Anne Conway (1631-79)

Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy concerning God, Christ, and Creation, that is, concerning the Nature of Spirit and Matter, thanks to which all the Problems can be resolved which could not be resolved by Scholastic Philosophy nor by Modern Philosophy in general, whether Cartesian, Hobbesian, or Spinozian.

God ➔ Logos = Middle Substance = Christ ➔ Third Substance or Created World

1. “God is one and does not have two or three or more distinct substances in himself, and just as Christ is one simple Christ without further distinct substances in himself … so likewise all creatures, or the whole of creation, are also a single species in substance or essence, although it includes many individuals gathered into subordinate species and distinguished from each other modally but not substantially or essentially” (VI §4 (30-31))

2. The Tree of Life: Hayyim Vital’s Introduction to the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria, Volume 1: The Palace of Adam Kadmon / trans. Donald Wilder Menzi and Zwe Padeh (Jason Aronson, Inc.: 1999), 13. “You should know that before the emanations were emanated and the creations created, a most supreme, simple light filled the whole of existence. There was no vacant place, no aspect of empty space or void, but everything was filled by that simple light of the Infinite. It had no aspect of beginning or end, but was all one simple, completely uniform light, and that is what is called the light of the infinite [Eyn Sof]… And when He wished to create worlds and cause emanations, to bring into being His perfect works, … He then contracted [tzimtzum] Himself into the middle point, in the very center.”

3. God “is infinitely good, loving, and bountiful; indeed, he is goodness and charity itself, the infinite fountain and ocean of goodness, charity, and bounty” whose “living waters … overflow in its perpetual emanation and continual flux (II §4 (13)).

4. “In God is an Idea which is his image, or the word [verbum] existing within himself, … through which he knows himself as well as all other things and, indeed, all creatures were made or created according to this very idea or word” (I §6 (10)). This Idea is “the word” by which “God knows all things.” God brings “into actual being that which is only hidden in the Idea” (I §7 (10)).

5. “The ancient Kabbalists have written many things about this, namely, how the son of God was created; how his existence in the order of nature preceded all creatures; how everything is blessed and receives holiness in him and through him, whom they call in their writings the celestial Adam, or the first man Adam Kadmon” show was “was unified with the Divinity before the creation of the world and before his incarnation” (V §1 (23)).

6. Since God is infinitely good and communicates his goodness to all his creatures in infinite ways, so that there is no creature which does not receive something of his goodness, and this as fully as possible, and since the goodness of God is a living goodness, which possesses life, knowledge, love, and power, which he communicates to his creatures… every one of his attributes is alive, indeed, is life itself… There can be nothing [that is not alive] either in God or in creatures (VII §7 (44-5)).
7. “Since God does everything he can do, it follows that he has multiplied and always multiplies and increases the essences of creatures to infinity” (III §4 (16-17)).

8. “God made all tribes and troops of creatures from one blood so that they would love one another and would be bound by the same sympathy and would help one another. God has implanted a certain universal sympathy and mutual love into his creatures so that they are all members of one body and all, so to speak, brothers (VI §4 (31)).

9. Every creature is capable of “every kind of feeling, perception, or knowledge, even love, all power and virtue, joy and fruition” (IX §6 (66)).

10. Every “creature is capable of a further and more perfect degree of life, ever greater and greater to infinity, but it can never attain equality with God. For his infinity is always more perfect than a creature in its highest elevation” (Principles IX §7 (67)).

11. Even “dust and sand are capable of all these perfections through various successive transmutations which, according to the natural order of things, require long periods of time for their consummation” (IX §6 (66)).

12. The created world is a single substance with a single essence, which is called vitality…. That single substance is constituted of an infinity of creatures in infinitum, each of which is a mode of the third essence = vitality (and each of which is related to all the others through enhanced universal sympathy).

Each of these creatures will increase in vitality in infinitum, although there will be moments of decrease (i.e., a diminishing of vitality). Among other things, this means that all creatures have the same goals and the same capacities to fulfill those goals although some will take longer to develop their capacities to achieve them. In other words, each creature is a mode of vitality, each has all the same vital capacities and powers, and each strives toward perfection.

13. “It is the nature of creature … always to become more and more like the creator.” (VII §1 (42)).

Individual Creatures or Morals Matter

14. “Nor is there any difference between body and spirit” since each is “an excellent creature of God, having life and sensation, which belong to it either actually or potentially, except that body is the grosser part and the spirit the more subtle” (VII §4 (51)). That is, “the distinction between spirit and body is only modal and incremental, not essential and substantial” (VI §11 (39-40)). In fact, spirit and body have "the same essence and being,” they “can change into one another” (VI §11 (38)).

15. “There are many degrees of this so that any thing can approach or recede more or less from the condition of a body or spirit. Moreover, … the more spiritual a certain creature becomes … the closer it comes to God who, as we all know, is the highest spirit (VII §1 (41-42)).

16. “all creatures, or the whole of creation, are also a single species in substance or essence, although it includes many individuals gathered into subordinate species and distinguished from each other modally, but not substantially or essentially” (VI §4 (31)). She explains about these subspecies that
they “are nothing but individual entities subsumed under one general and common Idea of the mind or one common term” (VI §3 (30)).

17. “Hence one can infer that all God’s creatures, which have previously fallen and degenerated from their original goodness, must be changed and restored after a certain time to a condition which is not simply as good as that in which they were created, but better. The work of God cannot cease, and thus it is the nature of every creature to be always in motion and always changing” (VII §1 (42)).

18. Micraeius, *Lexicon Philosophicum* of 1653: A *mode* is the determination of a thing, by which a thing in one way or another obtains essence, e.g., actually or potentially. Therefore, a *mode* does not compose a thing, but distinguishes and determines it... [T]here can be many modes of a single thing ...; so things that differ in modes are not diverse in essence.”

19. Mode= animating power, capacities, which are related to its state of moral development

20. ...we must distinguish as carefully as possible how one species differs form another. For there are many species which are commonly said to differ, but nevertheless are not distinct from each other in substance or essence but only in certain modes or properties [*proprietates*]. And when these modes or properties change, the thing itself is said to have changed its species. But indeed, it is not the essence or being [*entitas*] itself but only its mode of being which thus changes. For example, water does not change but stays the same, although when cold it freezes, where it was fluid before. When water turns to stone, there is no reason to suppose that a greater change of substance has occurred than in the earlier example when it changed from water to ice. And when a stone changes back into softer and more pliant earth, this too is no change of substance. Thus, in all other changes which can be observed the substance or essence always remains the same. There is merely a change of mode [*modus*] inasmuch as the substance [*individual creature*] relinquishes one mode and takes on another (VI §3 (29-30)).

21. all kinds of creatures can be changed into one another,” so that the “lowest becomes the highest and the highest … becomes the lowest, according to the pattern and order which the divine wisdom has arranged so that one change follows another in a fixed sequence” (IX §5 65)).

22. Since “it is the nature of creature … always to become more and more like the creator,” every creature “is always able to become more and more spiritual” (VII §1 (42)). It is part of the order to things that they all do so “to infinity.” In every creature, there will be “various degrees of life, which have a beginning but no end. Thus a creature is capable of a further and more perfect degree of life, ever greater” (IX §6 (67)).

23. “For if a creature were … totally constrained and confined within the very narrow boundaries of its own species to the point that there was no mediator through which one creature could change into another, then no creature could attain further perfection and greater participation in the divine goodness, nor could creature act and react upon each other in different ways” (VI §5 (32)).

24. It should be noted here that although the spirit of man is commonly said to be a single thing, yet this spirit is composed of many spirits, indeed, countless ones; as the body is composed of many bodies and has a certain order and government in all its parts, much more so is the spirit, which is a great army of spirits, in which there are distinct functions under one *ruling spirit* (VII §3 (53)).

25. “Just as a body, whether of a man or brute, is nothing but a countless multitude of bodies collected into one and arranged in a certain order, so the spirit of a man or brute is also a countless
multitude of spirits united in this body, and they have their order and government, such that one is the principal ruler, another has second place, and a third commands others below itself, and so on for the whole, just as in an army. For this reason, creatures are called armies and God the leader of these armies” (VI §11 (39)).

26. This “central nature … has the ability … to enlarge and to shrink,” and “the impenetrability of creatures must be limited to their centers” (VII §3 (51)).

27. “Thus it happens that the soul of every human being will remain a whole soul for eternity and endure without end, so that it may receive proper rewards for its labor. The universal law of justice inscribed in everything requires this. This law is like a strong and unbreakable bond in keeping this unity” (VII §3 (55)).

28. As Conway makes the point, an individual human being cannot “be changed into another” because “if one man could change into another,… then he who sinned would not be punished for that sin but another in his stead who was innocent and virtuous. Thus a righteous man would not receive the reward of his virtue” (VI §2 (29)).

29. Conway is clear that: “the central spirit … remains indissoluble” and “can only be further advanced or diminished according to its current worthiness or unworthiness, capacity or incapacity” (VII §3 (55)). “Thus there is a certain mutuality between creatures in giving and receiving, through which one supports another so that one cannot live without the other” (VII §3 (55)).

30. “Now, the basis of all love or desire, which brings one thing to another, is that they are of one nature and substance, or they are like each other or of one mind, or that one has its being from another” (VII §3 (46)).

31. “the great difference between God and creatures” is that “he is one, and this is his perfection, namely to have need of nothing outside himself. But a creature, because it needs the help of its fellow creatures, must be multiple in order to receive this help. For whatever receives something is nourished by it and thus becomes part of it” (VII §3 (54)).

32. “Thus there is a certain mutuality between creatures in giving and receiving, through which one supports another so that one cannot live without the other” (VII §3 (55)).

33. There are “various degrees of life, which have a beginning but no end. Thus a creature is capable of a further and more perfect degree of life, ever greater” (IX §6 (67)).

34. “But the wisdom of God sees that … creatures may have the opportunity to attain, through their own efforts, ever greater perfection as instruments of divine wisdom, goodness and power, which operate in them and with them. For in this the creatures enjoy greater pleasure since they possess what they have as the fruit of their labor” (IX §6 (66)).