

Thus it is possible for a few 'noble souls' in contemplating nature to find a certain mute pleasure and transitory calm.

The conclusion of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, written thirty years later, speaks directly to these early meditations:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me ... The former begins at the place I occupy in the external world of sense, and it broadens the connection in which I stand into an unbounded magnitude of worlds ... The latter begins at my invisible self, my personality, and exhibits me in a world which has true infinity but which is comprehensible only to the understanding – a world with which I recognize myself as existing in a universal and necessary (and not only, as in the first case, contingent) connection ... The former view of a countless multitude of worlds annihilates [vernichtet], as it were, my importance as an animal creature, which must give back to the planet (a mere speck in the universe) the matter from which it came, the matter which is for a little time provided with vital force, we know not how. The latter, on the contrary, infinitely raises my worth as that of an intelligence by my personality, in which the moral law reveals a life independent ... of the whole world of sense.⁹

In the radical dualism of his mature philosophy Kant secures a ground for human worth, a ground which, in his early writings, he stubbornly sought. The distinguishing mark of his critical philosophy is his conviction that the moral law within us is a subject of far greater awe than nature can inspire. It is the recognition of this inner law as an objective guide to moral action which decisively establishes the priority of practical reason, of morality, over contemplation.

Susan Meld Stodd, A Study of Kant's Philosophy and the Rights of Reason, Pass, 1985

2 / THE DISCOVERY OF ROUSSEAU AND THE ASCENDENCE OF RIGHT

From Rousseau Kant learned to regard morality with a new seriousness. Prior to (1762), when he first obtained the *Social Contract* and *Emile*, Kant's published works do not explicitly consider moral issues. After 1762 he released a rash of works of moral concern, all influenced in some degree or other by

⁹ *Crit. Pract.*, V 162 (166) (emphasis added)

the British moralists, some still bearing the lingering signs of Wolffian rationalism,¹ but all marked most distinctively by the impress of Rousseau.

This influence was observed by many of Kant's contemporaries. Herder claimed that Kant was the first and steadiest of Rousseau's German admirers.² Kant, as Borowski noted, interrupted his usually unswerving schedule to finish reading *Emile* (as he did twenty-seven years later to read news of the French revolution).³ Kant himself left a remarkable record of the impact which his discovery of Rousseau made upon him. A series of loose-leaf notes (the *Bemerkungen*) appended to his own copy of his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* expresses the shock and fascination of that first acquaintance.

A much quoted but too little understood confession from these notes reveals a decisive turning point in his intellectual career:

I am by inclination an investigator [*Forscher*]. I feel the thirst for knowledge and ... the deep satisfaction after every step forward. There was a time when I belaxed all this could be the honour of mankind and I despised the people, who know nothing. Rousseau has set me right ... I learned to honour mankind and I would be less worthy than the average worker if I did not believe that [philosophy] could contribute to what really matters, restoring the rights of mankind.⁴

This passage charts the beginning of the priority of morality in Kant's thought. Before Rousseau, Kant had defined the purpose of philosophy as the attaining of knowledge. After Rousseau 'what really matters' is the rights of man. No longer does Kant believe that the honour of mankind lies in intelligence and learning, the province of a few 'noble souls.' Rather that honour lies in the rights of mankind, the property of all. Heretofore knowledge absorbed itself in the self-sufficient pleasures of contemplation; hereafter it must justify itself; it must 'contribute' and 'restore.'

Rousseau had a powerful effect on Kant's estimation of the value of science and knowledge in general. Before reading Rousseau, Kant, in keeping with

¹ For a more detailed discussion of these early influences see Victor Delbos 'Rousseau et Kant', Dieter Henrich 'Hutcheson und Kant', Keith Ward *The Development of Kant's View of Ethics* 3-33; Christian Ritter *Der Rechtsgedanke Kants nach den frühen Quellen*; Schiapp

² J. G. Herder *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität, Sämmtliche Werke* (Berlin 1789) XVIII

324-5

³ L. E. Borowski *Darstellung des Lebens und Charakters Immanuel Kant's* 170

⁴ *Bemerkungen*, XX 44

the rationalist school, regarded reason as the measure of the perfection of man and all the other orders of the universe. After Rousseau he finds 'the greatest perfection' to lie in 'the subordination of everything to freedom' (*Freie Willkür*).⁵ 'Truth,' he writes, 'has no worth in itself; whatever the inhabitants of other planets may think.⁶ Truth can have only a conditioned worth, and can have it only in the service of the practical. Science must advance the rights of man. To be sure, Kant never doubts as radically as does Rousseau in his *First Discourse* that science can serve human rights. Kant is always far more confident than Rousseau of the potential beneficence of science.⁷ One does not find even in the early Kant the powerful longing expressed by Rousseau for a pre-enlightened era. Kant laboured to blur this difference, however,⁸ and credited directly to the teaching of Rousseau his own subordination of science to right.

1) Right → human equality

Corollary to the primacy of right, for Kant, is the fact of human equality, and this, he reports, a philosopher could learn only from Rousseau. The learned man thinks himself superior to others, for he fails to recognize that inequality is a matter of opinion: 'The opinion according to which we are unequal also makes us unequal. Only the doctrine of Herr Rousseau can convince even the most learned philosopher that he should not consider himself better than the common man, and this without the help of religion, but solely by means of his own honest wit.⁹

It is a moral need, shared equally by all, which justifies science. If there is any science necessary to man, writes Kant, it is that which teaches him to fill beneficially the place assigned to him by Creation; then he can learn what he must do to be a man. He should learn 'to recognize illusive seductions [*täuschende Anlockungen*] above and below him which have, in his ignorance, propelled him from his proper place.' Such knowledge 'will lead him back to the estate of man, and then, as small and imperfect as he still finds

Cognition + Bewußtsein?

5 Ibid. 144
6 Ibid. 175

7 See Delbos *La Philosophie pratique de Kant* 124.

8 See, for example, *Anthropology*, vii 326 (187): 'Rousseau at bottom did not hold that man should return to the state of nature, but rather that he should cast a backward glance at the level he there achieved.' See also 'Conjectural Beginning of Human History,' viii 116 (60) (hereafter cited as 'Conjectural Beginning'); *Anthropology*, vii 324 (185); *Reflection # 1454*.

9 *Bemerkungen*, xx 176; see also *ibid.*, 23-4: 'Mankind mistakenly thinks that its worth lies in its great artists and scholars alone, and considers the peasant and labourer as means of support: 'The injustice of this judgment already shows that it is false.' According to Kant, economic and social superiority is to be had only at the expense of others: 'Man cannot change nature's law. He must work himself or have another work for him, work which will rob the other of his happiness as he himself ascends above the average' (*ibid.*: 39).

himself, he will be upright and good in terms of the place to which he is assigned, for he will be precisely what he ought to be.'¹ The only useful science serves morality. It teaches man what he is so that he may learn what he ought to be. It does so, however, in a negative way, by destroying that false knowledge which has seduced man away from his rightful place. It protects him from these false seductions by exposing them as such, that is, by teaching man his limits. This science of man points towards the path which critical philosophy will take, establishing the limits of reason and thereby removing the illusive seductions which deflect man from that which is, morally speaking, his proper course. Already Kant conceives the science of man as a twofold undertaking: man must learn first his limits, and then what he ought to be. The moral function of philosophy is not, however, to set virtue forth, but to strip away the false doctrines which eclipse its natural pre-eminence. One is again reminded of Rousseau's *First Discourse*, in which 'true philosophy' means disposing of all learned doctrines which obstruct the moral conscience.² Kant's understanding of the moral role of philosophy is here closer to Rousseau than it will later be. Kant does not yet (Rousseau never did) believe that virtue requires its own doctrine and metaphysic. The essential role of speculative philosophy, however, will remain for Kant a negative one. 'Where error,' Kant later writes, 'is entangling and at the same time dangerous, negative knowledge and criticism are more important than positive knowledge ... Socrates had with regard to speculation a negative philosophy, by which I mean a philosophy of the non-value of many so-called sciences, a science of the limits of our knowledge. The negative part of education is the most important. Rousseau (marked the limits with precision).'³ Already in the *Bemerkungen* Kant defines 'metaphysics' as 'a science of the limits of human reason.'⁴

Man asserts his dignity and his honour as a race, a species, a humankind, for which the dignity of each is that of all, and all that of each. The pre-eminence of equality in Kant's discussion of right, undertaken in the 1760s, dispels any suspicion that the democratic element in Kant's thought was primarily the result of his enthusiasm for French events of 1789.⁵ But what is even more interesting than this democratic turn of mind, twenty years before

So, science + of opinion experiment - was falsified
Kant thinks of Cognition + Bewußtsein as (first) to human
collected + systematic knowledge. A true science of nature
sub-abstract to 1775/6

1 Ibid. 45-6

2 J. J. Rousseau *The First and Second Discourses* trans. Roger D. Masters (New York, St Martin's Press 1964) 64

3 *Reflection # 193*

4 *Bemerkungen*, xx 181

5 See, for example, *ibid.*, 55, 165, 35-6: 'Out of the feeling of equality springs the idea of justice ...'

the French revolution, is Kant's change of heart from a longing after truth to a respect for the rights of man, a respect which Rousseau awakens even against Kant's own inclination. Kant does not thereby cease to be a *Forscher*, a seeker, but he does cease to regard that seeking as his primary task. There is already in this general confession an element of self-denial and self-overcoming. The assertion and establishment of human right requires the submission and subjugation of the inclination towards truth. The desire to know and the satisfaction which knowledge affords were in any case never strong enough to stave off entirely that desire's demoralizing consequences. The problems which scientific knowledge posed for human dignity can be conclusively solved by making truth herself right. The dialectic of desire and frustration which characterized Kant's earlier works is now superseded by an attitude of confident self-reliance. In Kant's eyes man no longer depends on nature for those things which matter most.

Kant's reading of Rousseau causes him to revise his understanding of 'the honour of mankind'. Previously he believed that that honour lies in knowledge, which, by placing man on a higher rung of nature, draws him closer to the perspective of a contemplative God. But that solution was a tenuous one, a reassuring fantasy tacked on to a scientific theory which did not well support it.⁶ Previously Kant looked to nature to honour knowledge, by giving reason a pre-eminent place within the scheme of things. But in fact Newtonian science had banished rank and preference from the natural order. A world of interchangeable matter, to which all laws are equally applicable, brooks no hierarchies. Knowledge of such a nature could well terrify men with visions of their dependence and insignificance.

Rousseau taught Kant how much man might make good the stint of nature by doing for himself rather than by turning to God, as Kant did in his early scientific writings.⁷ As the equation of honour and knowledge led to a sterile dependence upon nature, so the equation of honour and right leads to fruitful co-operation among men. Right pertains to the sphere of humanity, not to the relations of man to nature, but to the relations of men to men. Once man recognizes the pre-eminence of his rights, which are in his power to assert and in the power of others to respect, nature's stint will not seem so painful. Honour is not bestowed on man, either by nature or by God, but rather lies in his doing what he ought to do to be a man.⁸

This notion of right makes possible a new solution to the problem of theodicy. Kant brings to the surface and rejects the feeling of natural injustice

6 See *Vlachsos La Pensée politique de Kant* 13ff.

7 Cf. *Bemerkungen*, xx 172: 'Man is needy, but also has power over his needs.'

8 *Ibid.* 41

which his earlier thought could not satisfactorily dispel. The feeling is recognized for what it is: a misplaced assertion of human right, misplaced because it is directed not against the wilful opposition of other men, who can pay it heed but against the necessary opposition of nature, which can pay it none. The struggle for respect and dignity is properly conducted not upon the natural but upon the social field. This is so not because nature treats us well – we are still and always natural beings of need – but because this good which 'matters most' is one we can supply ourselves. For this good at least, man does not depend on the material economy of nature. 'The motion of matter is maintained by a certain determined rule, but the wilfulness of man is without rule.'⁹ The wilfulness of man is understood as made possible by a kind of lapse of nature. Out of this lapse or lack of a natural law arises that human wilfulness which constitutes the basis of his freedom. But one man's wilfulness meets the opposition of another, and it is at this juncture that rights are properly asserted.

In a section of the *Bemerkungen* entitled 'On Freedom' Kant distinguishes between dependence on the necessity of nature and dependence on the wilfulness of another human being. 'Man depends on outer things,' through his need for them and through his wantonness [*Lüsterheit*]; in this respect he is 'the administrator of nature but not its master ... he must yield himself to the compulsion of nature, because he will not find that it always yields to his wishes. But what is harder and more unnatural is for a man to submit to the will of another.'¹ To submit to the will of another is not only difficult; it is 'more unnatural.' One discerns in Kant's distinction between natural necessity and human wilfulness the influence of Rousseau, who in his *Emile* makes a similar distinction the cornerstone of his pedagogy. According to Rousseau, 'there are two kinds of dependence, dependence on things, which is the work of nature, and dependence on men, which is the work of society.' Dependence on things is 'non-moral' and 'begets no vices.' Dependence on men, on the other hand, is 'out of order' and 'gives rise to every kind of vice.'² Rousseau traces this distinction to a fact of experience observable in any young child: we only feel wronged by pain which we regard as intentional. Thus the infant takes the heavy blows of chance in his stride, while lighter blows, which he recognizes as intentional, cause not only greater pain but even rage. This example evinces, according to Rousseau, man's 'innate sense of justice and injustice.'³ Pain may meet with tears but ill will arouses anger. We feel anger

9 *Ibid.* 93

1 *Ibid.* 91; cf. 164, 94: 'Even the slightest degree of dependency is a very great evil ...'

2 J. J. Rousseau *Emile* trans. Barbara Foxley (London, Everyman's Library 1966) 49

3 *Ibid.* 33

only when we feel wronged. Our capacity for anger is essential to our sense of justice and injustice.⁴

According to Rousseau nature cannot injure man because his very sense of injury presupposes his recognition of an intentionality which cannot properly be attributed to nature. Prior to his recognition of the intentionality of others, the history of man is non-moral. With this recognition comes the possibility of vice, which lies in the 'mutual depravity of master and slave.' In this relation of mutual depravity each is aware of his dependence on the other. The slave depends on the master for his very life; the master depends on the slave for the satisfaction of new needs and is thereby as surely ensnared. Moral and civic virtue become means whereby men strive to win back in some form the independence which they enjoyed in the state of nature. 'If the law of nations, like the law of nature, could never be broken by any human power, dependence on men would become dependence on things.' Civil law, or the general will armed with strength beyond that of any individual will, becomes a substitute for the necessity of nature.⁵

Rousseau presents human liberty and natural necessity as perfectly compatible. Man, he argues, does not mind those compulsions which he regards as necessary. Only those restrictions which appear to place him at the mercy of another will call his own freedom into question. In the *Bemerkungen* Kant seems to agree. Nature is no longer presented as the greatest threat to man's security and dignity. The obstruction of matter is far more easily borne than is compulsion from another will. From the *Bemerkungen* emerges a concept of liberty approaching that which Kant later calls external freedom, asserted wholly against other men.

Like Rousseau Kant distinguishes man from animal on the basis of man's self-awareness. 'An animal,' Kant writes, 'is not yet a complete being because it is not conscious of itself.'⁶ Man, however, knows of his own existence and, until another will obtrudes upon that existence, is whole and free. This wholeness and this freedom characterize natural man, who is distinguished from the beasts only by his self-consciousness, or what Kant will later call his

⁴ Thus Rousseau urges the educator to 'keep the child dependent on things only' by which course one will 'follow the order of nature.' Let the child's unreasonable wishes be met only by 'physical obstacles.' 'The tutor must in his encounters with the child disguise his own willfulness. Let the child 'early find upon his proud neck, the heavy yoke which nature has imposed on us, the heavy yoke of necessity, under which every finite being must bow.' But 'let him find this necessity in things, not in the caprices of man ... Thus you will make him patient, equable, calm and resigned, even when he does not get all he wants; man naturally bears patiently the nature of things, but not the ill-will of another' (ibid. 49-55).

⁵ Ibid. 49

⁶ *Bemerkungen*, xx 93

S-C → capacity to recognize
S-C in others

ability to reflect. But this self-consciousness also entails an ability to recognize a similar self-consciousness in others. Thus man becomes aware of others like himself, conscious of themselves, and of their power to lift an arm, a rock, a tool for their own use. As he first distinguishes between himself and outer things, so now he distinguishes between things and other men, and gradually it dawns on him that he too can be a tool, a mere thing to other men. To allow oneself to be used as a tool, to become a thing in the eyes of another, that is the meaning of submission (Untertunfertigkeit). To yield to the will of another is to cancel one's own essence, and is as such a 'contradiction' which indicates the injustice (*Unrechtmässigkeit*) of the deed. 'That man should need no soul of his own and have no will of his own, and that another soul should move his limbs, this is absurd [*ungereimt*, 'unrhymed', 'blank'] and inverted [*verkehrt*, 'exchanged', 'turned the wrong way']'. Such a man is the mere tool of another.' To stand in dependence on another is to lose one's standing and to be 'only a possession.' The man who submits to another is 'no longer a man.' Man is distinguished from the beasts, not only by his self-consciousness, but also by his capacity for self-contradiction. Nature makes man sound and man destroys himself. 'God makes all things good, man meddles with them and they become evil.'⁸ Here, as in Kant's later works, self-consistency is the standard of both metaphysical and moral legitimacy. Self-consistency is here understood as freedom from dependence on the will of another. Such freedom is the basis of right? Like man's ability to distinguish himself from outer things, and outer things from other wills, this right is an essential constituent of his humanity; without it he would cease to be a man.

To Rousseau, Kant attributes both his new appreciation of right and his new understanding of man. Kant calls him 'the Newton of the moral world.' Like Newton, Rousseau discovered order where those before him encountered confusion. 'Rousseau was the first to discover beneath the varying forms human nature assumes the deeply concealed essence of man and the hidden law in accordance with which Providence is justified by his observations.' Before Newton and Rousseau 'the objections of King Alfonso and the Manichaeans were still valid. After Newton and Rousseau, the ways of God are justified - and Pope's thesis is henceforth true.'⁹

The problem of theodicy, with which Kant struggled in his earlier works, he

⁷ Ibid.; cf. 66: 'Submission of a human will to a foreign will is contradictory; for man possesses spontaneitatem.' At this early stage Kant does not yet distinguish between inner and outer freedom.

⁸ J. J. Rousseau *Emile* 5; cf. Kant *Reflexion* # 1427: 'All the evils on earth are caused to man by man.'

⁹ *Bemerkungen*, xx 58-9

now considers solved. We have seen how in those early works Newtonian science gave rise to the problem in a special form. The flux of nature opposed by our natural desire for permanence, the indifference of nature to our ends and the opaqueness of its own, all this aroused the suspicion that nature does not do justice by us. Rousseau sets Kant right by showing him that the fundamental fact about man is his awareness of his freedom to use his own power as he will. Nature does not challenge this awareness. The onslaught of things merely provides the necessary arena upon which man may consciously exercise his powers. Things may pose a hardship to man; it is, however, natural and consistent to strive consciously to overcome these hardships. To yield to the necessity of things does not harm human freedom. But to submit to the will of another is to contradict and so subvert one's very essence.

Such subversion is itself a wilful act. The will cannot be cancelled by nature but only by the will itself. Kant's new theodicy redeems nature by implicating man. Injustice is our creation, a kind of self-mutation. Our rights are a part of us; and it is we who must restore them. If human life is not all that it could be, it is because we have done ourselves injury. This, then, is Kant's early solution to the problem of theodicy, a solution begun by Newton and completed with the aid of Rousseau. One must accept the solution as tentative: in Kant's philosophical maturity he will dismiss the entire problem of theodicy as incapable of theoretical solution. Nevertheless one discerns in these earlier convictions the signs of a drastic reorientation in Kant's thought. This is not to say that Kant's studies of Wolff, Newton, and the British moralists did not in an important sense constitute a preparation for this reorientation. Those nagging difficulties, of a sort Kant would later call practical, which science raised but could not solve, supplied the questions to which Rousseau suggested an answer.

Rousseau's distinction between dependence on things and dependence on other wills had both an immediate and a lasting effect on Kant. In works as late as his *Anthropology*, the last complete book Kant saw published, and his *Pädagogik*, published posthumously, the distinction plays a significant role. Kant in large part rests his discipline on a simulation of natural necessity, an artifice similar to that which the tutor employs in *Emile*. Both Kant and Rousseau recognize the discovery of other wills as having morally crucial consequences. Between Kant and Rousseau there is, however, an important

¹ In his critical period Kant will decisively modify this Rousseauian teaching.

² See, for example, Kant's essay 'On the Failure of All Attempted Theodicies' (1791).

difference: Kant emphasizes the indignity and self-abnegation implied in submission to another will, whereas Rousseau dwells on the damage that discovery can do to the natural balance in man between desire and power. Kant is more concerned with dignity / less with happiness. For Rousseau it is the possibility of tyranny, the use of others for the limitless expansion of one's own powers, that constitutes the gravest danger of the discovery. ⁴ The tutor expends great effort in preventing this tyranny by stopping or retarding in the child the development of new desires. ⁵

As Kant sees it, the appearance of new and dangerous desires unavoidably accompanies the development of reason, a development that is unquestionably desirable. For Kant the central problem is not tyranny and enslavement through an expansion of desire but rather submission and self-contradiction, with instilling in the young child strength to 'renounce' desires already present, when as passions they threaten to overwhelm him. The discipline of education should accustom the child to opposition, less to stimulate self-sufficiency (as with Rousseau) than to encourage self-control. ⁶ The despotism of infancy which occupied Rousseau is for Kant merely one occasion for aggravement. In his *Anthropology*, Kant describes anger as the first human passion, experienced by the infant even before it has learned to distinguish between things and men. ⁷

When an infant is forced to approach certain objects, or merely to change his general state, he feels that he is checked. This impulsion to have his own will and to take offence at that which obstructs him is ... signalled by the tone which he takes ... The same thing happens when he falls by his own fault. Animal young play; children quarrel very early; it is as if a certain concept of right (which relates to external freedom) develops at the same time as animality, instead of being progressively learned. ⁸

Unlike Rousseau, who traces the awakening of the sense of right to the discovery of other wills, Kant locates the first inking of right in the child's experience of things. The opposition of matter itself occasions a child's first

³ See, for example, *Emile* 126-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*: 33

⁵ *Ibid.*: 54-7, 60-3

⁶ *Pädagogik*, IX 458-61, 463. On some textual difficulties see Lewis White Beck *Essays on Kant and Hume* 193-7.

⁷ Anger is 'a good kind of passion in the innocence of nature' but bad in society (*Bemerkungen*, xx 63).

⁸ *Anthropology*, VII 269 (136) (my translation)

sense of injury and injustice, even as it calls to life the child's sense of his own liberty.

From his earliest scientific writings to his latest critical ones, Kant presents matter as an obstacle against which man tests his liberty. It is the nature of matter to obstruct the fulfillment of human desire. Happiness is not the destiny of a being whose desires are naturally insatiable. The destiny of man lies not in satisfaction but in work⁹ in struggle to overcome the limitations imposed by matter and man's material nature. Man should regard, as his destiny not happiness but the struggle for freedom.

One finds in Kant an impatience with the moral possibilities of the natural world never so openly expressed by Rousseau. Kant is not so easily reconciled to the necessary limitations which the natural world imposes on our moral lives. In his generally ironic *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, published in 1766, Kant gives straightforward reasons for his moral discontent:

The moral quality of our actions can, according to the order of nature, never be fully worked out in the bodily life of men ... The true purposes, the secret motives of many endeavours, fruitless by impotency, the victory over self, or the occasional hidden treachery in apparently good actions, are mostly lost as to their physical effect in the bodily state.¹

By failing to express fully the moral quality of our actions, the material world denies us full moral satisfaction. The moral quality of our actions lies in our motives; for it is the motives of our acts, and not their material results, which are wholly within our power and for which we may be held accountable. However, good motives often lead to bad results, while good results often derive from bad motives. There is, then, a fundamental incongruity between the moral quality of our actions and their effects within the material world. This physical realm, moreover, hides from us the moral quality of our own acts. The material world denies us moral satisfaction by beclouding our accountability.

The inadequacy of the physical world as a stage for morality induces Kant to posit a spirit world, in which the moral quality of our actions can be 'worked out.' In such a world, hidden intentions could be regarded as 'fruitful causes'

⁹ Work (*Arbeit*) is 'occupation not pleasant in itself, but undertaken for the end in view' (*Pädagogik*, ix 470). Man is the only creature who must work (ibid. 471); hence it is 'of utmost importance that the child learn to work.' Cf. *Emile* 163-171 and Judith N. Shklar *Men and Citizens* 24, 45-6. For both Rousseau and Kant work is naturally unpleasant. Only for Kant is it also morally imperative.

¹ Immanuel Kant *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* II, 336 (65)

and 'would mutually produce and receive effects appropriate to the moral quality of free will.'² These moral promptings are still understood by Kant as matters of sentiment. Morality has not yet attained the status of a 'fact of reason' which it enjoys in his critical thought. Nevertheless they are the occasion for the playful posing of a new dualism which (unlike the old spirit/matter continuum of Kant's *Natural History*) incorporates Rousseau's moral teachings. For this is a world of spirits defined not by their intelligence as such, but by their moral unity. They are not partakers in divine wisdom but participants in 'a community of all thinking beings' organized into a 'spiritual constitution according to purely spiritual laws.' Our access to this spirit world is not through knowledge but through moral sentiments. These impulses of duty and benevolence conflict with our selfish inclinations and so make us realize that 'in our most secret motives, we are dependent on the rule of the will of all.' Kant teasingly elevates the general will to the heavens, making of it an effective but invisible force with the power to move our very wills. Inner conflict is explained by the presence of a higher will within us. In *Dreams* moral awareness arises from our recognition of an inner conflict between the sentiments of selfishness and those of duty and benevolence.³ In *Dreams* inner conflict is the fact which awakens us to the moral world, and so to recognition of physical/moral dualism.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* the conflict between morality and nature scientifically understood will be a problem not only for morality, but also for reason. Kant there makes it clear that, should scientific reason and morality prove to be in necessary conflict, morality would have to give way. But in fact the case for morality (or moral responsibility, which implies freedom to act upon the material world) proves to be the case of reason itself. In judging between what are, rationally speaking, equally compelling arguments for moral freedom and for natural necessity, reason puts itself on trial.

Kant made no secret of the importance of moral considerations in the development of his thought. But that particular moral problem which he claimed most deeply influenced his theoretical inquiries was one which seemed to challenge the integrity of reason itself. 'The origin of critical philosophy,' said Kant, 'lies in moral theory' and specifically 'in reference to [the problem of] moral responsibility for actions.'⁴ The problem of moral responsibility in a determined universe, the problem broached in *Dreams* and playfully solved through the posing of an invisible world of morally united

² Ibid.

³ *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, II 334-5 (63-4)

⁴ *L. Blät.*, GS XX 335

spirits, returns in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as an 'antinomy' which reason must solve if it is not to lose its guiding principle of self-consistency. It was not the investigation of general metaphysical questions, Kant wrote to Christian Garve and repeated in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, but rather the antinomy of reason which first awakened him from his 'dogmatic slumber' and drove him to undertake a critique of reason 'in order to resolve the scandal of ostensible contradiction of reason with itself'.⁵ Yet if the source of critical philosophy lies in the antinomies of reason, the source of the antinomies lies in the 'desire' [*Begierde*] of reason for what Kant calls the unconditioned [*Unbedingte*], which lies beyond the conditionality of empirical experience. 'All antinomies occur because we seek the unconditioned in the sensual world.'⁶ Critical philosophy will attempt to free reason from the seductions of the unconditioned and from the philosophically and morally damaging contradictions which those seductions generate. Like Kant's infant, reason can achieve coherence only by suppressing desire.

2

The critical context

⁵ Letter to Christian Garve, 21 September 1798 (GS XII 256–8 (250–52); *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, IV 338–9 (86–7). Kant also attributes his awakening to his reading of David Hume (*Prolegomena*, IV 260 (8)).

⁶ *Reflexion* #6418