Putting Things Back Together Again in Kant[1]

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Any study, including the study of philosophy, usually begins with making distinctions, refining differences. With a comprehensive, precise, philosopher, a philosopher with a system, like Kant, it seems as if one could spend a lifetime just trying to work out the distinctions, without ever coming around to bring together the things that have been distinguished, that have been separated in thought. I would like in this talk to try to account for how some of the major factors distinguished by Kant come together and cooperate within the wholes that they constitute. The lecture divides into two basic parts.

Experience and the sciences based on experience, according to Kant, are based on two primary sources, sense intuition and conceptual thought. Concepts without intuitions, he argues, are empty, and intuitions without concepts are blind. How do they come together? The contrast with Aristotle's treatment should be revealing. The fundamental question behind this first part is: how to account for the cognition we do experience, how to account for the partial intelligibility of our world?

The realm of nature, natural science and experience, according to Kant, is determined strictly by necessary laws of cause and effect. The realm of morality, on the other hand, proceeds in accordance with laws of freedom. Like parallel lines, it would seem, the two realms never meet. Kant speaks of the great gulf that separates these domains, that "completely cuts off the domain of the concept of nature under the one legislation, and the domain of the concept of freedom under the other legislation, from any influence that each . . . might have had on the other."[2] The question then naturally raises itself: how are the realm of nature and the realm of morality related or connected in one and the same world?

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[1]A lecture delivered at St. John's College, Annapolis, April 14, 2000.
[2]*Critique of Judgment*, Pluhar translation, (Indianapolis, Hackett, 1987), Introduction, IX, p. 35.

In his long and difficult book, the *Critique of Judgment,* Kant develops the concept of purposiveness, especially the purposiveness of nature, that in some way is intended to bridge the gap between nature and morality. I am not able at this time to do more than touch on that subject. The purposiveness that Kant talks about is not found in nature, but supplied by the reflective judgment of the investigator whenever the investigator comes across phenomena like those of living organized beings for which the laws of mechanical cause and effect do not seem adequate. A purpose is defined by Kant as an effect that is possible only through the concept of that effect, the concept that is itself the cause of the effect. Like Thomas Aquinas, Kant argues that ends in nature only make sense when they are thought of as intended by some intelligence. The intending intelligence can be either in the being effecting the purpose or not. The innumerable complexes of purposive activities operative throughout nature, especially in animate nature, in beings not intending them, require some other being that does intend them, namely, God.[3] Teleology, Kant argues, finds its consummation in theology. But, unlike Thomas, for Kant this God is not to be assumed to have objective reality. The idea of such a being is produced by us in order to satisfy the subjective needs of our cognitive faculties. These purposive laws are to make sense of the phenomena *as if* some intelligent cause, a God, had made them.

The realm of the reflective judgment also contains Kant's analysis of the aesthetic judgment, the account of the beautiful and the sublime. The pleasure derived from an object judged beautiful comes from reflection on the free and harmonious play of one's own faculties of imagination and understanding in its judging.

The reflective judgment sometimes seems to be a judgment that possessing an indeterminate particular is on the search for the universal or universal law under which the particular could be subsumed, which, if found, would transform it into a determinate judgment. It evidently plays a key role in a very important subject not extensively discussed by Kant, concept formation. In his *Logic* he speaks of concept formation as based

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[3]*Summa Theologiae,* I-II, Q. 40, A.3, and Q. 1, A.2. Cf. also I, Q. 2, A.3. *Critique of Judgment,* §§ 75 and 76.

on three logical operations of the understanding: comparison, reflection and abstraction,

> the essential general conditions of generating any concept whatsoever. For example, I see a fir, a willow and a linden. In comparing them with one another I notice they are different from one another in respect of trunk, branches, leaves and the like; further, however, I reflect only on what they have in common, trunk, branches and leaves and [then] I abstract from their size, shape, and so forth; thus I gain a concept of a tree.[4]

In this context reflection would seem to be the power in the Kantian system that comes closest to the *noêsis*, or intellectual intuition, of Plato and Aristotle.

The gap between nature and morality also raises another question which is both a theoretical and practical question, namely, how do nature and morality coexist in one and the same human being?

Almost everyone who aspires to be generally educated in philosophy reads Kant's *The Foundations [Grounding] of a Metaphysics of Morals*, usually after reading his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* or selections from *The Critique of Pure Reason*. His *Metaphysics of Morals* is much less read. One is almost bound, it seems to me, to get a distorted picture of Kant's moral philosophy from reading the *Foundations* alone. In the *Foundations* Kant clarifies the *ultimate* principle of morality, the categorical imperative, by distinguishing it from what others claim are the sources of moral principle. The source of moral principle, he argues, is not nature, not divine revelation, not moral sense or feeling, not pleasure. The discussion usually takes the form of arguing why those plausible alternatives are to be ruled out as sources of moral worth. Kant's view appears as a noble, but narrow, inflexible, formalism: "so act that the maxim of your action can be made into a universal law "-period.

The chief difficulty for those who have read only the Critiques and the Foundations is to see how Kant applies the categorical imperative. In ethical and political matters the meaning of principles usually does not become clear until one sees how they work out in practice. The

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[4]See *Critique of Judgment,* Introduction (2),§4; and *Logik*, (Jäsche), AK IX, 94-95; *Logic*, English translation by Hartman and Schwarz, (Bobs-Merril, 1974), 100-01.

Metaphysics of Morals is devoted entirely to working out how the categorical imperative is applied within the varying circumstances of human life. Despite the formalism, it reveals Kant to be a deep, wide-ranging student of human nature, who is very much aware of the importance for morality of the sources that he rejects as *ultimate* sources of morality. In the second part of this talk I propose to illustrate how, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant tries to make sense out of morality; in part by showing how the moral law comes together with some of the alternative principles that were rejected in the Foundations.

I

Most discussions of Kant begin with his modifications and deepening of doctrines inherited from Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and others whose philosophies can be associated with modern mathematical physics. By emphasizing those modifications, the premises which these thinkers all share, in particular those premises formed in opposition to the classical Platonic-Aristotelian approach, are taken for granted, and as a consequence, are both insufficiently questioned and thereby insufficiently clarified.

If there is genuine knowledge, must not that which the knower has be in some way the same as that which constitutes the object known? In the *Meno* [72c] Socrates speaks of the form [*eidos*] as that through which things are what they are and that towards which one looks in order to give an account of what they are. Aristotle speaks of how in sense perception the sense is receptive of the forms of sensible things without their material just as the wax receives the mark of the signet ring without the iron or the gold.[5] As Joe Sachs put it, "the same form that is at work holding together the perceived thing is also at work on the soul of the perceiver."[6]

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[5]*De Anima*, 424a 17-21. Aristotle joins Plato's Socrates' "second sailing", taking "refuge in speeches [*eis tous logous*] to look in them for the truth about the beings" [*Phaedo*, 99C-100A], by coming around to concentrate on the form [*eidos*] "according to speech" [*kata ton logon*]. See *Physics*, 193a 31 and *Posterior Analytics*, 100a 1-3, and the whole of chapter 19 of Book II.

[6]*Aristotle's Metaphysics*, translated by Joe Sachs, (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 1999), liii-liv.

On the basis of what evidently lies in both prephilosophic and philosophic experience, and on the supposition that genuine knowledge is possible for human beings, Plato and Aristotle and their followers argue that human beings are endowed by nature with two interconnected kinds of intuition or insight, sense intuition and intellectual intuition [*nous*] which open themselves correspondingly to two kinds of forms, sensible and intelligible forms, the forms implicit in human speech as well as the forms of sense experience. According to the analyses of Plato and Aristotle the intelligible forms are understood to be primarily responsible for the way the world and things are as they are. And accordingly they become objects of the highest kind of inquiry, the study which came to be called metaphysics.

The great early modern opponents of the classical tradition and its medieval offshoots seemed to regard this presupposition of harmony between the mind and discourse of human beings and the nature of things as a naïve, if not gullible, optimism. Nature is not a kind mother, she deceives us: the cognitive equipment she endows us with conceals rather than reveals the true character of things.

Bacon, in the first Book of his *New Organon*, especially his treatment of the Idols of the Mind, devotes himself to "the refutation of the natural human reason." That refutation includes a refutation and account of those philosophies, especially the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, that "idolize" or even "idolatrize" natural human reason.[7] The continuity of his great project with that of Bacon is acknowledged by Kant through his choice of a long excerpt from the *Novum Organum* as the epigraph to *The Critique of Pure Reason.*

Thomas Hobbes was unrivaled for the lucidity with which he stated his opposition to classical thought. In his *The Elements of Law (Natural and Politic)*[8] we read "whatsoever accidents or qualities our senses make us think there be in the world, they be not there, but are seeming and apparitions only." What we are led to think are the characteristics of things in themselves are rather the effects upon

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[7]Cf. Laurence Berns, "Francis Bacon and the Conquest of Nature", *Interpretation* 7, No. 1 (1978), pp. 1-12, especially note 5.

[8]Editor, Ferdinand Tönnies, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), chap. II.10.

ourselves of causes or things which in themselves are utterly unknown to us. As for intelligibles, universals, Hobbes tells us that there is "nothing in the world Universal but Names; for the things named, are every one of them Individual and Singular."[9] He often criticizes Aristotle for mistaking discourse about our thoughts and the ordering of our thoughts for discourse about things in themselves. Traditional metaphysics from this point of view is absorbed by logic, if not by psychology.

Kant continued and developed this critique. We cannot know things in themselves, he argues. Science, the study of nature, is concerned only with what appears to us, with what lies in our experience and, as far as we can know, lies only in our experience. We are led by nature to think that what is present in our experience is of, or refers to, things that exist independently of our experience. And when we speak about our experience, especially in our use of common nouns, we speak as if we possessed a power to intuit intellectually the intelligible natures of things in themselves. But, Kant asserts, sense intuition is the only intuition available to us, there is no such thing as intellectual intuition for human beings. To emphasize both the denial and the temptation at the same time, he defines the word noumenon (which he and his readers knew in Greek means object of nous, object of intellectual intuition) negatively, as a word to refer to that which we can in no way know, an unknowable x, the unknowable thing in itself.

Kant seems to have never given an explicit and direct refutation of the intellectual intuition he so emphatically rejects. Years ago I was puzzling about this with the distinguished Kant scholar, Lewis Beck, and Beck finally said that he guessed Kant must have thought that he has given us everything valid that intellectual intuition was thought to have supplied and with more adequate explanations of its grounds. Beck was referring in part to the fact that although, according to Kant, we cannot go beyond phenomena to things in themselves, we can have objective, universal and necessary judgments about them, that is, about the phenomena that constitute our experience. We can accept Hume's critique and starting point without the burden of his skepticism. In fact, Kant argues, objectively valid natural science, mathematics and moral law,

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[9]*Leviathan*, chap. 4.

now, on his basis, can be more adequately grounded than they have ever been before. Kant's categories, the pure a priori concepts that ground experience, his substitutes for Platonic and Aristotelian ideas or forms, have no special purely intellectual objects of their own; they are valid and meaningful only in application to human experience, meaning sense experience. Reason, the ultimate source of understanding, and its concepts is not intuitive, for Kant, but legislative: it provides rules for the meaningful organization of sense experience, these rules we call concepts.

Despite these fundamental oppositions, there is a deep stratum of concurrence in Kant's approach and the Platonic-Aristotelian approach: both find the meaningfulness of ordinary sense experience fundamentally dependent on what is primarily at home in thought, even in logic. Kant might be thought of as, in his own way, joining Socrates' taking refuge in the *logoi*.[10] The same function of the mind that in discourse determines a certain kind of judgment, as a category provides the necessary conditions of meaningfulness that determine particular objects, as objects of sense experience.

Thus Kant can say paradoxically that "Reason prescribes to nature its laws." He must also have been thinking about how Newton in his *Principia* presents mathematical reason prescribing its laws to nature: that is, after working out different general mathematical force laws for bodies traveling in different kinds of geometric orbits (in Book I), some 200 or so pages later (in Book III) he determines the astronomical "System of the World" in a few pages by simply setting down the observational data, the phenomena, and seeing to which of those force laws they conform. (As every history of these matters makes clear the actual discoveries of the mathematical laws were made very much in interaction with observations of the things governed by them.)

But Kant spoke of his critical philosophy and Newton's procedure as part of the more general Copernican intellectual revolution of modern science. Let us take the most important example: we see the sun rise, move across the heavens and set each day. The Copernican hypothesis accounts for the apparent daily movement of the sun by the rotation of the earth, or more generally, by the activity and movement of the observer.

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[10]See note 5, below and the *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 105 or A 79, B 107, and B 370.

Kant accounts for the meaningfulness of sense experience in terms of its conformity to the rules set by our own conceptual activity. Hitherto, he argues, it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects, but he reverses the priority by asking whether it is not rather that we attain knowledge of objects when those objects, sense objects, conform to the conditions that our concepts and understanding set for all objects of experience. Experimental science too is seen as part of this intellectual revolution: in the experiment reason approaches nature with fixed laws in mind, and then creates conditions that would never occur in nature's own ordinary course in order to force nature to answer reason's own questions about which laws prevail.

I spoke earlier of how Kant cut off intellectual intuition as one route from experience to things experienced as things in themselves; but what about gaining access to the things themselves that are sensed through sense intuition, the one kind of intuition that Kant asserts we do possess? That avenue is cut off by Kant's notion of what it is that we receive through our senses. Following Hume, Kant agrees that what our senses present to us are impressions, or as later writers who follow this approach say, sense data; not sense objects, but sensations, mere matter for sense objects.[11] Sensation for Kant is not yet sense intuition. For sense intuition of sense objects to occur, the matter must be ordered or formed into appearances and experience. The formative or ordering power does not come from the object formed, but lies in the mind a priori, that is, independently of all sensation or experience. "[T]he form of all appearance must altogether lie ready for the sensations a priori in the mind; and hence that form must be capable of being examined apart from all sensation."[12] The form of outer objects of experience is Space, the form of inner objects of experience is Time. Space presents no properties or relations of things in themselves; "it is the subjective condition of sensibility under which alone outer intuition is possible for us."[13] As the a

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[11]To what extent does this depend on Kant's "Boscovichian" reduction of material "solids" to tensions of forces, especially repulsive and attractive forces? See his *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften, Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science,* especially chapter 2 on dynamics, "Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Dynamik", AK IV, 496-535.

[12]*The Critique of Pure Reason*, B 34.

[13]*Ibid.* B 42

priori form of inner sense, Time is the condition of possibility for any intuition or experience of simultaneity or succession. If, as we shall shortly see, all experience itself depends upon synthesizing activities of the subjects of experience, taking place in time, then time is the subjective condition of possibility for all intuition, for all experience and for all cognition. "Time is the formal condition a priori for all appearances in general."[14]

How, according to Kant, are intuition and concept brought together to produce experience and knowledge? The crucial link is the imagination. The pure imagination, Kant tells us, is

> a basic power of the human soul *which underlies a priori all cognition.* By means of pure imagination we link the manifold of intuition, on the one hand, with the . . . necessary unity of pure apperception [the source of the categories], on the other hand. By means of this transcendental function of the imagination the two extreme ends, namely sensibility and understanding, must necessarily cohere; for otherwise sensibility would indeed yield appearances, but would yield no objects of an empirical cognition, and hence no experience. Actual experience consists in [1] apprehension of appearances, [2] their association (reproduction), and thirdly their recognition; in this third [element] (which is the highest of these merely empirical elements of experience), such experience contains concepts, which make possible the formal unity of experience and with it all objective validity (truth) of empirical cognition. Now these bases of the recognition of the manifold, insofar as they concern *merely the form of an experience as such,* are the *categories.*[15]

Kant also spoke about the difference between the "two extreme ends", sensibility and thought, as the difference between receptivity, the receptivity of blind sense impressions and spontaneity, the source of all thinking (transcendental apperception). The two are defined in opposition to one another. Understanding, the ability to <u>think</u> an object of sensible intuition is our spontaneity of cognition, that is, the ability opposite to receptivity, the ability to produce mental presentations by ourselves, to go

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[14]*Ibid.* B 46, 49-50.

[15]*Critique of Pure Reason*, Pluhar translation, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), A 124-25. Emphasis supplied.

through, take up and combine mental presentations in acts of synthesis. "By synthesis, in the most general sense of the term," he says, "I mean the act of putting various presentations with one another and of comprising their manifoldness in one cognition." Spontaneity, he asserts, is the basis of the three-fold synthesis that brings sense intuition and conceptual thought together. The three syntheses are called, 1) the synthesis of apprehension in intuition, 2) the synthesis of reproduction in imagination, and 3) the synthesis of recognition in the concept.

The first two syntheses are, if I understand them, under the aegis of what Kant calls the productive imagination.[16]

What the first synthesis, of apprehension, accomplishes is the taking together of the received impressions as existing in one ("my") consciousness in time. The individual becomes conscious of a unity of intuition in him or her self, as existing "in me." It is only when the received appearances are apprehended and combined within a definite consciousness that Kant will call them perceptions.

The next stage, the synthesis of reproductive imagination, depends upon an association of perceptions brought together so as to produce an image of an object. This depends on a power of the mind "to call over" [*herüberzurufen*] a preceding perception to a subsequent perception to form a series of perceptions. The objective ground of the association, Kant says, is the affinity of appearances in the unity of apperception. A non-Kantian might be tempted to ask, "Is this a surreptitious glance at the outlawed thing in itself?" But, Kant argues, this process depends on the unity of consciousness of original apperception and is an a priori synthesis, thereby traceable to the action of the productive imagination.[17]

The third synthesis, synthesis of recognition in a concept, is more familiar to everyone who has read about the pure concepts of the understanding, the categories. Here there is a recognition that the manifold of former syntheses is a unity of syntheses according to a rule, that is, according to a concept. We have now reached the pole of thought.

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[16]*Ibid.* A 118. It can be argued that the second synthesis, as its name suggests, is not under the productive but only the reproductive imagination. Imagination, in general, is defined in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* B 151, as "the power of presenting an object in intuition even *without the object's being present.*" In the B edition the synthesis of apprehension is called the figurative synthesis.

[17]*Ibid.* A 122 and 123.

We now recognize the former syntheses of appearances, associated perceptions and finally an image as unified according to a rule, a category, under which they are subsumed and validated as conforming to the conditions of possibility of an object of experience.

At the end of this account Kant is satisfied that he can now say:

> Hence the order and regularity in the appearances that we call *nature* are brought into them by ourselves; nor indeed could such order and regularity be found in appearances, had not we, or the nature of our mind, put them into appearances originally.[18]

There are two other important accounts of imagination mediating between sense and understanding that I can only mention briefly. Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories culminates in his discussion of the schematism. A schema is not an image, but a product of the power of imagination, a rule of synthesis for the imagination that governs the production of images that then will be suitable for subsumption under concepts.

Another most important function of imagination is its provision of a priori intuition, the foundation of mathematical knowledge, according to Kant. Kant, like Newton and Hobbes, defines mathematical objects operationally rather than theoretically as Euclid mostly does. A line is what is generated by the path of a moving point, rather than a breadthless length. The intuition is a priori, because we, through our imaginations supply it, it is not derived from experience. In mathematics concepts are constructed, that is the universals, the concepts, are operative as rules of construction for the a priori images. The universal is found in the particular.[19] Construction of concepts is defined by Kant as the

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[18]*Ibid.* A 125.

[19]Euclid, I.32, the proof that the three angles of any triangle equal two right angles, provides a beautiful example: As soon as you supply the line parallel to one of the sides of the triangle, (keeping in mind what you have just learned about equalities between interior, exterior and alternate angles) the conclusion jumps out at you. See *Critique of Pure Reason,* B 744-45. In B 745 this notion of a priori intuition is shown to embrace also the "symbolic constructions" of algebra. Cf. Jacob Klein: "A new kind of generalization, which may be termed 'symbol-generating abstraction,' leads directly to the establishment of a new universal discipline, namely 'general analytic,' [algebra], which holds a central place in the architectonic of the 'new' science." *Greek Mathmatical Thought and the Origin of Algebra,* translated by Eva Brann, (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T.

production and exhibition a priori, that is, in pure imagination, of the intuition which corresponds to the concept. Because in his mind the geometer produces a circle with every radius exactly equal, "he can demonstrate by means of a circle which he draws with his stick in the sand, no matter how irregular it may turn out to be, the attributes of a circle in general, as perfectly as if it had been etched on a copper plate by the greatest artist." The production in pure imagination of the intuition corresponding to the concept Kant calls schematic in contrast to the merely empirical intuition on paper or drawn in the sand.[20]

In the middle of Kant's account of the three-fold synthesis we have just gone through a curious and revealing footnote appears.

> That the imagination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself has, I suppose, never occurred to any psychologist. This is so partly because this power has been limited by psychologists to reproduction only, and partly because they believed that the senses not only supply us with impressions, but indeed also assemble these impressions and thus bring about images of objects. But this undoubtedly requires something more than our receptivity for impressions, namely, a function for their synthesis.[21]

This criticism of what is evidently a premodern notion of perception seems to beg the question by assuming that what the senses supply are atomistic impressions, which then would require some other power to assemble them into representations of sensible things. Sensible things, as Kant knows, are what most people think they are perceiving through their senses. Kant was familiar with Aristotle's logic, but

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Press, 1968), available now in a Dover Edition reprint, p. 125. Cf. pp. 117-25, 163-78 and 192-211.

[20]Henry E. Allison, *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy*, (Baltimore-London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p.111, especially Kant's note. (AK VIII, 191-92) Kant's way of conceiving the object of mathematics is elaborately contrasted with the classical Greek way in David Lachterman's *The Ethics of Geometry: A Genealogy of Modernity*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1989). Lachterman develops and builds on Jacob Klein's *Greek Mathmatical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*; and "The World of Physics and the 'Natural' World" in *Jacob Klein: Lectures and Essays*, edited by R. B. Williamson and E. Zuckerman, (Annapolis: St. John's College Press, 1985), pp. 1-34.

[21]*Critique of Pure Reason,* (Pluhar), A 120.

evidently not with *De Anima.*[22] Aristotle's account of these matters seems to be much simpler, it remains very close to the ordinary and general experience in which they are found. As Joseph Owens put it, he "lets things speak for themselves." Aristotle and Kant, it seems to me, are considering pretty much the same phenomena, however differently they account for them.

In the beginning of his *Metaphysics* Aristotle speaks of how all animals by nature come into being with sensation and how, for some, memory emerges from sensation which makes them more intelligent and able to learn. He assumes that, of course, memory presupposes imagination. An animal remembers by recalling an image of something which has been perceived in the past and is no longer present, Kant's reproductive imagination. And so, he, Aristotle, goes on,

> the other animals live by imaginings and memories, but have little share in experience, but the human race lives also by art and reasoning. Experience arises out of memory for human beings; for many memories of the same thing bring the capacity for one experience to completion. And experience seems to be almost like knowledge, or science, and art; and knowledge and art come about from experience for human beings.

Experience is the link between memory and science and art. Experience, then, arises from memories, when many memories of the same thing are linked together in a unity: for example, this cured Smith, it also cured Jones, and Green and Quinn, therefore it should cure Collins as well. The doctor, thinking about Collins's illness is led by <u>something</u> to call up the images of those former patients and their cures. The intelligible character [*ennoema*][23] of the illness of the patient before him recalls that same intelligible character he had noticed in the illnesses of Jones, Smith and so on. The intelligible character of the illness is at work both in and through the perceived patient before him and in the doctor's mind, as well as in and through the images recalled of past patients.

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[22]Nor with Thomas Aquinas' commentary on *De Anima* and what he wrote on perception and imagination in his own name, cf. *Summa Theologiae,* I, Q. 84, AA. 6 and especially 7 and Q. 85, A 1.

[23]*Metaphysics*, 981a 6.

Aristotle has a name for the kind of human imagination that works together, that is, cooperates, with thought: he calls it rational [*logistikê*] imagination. It is distinguished from the kind of imagination that human beings share with the other animals, sensible imagination.[24] Let us recall, however, that experience is cognition of individuals. The intelligible form is working away in the linkage and the unity of experience, but it, so to speak, has not come into its own yet. In science and art when one can say this *kind* of medicine cures this *kind* of illness, the intelligibility of the form that was at work in experience is explicitly and fully recognized in speech as a universal. This culminating contemplation of the form as a universal is described by Aristotle in a way that at first seems strange, he describes it as a coming to rest of the soul out of its normal and natural disorder. But it is not the rest of inertia, it is the very active and untroubled calm of natural fulfillment, the gratifying fulfilling of a potency that was there from the beginning.[25]

The Kantian account is more technical and impressive. It tells us about all sorts of processes that remained hidden until Kant explicated, or invented, them. The imagination plays a larger role than it does for Aristotle. The sense-data, for Kant, must first be assembled or synthesized by the imagination before we can recognize them as constituents of sense objects. The Kantian account describes a world, that in its intelligible essentials is of our own making.

The Aristotelian account sticks much more closely to given experience, the causal factors it invokes almost seem to be extrapolations from the descriptions.[26] It finds intelligibility, perhaps even intelligence, in things and the natural world. We are instructed not so much to grasp or construct it, as to open ourselves to it.

II

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[24]*De Anima*, 433b 29-31.

[25]Aristotle, *Physics*, 247b 5-18 and *Posterior Analytics*, 100a 6.

[26]Aristotle does distinguish objects of sense that are proper to a sense, like the visible to sight, the audible to hearing, from incidental sense objects like "the white thing [that] is the son of Diares". [*De Anima*, 418a 7-26] What that colored thing is, is incidental to its simply being colored. But for human beings primary sense experience usually includes the what that is part of what constitutes the object of perception as a sensible thing.

Freedom in the sense of autonomy, self-legislation, is the fundamental principle of Kantian morality. Rousseau, whom Kant speaks of as a kind of Newton of the moral world[27], was perhaps the first to define freedom as self-legislation, but the idea is already implicit in Hobbes's theory of sovereignty and the social contract. We must obey the sovereign, Hobbes argues, because each of us through the social contract has agreed to allow his will to represent each of our wills. He is our representative. His legislation, because of the social contract, is, legally considered, our own self-legislation. Hobbes also formulated the more general principle underlying this conception: "there being no Obligation on any man, which ariseth not from some Act of his own; for all men equally are by Nature Free."[28] Obligation seems to be something like a contract with oneself.

This becomes even more explicit in Rousseau's doctrine of the general will. Freedom in society consists in uniting oneself with all the rest under the general will that declares the law, while at the same time remaining free, that is, self-legislating, in so far as one has contributed to the making of that law, either by taking part in the legislative assembly oneself, or taking part in the election of legislators. The process that makes the will general also makes it moral. Being compelled to express one's will in such a form that it can become a general law, so that it can coincide with the wills of all the others, moralizes the will. For example, I don't like to pay taxes. If I generalize my desire into a law that no one ought to pay taxes, I am compelled to see that then the police, public schools, courts, the enforcement of contracts, and so on, would all disappear. The irrationality of my original desire becomes manifest.

This idea is fully developed as a moral principle in Kant's doctrine of the categorical imperative: so act that the maxim of your action can become a universal law. The truly free or moral person, according to Kant, bows only to the moral will or practical reason within him or her self, and not to any standard coming from without.

The standard of autonomy, self-legislation, is opposed by heteronomy, legislation by another. The two most powerful and prominent

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[27]Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau, Kant and Goethe*, Harper Torchbooks, (Harper and Row, 1963), p. 18.

[28]*Leviathan*, chapter 21.

forms of heteronomy that are to be dethroned are the standard of nature derived from philosophy and the standard of God derived from Biblical revelation. Pure practical reason is the only source of moral law. Anything, therefore, empirical or sensual in origin is disqualified as a source or standard of moral worth: that rules out moral sense, moral feeling and pleasure. It also rules out happiness as a standard, happiness being understood by Kant as a kind of sum of satisfaction of empirical desire, or as he puts it, of inclination. The rational principle of heteronomy, the concept of perfection, at least does not, as the empirical principles do, undermine morality, but by its emptiness and vagueness is "altogether incapable of serving as its foundation."[29] With this glance at certain programmatic aspects of the *Grounding [Foundations] of a Metaphysics of Morals*, we can now turn to the *Metaphysics of Morals*.

The book is divided into two parts that correspond to the traditional division between political philosophy and ethics, the doctrine of right and the doctrine of virtue. Duties of right are defined as externally enforceable obligations, the external enforcer being a just, lawful, or right-protecting political order. Duties of virtue, ethical duties, are internal obligations. Duty is a necessitation or constraint of free choice through the law. The constraint in ethical duties, then, is "self-constraint through the representation of the law alone, for only so can that *necessitation* (even if it is external) be united with freedom of choice."[30] Free choice is not indeterminate, free choice is that choice that can be determined by pure reason.[31] And just to wrap this up: throughout both parts of the book "obligation" refers to "the necessity of a free action under a categorical imperative of reason."[32]

But before we enter into some of the substance of the book, it is time to clear up one fundamental point. Kant frequently speaks of the

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[29]*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, AK IV, 443.
[30]AK VI, 380.
[31]This appears to be an echo, or variant, of Spinoza's conception of freedom. Everything, according to Spinoza, is determined: freedom is the ability of the best human beings to be determined by clear and distinct ideas. (If we are not determined in our actions by clear and distinct ideas, we will be determined solely, or mainly, by natural causes like instincts, emotions and inclinations.) For Spinoza and German Idealism, as a whole, see Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), Preface, pp. 15-17.
[32]AK VI, 222.

unbridgeable gap between the domain of sensible empirical nature and the domain of moral freedom, as our earlier quote illustrated. Those statements turn out to be only provisional, to help us get clear about where our different principles are coming from. Freedom is a kind of causality. Although the natural causality of the sensible world cannot determine the subject as a moral, supersensible, being,

> yet the reverse is possible (not . . . with regard to our cognition of nature, but . . . with regard to the consequences that the concept of freedom has in nature); . . . this possibility is contained in the very concept of a causality through freedom, whose *effect* is to be brought about in the world . . . .

Those effects manifest themselves as appearances in the world of sense.[33]

This causality of freedom is another way of talking about how pure reason becomes practical: This can only happen when reason makes the individuals' maxims (subjective principles of action) fit for becoming universal law. And further, since we human beings are under the sway of nature's causality as well as freedom's, that power of reason can be exercised, Kant says, only by its prescribing the moral law in the form of imperatives that command or prohibit absolutely.[34] A divine being, with no countervailing natural tendencies to oppose pure practical reason, acts in accordance with the moral law as a matter of course, with no need for any imperatives, any commands.

Since my general aim here is to illustrate how Kant's sensible natural realm and supersensible moral realm come together in one and the same world, I will concentrate on the doctrine of virtue. Because that is where those sources of morality rejected in the Foundations as ultimate principles of morality are done justice to, as important factors in moral life.

An end, Kant explains, is an object of free choice, the object of some action, and is thereby empirical. The traditional, or classical, procedure of clarifying the rank order of one's ends and then setting one's personal maxims of duty in terms of the rank order of those ends, violates

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[33]See AK V, 195 and the note on 195 and 196.

[34]AK VI, 213-14; Mary Gregor translation (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 13-14.

the concept of duty according to Kant. Duty with its categorical ought is rooted in pure reason alone, and thereby must be in control of the maxims by which one sets one's ends. The ends to be sought in ethics then are ends that are also duties.

Although both nature and the concept of perfection seem to have been ruled out as fundamental moral standards in the *Foundations,* in section viii of the doctrine of virtue we find the end that is also a duty to cultivate one's own natural perfection. As Kant also says in the *Foundations*, ends that are necessary and objective ends for every rational being, that is, ends in themselves, can serve as moral laws. Rational nature, he declares, is an end in itself. It follows that human beings, being rational natures, are obliged in their own person or in the person of another to always treat humanity as an end, not a means. The end of humanity in our own persons is linked to the duty to make ourselves worthy of humanity by cultivating our natural capacities to realize the ends set forth by our reason. Then Kant goes on, "That is to say, the human being has a duty to cultivate the raw abilities of his nature by which the animal first raises itself into a human being."

Happiness, we remember, was also excluded from moral goals, but, Kant declares, the happiness of others is an end that is also a duty. The argument here is rather interesting, it seems to ground itself on universalizing a not very exalted natural and selfish principle. The reason why we have

> a duty to be beneficent is this: since our self-love cannot be separated from our need to be loved (helped in case of need) by others, we therefore make ourselves an end for others; and this maxim can never be binding except through its qualification as a universal law, and hence through our will also to make others our ends. The happiness of others is therefore an end that is also a duty.

Shortly thereafter Kant again puts his prodigious deductive power in the service of his good sense by qualifying this duty. "How far it should extend depends . . . on what each person's true needs are in view of his sensibilities, and it must be left to each to decide this for himself." For to promote the happiness of another at the sacrifice of one's own happiness

(one's own true needs) would be in itself a self-conflicting maxim, if one made it into a universal law.[35]

In the light of the *Foundations*, section xii of the *Metaphysics of Morals* is especially interesting: outlawed feeling and pleasure come into their own. The subject is those "moral endowments" resting on feeling that are required to prepare the mind to receive concepts of duty and to act on them. There are duties to cultivate these right dispositions of feeling.

Moral feeling is "the susceptibility to pleasure or displeasure merely from the consciousness that our action is either in agreement with or is contrary to the law of duty." Shortly thereafter a remarkable statement follows: "for all consciousness of obligation depends on this feeling." It is this feeling that makes us aware of the constraint that lies in the concept of duty. There is no duty to have or acquire it, because every human being (as a moral being) already has it. The obligation can "only be to cultivate it and, through wonder at its inscrutable [*unerforschlichen* -not to be searched into] source, to strengthen it"[36] To lack it is to be morally dead. Kant continues, in appropriately passionate language, "and if, (to speak in medical terms) the moral life-force could no longer excite this feeling, then humanity would dissolve (as it were by chemical laws) into mere animality and be mixed irretrievably with the mass of other natural beings."[37]

The other great source of heteronomy, both the Foundations and *The Critique of Practical Reason* tell us, is the biblical God of revelation. Kant ends the *Metaphysics of Morals* by speaking of religion as an integral part of the general doctrine of duties, but says that considered as a doctrine of duties to God it lies outside the boundaries of pure moral philosophy. The necessity for religion is stated quite clearly: "we cannot very well make obligation (moral constraint) intuitive for ourselves without thereby thinking of *another's* will, namely God's (of which reason in giving universal laws is only the spokesman)." This duty with regard to God, he goes on, is really a duty to the idea we ourselves make of such a being, it is really a duty of a human being to him or her self, "for the sake

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[35]AK VI, 391-94; Gregor translation, 154-56.
[36]AK VI, 399-400.
[37]Mary Gregor translation, p. 160.

of strengthening the moral incentive in our own lawgiving reason."[38] Kant hints that if we would really like to follow up this subject, we could consider his book *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*, where the agreements between pure practical reason and the teachings of history and revelation are explored. That book, like the *Metaphysics of Morals*, is one of those rare places where Kant describes human beings as we know them, whole human beings who are at one and the same time natural and moral beings.

It may be fitting to end this talk with some brief remarks about Kant's discussion of religion. The *Critique of Pure Reason* established, according to Kant, that we have no knowledge, positive or negative, concerning the existence of God. Religion, Kant argues, is unambiguously subordinated to morality, to moral reason. "Pure moral legislation, through which the will of God is primordially engraved in our hearts, is not only the unavoidable condition of all true religion whatsoever, but is also that which really constitutes such religion." True religion, he argues, "is a purely rational affair."[39] Religion within the limits of reason alone establishes what in the absence of knowledge we are obliged to believe, in order to strengthen our capacities to obey the moral law.

Kant had trouble getting his book on religion printed. Permission to publish was withheld because of opposition from officials of the theological faculties at the universities. Morals and religion, they argued, fell under the jurisdiction of the theological faculty, not the faculty of philosophy to which Kant belonged. (This jurisdictional issue was probably not the deepest ground for their opposition.) Kant had argued as early as *The Critique of Pure Reason* that moral theology in answer to the question "What may I hope?" was an indispensable part of philosophy. After a few years of rejection by some censors and acceptance by others, Kant did get his *Religion* . . . book published. But the practical and theoretical questions connected with the affair evidently led him to write what became a part of his last book, *The Conflict of the Faculties*.

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[38]*Ibid.*, 229-30.

[39]*Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone,* AK VI, 104; *Der Streit der Fakultäten,* AK VII, 67, *The Conflict of the Faculties,* (New York: Abaris, 1979), translated by Mary Gregor, p.123.

I bring this talk to a close with Kant's comments in that book on the traditional idea that philosophy is the handmaid of theology, He grants theology's "proud claim", but raises the question: Is she, however, the handmaid that walks behind bearing her gracious mistress's train, or the torchbearer that walks ahead to light the path?[40]

[40]AK VII, 28.