

Sketch of a Theism

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www.newdualism.org/papers/I.Thompson/theism-sketch.htm

Prerequisite: A Dualism of Discrete Degrees

On the basis of some idea of discrete degrees, as [discussed earlier in more detail](#), we proceed to a presentation of the main ideas of a theistic science.

1. Divine Structure

In the beginning there was God:

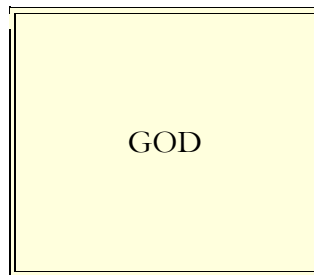


Figure 1

God is **Life Itself**, and this life consists of (1) Love, (2) Wisdom, and (3) Use. All these are within God, and constitute a living being, so God is a person, whom we call the Lord God.

We can outline how the trinity of Love, Wisdom and Use within God is arranged:

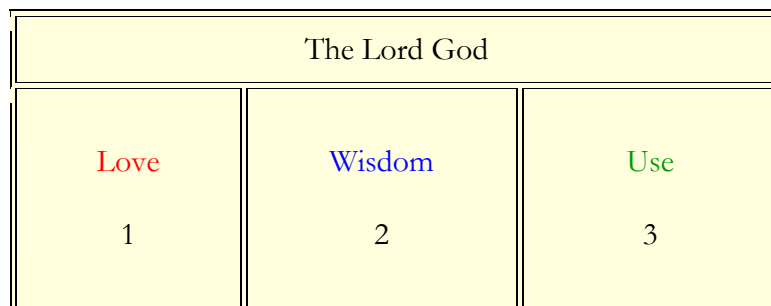


Figure 2

As well as seeing this *structure*, we should understand the *dynamics* of how this trinity operates:

1. Love, anticipating delights of Use, entertains *purposes* of producing these Uses. Love, having adopted a specific purpose, takes the form of Wisdom.
2. Wisdom, being Love with a particular purpose, entertains the *means* for achieving
3. those ends. Love and Wisdom together decide on a course of action.
4. Use, being produced by Love acting by means of Wisdom, is the ultimate *effect*. In this action, Love finds its satisfaction and delight with the results.
5. This delight returns to Love, and further manifestations of Loves are conditional on the effects already achieved.

The cyclic trinitarian pattern (1»3) with return (4) will appear in many other contexts below. (Usually, however, I will show *structure* which will only require degrees 1, 2 and 3; the return 4 only becomes relevant when we consider the dynamical operations of the structures.)

These three components are called *discrete degrees*. Swedenborg goes to great lengths to get us to distinguish such qualitatively distinct degrees from the continuous degrees that we see around ourselves in nature as one thing grades into another continuously.

A *person* has a *life* which is constituted by the operation of will and understanding in producing actions. The state of the will is the love, the state of the understanding is the wisdom, and the action is the use of the will and the understanding.

Humans on earth are not themselves Life Itself, but are created in the likeness and image of God, who has the structure of Life shown above. That is, we have been created from God, but are now separate from him to the extent that we are not Life Itself, but are the recipients of life from God. We have life, but received life is not divine, only a likeness of divine life. We have the above trinitarian structure as a consequence, and have that structure both as a whole personality, and all the sub-parts of our souls, minds and bodies. Thus, using the above structure, we can see how the structures of heaven, of minds and of nature are produced and animated by life from God.

2. THREE-FOLD STRUCTURES IN THE CREATED UNIVERSE

The created universe contains the likeness and images of Love and Wisdom, and receives Love and Wisdom to the extent that the created thing has the same functional form (use) as that of the source. Everything that exists does so because and only because it has *some* use. The dependence of reception on functional use is the *Law of Correspondence*, and derives from the Divine characteristic that "Loves are conditional on the effects already achieved", and will be explained in much more detail below (see also [Thompson\[1993\]](#)).

God:	Divine Love 1	Divine Wisdom 2	Divine Use 3
correspondence:	↓	↓	↓
Creation:	Likeness of Love 1	Image of Wisdom 2	Ultimate Effects 3

Figure 3: Three degrees, divine and natural in correspondence.

Let us now concentrate on the creation side of reality, and explore it in more detail. We use new names without capital letters to refer to the received life:

Creation:	love: entertainment of purposes 1	wisdom: entertainment of means 2	effects: production of nature 3
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Figure 4: Results in creation of correspondence with the divine.

Since created things have images of divine life by correspondence, we say that there is *divine influx* into those things. There is continual influx into all creation that is responsible not only for things coming to be, but also for their sustained existence from moment to moment (see [Thompson\[1991\]](#)).

We know this three-fold structure from Swedenborg by the other names of interior mind, exterior mind, and the natural world, or, most simply, *soul, mind and body*. The three stages can be also be viewed as `ends', `causes' and `effects', or `affections', `thoughts' and `actions' as more appropriate for minds, or some combination of these to claim a neutral language. We will see below the needs for these different sets of names.

Creation:	interior mind:	exterior mind:	natural world:
	entertainment of ends, affections in soul.	entertainment of causes, thoughts in mind.	production of effects, actions in body
	1	2	3

Figure 5

3. RECURSIVE STRUCTURE

'Recursive' means that the same rules apply to the whole as to each sub part. This arises because God is equally present in all of us, and in each part of us. (Of course, the functional forms of the whole and the parts are very different, and hence by the Law of Correspondence the received lives will be very different.) This means in particular that the interior mind, the exterior mind and nature all have *themselves* a threefold substructure and subdynamics that arise because they are all created and sustained in the image of a trinitarian structure within God. My main purpose of this present paper is to elucidate this recursive trinitarian substructure in the external mind and in nature ([Thompson\[1988b\]](#)). An internet illustration of recursive substructures may be given using [nested frames](#).

Let us therefore take the creation structure of the 'units' in Fig. 5, and determine the substructural 'thirds' that should be present:

interior mind:	exterior mind:	natural world:
1. ends	2. thoughts	3. effects
ends of ends: 1.1 (affections for ends)	thoughts of ends: 2.1	effects of ends: 3.1
ends of thoughts: 1.2 (affections for thoughts)	thoughts of thoughts: 2.2	effects of thoughts: 3.2

ends of effects: 1.3 (affections for effects)	thoughts of effects: 2.3	effects of effects: 3.3
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Figure 8: The 9 created degrees with brief systematic names and systematic numbering.

Now we must think ourselves what each of these substructures means, using our own knowledges and experiences (and revelations where necessary) to identify all of the individual parts:

- ▀ In the third column, 'effects' are clearly physical events, but 'effects of thoughts' and 'effects of ends' are not so easily identified. The 'effects of thoughts' appear to be scientific laws which define the natural means for the production of events, and the 'effects of ends' appear to be the first principles in nature that allow it to receive controlling influx from God (Divine Providence) and from minds (for the connection between minds and nature).
- ▀ The second column is the easiest from the psychological point of view, if we work backward from 'effects' being physical events. 'Thoughts of effects' are clearly sensory impressions in the mind, and 'thoughts of thoughts' are an indication of the kinds of logical abstractions and self-awareness that come with scientific and philosophical knowledge. 'Thoughts of ends' are more advanced processes, in which we consider and deal with moral and ethical knowledge of loves and purposes. These three stages are called by Swedenborg the 'sensual' mind, the 'scientific' (external rational) mind, and the 'internal rational' mind, respectively.
- ▀ In the first column, we can use Swedenborg's investigations of the heavens, and there we learn that people in the 'celestial heaven' work with the purposes of loves (ends of ends). Those in the 'spiritual heaven' work with the development and purposes of the understanding (ends of thoughts), and those in the 'spiritual-natural heaven' are work with the spiritual qualities of specific human actions (ends of effects). The three different heavens all desire, think and see content in these three different discrete degrees.

Using Swedenborg's terminology, we can redraw the above ennead as in Fig. 8:

interior mind: love 1.	exterior mind: understanding 2.	natural world: effects 3.
Celestial: 1.1	Internal Rational: 2.1	Reception ? : 3.1
Spiritual: 1.2	Scientific (External Rational): 2.2	Scientific Laws: 3.2
Spiritual-Natural: 1.3	Sensual: 2.3	Material effects: 3.3

Figure 8, version 2: The 9 created degrees with Swedenborg's terminology for the first 2 columns.

Let us take this process even further. The human mind is obviously complicated, and we must determine what we can deduce about its structure, and see if we can relate our deductions about the exterior mind with what has been seen and theorised by psychologists and philosophers in the past. We will look at the 3 subdegrees for each of the 3 degrees in the exterior mind.

The general pattern to be followed with these 'A of B' structures ('AB' in numerical form) is that the content in each case deals with degree B, and is appearing in level A. That is, content is present in level A that either comes from (or deals with) degree B. Note that the word 'of' does not itself determine the logical order of connection, since we speak both of 'parent of the child' and 'child of the parent'. Further information is therefore required to ascertain the meaning of the 'of' connective in 'A of B'. In this paper, I choose the order that *the first degree given is what first appears, and that later degrees describe what is 'hidden', namely the details of either the aim or content or origin of what first appears.* For that reason, the numerical point is inserted after the first number, so that the fractional numbers act as qualifiers, in accordance with standard mathematics. I allow above 'aim or content or origin' in order to allow whatever causal or logical connections are demanded by the degrees under consideration. These are: (1) affections for (aims), (2) thoughts about (content) and (3) effects from (origins).

The wording with the triply-nested 'ninth' structures follows the same principles, so that 'ABC' in numerical form is written as 'A of B of C', and is an abbreviation for 'A of (B of C)'. If B comes from C and then A comes from B, this is 'A from (B from C)', which means that content is present in degree A that appears to come from degree B but in fact originates in degree C.

To start with, we hence look at the 3 subdegrees for each of the 3 degrees in the exterior mind. We look therefore at the `ninths' within the `thirds' already discussed:

interior mind: love 1.	exterior mind: understanding 2.			natural world: effects 3.
Celestial, ends of ends: 1.1	Internal Rational: 2.1			Reception, effects of ends : 3.1
	Thoughts of ends of ends: 2.11	Thoughts of ends of causes: 2.12	Thoughts of ends of effects: 2.13	
Spiritual, ends of thoughts: 1.2	Scientific (External Rational): 2.2			Scientific Laws, effects of thoughts: 3.2
	Thoughts of causes of ends: 2.21	Thoughts of causes of causes: 2.22	Thoughts of causes of effects: 2.23	
Spiritual.- Natural, ends of effects: 1.3	Sensual: 2.3			Material effects, effects of effects: 3.3
	Thoughts of effects of ends: 2.31	Thoughts of effects of causes: 2.32	Thoughts of effects of effects: 2.33	

Figure 9: The 9 created subdegrees within the exterior mind.

Now we have our work set out for us, to determine what all these things mean! Fortunately, however, we can exploit previous logical and psychological investigations, and we have already at hand some 9-fold maps that match up almost exactly with the 3*3 series (2.11, 2.12, 2.13; 2.21, 2.22, 2.23; 2.31, 2.32, 2.33) in the middle of Fig. 9. The reason that psychological theories are directly useful, is that cognitive development of children starts with the simplest degree (2.33), and proceeds via 2.32 and 2.31 to the external rational degree. Piaget, for example, as categorised levels of cognitive development, and we will use his names for stages were possible. The logical patterns are derived from [Thompson\[1990\]](#).

- **Thoughts of effects of effects: 2.33 (effects » effects » thoughts)** If we reword this as `thoughts of effects of actions', then we see that this degree contains the sensations and perceptions from the senses. In Piaget's *sensorimotor stage* (0-1 years) the child is deals with sensations, which are the prerequisites for any cognitive development.

- **Thoughts of effects of causes: 2.32 (cause » effects » thoughts)** The causes of sensation effects are the *objects* of the world., and this degree allows ideas of constant and permanent physical objects.
- **Thoughts of effects of ends: 2.31 (ends » effects » thoughts)** After ideas of objects, the next stage deals with the processes and events undergone by these objects, so the child has ideas for sentences, and of simple relations between objects. Piaget calls this the *preoperational* stage, 2-6 years, as containing what he calls preconceptual and intuitive components.
- **Thoughts of causes of effects: 2.23 (effects » causes » thoughts)** This degree is the simplest in the external rational. Piaget has identified how rationality begins at ages 7-11 with the concepts of 'reversible operations', and calls this the *operational* stage. Conceiving of operations is the simplest way of thinking of causes of effects. Reversible operations are the logical prerequisites for any concepts of numbers, series, one-to-one correspondences and sets/classes. The operations, however, are all tied to concrete effects.
- **Thoughts of causes of causes: 2.22 (causes » causes » thoughts)** This degree clearly contains the beginning at typical ages of 12-16 of reasoning about causal chains and of theories of causes of event sequences. Piaget showed how at this stage operations can be considered as *formal* objects of thought, so that abstract plans become possible.
- **Thoughts of causes of ends: 2.21 (ends » causes » thoughts)** This degree was identified by Gowan[1972] as the *creative* stage, as an extrapolation of Piaget's cognitive levels. This degree allows the formulation of meta-theoretic notions, of thinking *about* theories, and discussion of the meaning, ends, interpretation and application of formal theories as if they were individual cognitive entities. These processes in late teenage years (e.g. 17-25 years, say) therefore enable thought about goals/ends as such, and indicate in interest in philosophical (or ideological) questions that go beyond formal problem solving of degree 2.22.

The degrees 2.23, 2.22 and 2.21 together constitute the *external rational*, because they enable independent rational thought. This thought, however, only deals with the external physical and logical worlds, namely only these degrees below and to the right in Fig. 9. The remaining three degrees (2.11, 2.12, 2.13) constitute the *internal rational*, because they are concerning with interfacing to the internal 'ends' degrees in the first column, and we need Swedenborg's insights for proper identification.

- **Thoughts of ends of effects: 2.13 (effects » ends » thoughts)** The cognitive content of this degree must be the discrimination of the practical effects of different ends/purposes as arising from different loves in degree 1. This occurs, according to Swedenborg, from following ones *conscience*, since the conscience leads to practical discriminations without giving the underlying reasons for the differences. This comes from influx from the spiritual-natural degree 1.3. [Gowan\[1974\]](#) called this the 'psychedelic' degree because it allows the intermittent input of psychical material that is normally unconscious, but this is not the best description of the normal modes of operation.
- **Thoughts of ends of causes: 2.12 (causes » ends » thoughts)** In this degree, there is progressively more insight into the structure and operation of ends/purposes/loves, as, Swedenborg explains, arising by means of influx from the spiritual heaven 1.2. This leads to progressive *reformation* of the understanding, what [Gowan\[1974\]](#) calls 'illumination'.

- **Thoughts of ends of ends: 2.11 (ends » ends » thoughts)** Here there are direct thoughts arising from the full understanding of how ends(likes) arise from other ends(likes), and the full development of this content results in *wisdom* concerning spiritual matters.

Combining these logical and psychological identifications of the nine subdegrees of the external mind, we can redraw the previous figure as:

interior mind: love 1.	exterior mind: understanding 2.			nature: effects 3
Celestial: 1.1	Internal Rational: 2.1			?: 3.1
	Wisdom: 2.11	Reformation: 2.12	Conscience: 2.13	
Spiritual: 1.2	Scientific (External Rational): 2.2			Scientific Laws: 3.2
	Creative: 2.21	Formal: 2.22	Operational: 2.23	
Spiritl.-Natural: 1.3	Sensual: 2.3			Material effects: 3.3
	Preoperational (events): 2.31	Objective: 2.32	Sensorimotor: 2.33	

Figure 10: Identification of the cognitive content of the 9 created subdegrees within the exterior mind, using terminology of Piaget and Swedenborg.

The implications for psychological theory of this pattern are discussed later.

4. DYNAMICS OF CORRESPONDENCES AND INFLUX

In all of the above sections, we have concentrated on the nested structure of subdegrees, and only mentioned in passing how this whole structure is supposed to work! That is, now we need to discuss the *dynamical* patterns of correspondences and influx.

First, we should remember that all these patterns originate because of the way Divine Love and Divine Wisdom produce in sequence Divine Use. I quote again from the first section:

- Love, anticipating delights of Use, entertains *purposes* of producing these Uses. Love, having adopted a specific purpose, takes the form of Wisdom.
- Wisdom, being Love with a particular purpose, entertains the *means* for achieving those ends. Love and Wisdom together decide on a course of action.

3. Use, being produced by Love acting by means of Wisdom, is the ultimate *effect*. In this action, Love finds its satisfaction and delight with the results.
4. This delight returns to Love, and further manifestations of Loves are conditional on the effects already achieved

The created world follows the same patterns, since its dynamics all originate with life received from the Lord God, who is the Divine Source. The dynamics of creating thus follows from influx from God:

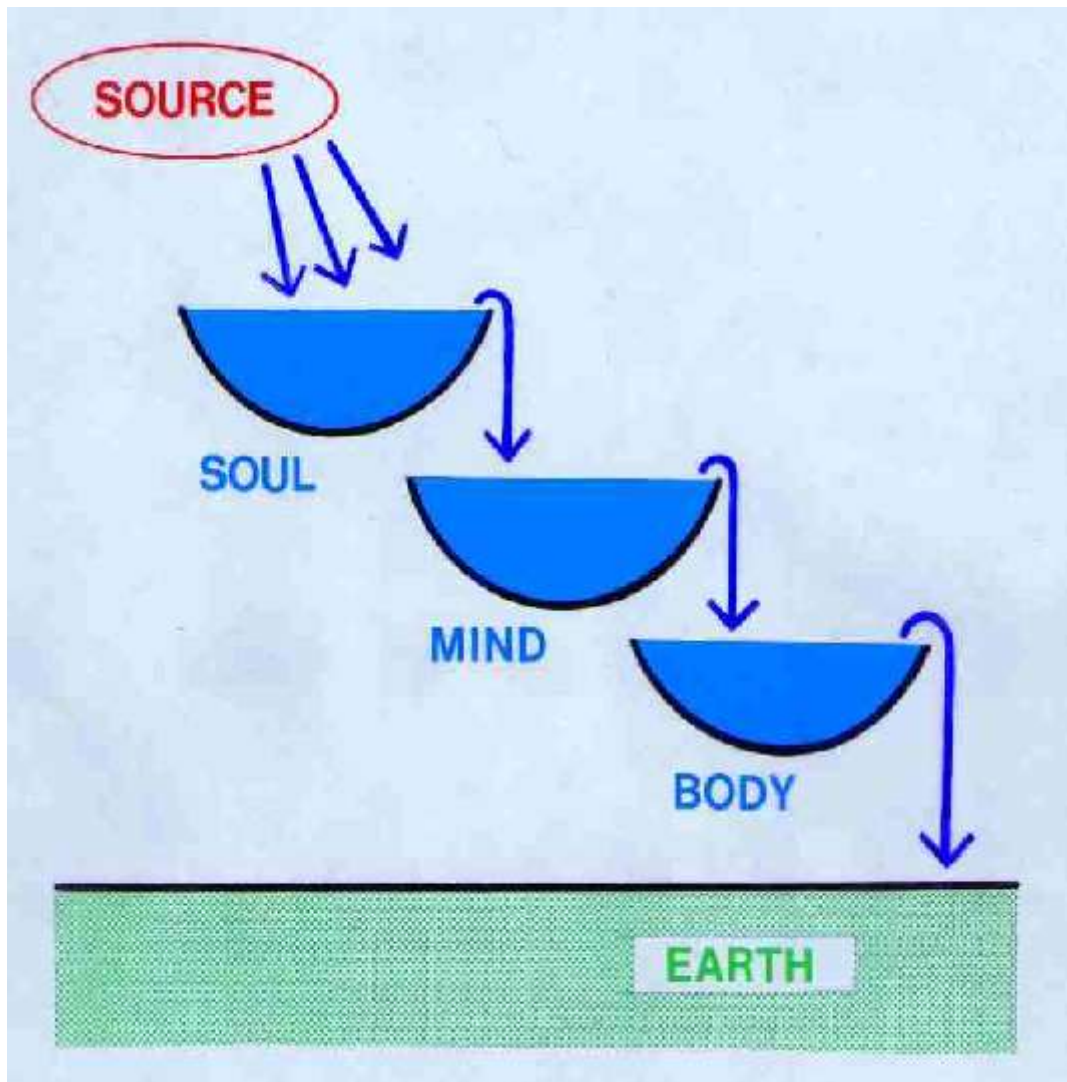


Figure 12

The created universe receives Love and Wisdom to the extent that the created thing has the same functional form as that of the source. This is the *Law of Correspondence*. It derives from the Divine characteristic that "Loves are conditional on the effects already achieved". Since different subdegrees have different functions, the correspondences work in different ways. Consider again in Fig 13 the basic 9-fold 3*3 subdegrees from Fig. 5.

soul 1.		mind 2.		body 3.
<u>Reception</u> ends of ends: 1.1 ↓	→	<u>Reception</u> thoughts of ends: 2.1 ↓	→	<u>Reception</u> effects of ends: 3.1 ↓
<u>Means</u> ends of thoughts: 1.2 ↓	→	<u>Means</u> thoughts of thoughts: 2.2 ↓	→	<u>Means</u> effects of thoughts: 3.2 ↓
<u>Executive</u> ends of effects: 1.3 ↓	→	<u>Executive</u> thoughts of effects: 2.3 ↓	→	<u>Final Effect</u> effects of effects: 3.3 ↓

Figure 13: The 9 created degrees showing the correspondence relations between them arising from influx. The operations underlined are the primary function of each degree.

Here, we show as underlined the primary function of each degree. Degrees 3.1's primary function is to receive influx from subdegrees 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 of the mind. Degrees 2.1's primary function is to receive influx from subdegrees 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 of the soul. Degree 1.1's primary function is to receive love from the Lord, in accordance with His trinitarian substructure shown in Figure 2. The thin right-pointing arrows show these influxes, called *receptive influxes*. The vertical down-pointing arrows show the normal productive processes.

The thick arrows connect those subdegrees that are performing similar functions: the 1.1, 2.1 and 3.1 degrees, for example, are all performing similar reception functions. The 1.2, 2.2 and 3.2 degrees all have the function of entertaining and planning means, whereas the bottom line degrees 1.3 and 2.3 have the executive role of carrying out plans. Degree 3.3 is the ultimate effect, whose role is to manifest permanent actions, and to return to the source the delights thereby achieved.

The two different kinds of influxes result in different kinds of connections between the earlier and later degrees. The thick arrows give rather *strict correspondences*, in which the functions of those related degrees are kept in rather good one-to-one correspondences. Because the final 'body' degree 3 is permanent, this kind of correspondence has the important function of maintaining many of the prior structures in the soul and mind. The thin arrows, on the other hand, show influx whose aim is to influence and control the reception degrees, and not so much to fix the structure of the source degrees. I call them *receptive correspondences* or *receptive influx*.

6. NATURE AND MIND

We must also consider in more detail the third column of 'effects', which constitute the physical world. The 3 subdegrees and 9 subsubdegrees within this ought to be related to what we already know about the physical world, in particular to what science (when properly formulated) tells us. Let us reproduce an earlier figure, now expanding the 3-degree into its 9 parts:

interior mind: love 1.	exterior mind: understanding 2	natural world: effects 3.		
Celestial, ends of ends: 1.1	Internal Rational: 2.1	Reception, effects of ends : 3.1		
		Product of ends of ends: 3.11	Product of ends of causes: 3.12	Product of ends of effects: 3.13
Spiritual, ends of thoughts: 1.2	Scientific (External Rational): 2.2	Scientific Laws, effects of thoughts: 3.2		
		Results of causes of ends: 3.21	Results of causes of causes: 3.22	Results of causes of effects: 3.23
Spiritual.- Natural, ends of effects: 1.3	Sensual: 2.3	Material effects, effects of effects: 3.3		
		Results of effects of ends: 3.31	Results of effects of causes: 3.32	Effects of effects of effects:3.33

Figure 14: The 9 created subdegrees within the natural degree.

Again we have our work set out for us, to determine what all these things mean! Fortunately, however, we can exploit previous logical and physical investigations, and we have already at hand the previous 9-fold of the exterior mind, to which all these correspond in some manner. I will not for now discuss the 3.1 (3.11, 3.12, 3.13) degrees, since these are completely unknown to our sciences. However, physics has already explored considerable detail of the 3.2 and 3.3 degrees and subdegrees, in particular *quantum physics*. First, we must remember that the intermediate results are not themselves the ultimate physical events, but more the *preparation* for such events: they provide, for example, the energy, the propensity or the circumstance for the final events.

- **LAWS (3.2): Results of causes of ends: 3.21 (ends » causes » results).** In the natural degree, the ends of causes are the general principles that guide the natural laws, such as general invariance requirements, and more specifically the '*variational principles* of least action for Lagrangians' that provide the starting point for many modern theories.
- **Results of causes of causes: 3.22 (causes » causes » results).** The first result of the variational principles are the *dynamic laws* which govern the propagation of 'bare' particles and quanta, according to formal laws of time evolution.
- **Results of causes of effects: 3.23 (effects » causes » results)** The next effect of the dynamic laws are *virtual events* of interactions of particles and quanta. These are reversible events whose role is the production of interaction potentials.

- **EFFECTS (3.3): Results of effects of ends: 3.31 (ends » effects » results).**
 The first effect of the interaction potentials are their interplay with kinetic *energy*, as expressed by the Hamiltonian operator in quantum physics. The operation of the Hamiltonian generates in the quantum context the time evolution of the wave function, as a direct consequence of energy balances.
- **Results of effects of causes: 3.32 (cause » effects » results)** *The wave functions* generated by the 3.31 degree describe physical objects and sequences of their behaviour, by means of a residual propensity for selections that may be probabilistic.
- **Results of effects of effects: 3.33 (effects » effects » results)** The final ultimate events are the selection of *actual outcomes* from the alternatives within the wave function. How this occurs is the 'quantum measurement problem', not fully solved yet; but note that the 2.33 degree (of sensory observations) corresponds with this selection process.

Combining these logical and physical identifications of the nine subdegrees of the external mind, we can redraw the previous figure as:

interior mind: love 1.	exterior mind: understanding 2	natural world: effects 3.		
Celestial, ends of ends: 1.1	Internal Rational: 2.1	Reception: effects of ends : 3.1		
		(reception of love): 3.11	(reception of thought): 3.12	(reception of decisions): 3.13
Spiritual, ends of thoughts: 1.2	Scientific (External Rational): 2.2	Scientific Laws: effects of thoughts: 3.2		
		Variational Principles: 3.21	Dynamic Laws: 3.22	Virtual Events: 3.23
Spiritual.-Natural, ends of effects: 1.3	Sensual: 2.3	Material effects: effects of effects: 3.3		
		Energy: 3.31	Wave Functions: 3.32	Actual Selections: 3.33

Figure 15. The 9 created subdegrees within the natural degree.

The implications for physical theory of this pattern are discussed later.

Concluding Remarks

The divine source does not produce all physical effects directly, but it produces via spiritual and natural stages what we see as *natural dispositions* or *natural propensities*. It is these dispositions or propensities, also known as causes, forces, potentials, quantum propensities) which lead to the ultimate physical interactions and events. The physical dispositions are a *very* limited 'remnant' of Divine Power, and Swedenborg describes how they operate in a way which corresponds to the characteristic operation of the Divine Love: by the patterns and sub-patterns we have seen above.

Correspondences of natural with spiritual things are also very useful to us, because we can use them to give a kind of definite and permanent form to our ideas of Love (which otherwise tend to be vague and nebulous). We have, for example, from Swedenborg the idea that "the Divine Love operates by means of Wisdom, to produce outgoing Spirit and actions". This *corresponds* to the pattern in the physical world, where "physical dispositions (energies and propensities) operate by means of interactions in spatial relations to produce physical effects". Love is *like* a disposition or physical energy or vibration, but is *not identical* to anything physical. Rather, we have many metaphors and analogies between the spiritual and the physical. To forget this, is to think physically and naturally of spiritual realities.

This page is extracted from an [accompanying paper](#) to a talk given to the Swedenborg Society, London, on 30 Oct 1999.