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MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE: WHAT PROVERBS MEAN
IN THE THEOLOGICAL WORKS OF EMANUEL SWEDEN-
BORG

Abstract: This study presents twenty five cases of semantic comparison that demonstrate the similarity between a text fragment from the translated theological works of the world-renowned Swedish scientist, engineer, philosopher and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) and its corresponding proverb or phrase (e.g., *virtue is its own reward, truth will out, love is blind, my better half, a stumbling block*, etc.). Some conclusions regarding the possible origin of such proverbs and phrases are suggested resting on the results of this analysis.

Keywords: Allusion, Bible, cultureme, Emanuel Swedenborg, meaning, philosophy, proverb, religion, theology

Introduction

In Chapter Seven of his book *Awareness Bound and Unbound: Buddhist Essays*, entitled “The Dharma of Emanuel Swedenborg”, the contemporary American scholar of Zen Buddhism David R. Loy grapples with “some of the more provocative parallels between Swedenborgianism and Buddhism” (Loy 2009: 107–128). He starts his essay with duly acknowledging the contribution to Zen Buddhism of D. T. Suzuki (1996), who, before publishing his main works around the middle of the twentieth century, had already introduced the Swedish scientist, philosopher and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg to Japan; Suzuki was the first Japanese author to translate four of his most widely-known theological works into Japanese and to write his own commentaries on Swedenborg’s biblical hermeneutics and mystical doctrine of Christianity, which were all later translated into English. Thus Suzuki’s works and their English translations succeeded in making Swedenborg much better known not only in Japan, but also in the whole of the English-speaking world. David Loy acknowledges his debt to the great Japanese Zen scholar by placing a charac-

teristic quotation from his seminal book *Suedenborugu* (published in 1913) in the beginning of the chapter in the way of a suitable motto to it. After an in-depth discussion of the main assets of the two great religious traditions, instead of making a conclusion by summarizing their similarities and pointing out their differences, Loy chooses to close his essay with what sounds like a strikingly personal confession, which seems to open up another discussion on the author's own personal reception of Swedenborg's doctrine: "Not having visited heaven or hell, I can only hope that, if they exist, they function in the way Swedenborg has described. After one studies his well-structured and extraordinarily detailed eschatology, other conceptions of the afterlife lose whatever credibility they might retain in our skeptical age. If the universe does not work in the way Swedenborg explained, well, maybe it should" (p. 128). This rather enigmatic passage leaves the reader wondering whether the author suggests that Swedenborg's "well-structured eschatology" should be taken as a matter of course and duly trusted, or just admired as a great work of art.

In eighteenth-century Europe and Russia, the great mystic and visionary Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was very well known while he was still alive, especially in the later years of his life, when, after having published anonymously almost all of his hermeneutical theological works, written in Latin (like his many scientific works prior to that) in some European cities outside of Sweden (mainly London and Amsterdam, as he was aware of the possible negative reception of his theology by the Lutheran church in his home country), he eventually decided to disclose his authorship of them. In my country, Bulgaria, the situation regarding Swedenborg has been rather peculiar. If we don't count the samizdat translation into Bulgarian of his best known and most popular work, *Heaven and Hell*, parts of which used to be disseminated subversively during the previous political regime before its actual translation from Latin into Bulgarian and "official" publication in 2004, or the remarkable works of the eminent Bulgarian erudite Tsvetan Stoyanov on Western literature, in which some of Swedenborg's ideas are discussed in a wider literary and cultural context (see Stoyanov 1973), during the nearly five decades of the socialist-communist regime in my country and the next thirty years of its extension, this outstanding proponent of the European Enlightenment was almost completely unheard of. In 2012, how-

ever, an event of tremendous cultural importance took place in Bulgaria: the publication of a truly unsurpassed study in terms of scope, variety, complexity, insightfulness, erudition and depth of interpretation, of Emanuel Swedenborg's life, work, and impact on other scholars, poets and writers, the result of a lifetime of painstaking labor, astounding knowledge and unique creative inspiration – the book of 520 pages *Емануел Сведенборг. Архитект на вечността* [Emanuel Swedenborg: Architect of Eternity] authored by the eminent Bulgarian translator, editor, researcher into Scandinavian literatures and university professor Vera L. Gancheva (Gancheva 2012).

As a proverb scholar, I must confess that Vera Gancheva's book has provided me not only with the much needed first-hand meticulously documented and brilliantly structured information about and in-depth critique of the life and intellectual exploits of this great European Enlightener and the detailed and exhaustive knowledge of his reception on both sides of the Atlantic and beyond, but also with the courage, inspiration and determination for continuing my own research into one very specific aspect of Swedenborg's colossal work, namely, how proverbs mean in the context of his hermeneutical interpretations of the Bible and his descriptions of the spiritual worlds he claims to have personally seen, heard, and explored. In this paper, I plan to spend no time defending or refuting Swedenborg's idealistic philosophical system or his mysticism, neither will I discuss the profound impact of his imaginative writings on so many great figures like Immanuel Kant, William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Ralph Waldo Emerson (who in his book of 1850, titled *Representative Men*, places him among the greatest figures of humanity) and other transcendentalists like Henry David Thoreau, or on Hans Christian Andersen, Honoré de Balzac, the French symbolists, Vladimir Solovyov, and August Strindberg, to name but a few, as this has already been done in very great depth by Vera Gancheva herself (in her article of 2008 and the third part of the book) and many other dedicated scholars, among whom Samuel Willard Crompton (2005) and Dole and Kirven (1997), authors of two very informative synopses of Swedenborg's life and work, Martin Lamm (2000), Lars Bergquist (1999/2005) and Ernst Benz (2002), whose insightful biographies have become a must for every scholar of Swedenborg, Devin Zuber (2010), author of the philosophical

essay “The Buddha of the North: Swedenborg and the Transpacific Zen”, or Cassie Lipowitz (2014), who compares his doctrine to Sufism in her essay “Seven are the Steps to Heaven: a Comparative Study of Swedenborg and Sumnani”, to name just a few. Suffice it to say that before experiencing a psychological crises in his mid-fifties, which made him finally turn to theology and dedicate the last twenty seven years of his long and productive life exclusively to Bible studies, Swedenborg had succeeded in building himself the impeccable reputation of a respected scientist, engineer, mathematician, philosopher, inventor, financier, entrepreneur, statesman and nobleman both in his home country, in continental Europe and Russia (where he was awarded the prestigious title of Professor Emeritus by the University of Saint Petersburg just across the Baltic Sea), and in the newly founded United States of America. Instead, I will focus right away on the topic of the allusions and contextual interpretations of some English proverbs and (proverbial) phrases which I found scattered in many of Swedenborg’s theological works translated from the original Latin into English. This paper should be viewed as a work in progress, as while going through the huge bulk of Swedenborg’s books I constantly keep discovering new contexts and new interpretations of the proverbs I have already examined that add new, additional layers to their meanings, which confirms once again the well-known dictum of their fundamental semantic indefiniteness (Krikmann 1974a, 1974b, Mieder 2014: 23).

My intention to deal with Swedenborg’s works in their English translation and not with the original texts in Latin derives not so much from my modest knowledge of Latin acquired in my youth at Sofia University in the course of only two semesters, taught however by the brilliant Makariy Portalsky, for which I am forever grateful, but from the specifically paremiological aim of this study, which is to explore in some depth the semantic evolution of a group of English proverbs whose standard (i.e., long-established and well-known) meanings, because of their long currency and wide distribution, may have long begun to sound a little too general, vague, and perhaps even somewhat “trite” or “hackneyed” to generations of English speakers, native and otherwise. It is certainly important and worthwhile to carry out a similar study of the Latin counterparts of the same proverbs and their contextual explanations in the original Latin texts, but let us remem-

ber that with English having become the modern lingua franca of science and scholarship today, this paper, by hopefully reaching other proverb scholars fluent in English, may rekindle the sadly dwindling interest in Emanuel Swedenborg's astounding powers of imagination, remarkable insights, and exemplary scholarly style of reasoning, as well as in the unexpectedly deep layers of wisdom that seem to be stored in many familiar proverbs in one of the most widely known languages of today.

A note is in order here: Swedenborg was not a paremiologist, neither was he a paremiographer or a linguist, although occasionally in his writings he does discuss linguistic matters such as language as a specifically human trait, or the etymology of certain terms; as will be seen in the discussion below, the text examples identified in his writings do not always involve the literal text of the proverb or phrase under study; rather, each of the text fragments dealt with here is as an allusion to a certain proverb to the extent to which its wording and / or meaning are more or less recognizable and transparent in it. After reading this paper, some proverb scholars may even begin to see "more than meets the eye" whenever they encounter some perfectly "innocent" proverb, a habit I gradually acquired while exploring in awe and amazement the surprisingly versatile, strange and fantastic treasure trove of wisdom and poetry stored in Swedenborg's works.

My two earlier studies on the topic (Petrova 2019b, 2020) deal with Swedenborg's theological interpretations of two small groups of English proverbs and proverbial phrases from the point of view of linguoculturology. This paper is a continuation of this project.

The Method

The kind of **semantic comparison** I apply to the English proverbs and phrases and their corresponding text fragments found in Swedenborg's works consists in the following: the semantics of the proverb or phrase (i.e., its standard (literal or implied) meaning) is compared to the semantics of the corresponding text fragment or section alluding to the proverb; for the sake of clarity and convenience, the proverb or its variant or paraphrase in the text fragment is shown in bold type and the examples discussed are numbered. The definitions of the proverbs (their standard meanings) are taken either from some of the dictionaries that

provide such explanations (e.g., Dubr., OCDP, Manser, Gen., FD), or from the Internet, where they can be found in context, or they come from my own knowledge and experience. In some less obvious cases, **the theory of the cultureme** is applied (for its detailed explanation and demonstration see Petrova 2016 and 2019a), because it helps elicit not only the meaning of the proverb, but also its main cultureme (the main entity the proverb prescribes or criticizes) and message (the advice it gives). As will be shown below, the diverse results yielded by the analysis range from total, sometimes even literal, semantic identity to various degrees of similarity, all of which however include an explanatory and substantially enlarged interpretation of the proverb's standard meaning from a very specific, theological perspective.

The text excerpts identified in Swedenborg's works that contain allusions to certain proverbs and phrases are shown in the way traditionally accepted in Swedenborgianism: not with the pages on which they appear in the books, but with the numbers of the sections originally used by the author and later by his translators and editors for the purposes of cross referencing, followed by the book title or its initials. In almost all of the cases, the whole sections are given in order for an appropriate context to be provided in which the proverb meaning fully unfolds; some of the longer sections whose parts bear no direct relationship to the meaning of the proverb discussed are (substantially) abridged.

Comparative Analysis

The first (1) case I will be looking at is the metaphorical proverb ***Crosses are ladders that lead to heaven*** (OCDP) and its transcendental explanation suggested by Swedenborg. We know that the metaphorical proverbs, which often make up the greater part of proverbs in some languages, differ from the literal (or direct) ones (e.g., *A green Christmas, a white Easter* (DAP), *A friend in need is a friend indeed* (App.), *Practise what you preach* (App.), *Pardon all but thyself* (App.)), in that their meanings and messages are indirectly suggested and implied instead of directly (or literally) stated. These proverbs have two separate and distinct planes of signification: an immediate or **surface plane**, and a **deep plane** (Luria 1979: 245, Permyakov 1988: 20–21, Petrova 2006: 22, 2016: 20–21, 2019: 296). The images and the situations created by means of the images on the immediate, surface, or **ex-**

pression, plane serve as a tool, medium, and a first-order sign for conveying another, different and specific idea on the deep or **content** plane. It is this idea that is the proper **definition** (explanation, standard meaning) of the proverb, which itself can be rendered in plain and neutral language, or, simply stated language with no imagery and no stylistic devices (tropes). The metaphorical proverb *Crosses are ladders that lead to heaven* can for example thus translate into the following neutral definition: “suffering leads to spiritual growth”. In it, the image of the crosses – an obvious allusion to the Crucifixion – and the implied image of someone climbing a ladder of crosses and reaching to heaven, all translate into the abstract idea of suffering that leads to some kind of great spiritual attainment or growth. A very similar idea is found in section 513 of Swedenborg’s book, *Heaven and Hell* (HH) (see in particular the parts in bold type below, which are partial paraphrases of the proverb):

“[...] The good spirits who are to be instructed are brought by the Lord to these places [i.e., certain special ‘regions’ in heaven] when they have completed their second state in the world of spirits, and yet not all. For **those who have been instructed in the world, have been prepared there by the Lord for heaven, and also are taken up into heaven** by another way – some immediately after death, some after a short stay with good spirits, where the grosser things of their thoughts and affections, which they have contracted from honours and riches in the world, are removed, and in that way they are purified. **Some first are vastated [...] in places [...] called the lower earth, where some suffer severely.** These are such as had confirmed themselves in falsities and yet had led good lives, for when falsities have been confirmed they inhere with much force, and until they have been dispersed, truths cannot be seen, and thus cannot be received.”

In the paraphrase above, we don’t see all of the images used in the proverb – for example, both the crosses and the ladders are missing – but the image of heaven and the meaning that the souls headed for heaven are vastated (i.e., they undergo trials that are meant to purify them), which prepares them for eternal life – are preserved. What is also retained is the positive evaluation of this

idea, denoted by the plus sign of the proverb cultureme, “suffering as a means to attaining spiritual growth (+)”. More importantly, the excerpt provides a lot of tangible detail that serves to explain how, when, where and why some people undergo such trials and what exactly gets purified via the vastations; all this helps reveal its deeper, transcendental meaning.

Another example is the classical proverb *Sound mind in a sound body* (DAP) (2), which Swedenborg interprets in his typically coherent, orderly and circumstantial way in section 330 (given in full here) of his book *Divine Love and Wisdom* (DLW): “Since the end of creation is an angelic heaven from the human race itself, all other created things are meant to that end; these means, because they have reference to man [in older texts like this the noun *man* and its pronouns are used generatively to include both sexes], have respect to these three human attributes, his body, his rational faculty, and the spiritual nature which is given him in order that he may be united with the Lord. For a man cannot be united with the Lord unless he be spiritual, nor can he be spiritual unless he is rational, **nor rational unless his body be in a sound condition**. These things are like a house; the body is like the foundation, the rational faculty is like the house built upon it, the spiritual nature is like the things in the house, and union with the Lord is like dwelling in it. Hence are evident the order, degree, and respect in which uses, as means to the end of creation, have relation to man; they sustain his body, they perfect his rational faculty, and they enable him to receive what is spiritual from the Lord.”

In this excerpt we see the proverb paraphrased: the collocation “a body in a sound condition” is used in the place of “a sound body” and the collocation “the rational and spiritual” [attributes to man] replaces “sound mind”. As can be seen from Swedenborg’s explanation, good health appears to be an absolutely indispensable condition for the spiritual development of human beings, and, as has been argued, there are valid reasons for this.

An interpretation of the same proverb but from another perspective was discovered in section 142 of another of Swedenborg’s books, *Divine Providence* (DP): “No one is reformed [in order to be saved] in a state of bodily sickness because his reason is not then in a state of freedom; **the state of the mind depends on that of the body**. When the body is sick, the mind is also, if for no other reason because it is withdrawn from the world.

Withdrawn from the world it thinks indeed about God but not from him, for it is not possessed of freedom of the reason. [...] In this state by itself no one can be reformed, but he can be strengthened in it if he was reforming before he fell ill.”

This excerpt asserts once again that body and mind are interdependent, and the lack of physical health is a great impediment to the freedom of reason, which, according to the author, is an indispensable condition for the reformation of the soul and ultimately for the person’s eternal salvation.

Another interesting case to look at is the English proverb *The face is the index of the heart* (App.) (3), an allusion to which was found in section 486 of the book *Heaven and Hell* (HH): “All the delights a man has are the delights of his ruling love, for he feels nothing to be delightful except what he loves, thus especially that which he loves above all things. These delights are various. In general, there are as many, as there are ruling loves; consequently, as many as there are men, spirits, and angels; for no one’s ruling love is in every respect like that of another. For this reason, no one has a face exactly like that of any other; for **each one’s face is an image of his mind**; and in the spiritual world it is an image of his ruling love.” In this fragment we see the actual wording of the proverb embedded in the text itself. It explains why people’s faces are so different and unique. The reason for this, argues the author, is in the ruling love of each person, which is never exactly the same as that of other people. He further explains that this most important, ruling affection, which ultimately characterizes and singles out each individual, during the life of the body is only dimly reflected on his or her face, but becomes truly and wholly visible and recognizable after death.

The next proverb, *Idle brains are the devil’s workshop* (App.) (4), together with its variants and synonyms, *Idle hands are the devil’s tools* (DAP), *Idleness is the mother of all vices / evil* (Dubr.), *By doing nothing we learn to do ill* (Dubr.), and *The devil is always at the elbow of an idle man* (DAP), when used in general discourse, condemns sloth, idleness, and laziness in a very general way. Swedenborg alludes to this proverb at least in two different places in his works. In sections 361 through 365 of *Heaven and Hell* (HH), when describing the life of the rich and the poor after death, he argues that material wealth or poverty have no impact whatsoever on the destiny of the individual after death;

what then truly matters is each person's love to the Lord and to his neighbor while he was in the body, and the sincere and selfless acts of charity he has performed during his life. The author differentiates between two kinds of people: "materially rich or poor" and "spiritually rich or poor", meaning persons abounding with, or lacking in, love to God and to their neighbors, while by the phrase "poor in spirit" he means those who realize they have no knowledge of spiritual truths, but are eager and willing to acquire it. The writer points out that "the wealth [of the rich in the spiritual and celestial worlds] is such as their uses were in the world, and such, too, is their delight and happiness [by *uses* Swedenborg means service, deeds, practical work]. Good uses are providing oneself and one's own with the necessities of life, also desiring wealth for the sake of one's country and for the sake of one's neighbor, whom a rich man can benefit more than a poor man. These are good uses, because **one is able thereby to withdraw his mind from an indolent life which is harmful, since in such a life man's thoughts run to evil** because of the evil inherent in him."

This fragment provides a lot of meaningful background to the idea of how harmful idleness can be. It shows how keeping oneself occupied by doing something useful for others can serve as a powerful protection against the constant assaults of evil surrounding man from all sides and, most importantly, from the evil which constantly attacks him from the inside. Swedenborg is very consistent in stressing that man's *proprium* [the properties arising from a person's physical nature, his self or ego] is inherently and intrinsically evil and that one can only overcome one's own *proprium* by ardently adhering to God's truths and by consistently implementing the Ten Commandments throughout one's life. This paragraph also argues, contrary to the widespread belief in the egotism of the rich, that wealthy people are not necessarily bad; it's not wealth, but the inordinate love of wealth, money and power that makes a person bad; on the contrary, in the hands of a good man, wealth can be very useful and beneficial, because he can share it with his less privileged brothers and sisters and make them happy.

Still another even more detailed and vivid allusion to the proverbs about idleness can be seen in section 249.13 of the book *Conjugal Love* (CL): "Man was created for use because use is the

container of good and truth, from the marriage of which is creation, and also conjugal love [...]. By pursuit and business are meant every application to use; for while a man is in some pursuit and business, or is in use, his mind is limited and circumscribed – as by a circle within which it is successively coordinated into a form [i.e., structure] that is truly human; within which, as from home, he sees the various lusts outside of himself, and from sanity of reason within exterminates them, and consequently also the wild insanities of promiscuous lust. [...] **The contrary happens to those who give themselves up to idleness and ease; their mind is unrestrained and indeterminate, and therefore the man [*homo*] admits to the whole of it every vain and frivolous conceit that flows in from the world and from the body**, and it bears him along into the love of them. That then also conjugal love is cast into exile is evident; for by idleness and sloth the mind is rendered stupid and the body torpid, and the whole man becomes insensible to every vital love, especially to conjugal love, from which as from a fountain go forth the activities and alacrities of life.”

Without quoting verbatim any of the proverbs about idleness, in this section the author quite obviously alludes to them again, adding another perspective to the way their meaning and message are to be understood – that of married love, which in many other places in his books he places on the same level as a person’s useful and selfless service to others. Idleness is thus shown as a great impediment to individual growth and – which is particularly important – eventually to eternal salvation. As far as the image of the devil is concerned, in the proverbs as part of folklore it is used as a stylistic device, a metaphor, suggesting something sinister, mean, cruel and evil, while in the context of Swedenborg’s doctrine the devil is a very real personage.

Our fifth case deals with the proverb *Evil communications corrupt good manners* (App.) (5). An elucidating allusion to it can be found in sections 208–209 of *Heaven and Hell* (HH). When used in general discourse, the proverb warns against communicating with bad people, which can be very harmful to an innocent person, but when placed in a transcendental context some additional meanings are realized that have to do with the hierarchy and subordination of the spiritual and celestial worlds. Swedenborg persistently stresses that there is a very strict order, hierarchy and

subordination in the afterlife, which must always be taken into account: “One heaven is joined with another, or the society of one heaven with the society of another, by the Lord alone, both by direct and by mediate influx, directly from himself, and mediately from the higher heavens in order into the lower. As the conjunctions of the heavens by this inflowing is from the Lord alone **there is a most careful precaution against any angel of a higher heaven looking down into a society of a lower heaven and talking with anyone there; for the angel is thus immediately deprived of his intelligence and wisdom.** [...] No influx is possible.”

In this section, instead of evil people, angels belonging to a lower level in heaven are envisioned, but the author warns that they too should be cautiously avoided by the better angels, i.e., the ones above them, because of the imminent danger they present to the latter. What is implied as a guiding principle is that heaven is very hierarchical in structure, an idea which may probably seem too “undemocratic” to the contemporary liberal western mind. Moreover, there seem to be very strict protective boundaries “erected” between the different levels, which stand in the way of those who want to mix with others indiscriminately. Arbitrary communication between and among angels with different qualities and belonging to different hierarchical levels appears to be wrong and harmful. Neither here nor elsewhere is any explanation given why this should be so, there is just the express warning that failing to obey divine order will most certainly result in punishments for the culprits.

The phrase *naked truth* (P.A.) (6), i.e., absolute, pure and complete truth, truth lacking in trappings, is explained by way of Swedenborg’s idea of *innocence* that appears to be deeply characteristic of the different types of angels and is inherently very close to truth: “As the garments of angels correspond to their intelligence they correspond also to truth, since all intelligence is from Divine truth; and therefore it is the same thing whether you say that angels are clothed in accordance with intelligence or in accordance with Divine truth. The garments of some blaze as if with flame, and those of others glisten as if with light, because flame corresponds to good, and light corresponds to truth from good. Some have garments that are glistening white and white without the effulgence, and others garments of various colors, because

with the less intelligent the Divine good and truth are less effulgent, and are also received in various ways, glistening white and white corresponding to truth, and colors to its varieties. **Those in the inmost heaven are not clothed, because they are in innocence, and innocence corresponds to nakedness.**" (HH: 179)

This text and especially the paraphrase of the expression *naked truth* in bold type in it offer a strikingly beautiful description of the celestial world showing the fundamental purity and sublimity of innocence, which is closely linked to truth and truthfulness that are the complete opposites to falsity and artificiality. Innocent truth needs no decorations, it is sufficient in itself.

Still another case of comparison involves the literal proverb *Virtue is its own reward* (App.) (7). It is explained transcendently in section 7[3] of the book *Conjugal Love* (CL): "...Have you forgotten the Lord's words, that he who would be great in heaven must become a servant? Learn then what is meant by kings and princes, and by reigning with Christ, that it is to be wise and perform uses; for the kingdom of Christ, which is heaven, is a kingdom of uses. For the Lord loves all, and from love wills good to all, and good is use. And as the Lord does goods or uses mediately through the angels, and in the world through men, therefore **to them that perform uses faithfully he gives the love of use and its reward, which is internal blessedness; and this is eternal happiness.**"

The paraphrase of the proverb in bold type does not mention the word "virtue", but the idea is alluded to in the collocation "them that perform uses faithfully". Apart from advocating selfless service to others, this section also conveys the idea that virtuous people, who during their life on earth can rarely be happy and satisfied, will be richly rewarded in the afterlife, and that their well deserved reward will be exceptional – utter and eternal happiness and bliss.

In section 823 of Volume One of Swedenborg's twelve volume book *Arcana Caelestia* (AC) we find a transcendental interpretation of the metaphorical proverb *You reap what you sow* (8) (Dubr.) together with its synonyms, among which *As you brew, so you must drink* (Dubr.) and *Sow the wind and reap the whirlwind* (Dubr.), and modern variant, *What goes around comes around* (DMP). In general discourse, the standard meaning of this proverb group is "whatever a person does is exactly what he or

she is gets back”, its main cultureme, “retribution (+)” and its message – “Beware of what you are doing and especially of your bad deeds, as there will be consequences”. The corresponding explanatory text in the book reads as follows: “**Whatever a man has done in the life of the body successively returns in the other life, and so does all that he has even thought.** When his enmities, hatreds and deceits return, the persons against whom he has indulged hatred and has clandestinely plotted are made present to him, and this in a moment. [...] The thoughts a man has harbored against others make their appearance openly, for there is a perception of all thoughts. Hence come lamentable states, for there concealed states break out openly. With the evil all their evil deeds and thoughts thus return, to the life; but it is not so with the good. With these all their good states of friendship and love return, attended with the highest delight and happiness.”

This description does not include the proverbs above, but their meaning is fully preserved and unfolded in such a way as to leave no doubt in the imminent reality of every single deed a person has committed or thought he has harbored in life, which leave their indelible imprint in his life after death.

Very similar to it is the proverb *As a tree falls, so shall it lie* (DAP) (9), whose meaning is that a person’s destiny is fully determined by his life. An explanation of this proverb is found in section 277b of the book *Divine Providence* (DP), which retains the literal wording of the proverb: “It is plain without explanation that man must be led away from evil in order to be reformed. For one who is in evil in the world is in evil after he has left the world. Not removed in the world, evil cannot be removed afterwards. **Where a tree falls, it lies.** So, too, when a man dies his life remains such as it has been. Everyone is judged according to his deeds, not that these are recounted, but he returns to them and acts as before. Death is a continuation of life with the difference that then man cannot be reformed. For reformation is effected in full, that is, in what is inmost and outmost, and what is outmost is reformed suitably to what is inmost only while man is in the world. It cannot be reformed afterwards because as it is carried along by the man after death it falls quiescent and conforms to his inner life, that is, they act as one.”

As can be seen again, the transcendental interpretation of the proverb abounds with a lot of supportive detail and diverse

arguments. It puts across the message of how important it is for people to try to reform themselves while they are still alive. This idea resonates fully with the message of the preceding proverb group.

The meaning of the proverb *Love is blind* (Mied.) (10) is explained in a similarly methodical and circumstantial way in the following fragment from section 406 of the book *Divine Love and Wisdom* (DLW): “Love apart from the understanding, or the affection of the love apart from the thought of the understanding, can have neither bodily sense nor action; because **love apart from the understanding is, as it were, blind**, and affection apart from thought is, as it were, in darkness, for the understanding is the light by which love sees. [...] [F]or action from love apart from the understanding is like that of a man in the dark when he knows not what he is doing. In such an act, there could be no intelligence or wisdom, and it could not be called a living act, for action derives its essence from love and its distinctive character from intelligence. Besides, all the power of good is exercised by means of truth.” And further: “**What is action from love without the aid of the understanding? Such action could only be called irrational.** The understanding points out what is to be done and how it is to be done; and love cannot know this without the help of the understanding; and therefore thereby is such a marriage between love and the understanding that, although they are two, they still act as one.” (409 DLW)

Here and elsewhere in his works, the theologian persistently reiterates that love must always unite with wisdom (and, by implication, with reason, understanding, intelligence and truth), otherwise it is useless, dangerous, and harmful.

In the excerpts above, the subject content of the proverb, which in the first part in bold is used verbatim, is significantly enlarged through involving in the disquisition the various aspects of love and understanding and truth as important prerequisites for love. The proverb, on the contrary, only states that love is blind, without qualifying the kind of love it envisions. Still, there is a presupposition in it, that the kind of love that should be condemned is the love that is blind, i.e., that fails to see things clearly and therefore lacks understanding of what things really are as it is far from truth. In contrast, the excerpt states expressly that love must never be divorced from truth. What remains the same in both

members of the comparison is the negative evaluation of the cultureme “blind love (-)” and the common message that one must beware of blind, irrational love and, by implication, aspire to the kind of love that is wise and enlightened.

Much in the same way as in the case above, the transcendental interpretation of the metaphorical proverb *Variety is the spice of life* (DAP) (11) in section 158 (HH), whose definition in general discourse is “variety makes life interesting, fulfilling and rewarding”, confirms the proverb cultureme – “variety (+)”. Swedenborg illustrates this idea by describing the frequent alterations of the inner states of the angels in the celestial world, explaining that “the delight of life and of heaven which they have from the love and wisdom that are from the Lord, would gradually become worthless if they were in it continually, as is the case with those who are in delights and pleasures without variety. [...] Also, by alternations of delight and lack of delight, the perception and sensation of good becomes more exquisite.” The latter, says the author, has to do with the perfection of angels, which is perpetual (cf. 10 200 AC).

As can be seen from this description, the kind of variety that is envisioned in the text fragment is the alternation between delight and lack of delight experienced by angels in heaven, and not a constant flux of diverse joys and delights in life experienced by humans, as the proverb may be suggesting. But regardless of what is implied in the word *variety* in the proverb, the text comes to confirm the proverb’s message of the intrinsic value of diversity.

The transcendental meaning of another proverb, the ancient maxim *As above, so below* (Hermes) (12), is illustrated in a very vivid and picturesque manner in the book *Divine Love and Wisdom* (DLW), especially in section 321, which is given here in full: “Be it known that the spiritual world in outward appearance is entirely similar to the natural world. There are countries, mountains, hills, valleys, plains, fields, lakes, rivers, and springs of water as in the natural world; thus all things of the mineral kingdom. There are parks, gardens, groves, woods, and in them all kinds of trees and shrubs bearing fruit and seeds, plants, flowers, herbs, and grasses, thus all things of the vegetable kingdom. There are also animals, birds, and fishes of every kind; thus all things of the animal kingdom; man is there an angel or a spirit. This preliminary statement is meant to show that the universe of the spiritual world

is entirely similar to the universe of the natural world, with this difference only, that things there are not fixed and settled like those in the natural world, because everything there is spiritual and not natural.”

The sections that follow elaborate on the dazzling beauties of the spiritual world, adding even more detail. The section above corresponds to the first part of the proverb, the word “above”, which denotes the spiritual world that is supposed to “stand” higher than the natural world people live in, which is the one “below”. While the proverb is compact and terse, its detailed interpretation abounds with very specific detail.

Our next case, the metaphorical proverb *The wish is father to the thought* (FD) (13), whose meaning is that our thinking and way of reasoning is determined by what we love (and not the other way round), is discussed and elaborated in many different parts of Swedenborg’s doctrine. The theologian stresses ever so often the link between, on the one hand, love and the human will, and, on the other, love and human reason, intelligence and wisdom. Love and affection, he claims, wholly determine man’s character and the direction of his will. Moreover, love, affection and therefore the will determine a person’s way of thinking and reasoning: “love, or the will, unites with wisdom, or the understanding, but that wisdom, or the understanding, does not unite with love, or the will; and therefore again it is evident that the knowledge that love acquires from the desire to know, and the perception of truth which it acquires from the desire to understand, and the thought which it acquires from the desire to see what it knows and understands, do not belong to the understanding but to love. **Thoughts, perceptions, and therefore knowledge**, flow indeed from the spiritual world but they **are not received by the understanding but by the love**, according to the mode in which it is affected in the understanding. It appears as if the understanding receives them, and not love, or the will; but this is a mistake. It appears also that as if the understanding unites itself to love, or the will, but this is also a mistake; love, or the will, unites itself to the understanding and brings about a reciprocal union, which arises from its marriage with love; for it is love and the power of love which cause this reciprocal union.” (DLW: 410. XII)

This excerpt explains step by step why love comes first and why people can understand more easily the things they love and

always find logical arguments to justify their wishes and desires no matter whether they are right or wrong. Swedenborg often reiterates this idea, claiming that even when someone is fond of falsities and evil, he can still find logical arguments to prove that they are good and true.

The well-known Renaissance maxim *Man is a microcosm* (P.A.) (14) is given multiple interpretations in various parts of Swedenborg's teaching in the context of his famous doctrine of correspondences. The proverb is a shortened version of the longer and much older maxim, which was developed from a specific perspective in more recent times by the Renaissance philosopher Paracelsus (1493/94–1541), who writes the following: "Man is a microcosm, or a little world, because he is an extract from all the stars and planets of the whole firmament, from the earth and the elements; and so he is their quintessence" (BQ). I am going to quote a couple of excerpts illustrating another, even deeper aspect of this very ancient idea in the way it is understood in Swedenborg's theology: "Man was called by the ancients a microcosm, because he resembles the macrocosm or universe as a whole. But it is not known at the present day why man was so called by the ancients; [...] the ancients called man a microcosm or little universe from a knowledge of the science of correspondences, which the most ancient people possessed, and also from their intercourse with the ancients in heaven." (319 DLW) Swedenborg often writes about the succession of the four epochs in the long history of the human species known as the Golden, Silver, Copper, and Iron Ages, in the course of which people's spiritual bond with heaven, he claims, was gradually and progressively diminished until in the middle of the eighteenth century it reached its lowest point of almost utter extinction that prompted a new rejuvenation for which he believes to have been specifically called and chosen. He stresses that "**there is nothing in the created universe which does not correspond to something in man, not only to his affections and consequently to his thoughts, but also to the organs and viscera of his body**; the correspondence, however, is not with these regarded as substances but with their uses. It is for this reason that in the Word where the Church and its members are spoken of, trees are so often mentioned, for example olives, vines, and cedars; also gardens, groves, and woods; and again, the beasts of the earth, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea. They

are mentioned ... because they are correspondences and make one by correspondence with that to which they correspond. This is why when men read about these things in the Word, the angels have no consciousness with such objects, but think only of the corresponding states of the Church and its members". (324 DLW) And further: "Since all things in the universe bear resemblance to man, Adam is described as to his wisdom and intelligence by the Garden of Eden, in which there were trees of every kind, and also rivers, precious stones and gold, and animals to which he gave names. All these things signify the various attributes he possessed and which constituted the being who is describes as Man." (325 DLW) Besides the direct confirmation of man's sameness or similarity with the universe, but only in the form of correspondences between different uses, what is also implied in these text fragments is that the whole Bible is built on such correspondences; they function as sacred signs and symbols, which, when interpreted correctly, tend to strengthen the absolutely vital bond between the human and the divine worlds.

In a transcendental context, the famous commandment turned proverb *Love thy neighbor* (Mied.) (15) according to Swedenborg quite surprisingly does not really mean loving the personality, or *proprium*, of one's friend or companion. This is how the philosopher discusses this commandment in its relation to the main and more important commandment to love God: "There are two distinct loves in heaven, love to the Lord, and love towards the neighbour. In the utmost or third heaven is love to the Lord and in the second or middle heaven is love towards the neighbour. Each proceeds from the Lord and each makes heaven. What the distinction is between these two loves and how they are conjoined appears in heaven as clear light, but in the world only obscurely. In heaven, by loving the Lord, is not meant loving him in respect of his person but loving the good which is from him, and loving good is willing good and doing it from love; and loving the neighbour does not mean loving a companion in respect of his person but loving the truth which is from the Word, and loving the truth is willing and doing it." The two footnotes to this section explain further that "[t]o love the Lord and the neighbour is to live according to the Lord's commandments", "[t]o love the neighbour is not to love the person, but to love that with him from which he is what he is, that is, his truth and good (10 143, 10 153, 10 310, 10 578,

10 648 AC)”, and also that “those who love the person, and not that with him from which he is what he is [his truth and good] love evil and good alike” (3 820 AC). “Charity towards the neighbour – summarizes the author, – is doing what is good, just, and right, in every work and every function (8 120 – 8 122 AC).” (HH 15)

As we can see, the kind of perfect and righteous love Swedenborg promotes is equated with demanding discipline and truthfulness to the Ten Commandments, with stern justice and fairness, and not with the liberal acceptance of our companion with all his or her shortcoming, errors, blunders and vices, as one might think. Indeed, this kind of critical, uncompromising and highly principled love even applies to God! It turns out that loving the *proprium* of our friend is to “love evil and good alike”, i.e., not to differentiate between them, which is not tolerated in heaven.

The Bible phrase *a stumbling block*, which in general discourse is explained as “a challenge or hindrance that prevents something from being accomplished” (FD) (16), is given a very vivid and utterly strange and unusual interpretation in section 534 of *Heaven and Hell*: “The way that leads to heaven, and the way that leads to hell were once represented to me. There was a broad way tending towards the left or the north, and many spirits were seen going in it; but at a distance a quite large stone was seen where the broad way came to an end. From that stone two ways were branched off, one to the left, and one in the opposite direction to the right. The way that went to the left was narrow or restricted, leading through the west or the sound, and thus into the light of heaven; the way that went to the right was broad and spacious, leading obliquely downwards towards hell. All at first seemed to be going the same way until they came to **the large stone where two ways meet**. When they reached that point they were separated; the good turned to the left and entered the restricted way that went to heaven; while **the evil, not seeing the stone at the fork of the ways, fell upon it and were hurt**; and when they rose up they ran on in the broad way to the right which went towards hell. What all these things signified was afterwards explained to me: namely, that by the first way which was broad, wherein many both good and evil went together and talked with each other as friends, because there was no visible difference between them, were represented those who in externals live alike honestly and justly, and between whom seemingly there is no difference. By

the stone where the two ways met or at the corner, upon which the evil fell and from which they then ran along the way leading to hell, was represented the Divine Truth, which is rejected by those who look towards hell; and in the highest sense by this stone was signified the Lord's Divine Human."

When we compare the phrase "a stumbling block" with this text, we can see right away several discrepancies. First, the phrase lacks all of the spiritual content of the text fragment. Second, the images, the situation, the drama and the metaphor of the text section are completely lost in the phrase. Third, only a small portion of the subject content of the description is retained in it – the image of the stone, but without mentioning its size. A further difference is the negative connotation of the image of the stone in the phrase in contrast to the positive connotation of the image of the large stone in the descriptive passage. In sum, in the process of semantic evolution, the secularized phrase, when compared to the text from which its true meaning probably derives, has been almost completely changed in that its original esoteric meaning has disappeared.

The proverb *Like will to like* (Manser) (17) unfolds its transcendental meaning in section 511 of the book *Heaven and Hell*: "In this second state the separation of evil spirits from good spirits takes place. For in the first state they are together, since while a spirit is in his exteriors he is as he was in the world, thus the evil with the good and the good with the evil; but it is otherwise when he has been brought into his interiors and left to his own nature or will. The separation of good spirits from evil spirits is effected by various methods; in general, by their being taken about to those societies with which in their first state they had communications by means of their thoughts and affections, thus to those societies that they had induced to believe by outward appearance that they are not evil. Usually, they are led about through a wide circle, and everywhere what they really are is made manifest to good spirits. **At the sight of them the good spirits turn away; and at the same time the evil spirits who are being led about turn their faces away from the good towards that quarter where their infernal society is, into which they are about to come.**"

The description above shows in very concrete terms and by means of appropriate images exactly how the principle of the attraction of similarities, tersely summarized in the proverb *like will*

to like, operates in the spiritual world. Swedenborg explains that the attraction and the ensuing separation of spirits into good and bad is ultimately determined not by the “externals” of the person, but by his or her “internals”, i.e., by his or her dominant inner state. What is retained in both members of the comparison is the positive evaluation of this principle of attraction.

Our next example is the Bible proverb *God is no respecter of persons* (DAP) (18). It is explained as “[God’s] attitude and behaviour to someone is uninfluenced by considerations of another’s rank, power, wealth etc” (FD). This proverb is used almost literally and then explained in detail in the beginning of section 509 of the same book (HH): “When evil spirits are in this second state, as they rush into evils of every kind they are subjected to frequent and evil punishments; and **there is no regard for person, whether one had been in the world a king or a servant**. Every evil carries its punishment with it, the evil and the punishment being connected; therefore whoever is in evil is also in the punishment of evil.” Although the word “God” is missing in this excerpt, it is implied in it, in the chapter, and indeed in the whole book and in all other works of the author; unlike the proverb, the excerpt mentions the severe punishments that are to be endured by the evil when finally justice is meted out to them. What is implied in both members of the comparison is the positive value of the idea of a just and fair judgment, uninfluenced by external factors.

Another short and well known proverb is *Truth will out* (App.) (19), which has a large number of variants and synonyms (for their detailed discussion see Petrova 2019a). Its meaning is unfolded in section 507 of the same book (HH): “When in this second state, spirits become visibly just what they had been in themselves while in the world, what they then did and said secretly being now made manifest; for now, because external things do not restrain them, they speak such things openly, and also try to do them, not being fearful of their reputation as in the world. They are also brought into many states of their evils, that what they are may be evident to angels and good spirits. Thus are hidden things laid open and secret things uncovered, in accordance with the Lord’s words:

There is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. Whatsoever ye have said in

the darkness shall be heard in the light, and what ye have spoken in the ear in the inner chambers shall be proclaimed on the housetops. *Luke XII. 2, 3.*

I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. *Matt. XII. 36.*

The proverb *Truth will out*, like the previous one, is short and generalizing. It doesn't mention the spiritual or the celestial worlds, it only states tersely that truth will be revealed, without specifying the time when this is to happen, but implying a truth about some bad deeds committed by a person who is afraid of revealing them to others. In contrast, in the extended explanation above, it is shown to whom exactly all bad truths will be laid open. It is also stated that not just bad deeds, but also bad thoughts will be laid open and judged in the day of judgment. Thus the implicit meaning of the proverb becomes fully explicit, enlarged and enriched with a lot of additional relevant information. As regards the positive evaluation of the idea of the imminent revelation of truth, both members of the comparative analysis preserve it.

Still another example is the idiom *to wear one's heart on one's sleeve* (20) whose definition in general discourse is "to openly display or make known one's emotions or sentiments" (FD). An allusion to this idiom may be seen in section 505 (HH): "When the spirit is in the state of its interiors it becomes clearly evident what the man was in himself when he was in the world, for at such times he acts from his proprium. **He who was in the world interiorly in good then acts rationally and wisely**, and even more wisely than in the world, because he is released from connection with the body, and thus from all earthly things that caused obscurity and interposed, as it were, a cloud."

When we compare the idiom and the excerpt, we can easily see again, first, the much richer subject content of the latter. The idiom, however, uses certain images on the expression plane – those of the sleeve and the heart, which are missing in the larger text. These images may have derived from a custom related to the tournaments during the Middle Ages in Europe, which exacted from the participants to wear the insignia of their noble rank or that of their lady on their garments or shields. The excerpt thus envisions the good, honest, open and sincere persons (such as the

medieval knights were supposed to be, at least according to the code of chivalry), who, once in the spiritual world, are finally free to speak their mind openly and fully. It also explains why such persons feel much better there: they no longer suffer from the physical burdens which hamper and distort the expression of their true feelings.

A very interesting case is the proverb *Marriages are made in heaven* (App.) (21) and its transcendental parallel text, discovered in section 383 (HH): “I have also been permitted to see how those in the heavens are associated in marriage. Everywhere in heaven those who are alike are associated together and those who are unlike are dissociated. Any one society in heaven therefore consists of those who are alike. Like are brought to like not by themselves, but by the Lord [which brings us back to the discussion of the proverb *Like will to like* above (no. 17)] ... and equally, consort to consort whose minds can be joined into one are drawn together; and consequently at first sight they inmosty love each other, and see themselves to be consorts, and enter into marriage. For this reason, **all marriages in heaven are from the Lord alone**. They have also marriage feasts; and these are attended by many; but the festivities differ in different societies.”

In this case we again observe the same features like in the cases discussed earlier. The first thing that may strike the reader is that in the theological description the proverb is used literally. What is added is the indispensable condition which makes these marriages possible: the perfect unity of mind and soul between the lovers: “Conjugal love is willing what another wills, thus willing mutually and reciprocally (2 731 AC).” It follows from this explanation that the marriages on earth that are between different and conflicting partners are entirely ruled out. Swedenborg often reiterates in his books, that at the present time and age (the 18th century) such heavenly marriages barely exist on earth and that the ones that do exist are not true marriages but mostly social or business contracts.

An even more enlarged and detailed explanation of the same proverb can be found in section 228 (20) of the book *Divine Providence* (DP) that can at the same time serve as an appropriate explanation of the phrase *love at first sight* (P.A.) (22): “For people who desire truly conjugal love, the Lord provides similar partners, and if they are not found on earth, He provides them in

heaven. This results from the fact that **all marriages of truly conjugal love are provided by the Lord**. [...] The Lord's divine providence is most specific and most universal in connection with marriages, because all delights of heaven flow from the delights of conjugal love, like sweet waters from a gushing spring. It is therefore provided that conjugal pairs be born, and they are raised and continually prepared for their marriages under the Lord's guidance, neither the boy nor the girl being aware of it. Then, after a period of time, the girl – now a marriageable young woman – and the boy – now a young man ready to marry – meet somewhere as though by fate, and notice each other. And **they immediately recognize, as if by a kind of instinct, that they are a match, thinking to themselves as from a kind of inner dictate, the young man, “she is mine”, and the young woman, “he is mine”**. Later, after this thought has for some time been settled in the minds of each, they deliberately talk about it together and pledge themselves to each other in marriage. We say as though by fate, by instinct and as from a kind of dictate, when we mean by Divine providence, that is how it appears. For the Lord unveils their similarities so that they notice each other.” This section adds another slant to the idea of the sacred and divine character of true love – its romantic nature, which has been the subject of innumerable works of art. Swedenborg succeeds in elevating the love between a man and a woman to new and greater, cosmic heights. For him, sexual love is not just a union meant to produce children, but a perfect union between two souls glorifying God. He often repeats that in heaven married couples do not have children. Instead, they work together in love to create spiritual fruits.

Close in meaning to the proverb about married love above is the phrase *my better half* (Kunin) (23), meaning “my husband or wife”. We find an explanation of the idea of the wholeness and completeness of the married couple together with a literal wording of the phrase in section 367 (HH), here quoted in full: “Marriage in heaven is a conjunction of two into one mind. It will first be explained what this conjunction is. The mind consists of two parts, one called the understanding and the other the will. When these two parts act as one they are said to be one mind. In heaven the husband acts the part called the understanding and the wife acts the part called the will. When this conjunction, which belongs to man's interiors, descends into the lower things pertaining to the

body, it is perceived and felt as love, and this love is conjugal love. From this it is clear that conjugal love has its origin in the conjunction of two into one mind. This in heaven is called cohabitation; and it is said that **they are not two but one. So in heaven a married pair is spoken of not as two, but as one angel.**"

Although in this excerpt we don't see the word "half", it is implied by the word "one" in the collocation "one angel", which denotes a unity made up of a man, who is the intellectual half, and a woman – the part of the will, implying love, affection and other related emotions. In Swedenborg's theological system, these two halves complement each other and build one single whole, called an angel.

The same phrase is repeated and explained further in section 52 of the book *Conjugal Love* (CL): "[...] **married couples in heaven are not two but one angel.** Therefore, by the conjugal union they fulfill themselves with respect to their humanity, which is to want to be wise and to love what has to do with wisdom." Here, one more aspect is added to the idea of unity and oneness – the shared aspiration of the husband and wife towards wisdom.

We see the same phrase explained from still another perspective in section 50. 4 (CL): "A man is then given a suitable wife, and a woman, likewise, a suitable husband. This is because the only married couples who can be accepted into heaven so as to remain there are those who have been inwardly united, or who can be united as though into one. **For married couples in heaven are not called two but one angel.** This is meant by the Lord's words, that they are no longer two, but one flesh. The reason these are the only married couples who can be accepted into heaven is that they are the only ones who can live together there, that is, who can be together in the same house and in the same bedroom and bed. For all those who are in heaven are associated to the infinities and the close similarities of their love, and their homes are determined accordingly. This is because there are no dimensional spaces in the spiritual world, but they have appearances of spaces, and these appearances are determined according to the states of their life, and their states of life are determined according to the states of love. Consequently, **no one in the spiritual world can stay anywhere but in his own house, which is provided and appointed to him according to the nature of his love** [this sentence brings associations with proverbs about home, such as *East or west,*

home is best and *Home, sweet home*"]. If he stays anywhere else, his chest labors and he has difficulty breathing. By the same token, two people cannot live together in the same house unless they are likeness of each other. And they cannot live together at all as married partners unless their feelings for each other are mutual. If these feelings of attraction are external and not at the same time internal, the very house or place separates them and drives them away." As can be seen from the excerpt, the subject content of this explanation is an enlarged version of the phrase *my better half*, for it not only stresses literally that the married couples in heaven are one angel, but also gives a lot of detailed information about the kind of unity and oneness that can make two people a true married couple. At the same time it provides the reader with a lot of factual knowledge of the heavenly worlds, which Swedenborg claims to be well familiar with.

The metaphorical proverb *Love makes the world go round* (OCDP) (24) meaning "love is the driving force in nature" was found in section 34[3] of the same book, *Conjugal Love* (CL): "But even though love is so frequently mentioned, nevertheless scarcely anyone knows what love is. Whenever someone meditates on it, he cannot then form for himself any idea in his thought about it, thus he cannot bring it into the light of his understanding, because it is not a matter of light, but of warmth [light in Swedenborg's doctrine corresponds to wisdom, intelligence and reason, while warmth corresponds to love, affection and will]. Therefore, he says either that love is not anything, or that it is merely some stimulus flowing in through his vision, hearing and social interaction, which thus affects him. He doesn't know **that love is his very life, not only the general life in his whole body and the general life in all his thoughts, but also the life in every single particle of them.** The wise person can perceive this from considering the following proposition: If you take away the impulse of love, can you form any thought? Or can you perform any action? In the measure that the affection belonging to love cools, is it not true that in the same measure thought, speech and action cool? And the warmer the affection grows, the warmer they grow? Love, therefore, is the warmth in a person's life or his vital heat. The warmth of the blood, its redness, have no other origin. The fire of the angelic sun, which is pure love, causes it." In this excerpt love is shown to be the vital energy that keeps life going. Swedenborg

often explains that physical nature, including the physical sun, is dead and that it is only due to God's love and wisdom that it is infused with life and kept alive and in constant motion. The same idea is repeated in section 46 (DLW), "nor can they [the blind in spiritual things] think otherwise of **love and wisdom**, or at all realize that **they are the source of all things in nature**", as well as in 52 (DLW), "**All things in the universe were created by the divine love and wisdom of God-Man.**" While the first part in bold just above is a paraphrase of the proverb, the second part stresses expressly the role of love united with wisdom, which emanate from the Lord (223.13 CL) and act as creators of the universe. The same proverb is literally repeated and explained once more in section 392 of the book *Divine Love and Wisdom* (DLW): "These two vital motions, the cardiac and the pulmonic, exist and persist because the whole angelic heaven, both in general and in particular, experiences them. And the whole angelic heaven experiences them because the Lord from the sun where He is, which is an emanation of Him, communicates them. That sun transmits these two motions from the Lord; and as all things in heaven and on earth depend on the Lord's operation through that sun, and stand in a relation to each other due to their form, like the parts of a mechanism which are arranged in series from first to last, and as **the life from love and wisdom is from Him, and all the forces of the universe derive their life from His love and Wisdom**, it is plain that these two motions have no other origin; and it follows that their variations take place according to the reception of love and wisdom."

This passage explains somewhat laboriously and in a peculiarly mechanistic way how the universe is kept in constant motion. Swedenborg the anatomist, inventor, engineer and mathematician, being a true exponent of the Age of Reason, offers many similar disquisitions in his books. Here he lays special stress on the unity of God's Love and Wisdom, which alone can maintain life in the whole universe and in all its parts.

Finally, there also exist proverbs about jealousy (**25**), for example *Without jealousy, there is no love* and its variants, *Love is never without jealousy* (DAP) and *Where there is no jealousy there is no love* (Askideas), which are given a very interesting transcendental interpretation in Swedenborg's book *Conjugal Love*, one of his latest and most mature creations. In it, Sweden-

borg the psychologist defends jealousy as a perfectly legitimate expression of love, giving all of the underlying spiritual reasons for this claim. His disquisitions on the topic cover several pages, so I am going to quote only the most prominent parts of his argument: “Jealousness...may be just or unjust. Jealousness is just in married couples who love each other. In them, it is a just and prudent zeal to keep their conjugal love from being violated, and a just anguish therefore if it is violated. An unjust jealousy...is found in people who are by nature suspicious, and who, from a viscosity and biliousness of blood, suffer a sickness of the mind. [...] [J]ealousness as a term derives from the same root as *zeal* [italics added; this linguistic statement is, indeed, correct, at least as regards English (cf. Longman)], with a suffix (-ness) denoting quality; [...] Viewed in itself, zeal is, so to speak, the fire of love set ablaze. [...] Jealousness is a kind of blazing fire against those who attack the love shared with a married partner, and a kind of trembling fear at the thought of losing that love. Jealousness is spiritual in character in monogamists, and natural [pertaining to the man’s proprium and therefore evil] in character in polygamists. [...] One finds jealousy also in regard to mistresses, but not such as arises in regard to wives. Jealousness is also found in animals and birds.” 357 (CL) And further: “When they [people] speak of being zealous and acting from zeal they mean nothing else but an intensity of love. [...] For it is the nature of all love to erupt into indignation and anger, even into rage, whenever it is dislodged from its delights. So it is that when love is interfered with, especially a governing one [i.e., the ruling love that defines and sustains a person], there results a disturbance of the mind. And if that interference does injury, it becomes a white-hot fury. It can be seen from this that zeal is not the highest degree of love, but that it is love set ablaze. When one person’s love finds a corresponding love in another, they are like two confederates; but when one person’s love rises up against another’s love, they become as enemies. The reason is that love is the very being of a person’s life. Consequently, anyone who attacks another’s love, attacks his very life; and this results in a state of white-hot fury against the attacker, like the state of anyone, who encounters another trying to kill him.” (358.1, CL) As can be seen from these two excerpts, Swedenborg equates jealousy with the legitimate state of mind arising in someone who protects his love and therefore himself

from mortal danger. But jealousy seems to have still another aspect that has to do with afterlife and eternal happiness: “In married partners who love each other tenderly, jealousy is a just anguish in accord with sound reason, that their conjugal love not be sundered and thus perish. Every love carries with it a fear and anguish – a fear of its perishing, and anguish if it does. The same is true of conjugal love [...]. Such a zeal in married partners who love each other tenderly is just and in accord with sound reason, because it is at the same time a fear of losing eternal happiness, not only one’s own, but the partner’s as well, and because it is a protection against adultery. [...] [This follows] from the fact that from conjugal love comes the blessedness of their [the partners’] souls, the happiness of their minds, the delights of their breasts, and the pleasure of their bodies. And because these continue for them in eternity, it is a fear for the couple’s eternal happiness. That such a zeal is a just protection against adulterous affairs, is obvious. On that account it is like a fire blazing out against any encroachment and protecting itself against it. It is apparent from this that **anyone who loves his partner is also jealous**, but justly and soundly so, in the measure of man’s wisdom.” (371.9 CL) Apart from the almost literal repetition of the proverbs about jealousy, this last excerpt also adds some important information about the dangers that may beset the love of the married partners not only in this life, but also in afterlife. The author dwells on the idea of eternity, where happily married couples continue sharing the blessedness of their love, but only on condition that it has been kept intact and they were true to one another while they were still in their physical bodies. What these excerpts do not tell us, is what happens to the married couples who are estranged and do not love each other, which however is explained elsewhere at great length multiple times in Swedenborg’s books.

Many more cases can be added to our discussion, for Swedenborg’s books do abound with diverse allusions to many proverbs and phrases, if one chooses to look closer. But the twenty five cases presented here should be quite sufficient for us to conclude that there is a lot of similarity in each of the analyzed couples and that in all of the cases Swedenborg’s theological interpretations of the proverb or phrase are significantly enlarged and developed in much greater detail and from a different and very original perspective.

These examples also suggest that there exists an enduring although not immediately obvious bond between some of the common proverbs of the people and the esoteric wisdom stored in the sacred books of humanity and their hermeneutical interpretations by men like Swedenborg. Whether this bond derives from common origin or we are dealing with instances of polygenesis, we still do not know. All we can say at this stage in our research is that proverbs have their own widely familiar meanings that are played out repeatedly in various situations in our everyday life, but their specific, transcendental interpretations in wisdom literature do reach astounding heights. We can start unraveling these sacred meanings only after we acquaint ourselves with the works of some long-forgotten man of genius like the Swedish philosopher, theologian and visionary Emanuel Swedenborg. Only when we place them in the context of his descriptions of a transcendental plane of existence where they seem to belong and from which they have probably originated, can these humble reminders of ancient wisdom reveal their true value, dazzling us with their striking brilliance and astounding magnificence.

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