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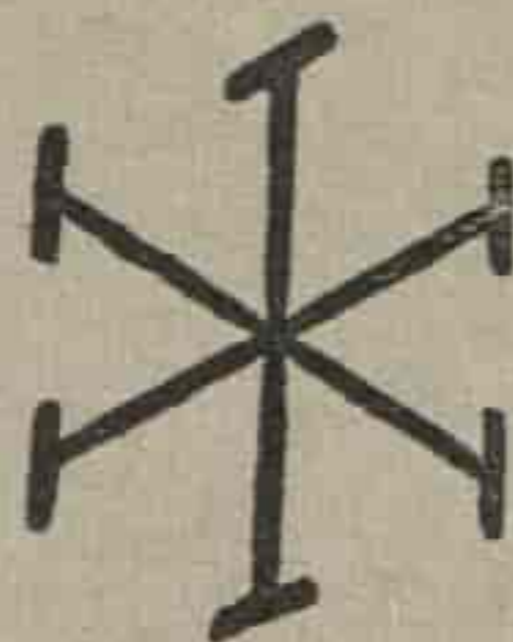
Rev. CLIFFORD HARLEY

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THE PHILOSOPHY  
OF  
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

GOD, MAN AND THE COSMOS

FIFTH  
FOUNDATION LECTURE  
1958



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*New Atlantis Foundation*

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТСКА БИБЛИОТЕКА  
"СВЕТОСЛАВ МАРКОВИЋ" БЕОГРАД  
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*Anyone who wishes to learn more about Emanuel Swedenborg and his work, is recommended to write to the Hon. Secretary, Swedenborg Society, Swedenborg House, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London, WC1.*

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# INTRODUCTION

by

DR L R TWENTYMAN

IT WAS ONE of the main motifs of Dimitrije Mitrinović's work to call attention to and emphasise the significance of genius, not only in principle, but in the persons of those great individual men of genius who are the creators of our heritage of values and truth. Emanuel Swedenborg was one of those men of immensely great genius of whose importance he spoke again and again. In this present planetary crisis, this vast universal world debate in which we are all engaged, should not the voices of these men from the past be sounded and heard? For, as Mitrinović said, their only disadvantage in comparison with those of us here is that they happen not to be alive. But their thoughts should live and be truly translated for our understanding and use to-day. We are very glad that the Reverend Clifford Harley has agreed to give this lecture and we are glad to listen and pay respect to Swedenborg in this Hall dedicated to his memory. We have many memories of previous meetings within the hospitality of its walls.

Now why do we in New Atlantis consider it important to understand the man Swedenborg, a man whom Immanuel Kant honoured, a man whose ideas of atomic structure and of the ultimate realities of the physical universe are in these last decades being corroborated by scientific research, who was the first in history to describe the functions of the so-called endocrine glands,

and whom learned Europe has accepted as one of the most outstanding men of the age? Mitrinović described him as the first Anthro-philosopher and, as such, marking a turning point in philosophic method. The significance of this characterisation will become clearer to-night, and the sense in which his is a highly critical method and no mere humanism in the usually accepted sense of that word.

His doctrine of uses, or function, understood in relation to organic forms, becomes a universal key of order and wisdom. Particularly would I draw attention to his doctrine of discrete degrees which is of great importance to our age, an age which tends to slur over all differences and reduce everything to mediocrity. With this and his doctrine of correspondences he was able to form a coherent system from the atom to the throne of God.

There was no sudden change in his work; it developed consistently from the natural to the spiritual world. It represents one of the few great consistent Western cosmologies and one in which Man has his true value. Science and Religion are not at conflict in him. He is one of the essential original thinkers in the philosophic line of monadologies, with Bruno, Leibniz, Bošcović, Herbart and in our own day Petronijević.

We are met, then, to honour one of the supreme geniuses of our Western World, a man who accepted the philosophic implications of the statement that Man is made in the image of God, and carried it through with the highest courage, discrimination and integrity. Is it not time that men of Science and Philosophy overcame their reflex fears when a great man starts to speak of God and Angels, and began to hear what he said? I am sure it will become clear to-night how important is Swedenborg's view, exactly for those unsolved problems in the cultural life of the West, which are rending the world. These stem on the one hand from the inability of Science to understand the nature of Man and from its world picture in which Man has no place, and on the other from the one-sided development of historic Christianity up to date, in which the Cosmological side has been neglected.

THE PHILOSOPHY  
OF  
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

GOD, MAN AND THE COSMOS

IN INTRODUCING to you the philosophy of Emanuel Swedenborg, I shall commence, where all sound thinking should commence, with the idea of God. Concerning this idea, Swedenborg remarks that

‘Nothing exists, subsists, is acted upon and moved by itself, but by something else: whence it follows that everything that exists and subsists is acted upon and moved from the First who is not from another, but is in Himself the living force which is Life.’

You will notice Swedenborg’s use here of a personal pronoun ‘Himself’ to describe the ‘First’. For him the primary cause of all created things is not an impersonal force or principle. The first or primary cause of creation is a Personal Being. Forthrightly he declares that ‘God is a Divine Man and the One only Man’. He is the ‘One only Man’ because He only is Life. He is life-in-itself. His Being is in no way contingent upon anyone or anything and therefore He is Infinite, Uncreate, existing only in Himself and from Himself. Every other form of Being, animate and inanimate alike, is derived being, and dependent; or in philosophical terms, ‘contingent Being’. Every other form of existence is created

Being and therefore it is finite Being. God alone is the First and is therefore the Infinite. Created beings, including man, are finite. So far as it is possible to define the Infinite and the finite, it may be done by saying that the Infinite is that which alone *is* ('is' being the very predicate of existence). The finite is created Being whose existence is derived from the Infinite, that is, from God.

In his supreme philosophical work—'Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom', Swedenborg commences the thesis which is therein expounded by the amazing and seemingly irrelevant statement that 'love is the life of Man', and he illustrates this astonishing definition of life in these words—

'Man knows that love is something, but he does not know what love is . . . . Man is altogether unconscious that love is his very life; not only the common life of all his thoughts, but also the life of all the singular things thereof . . . .

'If you remove the affection belonging to love, can you think anything and can you do anything? Do not thought, speech and action grow cold in proportion as the affection belonging to the love grows cold, and do they not grow warm in proportion as the affection warms? . . . .

'Some idea of love as being the life of man may be had from the sun of this world. Heat is a kind of common life to all vegetation. For when it goes forth in the time of spring, plants of every kind rise out of the ground . . . . But when the heat retires, as it does in autumn and winter, the plants are stripped of all the signs of their life and fall away. So it is in love with man: for love and heat mutually correspond to each other: wherefore also love is warm.'

By way of further illustration of this definition of life as being love, we may usefully consider some of the various forms of life on the earth. First take animals of every genera and species. In what does their life consist but in their animal loves—the affections of eating, drinking, sleeping, mating, procreating and love of their offspring? These their loves, so closely allied to their bodily

senses, are their life. They have no other life than this. Animal love is their life and their bodies are perfectly adapted forms for the activities of their love or life.

Next consider vegetation. Here, life as love is exercised and manifests itself as the effort to produce fruit and seed. Every part of the plant, taken together or considered separately, is formed for the performance of the effort to produce fruit and seed. This is the essence of the use of vegetative life. Its vegetable life may be symbolically described as the love of producing vegetative uses.

Finally consider the mineral kingdom. Herein life is manifested as purposed and purposive motion. The atoms 'mate' as it were; protons and electrons unite in different proportions, according to which they produce the different forms of physical substances which in general are liquids, solids and gases in an indefinite variety of forms, all of which perform uses to the whole economy.

Notice, too, how the three kingdoms of nature are formed to serve an end beyond themselves—and what but life or love can create and perform uses?

The mineral kingdom exists to serve the vegetable kingdom. Both of these exist to serve the animal kingdom. All of them exist to serve the human kingdom, and man exists—for what end? Here we return to the idea of God, and the significance of a true idea of God to a rational understanding of the Universe.

It has been affirmed that life and love are synonymous terms; but what in essence is love? The answer shall be given in Swedenborg's own words. Under the proposition that '*the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom cannot otherwise than Be and Exist in Others created by Itself*' he says—

'The very quality of love is not to love self, but it is to love others and to be conjoined to them by love. The very quality of love also is to be loved by others, for thus conjunction is effected . . . . Love consists in this, that its own is another's;

and that it feels that other's joy as a joy in itself. This is to love. But to feel its own joy in another and not that other's joy in itself, is not to love; for this is to love one's self, but the former is to love the neighbour. These two kinds of love are diametrically opposite to one another . . . .

'Who that can look into the essence of love cannot see this? For what is loving one's self alone and not another outside of one's self, by whom one may be loved in return? This is dissolution rather than conjunction. Conjunction of love is by reciprocity; and there is no reciprocity in self alone . . . . Hence it is plain that the Divine Love cannot otherwise than be and exist in others whom it may love and by whom it may be loved. For if there is such a thing in all love, it must be most of all, that is, infinitely, in Love Itself.'

The passages speak for themselves and therefore need no further explanation, beyond the remark that the essence of love is givingness.

Plain as these passages are in their meaning, Swedenborg felt it necessary to add a cautionary statement, lest his readers should assume from what he had written, that his philosophy was pantheistic, or that his doctrine of God should be supposed to be in any way pluralistic. I quote the relevant passage—

'With respect to God, loving and being reciprocally loved cannot exist with others in whom there is anything of Infinity, or anything of the essence and life, of love in itself or anything of the Divine. For if there were anything of Infinity in them, or of the essence and life of love in itself, that is, anything of the Divine, then He would not be loved by others, but would love Himself, for the Infinite or Divine is one and single. If this were in others it would be Very God, and He would be the love of self, of which nothing can be in God . . . Wherefore the love must be given in others in whom there is nothing of the Divine in itself. . . .



‘Upon the perception and recognition of this arcarnum depends the understanding of all things of existence or creation and of all things of subsistence or conservation by God,’

And he adds—

‘But do not, I beseech you, confound your ideas with time and space, for in proportion as space and time are in your ideas you will not understand it (i.e. creation) for the Divine is not in space and time.’ . .

It follows from all that I have so far advanced, that Divine Love and Divine Wisdom are the Ultimate Reality. Very Reality is that which alone *is*, and the One Only Reality of that from which every other thing is.

But if Ultimate Reality is the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom from which all created things are derived, it logically follows that Divine Love and Wisdom are substance and form in themselves. It follows logically because Creation is not effected from nothing—*ex nihilo, nihil fit*—‘out of nothing nothing comes’. Creation is effected by the successive putting forth, or emanation of Divine Substance, which is finited by the withdrawal from what is put forth of successive degrees of Divine Life. These first finite substances are what constitute the organic substances of the spiritual world, and of those substances are the soul and spirit of man compounded and organized, later to be, as it were, clothed upon, (as the substances of the spiritual world are also invested) with the relatively inert and dead substances of matter.

Creation, therefore, is continuous from God the Creator and Primary Cause, through the spiritual world, to ultimate things which are the physical Universe.

Continuous from God as they are, they are not God, neither are they in any way a part of God. For us to be able to see this we shall need to know something of Swedenborg’s unique doctrine of Degrees. This doctrine of Degrees I will shortly outline, but



before I do so it might be helpful if I here summarized what has been advanced up to this point.

1. The Universe, including man, is a creation and therefore finite.
2. The Infinite is God and God is a Personal, Divine-Human Being whose *esse* is Love itself and its form or mode of Being is Divine Wisdom.
3. God is Life in itself and Wisdom in itself, and Divine Love and Wisdom are substance and form in themselves.
4. God, who is Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, is the Very and Only Man, and the One Only Reality,
5. Creation is continuous from God but is not God and forms no part of God.

It is the last point that leads us now to the consideration of Swedenborg's unique doctrine of Degrees.

As its name implies a degree is a step, a stage. Creation proceeds by ordered steps, which in general are God, the spiritual world and the physical universe.

Degrees are of two kinds, one of which alone is familiar to philosophers, scientists, theologians and to lesser mortals than these. The degrees present in all things are discrete and continuous. It is the latter with which most people are familiar, as for example degrees of heat, from intensity, less intensity, to cold. Degrees of light in like manner, of effulgence, to shade. Objects are thick, thicker, or less thick, to thinness. These are examples of continuous degrees which are less or more of the same thing on the same plane.

Discrete degrees on the other hand, are best compared to parallel lines. These can be continuously extended or diminished, but they each remain distinct from each other, never meeting and never merging.

Thus God's existence is on the discrete plane of Divinity and

Infinity. Whatever is spiritual exists on and in its own degree or plane of existence; and whatever is natural exists in and on its own plane or Degree.

None of these planes merge into another. As with parallel lines, they remain distinct. Spirit is not sublimated matter. God is not sublimated spirit. Each degree is discrete and its bounds cannot be crossed. Let one illustration suffice, namely, that of speech. The written or spoken word is a physical thing, ponderable and measurable. No word could either be written or spoken except from thought; nor could thought exist except from the affection, purpose or desire, of which thought is the expression. But affection is not thought, and thought is not speech. Each stand in relation to each other as purpose or end, cause and effect. Each are discretely separate things or states.

Nevertheless, thought proceeds from affection, and words proceed from thoughts, but each step in the series remains throughout in discrete being. The creation of speech is continuous from thought and thought from affection, yet each step is complete and distinct from its successor.

Likewise in the creative process, which never ceases. First Cause is God. Mediate cause is the spiritual world; the final effect is the physical world. And all these planes are together in their order and connection because each is in correspondence with the others, and all are the recipients of the influx of Divine life.

The doctrine of discrete degrees saves us from falling into the error of pantheism. God, Spirit, Matter constitute a triad in which not one element is identical with another; and the universe of Spirit, the universe of Matter and the human race are 'other than itself' to which the Divine Love can give itself. Divine Love is the cause of creation, and love is the end for which it exists.

This all leads us to the consideration of the relation of humanity to the creation, and of human individuals to the whole race of mankind.

A thorough-going system of evolution could, theoretically, dispense altogether with the idea of a Divine Creator, since it would present us with a closed and self-explanatory system. It postulates the eternity of matter, and reduces every form of existence to matter which evolves itself, by adaptation to environment, into all the forms of extant objects by means of selectivity and fitness to survive, and which will so evolve itself to eternity.

Need I remind you that despite its popularity and widespread acceptance by all sorts and conditions of men, evolution remains an unproven theory, unproven at least so far as continuous evolution is concerned? Evolution within species is as nearly proven as will suffice for acceptance. Haeckel's famous diagrams about the evolution of the horse show nothing more than just that—the development of a less perfect horse-being to the magnificent animal which the name 'horse' represents to us. It does *not* show the evolution of a species non-equine, into a new species called horse. So far as I know there is no factual evidence at all of any species of inanimate or animate thing evolving into an entirely new and different species.

Be that as it may, Swedenborg's philosophy offers us a far more reasonable account of creation than is to be found in any other cosmological theory.

The Creator is the Divine and only Man. Humanness therefore will be the outstanding witness to His Divine Humanness; and anticipations and adumbrations of the supreme form of humanness—man, will be evident throughout the Creation. That this is actually the case will easily be seen from the examples which I shall now offer.

The analysis of the atom (for so long believed to be the ultimate form of matter) into protons and electrons and into even more refinements has disclosed a most interesting and significant fact. Between these elements and the atom there exists a two-fold power: 1. that of attraction, and 2. that of repulsion. The attrac-

tion of protons and electrons brings about a kind of adhesion and, according to which elements are thus combined arise the different forms of physical substance. There is a kind of 'mating', a 'marriage' of elements, which give rise to new forms, so that, even in the mineral kingdom, there is an embryonic likeness to the human form and to the union in God of Love with Wisdom.

The mineral kingdom acts, too, as a matrix—as a kind of womb into which the creative life of God is received, and by means of which, by the addition of something not intrinsic to that kingdom but extrinsic to it, the world of plants emerges. This new kingdom of vegetation likewise tends to the human form, for the core of it is the effort to produce fruit and seed. The very forms of vegetative life, as they ascend the ladder of development, approximate even more nearly to the human form, so that the tree has its trunk and limbs and reproduces itself by its seeds, to which the earth acts as a kind of foster-mother.

With the animal kingdom and increasingly as animal forms of life are perfected, the creative influent life manifests its essentially human qualities in animal affections and innate knowledge of all things necessary to its life. There are love and matings, reproduction and love of offspring. Whatever may be the nature of that which differentiates animal from plant, it is extraneous to the mineral and vegetative kingdoms. Produced, each in its turn and order, through and by means of the preceding kingdom, what is thus produced is new and unique. The animal is formed to receive its life from God with more of its human qualities than either of the kingdoms through and by means of which, as agent, it is created.

The creation of man follows the same clearly defined pattern. His body is based upon and contains all the elements of the three kingdoms of Nature. In him are collated mineral, vegetable and animal elements which make him truly a microcosm—a world in miniature. But more significantly than his body, the spirit or mind of man is so formed and organized that he can be the



receptacle of the life from God—which, as with all things else, is veritably his being—in the fulness of its human qualities. Endowed with the organs of will and understanding, he can receive life as love in the form of the affections of his will and the thoughts of his understanding. He can receive the idea of God and confirm it by reason. He can receive the divinely human life of God as the thought of right and wrong, good and evil. He is, indeed, the only kind of being whose life is of this quality and by it he can exercise moral judgements and form a conscience, make value-judgements of ponderable and imponderable things, conceive the idea of beauty and appreciate and delight in its presence. Above all, he can love the Divine Being who created him, by loving and revering the qualities which God, by revelation, has disclosed to him as being of His very nature; and with all this his will is free to choose between good and evil; and, although he has no other consciousness than that his life is his own and that he lives from himself, he yet can know and acknowledge that he lives from God, without whom he can do nothing.

Thus man can truly be the 'other than God' to whom the Divine Love can be given and by whom it can be reciprocated. In man the cycle of creative life is completed. Descending from its first principles in God, through the spiritual world as the efficient means, to ultimates, which are the things of the natural world, it ascends from mineral to vegetation; from vegetation to animal; from animal to man; from man to God. Thus is man created in the Divine image and likeness, and to this end the whole creation moves through all the gamut of approximations towards the human form, to its apotheosis in man himself, the potential and often actual lover of God; and from that love, to love of the neighbour.

Finally, I now briefly discuss the subject of the organic oneness of the human race. I say 'organic oneness' with deliberate intent, for Swedenborg affirms that the entire heaven of Angels and the whole race of mankind on earth appear before God as

one single man, 'Maximus Homo'—the Grand or Greatest Man; and that His Providential Government of the entire human race is as the government of each individual by his brain and its derivatives into the very ultimates of his body.

Between man's bodily organs and his mind or spirit with its organs, there exists a relationship which Swedenborg calls 'Correspondence'. This may be defined as the organic relationship of spiritual cause with natural effect. Thus, the heart and lungs are the corresponding physical organs of the will and intellect, which are the vital organs of the spirit. This is actually a cause and effect relationship, since the motions of the heart and lungs are both derived from and dependent upon the life of the will and the understanding.

A like correspondence could be shown to exist between every part and organ of man's body and his mind or spirit—as e.g. the liver, the organ of purification, with the rational mind with its power of discrimination; of the pancreas, bladder and spleen; of hands and feet with the deeds initiated and done by the affections of the heart and the thoughts of the mind. So intimate is this connection between soul and body, that Swedenborg declares that while the primary habitation of the soul is in the brain, it nevertheless dwells in every part of the body while yet it remains distinct from the body, which can only live by virtue of the spirit within it and dies when its primary organs, the heart and the lungs, can no longer re-act to the inflowing life from the Will and Understanding.

As it is with man the individual, so is it with man in the aggregate. Every race of mankind, every nation, every community, is created of such a particular genius and disposition that they perform in the whole body of mankind, spiritual uses which do for mankind, in its wholeness, what the functions of organs of the body do for the individual. The correspondence is with function or use, not with shape.

The human race is itself an organic human organism—one grand or greatest Man. In its perfection in the heavens, in less degrees of

perfection in the inhabited earths of the Universe. Because, and only because, God is Very Man, the only Man, does creation reflect the humanness of the Creator, and everything tends towards the human form, until it reaches its highest form in man.

And it is precisely because God is always Man in first principles that He could and did, in the fulness of time, become Man in ultimates, even as to flesh and bones. *'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'*. In Him is the nexus between the Infinite and the finite. In Him was the invisible God made visible. Incarnate Love and Wisdom for a short time trod our earth with consequences of eternal significance. His name is Jesus Christ, the eternal, and everlasting Divine Man.







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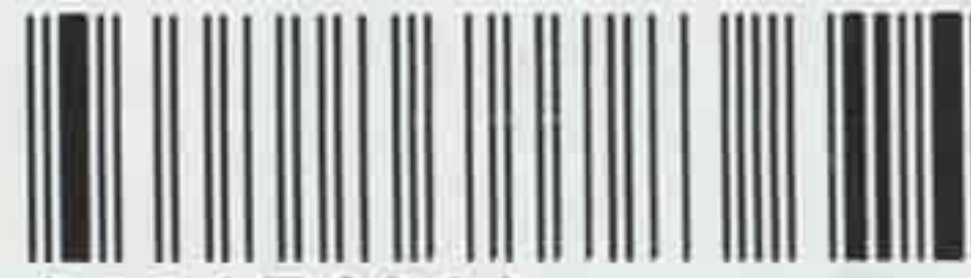
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