

## THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF PHILOSOPHIC IDEAS.

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It is the nature of the uncritical form of mind to mistake words for ideas. What we can name we are apt to imagine that we know without first seeking to realize the way the ideas have been formed which finally are crystallized in words. Take such a phrase as "spiritual substance," the nature of which we have so frequently discussed. How easy it is to argue this way and that without first calling into question the manner by which we have arrived at the idea denoted by the two words "spiritual" and "substance."

Modern philosophy is considered by many to have commenced with the statement of Descartes "I think, therefore I am." Descartes ambition was to build up a mathematically correct philosophy, every phase of which was a necessary conclusion from the preceding premises. The first necessity of such a philosophic system was to find some premise which could not be doubted. Every idea which he entertained in his mind be believed was open to the possibility of a doubt, until it dawned upon him that the idea of "I think, therefore I am," was an expression that was not open to this possibility; the reason being that the opposite statement, "I am not, therefore I think," involved a contradiction of itself, and really confirmed the original proposition.

There are still well-known philosophers, such as Calkins, who agree that in this statement of Descartes was laid the foundation of a positive philosophy. We maintain that it was not, for the reason that Descartes did not examine into the origin of the idea "I," or the idea involved in the word "am." Neither of these words expresses a primary concept of the human mind. Both of them are arrived at by the process of something like reasoning.

A child knows many objects before it comes to recognize itself as an object; and when it first arrives at the idea of "me," it is probably due to the following train of thought: The child has recognized its parents, nurses, and playmates as individuals or units; the unintelligent complex of sensations that come from mother and father have taken on a unity in its mind.

It finally comes to recognize that the word "me" implies a similar unity; this unity is first conceived of in terms of the body. A child knows its fingers, hands, eyes, head, etc., long before it knows that it has a mind. The idea of "I" as something which thinks, as understood by Descartes, is, therefore, the culmination of a long process of reasoning. We are not here considering the infantile perception that accompanies the upbuilding of the mind.

If Descartes accepts his conclusion, "I think, therefore I am," legitimately, it means that he must accept the truth of the method by which the human mind has arrived at this conclusion, which seems to lead to a very different basis of philosophy than the one

maintained by Descartes.

As Hume later on pointed out, no one has seen or known the ego as such. All we know are certain internal sensations of thought, love, etc., which seem to presuppose something as their subject. This thing we call the mind, the "I."

When, therefore, I say that "I am," what I mean is that I consider myself an object of thought, having certain similarity to the other objects that I know. If I deny the existence of other objects, apart from my ego, I deny the validity of the origin of the very idea of my ego. In other words, "I am" becomes a meaningless expression. In opposition to Hume, we maintain that we are aware of a certain unity of personality, a consciousness of a self, but scarcely in the sense of a subject of which thoughts and loves are attributes. All we are conscious of is a unity or relationship of our thoughts and loves, and this unity or relationship is what we are conscious of as our ego. All of which may sound like dialectical hair-splitting; but we maintain that it is not so.

All thought and all knowledge are based upon sensation. Sensation is of two kinds, external and internal. External sensation is the sensation of the bodily senses; internal sensation is awareness or consciousness of mental activity. We feel that we think, we love, we imagine. All thought is built up from these two types of sensation.

As we mentioned previously, all thought, up to a certain point in mental development, is based upon external sensation. This is true of most, if not all, of the life of childhood.

External sensations reveal to us a world composed of objects or rather subjects, having motion and activity. The idealistic philosophers do indeed deny the reality of the existence of external objects as such; and modern science, like Swedenborg's science, reduces the material world to the product of motion. But we will not turn aside to consider such hypotheses here. We are investigating the origin of ideas from sensation; and, as we have said, external sensation reveals to us fixed objects in space having certain activity or attributes, including local motion. We must never forget that it is this external sensation, such as we know it, that formed our first ideas. We can never get away from these ideas; nor will they cease to be the bases of our thought, no matter how abstract our form of mind may become. Remove the habits of thought that are based upon external sensation, and we can think nothing.

Let us now turn to internal sensation, and see what that reveals to us. At a certain point in the development of the human race, a primitive philosopher noted that certain activities of mankind were distinct from the activities of the body. Now it is the very nature of the human mind, due to its experience, to presuppose a subject or substance when there is an activity. When we consider the properties of light, we assume that there must be a subject, -the ether of which light is a predicate.

No one has seen the mind as such; no one has seen the mind as organic. We may know the laws and activities of the mind or spirit, but no philosopher besides Swedenborg has been able to approach the nature of the mind or spirit, except as a form of activity. There

was but one possible approach, and this approach no one but Swedenborg has found.

Let us illustrate the difficulty of the approach by an example: Suppose a piano was being played in the next room, and no one of us had ever seen a piano. If, on hearing the music emanating from the locked room, we were asked to describe the piano, what could we tell of its nature? If we were musicians, and were familiar with other stringed instruments, we might make some fairly good guesses. But let us suppose we had never seen a musical instrument of any kind, and were not familiar with anything that even made a noise. If we were physicists, we might be able to invent instruments for measuring the wave-lengths, and thus might have some faint bases for speculation; but supposing, in the very nature of things, such instruments were impossible, what then could we know and learn?

By careful listening we might learn to distinguish high and low notes, melody, harmony, and rhythm, but as to the nature of the thing from which these sounds emanated, we could have not the least conception. We might argue until doomsday whether a piano was structural or non-structural; but as to the nature of the piano we could not have the least idea.

This is the problem which the philosophers have been confronted with when considering the human mind. By internal sensation they are conscious of an activity of love, thought, and imagination, etc.; and they can express the laws governing these activities but they cannot with any reason say whether the mind or spirit is structural or non-structural; and still less can they even imagine what is the nature of the mind. In fact, they cannot prove that there is such a thing as the human mind, except in the sense of activity following established laws. It could not even be shown that the word "activity" would be an appropriate one. For the thought connected with the word "activity" is derived from the external senses, and implies a subject and predicate; while it has not as yet been proved that there is such a thing as a spiritual subject. In reference to the mind, there is no evidence of anything but internal sensation; and it has not as yet been proved that the same law which applies to external experience, namely, that of subject and predicate, necessarily applies to internal sensation.

It might be answered that common sense shows that there must be such a thing as a spiritual subject of which thoughts and desires, etc., are predicated. "Common sense" is nothing but common experience; but what we usually think of as common experience is the experience that comes through the external senses. Common sense would not necessarily demonstrate that the laws of external sensation can be transferred to internal sensation, and still be valid.

Even on the plane of external sensation, common sense or common experience may have to be revised from time to time. To illustrate: Experience taught men that an ax must be sharp on the entering edge, but that the opposite side of the ax must be flat. The same law applies to all other cutting and piercing tools, such as nails, spikes, and needles. In the human mind this law tended to become a universal law.

Wherefore, the first airship builders thought that it was common sense to make the front or piercing end of an airship more pointed than the back end. It has been proved that this law does not work in the higher medium of the air. But the reverse of this law of solid objects is true, namely, that a well-constructed airship must be more acutely pointed on the rear end.

When we consider the vast difference between the external senses and the internal sensation of thought, love, etc., we cannot say, a priori, that the same law of subject and attribute which applies in the external world necessarily applies to internal sensation,-the sensation of what we call the mind,-and consider it proved. In other words, the philosophers cannot say whether the mind is a material substance, a spiritual substance, or no substance at all. Still less can they describe its nature.

Kant showed that the human intellect could define the modes of the functioning of the will, understanding, and sensation, etc.; but, according to the methods pursued by philosophers, it could do nothing else. It could not prove intellectually that there is Divine substance, spiritual substance, or even material substance. Philosophers since Kant's day have been like men seated listening to an instrument in a locked room, and vainly speculating as to its nature, until they have wearied of the impossible, and, for the most part, have given up in despair.

In the meantime, Swedenborg had approached philosophy from a new angle. Swedenborg saw, in the first place, that if one doubted the existence of the material world, one undermined the foundations upon which the human mind had been built, and that, with the undermining of the foundations of the human mind, all rational philosophy became impossible. He, therefore, did not consider this alternative.

He also saw that there could be no direct approach to the soul as a substantial existence; for we cannot by means of the internal sense come to know the soul as organic, or even as a substance. If, therefore, any progress was to be made, a new means of approach had to be found. Swedenborg, in his studies, came upon certain laws with which we are all familiar, such as the laws of series, degrees, correspondence, and the similarity of things greatest and least. These laws, one might maintain, have not been proved beyond a doubt.

We would answer, in behalf of our philosophy, that there is abundant illustration of these laws in the plane of nature; and if these laws are not true, then all philosophy is vanity. Without them no system of philosophy worthy of the name is possible. If, then, we accept these laws, as Swedenborg did, an approach to the nature of the human mind and spiritual substance becomes possible.

But before considering Swedenborg's manner of approach, let us first give another illustration of the difficulties that lay in the way. Imagine an intelligent man who had been living entirely apart from other human beings, and who had had a peculiar loss of memory. This loss of memory applied particularly to the nature of the human body. Suppose he was unable to touch his eyes or see his own reflection. What could he find out about himself? He would soon find out the nature of hands, feet, and trunk, with their

respective functions. He could discover considerable knowledge about his head. Probably the last thing that he would note would be that he had such a thing as sight. After discovering this sensation, he might speculate as to how it functioned. The more he speculated, the more impossible it would be for him to come to a conclusion as to the nature of the eye. He could tell nothing of its shape, form, or structure. In fact, he might arrive at the conclusion that it was a purely spiritual, human attribute, having no organic structure.

When Swedenborg commenced his search for the soul, he was fully aware of the difficulties lying in his path. He saw that it was as hopeless to try to find out the nature of the substance and structure of the soul, from reasoning based merely upon the observation of thought or internal sensation, as it would be for the man in the above illustration to discover the organic form of the eye from the sensation of sight. If there was to be any progress in philosophy, there had to be an analogy between the world revealed by external sensation and that revealed by internal sensation; there had to be a correspondence between the soul and the body, between the natural world and the spiritual world. But this correspondence was not the only thing requisite. By itself, it would be insufficient, if he was to arrive at a rational conception of the internal human organic. The doctrine of series and degrees was the additional necessary link.

Swedenborg had noted that there were series and discrete degrees in the world of external experience.

There was scientific evidence pointing to the fact that the series and degrees of the external world ascended to a plane above the five bodily senses. Swedenborg realized that, if the series to which external objects belonged could be imagined to ascend to higher and higher planes, as by steps, as illustrated in his series of atmospheres, until the place was reached where these planes became the subject of which the internal sensation of thought and will were the attribute, then a rational philosophy became a possibility. By this means, external and internal sensation might be brought into a relationship, without which metaphysics was mere phantastic speculation.

In other words, if we could, in our thought, abstract the grosser elements of the material world as we ascended degree by degree, until we arrived in this series at a place where we could find a plane or substance of which thought and love were the attributes, we could arrive at a substantial idea of the mind.

Swedenborg first traced this series in the atmosphere, then in the human body. If there is a similarity between greatest and least, then, by the study of the human brain, some knowledge of the human mind as organic may be obtained. If there is a correspondence between the soul and the body, then, by studying the human body, some knowledge of the soul is possible.

It is not the object of this paper to trace the manner by which Swedenborg advanced along these lines. What we wish to emphasize here is, that all such ideas as subject, substance, body, structure, and atmosphere, are ideas derived from and based upon

external sensation. While the ideas expressed in the words "love," "will," "thought," and "imagination," are based upon internal sensation, this was true with Swedenborg as with every other man.

Let us here turn for a moment to the word "spiritual." In spite of the fact that in many languages this word means breath of air, yet, in the meaning we attach to it, it is not derived from external sensation, but from the internal sensation of the operations of the human mind. When, therefore, we used the words "spiritual substance," we combine reasoning based upon two distinct types of sensation. In our imagination, we have ascended the series which culminates in matter, and which is known by our external senses, until we have arrived on a plane that is directly known, as to its activity, by the internal sensation that we call consciousness of thought and feeling.

New Churchmen have sometimes striven to conceive of a purely spiritual organic. By this we mean an idea of a spiritual organic based upon internal sensation, and not upon external sensation. We have tried to show that this is a vain delusion. In fact, we doubt whether the mind, built up as it is, can rationally conceive such a thing. But, supposing there were such a form as a purely spiritual organic, its nature could not be expressed in words, for all words signifying organic are based upon external sensation. All ideas of organic have the same basis. The mind, therefore, has no structural bases for conceiving such ideas. To try to imagine a purely spiritual organic, in the sense that we have been describing, would be like attempting to imagine a color entirely distinct from any that we have seen, or to imagine a new, distinct sense of the body, as different from our bodily senses as hearing is from sight. There is no structural basis in our mind for such concepts. And the same is true of a purely spiritual organic, that is, an organic, the ideas of which are derived from the internal sense, and not from the external senses.

Why, then, does it say in the Writings that love is substance? Love, as we know it, is nothing but an internal sensation. By scrutinizing and analyzing the operations of our mind, we cannot discover love to be substance. Our idea of substance is based upon external sensation. To our mind, substance seems something like a higher, purer and living form of that which ultimates itself before our external senses as matter.

In the Writings, it frequently speaks as if spiritual substance were atmosphere or a human organic of which love and wisdom were attributes. Love and wisdom are treated of as the attributes or activity of spiritual atmospheres, which are received in the organic forms of angel and man. In other passages, it speaks as if love was the subject or substance itself. The reason for these latter statements is, we believe, to prevent us from forming a material idea of the spiritual world. If we speak of atmospheres, even though we call them spiritual, our ideas are based upon external sensation; it is, therefore, impossible, owing to the way in which our mind has been built up, to get away from a somewhat material idea of atmosphere.

No matter how much we refine and purify our conceptions, our idea of atmosphere is still based upon that of matter. Wherefore, if we think of love as atmosphere in activity, we think more or less materially. Though we have ascended, as by a ladder, far above the

material world, still the first round of the ladder is matter, and we see the higher rounds only in our imagination. This ascent is a proper one; but, by itself, it is inadequate; by itself it is materialism.

When we say that love is spiritual substance, we make a direct approach to the spiritual; we approach by the way of internal sensation. And we must never forget that this approach, although it is also inadequate in certain ways, nevertheless reveals to us more accurately the true nature of the spiritual than does the other approach. Let us illustrate this point: If I tell a simple person that light is a wave motion of the particles that compose the ether, this idea, by itself, would be far less true than if I said that light was the medium of sensation by which I am able to see the objects about me. Again, if I say that lire consists of various particles of matter in a certain kind of motion, this statement, by itself, gives a less true idea of heat than if I say that it is the activity which causes a feeling of warmth.

When the Writings say that love is substance, what is meant is that love is reality, and that the nearest and most direct approach to reality is through the internal sensation,-the sensation by which I am conscious of love,-and not through the external sensations of the body and reasonings based thereon.

We will close this paper with a brief statement of the position of our philosophy in the usual classifications of philosophic systems. Philosophies are divided into groups under three general headings. The first of these is dualism, namely, the belief in two totally different types of substance,-spiritual substance and matter. Descartes philosophy is representative of this group. The second group is monistic, acknowledging but one kind of substance, namely, matter. Hobbess philosophy is an example of this type. The third group is also monistic, but maintains that spiritual substance is the only reality. This philosophy is idealistic. And the chief representative of this group is Berkeley.

Swedenborg has usually been classed as a Dualist and a Cartesian.

It is our opinion that this is a misclassification. We believe that Swedenborg's philosophy differs fundamentally from each of these classes, while it agrees in certain aspects with all three.

Swedenborg agrees with Descartes in maintaining that there are two kinds of substances, which are distinct, namely, spiritual substance and matter. He differs from Descartes teaching that there is no finite ratio between these two types of substance, and insists that, as to substance, these two belong to one series, the upper half of which is living and the lower half dead.

Swedenborg agrees with the idealists in their belief that spiritual substance, being nearer to its source than matter, is in a sense more real than matter. He differs from them in maintaining that matter has a reality of its own.

Finally, Swedenborg agrees with the materialists that our basic concepts of structure,

organism, body, etc., are derived through the outer senses, and so are based upon matter. He differs from them in insisting that nevertheless matter is not the only reality, nor indeed the chief reality. Swedenborg's philosophy cannot, therefore, be grouped under any of these headings.

The object of this paper is to invite your careful consideration of the way in which the ideas of the mind have been formed. If we are not careful to consider this process, our philosophic discussions are apt to degenerate into words, the ideas connected with which are obscure.

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