

It's Elephants All the Way Down

DWM Logopraxis Online Retreat - January 2024



The video of this presentation can be found here...

<https://youtu.be/ISQb2e75AKk>

"Elephants all the way down." What is that about? This is a title drawn from what I think is an ancient Indian tale or, maybe it's just a philosophical story. But, the idea is that a young adept comes to an Indian sage and asks the question, "What holds up the world?" And the Indian sage replies to his adept.

"Little one, what holds the world up are four elephants, each facing out from each other with the globe upon their backs." And the adept thinks about that for a little while. And then he says, "Master, what holds those elephants up?" And the sage replies and says, "Well, little one, what holds those elephants up are much bigger elephants. These elephants hold up the four original elephants and the globe that is upon those elephant's backs." The adept thinks for a little bit longer and then he says, "But master what holds those elephants up?" And the sage replies, "Well, little one, it's elephants all the way down."

So we're going to look at the nature of reality of what holds everything together from a spiritual point of view. And I'd like to open with a few quotes, two from the works of the Heavenly Doctrine and one from Scripture.

Since God is human, therefore the whole angelic heaven in its entirety resembles a single person. It is moreover divided into regions and provinces corresponding to the members, viscera and organs of the human anatomy. For there are societies in heaven which constitute the province of all the components of the brain, societies which constitute the province of all the organs of the face, and societies which constitute the province of all the viscera of the body; and these provinces are differentiated from each other just as the components in the human anatomy are. Angels also know in what province of the human anatomy they are.

*The whole of heaven is in this image because God is human. God, moreover, is heaven, because the angels who constitute heaven are recipients of love and wisdom from the Lord, and recipients are images.***(DLW 288)**

*It has been granted me to know from much experience, that man has communication with heaven by means of the Word. When I was reading through the Word from the first chapter of Isaiah to the last of Malachi, and the Psalms of David, keeping my thought fixed on the spiritual sense, it was granted me to perceive clearly that every verse communicated with some society in heaven, and that in this way the entire Word communicated with the whole of heaven. Thus it was evident that as the Lord is the Word, so also heaven is the Word, since heaven is heaven from the Lord, and the Lord by means of the Word is the All in all of heaven.***(TCR 272; see also AC 9406.2)**

*Wherefore do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet***(Luke 24:38-40).**

The Word is the Divine Human. It is the Lord. The Word is in the Human form which can be seen in that it has an internal and an external aspect to it. Its external is its letter which serves as the basis, support and foundation for its spirit which is its spiritual sense, its internal. The letter of the Word is the Lord's body within which is the Lord Himself or the Divine Love and Wisdom. So, when the Word speaks of body parts such as hands and feet, it does not mean the hands and feet of a physical body but spiritual hands and feet belonging to the Word which are functions of mind. The Scripture quoted above in directing the reader's attention to its "hands" and "feet," points to the internal and external meaning of the Word that deals directly with what is needed for the salvation of man or the regeneration of the human mind. By the hands are meant the power of the Word to regenerate the human mind by means of spiritual truths and by feet are meant the letter of the Word that lends support to those truths by making them available to the perceptive faculties of the natural mind via the senses.

By "flesh" and "bones" is meant the good and truth of the Word. The flesh of the Word is the good of love and its bones are the truths of faith through which we are able to perceive celestial and spiritual realities on the level of our natural comprehension. We can see this when we consider the correspondence of bones and flesh and their relationship. Bones support and give form to flesh just as truths give support and form to good. Again, the Gospel here is speaking of what belongs to the Word or Logos as Sacred Text and not of material flesh and bones belonging to a physical body. The Heavenly Doctrine indicates that this is the case in stating that after the Lord's resurrection those who saw Him did so due to having had their spiritual eyes opened. This is an important point to grasp. The resurrection of the Lord involves seeing Him not in the physical flesh and bones of bodily sight but in the corresponding goods and truths of spiritual sight. From a Logopraxis perspective spiritual sight is the ability to reconceptualise the Word anew, anatomically, as the Lord or the Divine Human. To see the Word as the Lord is what it means to have one's spiritual eyes opened.

The reason why the disciples saw Him was that their spiritual eyes were at that time opened; and when these are opened, the objects in the spiritual world are seen as clearly as those in the natural world. (TCR 793)

Now we might ask what are these spiritual eyes that enabled the resurrected Lord to be perceived?

It is said that "God opens the eyes" when He opens the interior sight or understanding; which is effected by an influx into man's rational, or rather into the spiritual of his rational. This is done by the way of the soul, or the internal way, unknown to the man. This influx is his state of enlightenment, in which the truths which he hears or reads are confirmed to him by a kind of perception interiorly within his intellectual.

*[2] That the "eye" signifies the understanding is because the sight of the body corresponds to the sight of its spirit, which is the understanding; and because it corresponds, in the Word the understanding is signified by the "eye" in almost every place where it is mentioned, even where it is believed to be otherwise...**(AC 2701)***

So to summarise this: *Spiritual sight is a state of enlightenment where truths are confirmed by a kind of perception interiorly within the intellectual faculty.*

If this is the case then spiritual eyes must be mental structures by which an awareness of spiritual or mental objects i.e., spiritual ideas, concepts, truths or principles is made possible. Spiritual eyes, as is the case with every other organ that forms a spiritual body, are composed of spiritual substances which are organised into a form suited to the performance of the required mental or spiritual functions related to our psychological life. If we hold that spiritual substance is mental or psychological then it follows that goods and truths from the Word are that substance or is that which is truly substantial. In the Heavenly Doctrine the term substantial is used in contrast to what is deemed non-substantial or material. The only things that are substantial from a spiritual perspective are organised (organic/living) forms (minds) made up of goods and truths from the Word. These forms of mind are what angels are. Substantial things are also called real things in the Heavenly Doctrine suggestive that the things of the world are not "real things."

*[2] That all things that are real have come into existence and do come into existence through the Divine truth that is from the Lord, and thus through the Word, is a secret that has not yet been disclosed.... The Divine truth proceeding from the Divine good [the Word] is the veriest reality and the veriest essential in the universe, and it is this that makes and creates ...it is the Divine truth proceeding from the Lord, the veriest reality and essential, that is the source of all things, and from which are the forms of good and of truth.**(AC 5272)***

When the Word speaks of creating or creation it isn't talking about the physical universe we see with our physical eyes, it's referring to the psychological universe that is brought into being through regeneration of the human mind by means of the

Word. Everything that is real in that mental universe is created from what is good and true. In other words it is a universe composed of mental substances that are organised so that they present to view to the awareness of spirits and angels as their sensory world. Now, if everything in the spiritual world is composed of spiritual or mental substances then this must also be true of spiritual bodies and their organs. Spiritual organs are composed of specialised goods and truths that are adapted to a specific use or function in the spiritual body in the same way that the organs of a physical body are composed of specialised cells organised and adapted to the functions of a material body. A spiritual body differs from a physical body in that it is a substantial body which means that it is composed of goods and truths. As such, a spiritual body can only be perceived with spiritual eyes or specialised goods and truths organised into concepts in the understanding that form an organ of perception (in other words spiritual "eyes") adapted to bringing the mental objects of spiritual sight to conscious awareness.

This organ of spiritual perception corresponds to physical eyes and like them is composed of many complementary structures, only these structures are mental or spiritual and not physical or material. The physical eye's components are made up of cells formed into structures that are necessary for sight. These structures include the cornea, lens, retina, and optic nerve, each playing a crucial role in capturing, focusing, and transmitting visual information to the occipital lobe of the brain where vision is processed. These physiological structures and their associated biochemical processes offer a corresponding representative image of the structures and processes involved in mental perception or spiritual (in)sight.

As has been said, spiritual structures are not composed of cells but of goods and truths. A spiritual organ is the form that supports the operation of psychological functions or processes. Spiritual sight has for its organ things that belong to the mind. In general we know by direct experience that how we see or understand things is governed by such things as the beliefs and attitudes we hold to, the mood or disposition that is active, the social and cultural influences that shape our sense of the world and our sense of place within it, our family of origin, our education and memories and so much more. The point is that all this has a bearing on how we see or understand things; it all goes into forming the complexity of cognition as the basis for our spiritual eyes. And what's true for the formation of spiritual eyes is also true for every other spiritual organ that makes up a spiritual body as well as its limbs including spiritual hands and feet and, spiritual flesh and bones. All of this is

substantial i.e., non-material, so is composed of goods and truths organised into forms tailored to perform essential spiritual or cognitive functions.

If we acknowledge that every element of a spiritual body consists of mental substances, it becomes apparent that a spiritual body is essentially a mental or psychological body. In this context, it is made up of affections and thoughts organised in a way that gives rise to various psychological activities that we experience as our thinking and feeling functions, i.e., our spiritual life. The Heavenly Doctrine is clear that all the biological structures and processes in the human body are representative of, and correspond to, spiritual or psychological structures and processes.

...as there is an invariable correspondence of all things of the mind with all things of the body the human mind is evidently formed in like ways. And from this it follows that the human mind is organized inwardly of spiritual substances, and outwardly of natural substances, and lastly of material substances. (TCR 38)

So where those physical structures and processes serve the life of the body so the spiritual body supports the functioning of our mental and emotional life. Given this perspective, we can ask what is being referred to when the Word employs anatomical language? We can certainly get a sense of what it might be in those teachings that deal with the Grand Human (Lat. Homo Maximus). In these teachings we have an image of heaven in the human form composed of countless numbers of societies also organised into the human form, with these societies being composed of angels who are also human in form. These angels, societies, and the Grand Human taken as a whole are in the human form because the whole and every part of the whole consists of goods and truths organised to perform specific cognitive and emotional functions that correspond to the anatomical structures and biological processes found in the human body. And regardless of the scale, whether it's an individual angel or a single heavenly society or a collection of societies of supporting functions or the Grand Human taken as a whole each and every form is a complete human form with nothing missing. And this makes sense when we consider that every good and truth of which this spiritual universe is created traces its origin back to the Lord Himself. And so we have this from the work Heaven and Hell 460.

...every good and truth that goes forth from the Lord and makes heaven is in the human form; and this not only as a whole and in what is greatest, but also in every part and what is least; also that this form affects everyone who receives good and truth

from the Lord, and causes everyone who is in heaven to be in the human form in accordance with his reception of good and truth. It is in consequence of this that heaven is like itself in general and in particular, and that the human form is the form of the whole, of every society, and of every angel to which let it be added that it is the form of the least things of thought derived from heavenly love with the angels.

This number presents us with a holographic conceptualisation of the human form. The leading idea being that every part contains the whole thus is fully human in its form without anything missing. We are conditioned to think of wholes as the product of component parts which would seem to foster an underlying potential for fragmentation, perhaps this way of thinking is what underpins aspects of what the Heavenly Doctrine refers to as "faith alone." But whether that's the case or not this number suggests a very different way of conceiving of wholeness and what it means to be human and it has to do with how closely any given part is also the whole. The basis for this structure is the Lord Himself which can be seen in the following number from the work True Christian Religion 364...

[3] ...the Lord is omnipresent, and where He is present, there He is with His whole essence. It is impossible for Him to take anything away from that essence, so as to give a part to one and another part to another, but He gives it in its entirety, enabling a person to take a little or much.

Every good and truth is in the human form because every good and truth is from the Lord who is the Divine Human or Word. Every good with its truths holds within it the Lord in fulness and so is in the human form. There is no such thing as disembodied goods and truths, in other words there are no goods and truths that exist outside of human minds. Goods and truths are celestial and spiritual realities, they are real things, and as such are organised into celestial and spiritual forms of minds i.e., all goods and truths in the heavens are organic living human forms that present to view as angels within which heavenly qualities, reflective of the Lord, shine forth to view.

Now heaven understood as the Grand Human is composed of goods and truths from the Word that are formed into angelic minds or angels, who are in communities related to each other on the basis of the similarities of loves. These loves find expression through innumerable functions that constitute the operation of the collect human mind, the Grand Human. That same mind is found in all in heaven and gives rise to every angel's experience of heavenly states of mind with all its objects. The objects that make up an angel's sensory world, whether landscapes, houses,

paths, trees, birds, animals etc., are all mental objects formed from goods and truths from the Word. They are substantial or mental objects in a representative sensory form. They are also called true appearances because the world angels experience without in their senses accurately represents the organisation of their interior world that brings this exterior spiritual world into being.

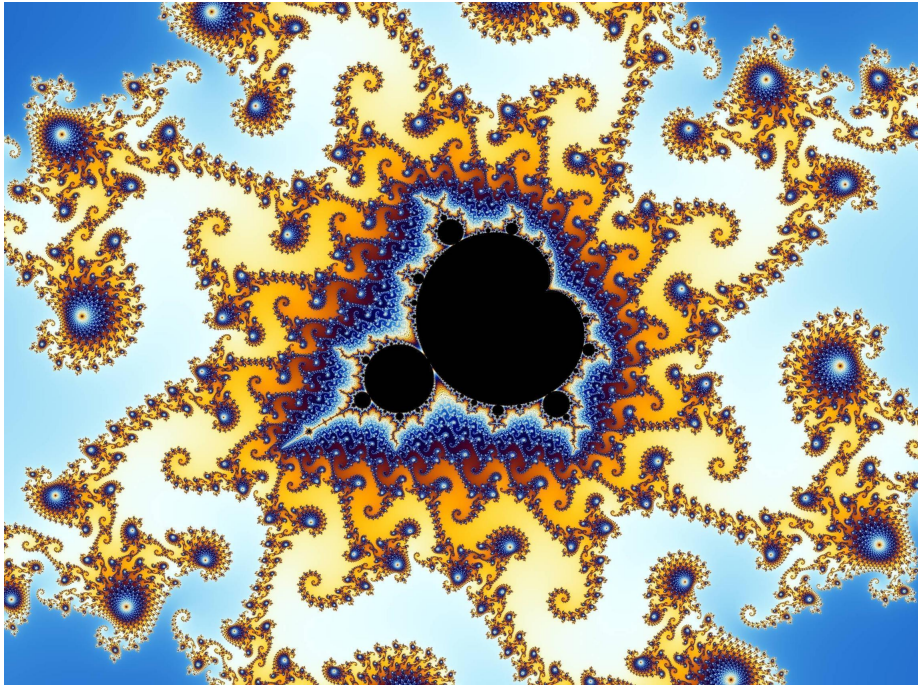
It is a spiritual law that no finite being is capable of generating a single thought and affection from themselves but that all receive their mental life through influx from spirits and angels present with them. Every thought and affection we experience arising in our minds is due to the presence of spirits and angels. The mental objects we experience as our thoughts and emotions are spirits with us that we experience as the psychological activity that constitutes our mental life. In the "other life," once we are freed from the bodily senses, these spirits are experienced directly and form the representative world we perceive around us. This is why the work of self-examination and repentance in relation to our thought and affectional life is so important. Through this inner world the Lord as the Word creates our mental world which takes form as sensory objects when we are no longer attached to a physical body.

So, coming back to this idea of holographic wholeness and its relationship to the human form. If goods and truths are in the human form and these goods and truths are the substance and form of all that exists in the heavens then it is quite possible that that world and everything in it consists of nothing else but angels and spirits for angels and spirits are goods and truths. A similar idea to holographic wholeness is found in the world of fractals. The term fractal-wholeness describes a structure in which the pattern of the whole is repeated in all its parts, potentially without end as parts within parts are unfolded. This structure seems to be repeated endlessly in nature from the form of galaxies all the way down to the humble fern as can be seen in the following video.

<https://youtu.be/Zh4oVYty61M>

While the fern exhibits a relatively simple fractal structure fractals are not limited to just simple patterns. In computer simulations of fractals the sequence can lead to very complex patterns before there's a return to the form the pattern began with as can be seen in this next video that uses a fractal pattern called the Mandelbrot set...

<https://youtu.be/ruRHhA2XXfg>



If we imagine the Mandelbrot image to be the Grand Human/Heaven or, the Word or, a single society of angels or, a single angel or, for that matter, a single good or truth we can perhaps get a sense of fractal-wholeness. Of how every part is within the whole and the whole is in each and every part. Now this gets really interesting if we take the image as a representation of you, more specifically a representation of your mind or you as a spirit or angel. It was mentioned previously that no finite being is the source of the thoughts and feelings they experience - it's all the result of influx due to the presence of spirits with us. But it is also true that those spirits with us that we experience as our psychological or mental life are also not the source of the affections and thoughts they experience as their mental life - no finite being is; in fact the very definition of finiteness is that which receives its life from another. The whole of the spiritual world which is made up of the mental life of angels, spirits, and human beings is structured so that each has a sense of self independent from others while being dependent on the whole for their mental life. The whole of course is not the sum of the parts but the Lord who, as the Divine Human, imparts the human form or pattern to each and every part.

*The mind of man is his spirit and the spirit is the man because by mind are understood all the things of man's will and understanding,... life is in the whole from every part, and in every part from the whole***(DLW 387)**

I want to take this a step further and expand on the idea that everything in the spiritual world i.e., the human mind, has as its substance what is of love and this is given form through wisdom. Or we could say that what is substantial is of the will

and the form or quality of the will is expressed as the understanding. But essentially a human being is nothing other than their will and understanding; we are, each and every one of us as to our spirit or essential self, the good and truth we make our own while in the world.

...when man is viewed in himself he is nothing but his own good and truth, because good is of his will and truth of his understanding, and man is such as his will and understanding are. (HH 350)

We have already seen that spirits are in the human form and have a body that is fully human in every aspect. The difference is that a spiritual body is a substantial body not a material body. A substantial or mental body has all the organs and systems of a physical human body only they are spiritual, which means that each organ or spiritual body system is composed of goods and truths or, affections and thoughts given to specific psychological functions needed for the life of the mind. Now goods and truths are angels and spirits. If you recall it was pointed out that there are no disembodied good and truths because all goods and truths, being from the Lord, are human forms, they are angels and spirits. Spiritual organs are ideas formed around specific loves to produce a use or function of the mind which, is to say that every spiritual body of every "individual" angel and spirit is made up of angels and spirits, whose spiritual bodies in turn are also made up of angels and spirits, whose bodies are also made up of angels and spirits and so on and so on, so that the whole is in every part reflective of fractal-wholeness.

...all spirits and angels are affections, the entire angelic heaven is evidently nothing but the love of all affections of good, and the consequent wisdom of all perceptions of truth. And as every good and truth is from the Lord, and the Lord is love itself and wisdom itself, it follows that the angelic heaven is His image. And as the Divine love and the Divine wisdom in their form are Man, it also follows that the angelic heaven cannot be otherwise than in such a form. (DP 61)



This presentation is entitled, It's Elephants all the Way Down. In fact, its clearly not elephants but angels and spirits or, goods and truths organised into human forms, all the way down. The whole is present in every part, because the Lord is in every part in fulness in every good and truth preceding from Him.

In the work Apocalypse Revealed 273 we have the following

(Revelation 5:7). And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, signifies that the Lord as to His Divine Human is the Word, and this is from His Divine in Himself

For the Word to be the Lord means that the Word is the Divine Human. As the Divine Human it clearly must be Human in form which means, at the very least, that it has every anatomical structure found in any other complete human form. One of the numbers we opened with stated that...

...just as the Word is the Lord, so too the Word is heaven, since heaven's being heaven comes from the Lord, and the Lord by means of the Word is the all in all of heaven.

(TCR 272)

Heaven is formed from the Word or, put another way, to be in heaven is to be in the Word and to have the Word in you. Truths and goods from the Word reorder the mind into a form that can receive the Lord. The Word becomes flesh when it is integrated into our lives - its goods and truths unite and develop to provide a new mind or a new will with new affections that generate a new understanding filled with heavenly forms of thought. This is what it means to be reborn spiritually and it all culminates in a deep set appreciation for the deeper meanings the Word offers in support of this "other" life.

So, where the Word uses anatomical language, it is seeking to direct the attention to the psychological structures and processes of the mind. And where it uses this language in relation to the Lord it is directing the mind to the Word Itself and, depending on the subject, whether hands or feet or flesh or bone, to those specific forms of goods and truths in the Word that are designed to fulfil the spiritual functions that correspond to the material hands and feet, or flesh and bone. The aim of all this is to provide the basis for the integration of these functions or organs into the fabric of our being so that we can be given a new mind that derives its sense of self from the goods and truths the Word offers as opposed to that sense of self that has been acquired from our contact with the world that takes the fallacies of the senses as the last word on what is real.

Perhaps we should now come back to the Luke account where we see in the narrative the Word working to redirect our attention in an effort to free our minds from a sense based understanding of the Lord's Human tied to the historical person of Jesus Christ to a deeper spiritual apprehension of the Word Itself as the Lord God Jesus Christ in His Divine Human.

*Wherefore do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet***(Luke 24:38-40).**

The movement from a more external understanding of the Word into a more internal understanding of things always comes with a level of doubt and questioning. So, we see here the Word addressing this vulnerable state with tenderness. It asks us, "Wherefore do thoughts arise in your hearts?" and then invites us to engage with it to see that the new meanings arising have substance to them. In some way this

pattern of interaction plays out each time we come to the Word over the course of a Logopraxis session cycle.

Just by way of example, if you remove the historical frame from the quote from Luke's gospel you come closer to the level of meaning that can be applied to our spiritual life. A key Logopraxis practice for engaging with the Word is to work to shift our thinking away from ideas of person, place, time and space. The spiritual meaning of the words of divine revelation have nothing to do with people or events in time. To read this particular quote historically or naturally is to understand it in terms of the person Jesus speaking to other persons (His disciples) in the past (time) in a particular place. None of that is helpful spiritually speaking because the attention is pulled outward into historical events and the more historicals occupy the mind the less what is spiritual or, the meaning related to our mental life is able to be grasped. This historical literal understanding of the Word entombs the Lord or the spiritual goods and truths that are needed to sustain the spiritual life. But how much richer and sustaining does the Word become when things of a historical nature drop away. What we see then is the Lord rising from the Word as a new understanding that describes how to deal with things belonging to our mental or psychological life. We come to see the Lord as the Word Itself.

It also needs to be restated that when the Word uses anatomical language is not referring to the physical limbs, organs or bodies of historical figures. It's referring to psychological or spiritual realities of the mind. If we remove the idea of person so that the name Jesus refers to the Word then clearly we have to make the same shift in meaning where His hands and feet or bones and flesh are concerned. These terms simply don't refer to physical limbs or to material bone and flesh.

To switch our frame of reference from historical events to a psychological state when reading the Text can be helped by applying the pronouns in this verse to the Word Itself as that which is speaking to us. The Word, the Logos, is always reaching out and saying what's stated here. It's inviting its reader to perceive the true nature of its "hands" and "feet." It urges the reader to let go of thinking of the hands and feet of a person in time; to see that the things spoken of in the Word relate to spiritual or psychological realities that apply in the here and now. That nothing in the Word of a spiritual nature relates to memories of past events. Such a reading merely entombs the spirit of the Lord.

The Word is speaking to those who have (spiritual) ears to hear; and it is saying that its hands and feet, the spirit and the letter of the Word is Divine. It states that "it is I Myself," i.e., it is the Lord Himself and it invites the reader to, "handle Me and see," where by "handle" is meant to engage with, to verify through first-hand experience (in LP terms to practise), for only then will one "see" or know for oneself the substantial nature of the inner world that engaging with the Word opens up. There are two Greek words in this passage translated into English using the word see. The first is used twice. It is found in the statement, "See my hands and feet" and again where it says "handle me and see." A different word is used in the phrase "as ye see Me have". The Greek word for the first two usages is a word that carries the idea of having first-hand experience of a thing. This last instance of "see" is a Greek word that means, "seeing as an observer or spectator" without personal engagement. This all describes the change in perception that arises when the Word is engaged with as the basis for spiritual life as opposed to being something held at a distance. Only through engaging with the Text with a view to self examination and repentance where ones thoughts and affections are concerned can its life-giving meanings be elevated out of the historical tomb of a literal reading to become a river of life in ones life. May it be so for us all.