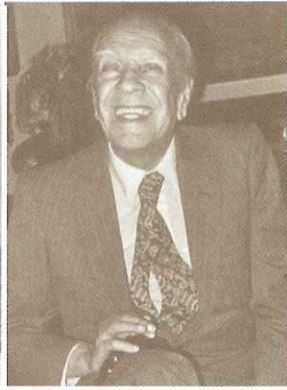


What Do These Thinkers Have In Common?*



August Strindberg



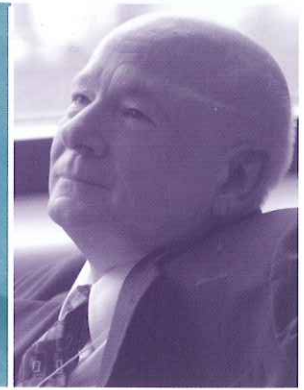
Jorge Luis Borges



Helen Keller



Johann von Goethe



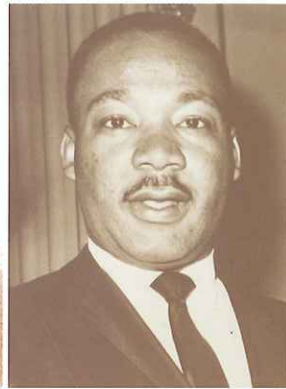
Dr. Raymond Moody



D.T. Suzuki



Ralph Waldo Emerson



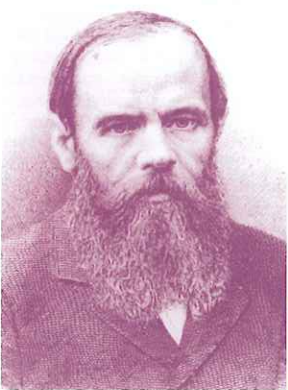
Dr. Martin Luther King



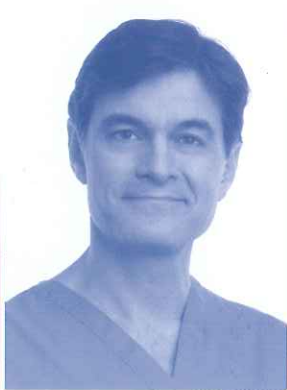
Czeslaw Milosz



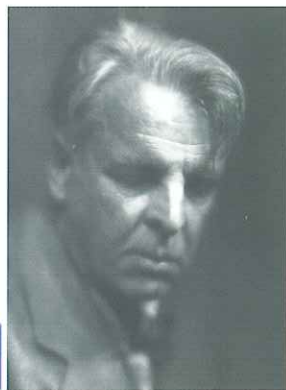
William Blake



Fyodor Dostoevsky



Dr. Mehmet Oz



William Butler Yeats



Elizabeth B. Browning



Honoré de Balzac

*All Were Influenced by Emanuel Swedenborg

Emanuel Swedenborg: The Swedish Da Vinci

Enlightenment Scholar

Born in 1688, Emanuel Swedenborg graduated from Uppsala University in 1709. His thirst for knowledge drove him in 1710 to England, where he read the works of Isaac Newton, replicated Robert Boyle's experiments, studied with Edmund Halley, and absorbed the poetry of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. Moving on to the University of Leiden, Swedenborg continued his scientific research under the influence of Anton van Leeuwenhoek. In 1714, his mastery of practical sciences yielded a first spate of inventions that included a submarine, an air pump, an air gun, a water clock, and a controllable glider.

Upon returning to Sweden, he invented devices to improve the productivity and safety of mining. A veritable Swedish da Vinci, Swedenborg formulated an atomic theory of matter, identified the function of the cerebral cortex and the ductless glands, wrote textbooks on algebra and calculus, founded the science of crystallography, and authored the leading work on metallurgy. Books on astronomy, chemistry, economics, and other topics flowed from his pen. Master of nine languages, he traveled widely in Europe. He was an active member of the Swedish parliament and a figure welcomed at the royal court. Yet, as D. T. Suzuki pointed out, he remained a "gentleman free of worldly taint."

Spiritual Empiricist

Like Isaac Newton, Swedenborg in midlife turned his attention from the physical to the metaphysical. A series

of spiritual experiences between 1743 and 1745 led him to believe that he had been divinely commissioned to write and publish books of biblical interpretation and topical theology. It is from these later works that Swedenborg's great influence springs.

His first and largest theological work, *Arcana Coelestia (Secrets of Heaven)*, is an original exegesis of Genesis and Exodus, elucidating the correspondence between their symbolic subtexts and human spiritual experience. "In the history of the rebellion of man against God and against the order of nature, Swedenborg stands out as a healer who wanted to break the seal on the sacred books and thus make the rebellion unnecessary," wrote Czeslaw Milosz.

Heaven and Hell, described by Gary Lachman in *Gnosis* as "one of the most fascinating guides to other worlds in the Western spiritual canon," was Swedenborg's next work. A series of influential books followed, including *Divine Love and Wisdom*, *Divine Providence*, *Marriage Love*, and his last published work, *True Christianity*, a summary of his theological doctrine.

Pervasive Influence

After Swedenborg's death in 1772, his influence spread throughout Europe. Both a church and a spiritual current were catalyzed by his thought. Artists, novelists, poets, musicians, and scholars turned to him for inspiration. Blake's poems and art and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* echoed his teachings. Thomas Carlyle said of him, "More truths are confessed in his writings than in those of any other

man," and Swedenborg's beliefs can be found interwoven in the poetry of Yeats.

Ralph Waldo Emerson extolled Swedenborg's thought in *Representative Men*, a seminal work of the Transcendentalist movement. Swedenborg's views on unitive social order played a key role in many nineteenth-century communitarian experiments, and his vision gave impetus to the New Thought movement. John "Appleseed" Chapman carried his books to frontier settlers; Henry James Sr. found in his works the only solace for a devastating depression. His ideas resonate in the poetry of Robert Frost and Ezra Pound, and Helen Keller cited his message as her "strongest incitement to overcome limitations."

Throughout the world, Swedenborg's insights had impact. Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki called him the "king of the mystical realm, clairvoyant unique in history, scholar of incomparable vigor." Jorge Luis Borges noted that "no one accepted life more fully, no one investigated it with a passion so great."

In every new generation, more great thinkers are inspired by Swedenborg. Martin Luther King wrote in the margins of an Emerson anthology, "Swedenborg enables us to have the best possible understanding of God's message as it exists in those Bible Books which constitute God's Word."

Swedenborg's immense influence is studied in detail in a special volume, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essays for the New Century Edition on His Life, Work, and Impact*.