirit.” The “soul” of any entity is that inherent, God-given quality which predetermines the form it will take and the use it will perform. The “body” is the tangible or discernible form, or shape, or physical organization which the “soul” produces or “creates.” And the “spirit” is the ultimate effect, the “going forth,” the personality which results when the soul transmits power to the body causing it to act.

Here, in order to see this as an existential trinity, “soul” may be identified with both *conatus* and love. “Love,” by its very nature, must be doing something. It needs a means, however, and this means is the “body” or embodiment of the soul. On the mental level, that which gives form or direction to love is truth or knowledge. Love must be directed or channeled in its *conatus* to *do*. And the *doing* that results is the *use* or *goal* of the striving. Thus the existential trinity, corresponding to the end-cause-effect trine, becomes love-truth-use.⁴¹

To get this all back to our mind/body problem: the soul of man is now seen as characterized by love; the body is the “truth,” *i.e.* the tangible form his soul takes; and the spirit of man (in this context) is most aptly described as his personality—the way he is known *as a person* (hence the “effect”) to others, quite apart from his physical appearance.

Even with these added psychological features, however, we still have not bridged the lacunae in our quest to determine *how* the soul communicates with the body. It will be necessary to introduce yet another ages-old philosophic consideration. It is a notion which has not, to my knowledge, been introduced as a critical factor into the attempt to solve the mind/body problem by any other philosopher than Swedenborg. It is the con-

⁴¹Cf. *Love in Action*, Chap. III, for another phase of this idea.

cept of human free will, or freedom of choice.⁴² In his last great summary work alone he devotes some sixty pages to the subject, so we can at best treat his ideas on free will in barest outline.

A state of moral and spiritual freedom of choice or free will is, for our author, unquestionably true of man. There is no such thing as predestination or determinism in the Calvinistic sense. It would not be exaggerating to say that Swedenborg's whole theological system hinges or depends on a doctrine of human free will.

...without freedom of choice in spiritual things there would be nothing in man whereby the Lord could conjoin Himself to him, and yet, without reciprocal conjunction, no reformation or regeneration, and thus no salvation is possible.⁴³

Several secondary premises are set forth to validate this general principle. The one most closely allied to our current pursuit is that which posits that through the offices of divine providence, man as to his spirit is poised midway between heaven and hell, his equilibrium consisting in his being not susceptible to overbearing pressure from the spiritual world to choose either good or evil. In every event in his life involving moral decision, divine providence so overrules or controls the otherworldly pressures that man is consistently presented with what are truly "free" choices. (The pull and push exerted on man's "decision-process" by human inhabitants of both heaven and hell are described in graphic detail.)

Consequently, man has freedom of choice in spiritual matters.

The conclusion from all this is that freedom of choice itself in spiritual things resides in the soul of man in all perfection, and from that it flows, like a stream into a fountain, into his mind, into the two parts of it, which are the will and the understanding, and through these into the bodily senses, and into speech and action...It

⁴²Note: Unlike Augustine, Swedenborg does not use the same words consistently to differentiate two levels of freedom. The word *libertas* (Augustine's "eminent" freedom) and *liberum arbitrium* are used synonymously by Swedenborg, although a philosophy of levels of freedom is endemic to his thought.

⁴³*True Christian Religion*, n. 485.

is this freedom of man, through which, in which, and with which, the Lord is present in him, and unceasingly urgent to be received; but He in no way sets aside or takes away this freedom, since, as said above, whatever man does in spiritual things that is not done in freedom does not endure. It may therefore be said that the Lord's abode in man is this freedom of man which is in his soul.⁴⁴

There is something of a linguistic or translation problem here. One is uneasy with the wording that "the Lord's abode in man *is* this freedom." The Latin here reads: "*quare dici potest, quod hoc liberum hominis sit, in quo Dominus apud illum in anima ejus habitat.*" Another translator has it read: "...it is this freedom of man *in which* the Lord dwells with him, in his soul" [my emphasis]; whereas another phrases it: "...this freedom of the soul is the *faculty* in which the Lord dwells." [emphasis added] Some unknown sage has said that a translation should be at least as ambiguous as that which it translates. This may be the principle operative here. Of the three, the second one is the most literal and, perhaps in this case, seems to reflect most smoothly what the author said. The word "faculty" is a dubious interjection due to its many obscure overtones. What does seem clear in the intent of the passage is that somehow human freedom is essential for communication and conjunction between God and man, and in turn between man's soul and body.

Human freedom, in turn, is a topic dealt with in that branch of philosophy called ethics or moral philosophy. One is led inevitably to the conclusion that the final grounds on which Swedenborg rests his case as to how the soul communicates with the body is somehow related to the grounds on which one is able to infer that man is a moral creature and that this is both a causal and a moral universe.

In a sense we can see, as we look back over the development of our argument, that this is a direction that has been implicitly indicated. The power (both in the sense of *potentia* and *potestas*) which flows initially from God to man is regularly identified as forms of love and wisdom. The love element is that which makes it possible for man to adhere to that which is good; the wisdom element to that which is true. Concern with distinctions

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, n. 498.

between good and evil, truth and falsity, is part and parcel of ethics. We discover at last that in terms of specific, overt discussion of the mind/body problem, the *how* of communication does not really enter into the topical treatment. It is simply assumed that somehow these two "qualities" or "entities," love and wisdom, are so constituted that they are indeed capable of effecting communication from God into man's soul and on into his body. One must look elsewhere in the Swedenborgian corpus to discover the reasoning behind this assumption. Since it, too, is inextricable from his over-all philosophy of causality, the philosophy it involves will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Let us, then, conclude this discussion by citing what may fairly be called the author's own summary of the process of soul/body communication from his late, short work on the subject, *De Commercio Animae et Corporis* [1769]:

Love and wisdom flow conjointly from God into the soul of man, and through this into his mind, its affections and thoughts, and from these into the senses, speech, and actions of the body.

...The reason that life from God flows [thus]...is because these are of life in successive order; for the mind is subordinate to the soul, and the body subordinate to the mind. And the mind has two lives, one of the will and another of the understanding. The life of the will is the good of love, the derivations of which are called affections, and the life of the understanding is the truth of wisdom, the derivations of which are called thoughts. By these together the mind lives. But the senses, speech, and actions are the life of the body; that these are from the soul through the mind, follows from the order in which they are; and from this they manifest themselves before a wise man without investigation. The human soul, because it is a superior spiritual substance, receives influx immediately from God; but the human mind, because it is an inferior spiritual substance, receives influx from God mediately through the spiritual world; and the body, because it is from the substances of nature, which are called material, receives influx from God mediately through the natural world.⁴⁵

⁴⁵*Influx*, n. 8.

A postscript to this treatise involves an account of an otherworldly discussion of the relative merits of the concepts of physical influx, occasionalism or spiritual influx, and preëstablished harmony, culminating in a lottery, in which the piece of paper on which was written "spiritual influx" is drawn. The curtain falls on the scene with the sudden appearance of an angel, who assures them that the drawing was not by chance but was providential. This may well constitute the most singularly unique methodology yet found to cope with this problem.

(To be continued)