3. Explaining Theism

Topics for today:
• Principles of Theism
• Argument from Being
• Argument from Life itself
• We are images of God in every part
• Levels, sub-levels and sub-sub-levels
• Questions of correspondences, personal identity, law vs intervention, etc.

Where to begin Theism?

Living theism:
• God is that Person who
  – is a necessary being,
  – is unselfish Love itself,
  – is Wisdom itself,
  – so: Life itself.
• God enlivens our world.

Essential Theistic Principles

0. God exists, and God is One
1. God is love which is unselfish and cannot love only itself.
2. God is wisdom as well as love and thereby also power and action.
3. God is life itself: the source of all dispositions to will, think and act.
4. Everything in the world is a kind of image of God: all minds and also natural objects of all kinds.
5. Our life from God derives from divine power, depending on us.

Religious Support for Postulates

1. Love: “God is Love” 1 John 4:8
2. Wisdom: “the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” Proverbs 2:6
3. Life: “the Father has life in himself” John 5:26
4. Image of God: “God created man in his own image” Genesis 1:27
5. Our life is from God: “The free gift of God is eternal life” Romans 6:23
Our existence depends on God

1. **God is being itself**
2. We exist
3. We (as individuals) have being.
   - Therefore, our being either is God, or depends on God.

God is Not Us

1. **God is love** which is unselfish
2. Unselfish loves cannot love itself.
   - Therefore, we must be distinct from God.
   - That is: We are separate from God in some way: God is not us.
   - So: not ‘pantheism’ - when everything is a part of God

God cannot create another god

- Suppose God did create something that lived in itself.
  - Then that thing would have as one of its attributes life itself.
  - So that thing would have as one if its attributes God.
  - Then, since God is one, we should conclude:
    - That thing would not be distinct from God.
- We do exist distinct from God (as loved unselfishly)
  - So God cannot create beings who live in themselves
  - ‘Little gods’ cannot be created.

Life and Life Itself

- The ‘life of an object’ is the most original generative disposition that gives rise to its capacities and actions.
- God is Life Itself
  - The original source of all powers, capacities and dispositions of objects and persons.

How do we live?

- Our being and life depends on God. How?
- Our actions are our own
- The life we have is derived from God in accordance with what we have already done.
  - So we can choose when to act
  - And we enjoy our actions
- Our actions are occasional cause
- God’s life is the principal cause.

God is Love, Wisdom and Action

1. **God is love** which is unselfish and cannot love only itself.
2. God is wisdom as well as love
3. God is thereby also power and action.
   - This is a trinity within God, as one person:
     1. Love is the substance
     2. Wisdom is the form
     3. Action is the resulting act
Images of God
• All the world, and each of its parts, is a kind of image of God
  – We are images to greater or lesser extents, depending on our nature and actions.
  – What is unified and continuous in God, is imaged as discrete distributions
  – There are in us images from God of Love, Wisdom and Action.

We receive and re-use life
• We choose when to act (freedom!)
  – so we enjoy our actions
• This requires us to receive, retain, reuse life
• This requires ‘separate containers’ for love, and wisdom and means to action.
• These are then combined when we choose.
Name: reception = ‘influx’

Three kinds of reception
1. Spiritual, to contain the separate loves in creation, including desires, loves, affections, motivations, purposes, dispositions, etc.
2. Mental, to contain the separate carriers of wisdom, including thoughts, ideas, understandings, rationality, plans, ideologies, beliefs, etc.
3. Physical, to deal with separate final actions & effects, including the entire sets of things we know from external observations and physics.

The spiritual and mental, together, are often call ‘mind’.

Relations between 3 receptions
• God, with the three created receptions, gives a set of four generative levels.
  – God ⊃ Spiritual ⊃ Mental ⊃ Physical
1. God generates first the spiritual realm, where there are containing-substances which appropriate and retain love.
2. Spiritual (of loves) acts by producing new thoughts in the mental realm, where there are containing-substances which appropriate and retain ideas.
3. Mental (of ideas) acts, in conjunction with the loves from the spiritual, by producing new effects in the final physical realm
4. Physical (of actions) is the final effect of the chain and is the ‘bottom line’ or termination of all the processes.

Relations between 3 receptions
• Lower levels select what can occur:
  – God ⊃ Spiritual ⊃ Mental ⊃ Physical
1. Particular existing spiritual containing-substances select which loves from God can be appropriated and retained.
2. Particular existing mental containing-substances select which ideas generated by the spiritual realm can be appropriated and retained.
3. Particular existing physical containing-substances select which actions generated by spiritual and mental realms can have permanent physical effects.

God is Equally Present in All Subparts
• God is the same everywhere, at all scales in space and at all degrees and stages of generation.
• Same pattern of love/wisdom/effects can be applied at each of the theses 3 created generative levels
• This produces sub-levels.
• Three levels give nine sub-levels (an ennead)
Ennead of sub-levels: form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiritual degree love in the spirit</th>
<th>Mental degree thoughts in mind</th>
<th>Physical degree actions in the body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love of loving: 1.1</td>
<td>Thoughts of loves: 2.1</td>
<td>Effects from ends: 3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of thoughts: 1.2</td>
<td>Thoughts of thoughts: 2.2</td>
<td>Effects from thoughts: 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of actions: 1.3</td>
<td>Thoughts of actions: 2.3</td>
<td>Effects from actions: 3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Each of these nine sub-degrees describes substances of its own kind which act in distinct spaces.
- Within those spaces there can be contact between two objects of the same kind.
- These nine substances exist simultaneously and interpenetrate without collision. Note that ‘interpenetrate without collision’ is only a metaphor for the relation of the nine spaces.

Sub-sub-sub-levels in the Physical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiritual world</th>
<th>Mental world</th>
<th>Physical world</th>
<th>effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love of loving 1.1</td>
<td>Thoughts of loves 2.1</td>
<td>Effects from ends 3.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of thoughts 1.2</td>
<td>Thoughts of thoughts 2.2</td>
<td>Effects from thoughts 3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of actions 1.3</td>
<td>Thoughts of actions 2.3</td>
<td>Effects from actions 3.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- There are also sub-sub-sub-levels known in the mental (see next week).

Dynamic Existences

- Everything has substance and form (physical, mental, spiritual, even God)
  - ‘No process without structure, no structure without substance, no substance without power, no power without process’
  - Time is ‘normal’, not strange just for spirituality:
    - Past is definite
    - Future is not yet existing (only as form, maybe)
    - Present is the conscious point of becoming
- No process without structure, no structure without substance.

Correspondences

- Detailed events in both of each pair of degrees.
- Successive generative influxes (from prior degree) reciprocating with sequential selections
- This alternation will repeat itself longest if the patterns of the constituent events are most similar in the two degrees
  - As then they do not get out of step.
- This gives rise to correspondences of function between adjacent degrees.
  - by a sort of survival of the fittest
- This is a causal explanation of correspondences.
  - Swedenborg talks a lot about these.

Personal Identity

- Love is the substance of a person
- Cannot change a person without changing their loves.
- Cannot changes loves, and keep the same person, without some acceptance by old loves
- The deepest love can be unchanging
  - This may be used to permanently identify persons
  - Swedenborg’s ‘inmost degree’ not normally seen?
Law and Divine Intervention

- Physical laws describe behavior of physical degrees, if no influx from spiritual or mental
  - if only physical laws, matter is 'causally closed'
- But not here: **Need influx into matter!**
  - to sustain physical processes
  - to select and contain mental & spiritual processes
  - This not ‘intervention’ but intended causal influx!
- Note how sustained mental and spiritual processes depend on physical selections.
  - The physical is the needed ‘bottom line’ for creation.

Preview of Fourth Talk (Feb 26)

- Apply ideas and theory developed so far
  - Mental development (cognitive and affective)
  - Spiritual growth and religion
  - Mind-body connections
  - Starting the universe
  - Correspondences
  - Evolution
  - etc
  - any suggestions?