

What is Intelligence?

A few passages shared by the Rev. Stephen Cole in anticipation of the Community Supper on Artificial Intelligence

An important prerequisite for talking about *artificial* intelligence is to try to gain some clarity about what is meant by "intelligence," which is notoriously difficult to define. Here are some passages which might relate to a New Church perspective on the topic:

With people there is knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom. Knowledge is a matter of cognition; intelligence is of reason; and wisdom is of life. Wisdom, considered in its fullness is at the same time of things cognized, of reason, and of life; cognitions precede; through them reason is formed; and wisdom by both, and this when one lives rationally according to the verities that are cognitions. Wisdom therefore is at once of reason and of the life; and it is becoming wisdom while it is of reason and thence of life, and is wisdom when it has become of life and thence of reason. ([Married Love 130](#))

Conjugal love is peculiar to human beings, because none but human beings can become spiritual. They are able to raise their intellect above their natural loves, and from that height to look down on them and see them for what they are; they can also improve, correct and banish them. This is something no animal can do, for its loves are wholly one with its innate knowledge, so that this cannot be raised to the level of intelligence, much less wisdom. An animal is guided by the love implanted in its knowledge, like a blind man guided through the streets by a dog. ([Married Love 96](#))

This can be illustrated by the atmospheres, of which there are three degrees. The highest is the aura, beneath this there is the ether, and air below this; nor can any quality of the air be raised to any quality of the ether, nor this to any quality of the aura; and yet in each one the raising of perfections is possible to infinity. On the spiritual level, natural love, which is experienced by animals, cannot be raised to the level of spiritual love, which is implanted in human beings from their creation. It is the same with the natural intelligence of animals compared with the spiritual intelligence of human beings. ([True Christian Religion 32:8](#))

For no man is a man from his natural mind, being from this rather an animal; but he becomes a man by intelligence and wisdom from the Lord, and in proportion as he is intelligent and wise, in the same proportion he is a beautiful man, and an angel of heaven. In proportion, however, as he rejects, suffocates, and perverts the truths and goods of the Word, that is, of heaven and the church, and thence rejects intelligence and wisdom, he is so far a monster and not a man, because he is so far a devil. ([Apocalypse Explained 790:10](#))