

## KANT'S CRITIQUE OF MYSTICISM:

### (2) The Critical Mysticism

...the inscrutable wisdom through which we exist is not less worthy of veneration in respect to what it denies us than in [respect to] what it has granted.<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Mysticism and Religious Experience

In the first article in this series<sup>2</sup> I examined the Critical character of Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*<sup>3</sup> and its role in preparing the way for his Critical System. I argued that, far from being a "pre-Critical" work, *Dreams* contains all the essential ingredients of the Critical method and that the only key element of Kant's mature thinking which is altogether missing, namely the famous "Copernican" insight, is actually present in the works of Swedenborg, whom Kant was criticizing in *Dreams*. I also suggested, but left undeveloped, the idea that Kant himself did not have an entirely negative opinion of mysticism, but rather hoped through his Critical System to provide a secure foundation not only for metaphysics, but for mysticism as well. The purpose of the present paper will be to defend this idea more thoroughly by demonstrating the extent to which a kind of mystical world view can be seen operating throughout Kant's philosophical writings, but especially in those which compose the Critical System itself. I will begin in this section by explaining the differences between several types of mystic, paying special attention to the role of religious experience. The next section will examine more thoroughly Kant's reasons for rejecting traditional forms of mysticism. Section III will then demonstrate that Kant himself developed a Critical type of mysticism. And the fourth section will conclude this paper by pointing out how this way of understanding Kant's world view sheds light on certain metaphors which he frequently used.

A good general definition of mysticism is suggested by Albert Schweitzer's description of the mystic as "a human being looking upon the division between earthly and super-earthly, temporal and eternal, as transcended, and feeling himself, while still externally amid the earthly and temporal, to belong to the super-earthly and eternal."<sup>4</sup> From this at least three sorts of mysticism can be inferred. First, the mystic might believe that membership in a "super-earthly" realm makes it possible to communicate with other spirits, especially those which are no longer tied to a body. This is the type of mysticism which Swedenborg practiced, and against which Kant was reacting in *Dreams*. Another, more common alternative is for mystics to join some organized religion and seek to express their eternal nature through more traditional beliefs and rituals. (This is indeed so common that such participants in organized religion are normally not regarded as mystics.) Kant readily admits the validity of this second sense of mysticism, as organized religious experience, and encouraged its promotion insofar as it maintains itself as a rational (moral) discipline.<sup>5</sup> However, mystics (as well as many ordinary religious people who would not presume to adorn themselves with such a title) often speak of "religious experience" in a rather different way. This term can be used to refer not to the act of pleasing God through the overcoming of one's evil heart, as expressed in the moral actions of a group of believers banded together to form a church, but to a more direct form of communication or communion with a personal God. That Kant may have also admitted the validity of immediate personal religious experience, and encouraged its promotion as an important aspect of the Critical System, is a view which (if entertained at all) is almost universally denied by his interpreters. Nevertheless, my purpose here will be to demonstrate that such a mystical feeling lies at the very heart of the Critical System: it is as important to the System as birth and death are to an individual person, for it sets up the limits and in so doing establishes for the System its ultimate meaning.

Webb notes the traditional view that philosophy is "the daughter of Religion, and

starts upon her career with an outfit of questions suggested by religious experience."<sup>6</sup> The "religious experience" to which Webb is referring is not so much the experience of God in humanly organized religion as an immediate personal encounter of the sort I have labelled "mystical" (even though this term is often reserved for its extreme manifestations). Kant's philosophy, I maintain, does not break with tradition in this respect. For his Critical System has a clear religious and theological orientation, despite the failure of most commentators to recognize its significance. For example, the task of validating the primarily theological ideas of God, freedom and immortality unites the three Critiques; indeed, Kant believed that his approach to these and other topics of religious and theological interest, though entirely philosophical in its presentation, could provide the only legitimate rational basis for religion [see e.g. CPR xxx,877; CPrR 3-5]. Moreover, his last book before setting out on the path of the Critical System (viz. *Dreams*) sets before him the question of how the philosopher is to cope with the claims of mystics such as Swedenborg; and the uncompleted book intended to fill the final gap in his philosophical System (viz. *Opus Postumum*, as it is now called) provides ample evidence that the ultimate aim of the entire Critical enterprise is to replace the extreme mystical and anti-mystical attitudes with a balanced attitude which can best be called "Critical mysticism". Since I have dealt with these two works elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> I will leave them out of account here and examine in general the extent to which we are justified in associating Kant's other works with a mystical spirit.

## II. Kant's Apparent Rejection of Mysticism

The traditional interpretation of Kant portrays him as consistently denying, or at least ignoring, any "possibility of an encounter with the transcendent",<sup>8</sup> and adds that "he seems to have found the notion of an immanent God unfamiliar and uncongenial to his mind" [KPR 50]. Baelz expresses this view in its classic form:

Kant, while recognizing the demands of the moral law inherent in man's own rational being, had no room for any immediate apprehension of God, belief in whom was a postulate and no more than a postulate, inferential rather than direct, mediated by reason rather than immediately given in experience.<sup>9</sup>

Even those who recognize that Kant's view of religion in RBBR is "not radically unlike the traditional Christian view" of religion generally agree that "any sense of personal fellowship with God, revelation from God or redemption by God is entirely lacking in the Kantian scheme."<sup>10</sup> However, such claims are much too harsh: Kant is always careful to leave a space for God's activity in relation to man (for faith in relation to knowledge); what he criticizes is only man's attempt to grasp or control God in such a way as to force Him into revealing Himself or redeeming man.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, a few interpreters, rejecting the traditional interpretation, have seen in Kant "the glimmer of a notion of faith as a 'direct interior persuasion' in matters of religious truth".<sup>12</sup> The recognition that Kant's philosophy is a System of Perspectives can, I believe, transform this "glimmer" into an unmistakable ray of noon-day sunlight. It may even enable us to defend Du Prel's suggestion that Kant's "Critique of Reason" points directly to mysticism.<sup>13</sup>

The belief that Kant disallows any direct experience of God stems from two misunderstandings, which arise only when the dependence of his ideas on the Principle of Perspective is ignored. The first arises out of the failure to make the important distinction between mediate experience (i.e. empirical knowledge), and immediate experience.<sup>14</sup> The fact that "the glimpses [of "the infinity in the finite and the universality in the individual"] are distrusted" by Kant<sup>15</sup> is taken by most interpreters as a distrust in immediate experience, when in fact Kant's expression of distrust in such "glimpses" is always an expression of distrust in their adequacy when viewed from reason's theoretical standpoint (which always aims at and depends on empirical knowledge). If such glimpses are viewed as immediate experiences, and therefore not reflected upon, then

there is no question of distrusting them, because no Critical standpoint is adopted from which such distrust can arise.

The second misunderstanding arises out of the failure to recognize that Kant does not require that one of the Critical perspectives must be adopted at all times. Only when a person chooses to reflect rationally on experience would Kant argue that one of the Critical perspectives must be adopted. By no means does such reflection entail a denial that people have nonreflective (immediate) experience as well. Thus, when Kant makes statements such as "The philosopher, as a teacher of pure reason...must waive consideration of all experience" [RBBR 12(11)], he is not calling into question the reality or validity of such (immediate) experience, but only reminding us to distinguish between the a priori and a posteriori. Likewise, his lack of attention to the importance of an immediate encounter with God throughout most of his Critical works does not indicate that he views such an encounter as impossible, but only that he recognizes that it does not occur by means of reflection. Kant's tendency to explain religious doctrines and experiences in practical (moral) terms must therefore be regarded not as a denial of the legitimacy of immediate experience, but merely as an insistence that, insofar as one wishes to explain such experiences, a practical explanation always takes precedence over a theoretical explanation.

Affirming that we have immediate (and hence nonreflective) experience is not problematic; but asserting that God is actually present in such experience does seem to go directly against Kant's own claims to the contrary. "A direct revelation from God", he says, "would be a supersensible experience, and this is impossible."<sup>16</sup> For "a supernatural experience...is a contradiction in terms" [CF 57]; indeed, "supersensible experience...is absurd."<sup>17</sup> Before we jump to any conclusions concerning the implications of such negative statements, it is important to determine just what Kant means by the words "supersensible [or "supernatural"] experience". Is he declaring that

an immediate, nonreflective encounter between man and God is so absurd an idea as to be an impossible contradiction, or is he only rejecting the supposition that such an encounter can give rise to real empirical knowledge of God (i.e. from the standpoint of a theoretical system)? Since most interpreters fail to distinguish between immediate experience and experience in Kant's special, mediate sense, this question is rarely even asked. Once we make this distinction, however, it seems clear that Kant is referring to experience as empirical knowledge whenever he rejects the possibility of supersensible experience. Immediate experience just is; so words like "contradiction" do not really even apply to it. Moreover, Kant himself, as we have seen, was actually open to the possibility of mystical visions in Dreams; and he even affirmed an immediate experience of God in his *Opus Postumum*, so it would be a blatant contradiction for him to claim elsewhere that such ineffable experiences are actually absurd. By contrast, a claim to theoretical knowledge of the tran-scendent (i.e. supernatural) ground of the empirical world clearly would be absurd and contradictory, inasmuch as the presupposition of the entire System is that the transcendent ground (the thing in itself) is unknowable.<sup>18</sup>

The purely theoretical intention of Kant's various denials of supersensible experience is substantiated by examining the context of such comments. For he never denies altogether that such experiences are legitimate, but only requires that we change the standpoint from which we view them. In CF 57-8 Kant is considering whether the "claim that we feel as such the immediate influence of God" can be used as "an interpretation of certain sensations" in order to prove that "they are elements in knowledge and so have real [theoretical] objects". He concludes that "we can never make anything rational out of" such an attempted theoretical proof. He admits that such subjective experiences are genuine, but insists that they remain mysterious.<sup>19</sup> Thus he explains in CF 47 that the experience of divine supernatural power "comes to man through his own reason"; it is not a "direct revelation" inasmuch as it does not come in the form of a

sensible experience which is objectively verifiable. (Otherwise, a person watching someone who is experiencing, for example, an apparition of the Blessed Virgin would also be able to see the object just as clearly. Indeed, a television camera would be able to capture it.) "The internal experience [e.g. of the mystic], and the feeling (which is in itself empirical...), are incited by the voice of reason only"; yet such feeling does not constitute "a particular rule for reason..., which is impossible" [GT 402(181)]. Here again Kant is explicitly considering whether or not such a feeling suffices for a theoretical proof: if it could give rise to a "rule for reason" (i.e. for everyone's reason), then it would be objective, and could qualify as a supersensible experience in his theoretical system.

Kant's point is that all such feelings which arise out of our immediate experience will remain subjective;<sup>20</sup> but the certainty which results from them is not for this reason any less valid [see e.g. CPR 857]. Thus, he says "there is no theoretical belief in the supersensible"; yet "from a morally practical standpoint a belief in the supersensible is not only possible, but it is even inseparably conjoined with it [i.e. with the practical standpoint]" [GT 397n(174n)]. So when he says the "feeling of the immediate presence of the Supreme Being and the distinguishing of this from every other, even from the moral feeling, would constitute a receptivity for an intuition for which there is no sensory provision in man's nature" [RBBR 175(163), emphasis added], he is not denying that such a feeling can legitimately be experienced, as Ward suggests [DKVE 157], but is only insisting that it cannot properly be viewed from the theoretical standpoint. Likewise, when criticizing the excesses of the "philosophy of feeling", which attempts to go "directly to the point itself", without "reasoning from conceptions" [GT 395(171-2)], Kant admits that "philosophy has its secrets which may be felt". The mistake is to think such feelings can be interpreted in such a way as to replace reason. This accords well with the mystic's recognition that what is apprehended in a mystical experience remains

ultimately mysterious--i.e. it is something the true nature of which cannot be apprehended sensibly. Indeed, this very fact that man cannot have a sensible experience of the transcendent as it is in itself--i.e. one which gives rise to theoretical knowledge--is what gives rise to the need for a mystical experience which cannot be fully analyzed from any Critical perspective.

Unfortunately, Kant had a rather narrow conception of what mysticism is. He equates "mystical" with "magical" in RBBR 120(111), and comments elsewhere on "the mystical fanaticism in the lives of hermits and monks" [130(121)]. He refers to the "mystical veil" [83(78)] in such a way as to indicate that for him mysticism implies confusion or lack of clarity. Thus he claims in GT 398(175) that mystics seek to establish "an overlap...from conceptions to the incogitable" by means of "a faculty to seize that which no conception reaches". Such efforts usually indicate "a bent towards fanaticism": because such mystical operations are "transcendent and can lead to no proper cognition of the object, a surrogate of it, supernatural communication (mystical illumination), must be promised; which is then the death of all philosophy." Similarly, in *The End of All Things*<sup>21</sup> Kant argues that "the speculative man becomes entangled in mysticism where his reason does not understand itself", a situation which is not "fitting for an intellectual inhabitant of a sensible world". (The example he cites is that "Chinese philosophers strive in dark rooms with eyes closed to experience and contemplate their nihilism.") Mystical experiences as such can hardly be called speculation in Kant's theoretical sense, yet he believes they are subject to the same criticism, because the pantheism on which he believes such practices are based "is really a concept in company with which their understanding disintegrates and all thinking itself comes to an end."

Kant's official criticism of mysticism is that it errs only when it gives rise to fanaticism--i.e. only when the attempt at "communion with God" is believed to "accomplish [something] in the way of justifying ourselves before God" [RBBR

174(162); see also CF 54-7]. However, mystics do not have to be fanatics of this sort--indeed, they often are not. In CF 46 Kant explains that mysticism in the form of fanatical fantasy which "inevitably gets lost in the transcendent" can be avoided only by establishing for it an ethical grounding [cf. note 4]: philosophers should "be on the lookout for a moral meaning in scriptural texts and even...impose it on them", because "unless the supersensible (the thought of which is essential to anything called religion) is anchored to determinate concepts of reason, such as those of morality, ...there is no longer any public touchstone of truth." So "mysticism, with its lamp of private revelations" [65] is not illegitimate in itself, but only when it fails to subject itself to the objective principles of practical reason, as expressed, for example, in the Bible.<sup>21a</sup> Accordingly, Kant says in CPrR 71 that empiricism is actually more harmful than mysticism: because "empiricism uproots the morality of intentions, ... [it] is far more dangerous than all mystical enthusiasm, which [because of its extreme character] can never be a lasting condition for any great number of persons."

Like all objects to which Kant applies his Critical method, mysticism is rejected only in its extreme form ("enthusiasm"), but is allowed to remain in a more moderate ("Critical") form. Kant implies as much when he says in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764) that some of Plato's tendencies "may be too mystical" [ET 240(53), emphasis added]. He makes the same point in a rather different way in CF 59:

And so, between orthodoxy which has no soul and mysticism which kills reason, there is the teaching of the Bible, a faith which our reason can develop out of itself. This teaching is the true religious doctrine, based on the criticism of practical reason, that works with divine power on all men's hearts...

The three words Kant emphasizes in this passage suggest that his real aim is to defend, in accordance with the true aim of the biblical message, not only a kind of Critical

orthodoxy [see KSP, ch.XI], but also a kind of Critical mysticism. Thus, although Kant criticizes the belief that we can "by any token, recognize a supersensible object in experience", he readily admits that "at times there do arise stirrings of the heart making for morality" [RBBR 174(162)]. As a support for the moral life, Kant would not only sanction the attention a mystic pays to such "stirrings", but, as we shall see, he actively fostered them in his own life. Indeed, whereas fanatical mysticism leads to "the moral death of reason" [RBBR 175(163)], Kant's Critical mysticism is based on what can be called the moral birth of reason.

Most mystics, in fact, regard a concern for the revitalization of everyday life as the end result of the true mystical journey. For the mystical experience is not generally one of confusion or uncertainty, as is so often wrongly assumed [see e.g. note 21a], but one of utmost clarity and immediate certainty. Kant's own attitude towards God in his *Opus Postumum* reflects this same sense of inexpressible clarity and immediate certainty, though we shall not examine it here. Moreover, just as mystics (contrary to Kant's opinion) do not try to grasp God (or even their own "nihility") but to open themselves up to be grasped by the transcendent Ground of Being, so also Kant's description of the voice of God speaking through the moral law within is intended not as a way of controlling God, but as a way of recognizing and receiving God's Word immediately and thereby applying it to one's everyday actions.

Kant reveals that he is not entirely antipathetic towards mysticism by appending to his discussion of theology and religion in CF a lengthy letter in which a young student named Wilmans summarizes the content of the Critical System.<sup>22</sup> Kant warns that "I do not mean to guarantee that my views coincide entirely with his" [69n]; but the title Kant gives to this Appendix ("On a Pure Mysticism of Reason") suggests that his main reason for including this letter is to encourage the reader to flirt with the enticing suggestion Wilmans makes at the end, that true Christian mysticism is entirely consistent with, and

perhaps even implied by, the Critical System. (If Kant had objected to this suggestion, he could easily have omitted this last portion of the letter.) Wilmans' argument [74-5] begins at the first point in the letter where he actually addresses Kant, and is worth quoting at length:

I had reached this point in my study of your writings...when I became acquainted with a group of people, called separatists but calling themselves mystics, among whom I found your teachings put into practice almost verbatim. It was indeed difficult to recognize your teachings, at first, in their mystical terms, but after persistent probing I succeeded. It struck me as strange that these people...repudiate all "divine service" that does not consist in fulfilling one's duties: that they consider themselves religious people and indeed Christians, though they take as their code not the Bible, but only the precepts of an inward Christianity dwelling in us from eternity. I inquired into their conduct and found in them (except for the mangy sheep that, from self-interest, get into every flock) a pure moral attitude of will... I examined their teachings and principles and recognized the essentials of your entire moral and religious doctrine...: ...they consider the inner law, as they call it, an inward revelation and so regard God as definitely its author. It is true that they regard the Bible as a book which in some way or other--they do not discuss it further--is of divine origin; but, ...they infer the divine origin of the Bible from the consistency of the doctrine it contains with their inner law. For if one asks their reason, they reply: The Bible is validated in my heart, as you will find it in yours if you obey the precepts of your inner law or the teachings of the Bible. For the same reason they do not regard the Bible as their code of laws but only as a historical confirmation in which they recognize what is originally grounded in themselves. In a word, if these people were philosophers they would be (pardon the term!) true Kantians.... Among the educated members I have never encountered fanaticism, but rather free, unprejudiced reasoning and judgment in religious matters.

If Kant really was interested in the prospects of such a Critical mysticism, then we would expect some evidence of a mystical tendency both in his own life and in his philosophical writings. Although it is rarely taken at face value, there is actually ample evidence of such a tendency in both areas. We shall therefore turn at this point to a careful consideration of this evidence.

### III. Kant's Disclosure of Critical Mysticism

Kant's belief in God was based not on theoretical proof, but on an existential "conviction that dawns most spontaneously in all minds",<sup>23</sup> which is quite close (if not identical) to the sort of immediate certainty of the transcendent claimed by mystics. As Norburn puts it: "Kant himself never doubted the existence of a Supreme Being... He claimed that our awareness of God came by another route, a route not open (like logic) to the clever devil."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Kant sometimes uses phrases which imply some sort of communicative relationship between God and man (such as "God tells us"<sup>25</sup>), as does his belief that duties can be regarded from the religious standpoint as divine commands.<sup>26</sup> For instance, he says that "the sort of moral relation that holds...between God and man surpasses completely the boundaries of ethics and is altogether inconceivable to us."<sup>27</sup> Ward somehow construes this to mean that God and man are not related [DKVE 158]; yet Kant's point surely is that a relation holds between God and man, even though the nature of such a relation is "inconceivable" from the theoretical standpoint.

Kant's favorite idiom for expressing the relation between God and man, which he employs on numerous occasions in his later writings, is that of the "voice of God" which speaks to man through the common participation of God and man in practical reason. The question as to how this "voice" is experienced--i.e. as an inner feeling, as an audible voice, or even as part of an (apparently) outer vision--is not important, as long as the person who experiences it recognizes that it comes not as a direct (i.e. theoretical)

communication, but indirectly, through the mediation of our "morally legislative reason" [see CPR 847]. To let our activity be guided by this mysterious, inwardly impelling force or spirit is to let ourselves be guided by God. Because God's voice comes to us through the mediation of practical reason, it will always agree with the moral law within us:

For if God should really speak to man, man could still never know that it was God speaking [i.e. the voice does not convey theoretical knowledge]. It is quite impossible for man to apprehend the infinite by his senses, distinguish it from sensible beings, and recognize it as such. But in some cases man can be sure that the voice he hears is not God's; for if the voice commands him to do something contrary to the moral law, then no matter how majestic the apparition may be...he must consider it an illusion. [CF 63]

Kant draws attention away from the theoretical and towards the practical, as usual, in order to guard against fanaticism. But his references to this "voice" are by no means entirely negative. On the contrary, he associates it with a specific (judicial) faculty of the mind, which he calls "conscience".

Kant describes conscience as "the representative of God, who has His lofty seat above us, but who has also established a tribunal in us."<sup>28</sup> That it is a judicial faculty is evident from the fact that Kant describes it as "a third thing" which mediates between "the moral judgment and the moral law" [LE (69)]. "Conscience is a state of consciousness which in itself is duty.... [It] is the moral faculty of judgment, passing judgment upon itself" [RBBR 185-6(173-4)]. Through this "consciousness of an inner court in man" [MM 437; see also 399-400], God shows Himself to be both transcendent ("above us") and immanent ("in us"). Kant does not, however, identify our conscience with God; rather "conscience must be conceived as a subjective principle of responsibility before God for our deeds" [438], for "I, the prosecutor and yet the accused as well, am the same man" [438n]. God, as the third person in the Trinity, is "the real Judge of men (at the bar of conscience)" [RBBR 145n(136n)]: "the Judge of men...(the

Holy Ghost)...speaks to our conscience according to the holy law which we know" [140n(131n)]. "The judge within us is just" [LE (67)], therefore, because it is conscience commanding on God's behalf in accordance with the moral law.

This experience of the voice of God can always be trusted as a person's "guide" [RBBR 185(173)]; the problem is to be certain that the voice one appeals to for guidance really has its source in the conscience: "an erring conscience is a nonentity; ...I may err...in the judgment, in which I believe to be in the right: for that belongs to the understanding...; but in the consciousness, Whether in fact I believe to be in the right (or merely pretend it), I absolutely cannot err..."<sup>29</sup> It is potentially misleading, however, to interpret Kant as saying that "God's will cannot be...ascertained otherwise than through our conscience" [KPR 86]; for Kant does not mean that we cannot learn of God's will in any other way, but only that whatever the outward form (e.g. a passage from Scripture, a sermon, or an inner "voice"), the validation that it is from God occurs when the message touches our conscience. If a message touches the depths of our being (i.e. the conscience of our practical reason), then we can be sure it is from God. In proposing this view, Kant is not freeing individuals to follow the whims of their desires so long as they convince themselves not to feel guilty. That would be to ignore the voice of conscience. Rather, the ultimate goal of all reflection--and so also of doing philosophy--is to learn how to distinguish properly the voice of God from the impure incentives which speak against the moral law. Along these lines Kant says in EAT 336 that "practical wisdom...abides alone with God. And to respond to this Idea, by not obviously acting against it, is what we might perhaps call human wisdom."

Kant's theory of the individual conscience as the means by which God judges man is entirely consistent with Jesus' teaching about judgment in the Sermon on the Mount. Both insist "it is impossible to judge the virtue of others from their actions; that Judge, who looks into all hearts, has reserved that judgement for Himself."<sup>30</sup> Along these lines

Kant criticizes "the forcing of conscience" which clergy tend to impose on laity, which can "forbid thought itself and really hinder it" by assuming that doubting theoretical doctrines is "tantamount to lending an ear to the evil spirits" [RBBR 133-4n(124n)]. For a person can become aware of "the verdict of his future judge" not by examining the correctness of various theoretical beliefs, but only by considering "his awakening conscience, together with the empirical knowledge of himself [i.e. of the motives of his actions] which is summoned to its aid" [77(71)]. This implies that God will judge us on the basis of the judgment of our own conscience, which seems to be part of what Jesus intended to convey in proclaiming that "in the way you judge (yourself and others), you will be judged (by God); and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you" [Matthew 7:2]. In any case, Kant's understanding of the role of conscience provides significant evidence that he was concerned not only with "the rational 'form' for the decision-making procedure that a Christian would follow, anyway, ...if he acted fully in accordance with Jesus' teachings"<sup>31</sup>--a description which does accurately describe the purpose of his practical system--but also with the existential experience of the relation between God and man.<sup>32</sup>

Further evidence of Kant's concern for understanding the experience of a relationship between God and man can be gleaned from his description of "devoutness" as "an indirect relation of the heart to God" [LE (89)]. A thorough discussion of this theme would be out of place at this point [but see KSP XI.3], so it must suffice to state that Kant's emphasis on devoutness as a way of preparing oneself to act, rather than as a way of manipulating God, is precisely the emphasis mystics usually put on spiritual exercises such as meditation, prayer and fasting. Most mystics use such disciplines not to grasp God, nor to render themselves well-pleasing to God, but to open themselves up to the immediate presence of God, so that the ordinary actions of their everyday life become imbued with divine energy. That Kant approves of such Critical mysticism is clear when

he proclaims that the true prayer is that in which God's "all-seeing eye penetrates into our innermost souls and reads our thoughts" [LE (98)] and which should as a result "fan into flames the cinders of morality in the inner recesses of our heart" [(99)]. The traditional view, that "a private relation to God...is in Kant's eyes incompatible with sound morality and sane reason" [KPR 155-156], is therefore based on a mistaken interpretation of Kant's criticism. Kant encourages a private relation between God and man through a mutual participation in practical reason; he objects only to the supposition of a public (theoretical) relation based on a supposed sensible intuition of God himself.<sup>33</sup> In other words, he accepts the importance of "mystery, i.e., something holy which may indeed be known by each single individual but cannot be made known publicly", as long as we understand that "it must be moral" and "not for theoretical use" [RBBR 137(129)]. Thus, when he criticizes "the tendency of prayer to turn God, the proper object of faith, into an object of intuition" [DKVE 63; see LE (115)], he is not arguing that any attempt at "fellowship with [God]" is "imaginary" [DKVE 62; see also KPR 155], but that our immediate experience of such fellowship (which in itself is neither practical nor theoretical) can be rationally explained as being rooted only in our practical reason. Far from denying the validity of a fellowship based on practical faith, Kant actually defends its sufficiency: "We do not know God by intuition but by faith.... Now faith is undoubtedly no less vigorous a faculty than intuition" [LE (114-5); s.a. RBBR 52(48)].

A criticism which is often made of Kant is well-expressed by Otto: "It is one thing merely to believe in a reality beyond the senses and another to have experience of it also; it is one thing to have ideas of 'the holy' and another to become consciously aware of it as an operative reality, intervening actively in the phenomenal world.<sup>34</sup> Webb applies this criticism directly to Kant in KPR 22: "With Science and with Morality one feels that Kant was completely at home... With Aesthetics, and with Religion...the case is otherwise. The circumstances of his life denied Kant any extensive experience of visible

beauty, whether natural or wrought by art." He adds that, in spite of his "congenital incapacity for much that is most characteristically religious", Kant's philosophy of religion "is epoch-making in theology" [24; see also 60]. To back up these judgments Webb would presumably refer to the well known biographical details of Kant's life: to the fact that he never strayed more than ten or twenty miles from his birthplace in K nigsberg; to his rigidly structured daily schedule, so mechanical that his neighbors, it is said, could set their clocks by his daily comings and goings; and to his lack of church attendance.<sup>35</sup> Yet none of these facts points necessarily to a philistine attitude towards life. On the contrary, many mystics would affirm that the more one travels, the more difficult it is to maintain the mystical centre of one's experience (i.e. one's "home"). Surely one does not have to view natural wonders such as the Grand Canyon or Mount Everest in order to appreciate God's presence in a flower: the most ordinary landscape is quite capable of evoking a deep (mystical) response from a person who is intimately familiar with it. And generally it is not the philistine who is disciplined, but the mystic; for only in the context of a disciplined life can the voice of God be clearly distinguished from one's own inclinations. Moreover, it seems extraordinarily odd to assume that someone who is capable of expounding the heart of the Christian message, as Kant did so profoundly in RBBR, was himself uninterested in (to say nothing of congenitally incapable of!) religious experience as such.

If we ignore the well known descriptions of Kant's life and character, and consider the facts carefully and with an open mind, there turns out to be ample evidence that he not only believed in the reality of a transcendent God whom we represent by a theoretical idea, who manifests Himself in our practical reason (speaking to our conscience), and who communes with us in prayer, but also actively experienced this reality in his daily life. Webb admits that "there is no doubt that Kant could...have given in all sincerity an affirmative reply to the question": "Whether he feared God from his

heart" [KPR 28]. But Rabel goes much further:

Kant was a profoundly religious man.... When Kant had discovered [on one of his daily walks] that in a bad summer swallows threw some of their own young out of the nest in order to keep the others alive, he said: "My intelligence stood still. There was nothing to do but to fall on one's knees and worship."<sup>36</sup>

(Wallace relates the same story in more detail [WK 53], adding that once Kant said "he had held a swallow in his hand, and gazed into its eyes; 'and as I gazed, it was as if I had seen into heaven.'") To any non-mystical person, out of touch with the voice of God, the observation that swallows had killed their own young would be more likely to evoke confusion or disgust with the evils of nature than an attitude of worship. Yet for Kant, who believed we should always try "to discover the good in evil", it evoked an overwhelming sense of divine Providence.<sup>37</sup> Note, however, that it evoked this response of fearful respect for God precisely because he was unable to understand it: reason rests in the face of immediate experience; yet this rest is not so much a death as a new birth, if reason accepts its submission to a higher power. This is the alternative offered by Critical mysticism.

The twofold aspect of Kant's mystical world view is expressed most clearly by his famous exclamation in CPrR 161-2 (emphasis added):

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. I do not merely conjecture them and seek them as though obscured in darkness or in the transcendent region beyond my horizon: I see them before me, and I associate them directly with the consciousness of my own existence.

Such a statement could only be made by a person who had spent long hours meditating on the hand of God in nature and on the voice of God in conscience. The starry heavens and the moral law apparently correspond in Kant's mind to his theoretical and practical

systems, respectively. But what "fills the mind with awe" is not empirical knowledge of the stars or moral activity as such, but rather a meditative observation of how these wonders operate in our immediate experience. There is no third object of meditation representing Kant's judicial system because this system is not concerned with knowledge, but with feelings. "Feelings are not knowledge and so do not indicate [the presence of] a mystery" [RBBR 138(129)]. His explanation in the third Critique of purposiveness in nature and of beauty as the "symbol of morality"<sup>38</sup> should therefore be regarded as an attempt to justify, from the judicial standpoint, the feelings of awe which arise out of meditation on the mysteries of theoretical and practical reason.<sup>38a</sup> This assumption--that Kant's own religious experience arose more profoundly in his personal contact with conscience and with nature than in his participation in organized religion--can adequately explain why he chose beauty and teleology as the topics of CJ (the Critique which he explicitly regards as providing a religious answer to the question "What may I hope?" [see CPR 832-833]) rather than more traditional forms of religion.<sup>39</sup> The remainder of this section will therefore be devoted to a closer look at these two objects of Critical meditation.

We have already considered in some detail how, as Webb puts it, "Kant's attitude towards the moral law is always profoundly religious, full of...what Professor Otto...taught us to call *das Numinose*" [KPR 58]. Kant says, for example, that our soul regards "with the highest wonder" and with exalted "admiration...the original moral predisposition itself in us" [RBBR 49(44)], for "the very incomprehensibility of the predisposition...announces a divine origin" [49-50(45)]. An autobiographical remark towards the end of his life shows that Kant put into practice the theory he propounds:

...when composing my writings, I have always pictured this judge as standing at my side to keep me not only from error that corrupts the soul, but even from any careless expression that might give offence. And...now, in my seventy-first year, ...I can hardly

help thinking that I may well have to answer for this very soon to a judge of the world who scrutinizes men's hearts [CF 9-10].

His meditative attitude towards the moral law can be adequately summarized as an attempt not to know God, but to recognize and accept God's proper role as "a knower of hearts" [FPET 269(212)].

Unfortunately, commentators are usually not as aware of Kant's profoundly religious attitude towards nature. Webb, for instance, laments "that Kant did not more clearly perceive in his own attitude in the presence of the starry heavens a proof that Religion has other roots than the experience of moral obligation" [KPR 177]. However, just because Kant believed no theoretical proof can be adequate to demonstrate the existence of God, and that religion can therefore claim a rational basis only in morality, this does not mean that he failed to appreciate the significance of the immediate presence of God in nature. On the contrary, Kant admits, for instance, the force of the teleological argument for God's existence, as long as it is viewed as providing good empirical reasons for belief, rather than an absolutely certain, theoretical proof. Surely, this indicates just as clear a perception of the presence of God in the experience of nature as in "the experience of moral obligation"--though in neither case is this perception or feeling a sufficient basis for theoretical proof. Indeed, evidence of Kant's meditative attitude towards nature can be found both in the details of his life and in the contents of his writings.

Kant's mother, whom he greatly respected, taught him at an early age to appreciate his natural surroundings [WK 12,53]. As he once told his friend Jachmann, "she planted and tended the first seeds of good in me. She opened my heart to the impressions of nature; she awakened and widened my ideas, and her teachings have had an enduring, healing influence on my life" [quoted in KE 16]. In his early adulthood (between 1746 and 1755) Kant worked as a live-in tutor for several wealthy families who lived on country estates near K nigsberg. During these seven or eight years [cf. WK 19-

21 and KE 22-3] he must have had ample opportunity to experience the hand of God in nature, as his mother had taught him. (He also sometimes preached sermons in the village churches.) And even after becoming a professor at the age of forty-six [WK 34], he disciplined himself to break away from the lively conversation at his dinner table at four in the afternoon in order to enjoy an hour or more of peaceful walking. These walks he usually took in solitude, either on what is now called the "Philosophers' Embankment" along the river Pregel or to the north-west of town along various garden paths [40-1; KE 481]. (He also enjoyed "going for excursions into the country surrounding his native town", especially to the "idyllic" forest just a mile to the north-east, where in 1764 he composed *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* [KE 27-8].) As he walked, he was careful to keep his mouth closed and breathe through his nose, because he believed this could help prevent disease, but also, no doubt, as an excuse for walking alone in silence [49]. (Kant describes his attitude towards the proper relation between thinking, walking and eating in CF 109-110; and he adds some interesting comments about "drinking air" through the nose in CF 110-111n.) Such an interest in keeping disciplined periods of silence and solitude is likely to give rise to a religious experience of some sort, even if one is not consciously fostering a mystical bent. Furthermore, Kant usually fasted on "nothing but water" in between his once-a-day afternoon meal [KE 49]. That Kant may have been more conscious of the spiritual benefit of his disciplined lifestyle than is generally recognized is suggested by the fact that, upon returning home from his walks, he would spend the next few hours doing what could well be called meditating: "As darkness began to fall, he would take his seat at the stove, and with his eye fixed on the tower of Loebenicht church would ponder on the problems which exercised his mind."<sup>40</sup>

The impact of Kant's meditative mind-set on his attitude towards nature is clearly reflected in his writings on nature. For example, he says in HPE 431(95): "Man, who is

intrusted with the oeconomy [sic] of the earth, not only possesses a capacity ["for contemplation and admiration" of nature], but takes a pleasure in learning to know it, and through his introspections glorifieth the Creator." The book which contains Kant's most important "introspections" into nature, and which gave rise to a revolutionary theory of the universe (often called the Kant-Laplace theory), has at times an "almost mystical tone".<sup>41</sup> In the "Opening Discourse" Kant explicitly links his introspections into nature with his experience of the presence of God: "at each step I saw the clouds...dissipate, and...the splendour of the Highest Being break forth with the most vivid brilliance" [UNH 222(81)]. As he draws his discussion to a close he exclaims at one point that "God...paints [malt] himself in all his creatures" [360(190)], thus implying the view he develops in CJ of nature as the artwork of God. And in the final paragraph he makes a profound statement of the mystical experience of the hand of God in nature: "In the universal silence of nature and in the calm of the senses the immortal spirit's hidden faculty of knowledge speaks an ineffable language and gives [us] undeveloped concepts, which are indeed felt, but do not let themselves be described."<sup>42</sup>

This attitude towards nature is by no means limited to Kant's early, "pre-Copernican" writings. In his Inaugural Dissertation, when he had already adopted the Copernican doctrine of intuition, he nevertheless affirms that "we intuit all things in God."<sup>43</sup> Far from giving up this view in his later life, the entire Critical System can be regarded as an explanation of its implications [see e.g. MM 481]. Thus a comment much like that quoted from UNH 367(196) is made in RBBR 197(185-6):

...the contemplation of the profound wisdom of the divine creation in the smallest things, and its majesty in the great...is a power which cannot only transport the mind into that sinking mood, called adoration, annihilating men, as it were, in their own eyes; it is also, in respect of its own moral determination, so soul-elevating a power that words, in comparison, ...must needs pass away as empty sound because the emotion arising from

such a vision of the hand of God is inexpressible.

The main difference between this and his earlier eulogies of the mystical contemplation of nature is that he now distinguishes between the fanatical tendency to allow oneself to be annihilated by the mystical "vision" and the Critical mysticism according to which one accepts the immediate but inexpressible presence of God as a private confirmation of the moral postulate of God's existence.

If we now recall Schweitzer's definition of the mystic as the person who feels a connection with the eternal even "amid the earthly and temporal", and who sees this very division as somehow transcended, then we can safely conclude that Kant's deep awareness of the "beyond" towards which nature and conscience points us qualifies him as being a mystic [cf. note 4 above]. A further confirmation of this conclusion comes in FPET 264(204-5), when the philosopher whose "bent" in life is supposed to have been "remote" from any interest in experiencing God's presence<sup>44</sup> declares that, in the end, the only solution to the problem of evil is a full appreciation of God's presence in one's contemplative experience of nature ("the world") and conscience ("practical reason"):

The world, as a work of God, may be contemplated by us as a divine publication of the designs of his will.... For there [i.e. in the "authentic theodicy" provided by our experience of God] God is by our reason the very expounder of his own will announced by the creation; ...that is not the exposition of a reasoning (speculative) practical reason, but of a practical reason possessing potency, which...may be considered as the immediate declaration and voice of God, by which he giveth a meaning to the letter of his creation.

The final confirmation of the mystical character of Kant's world view would require a thoroughgoing examination of Kant's *Opus Postumum* [see note 7 above], for in this work he was attempting to realize his long-standing dream of establishing a Critical mysticism on the basis of his Critical metaphysics by arguing that the hand of God in nature and the voice of God in conscience can be regarded as the two sides of one

mystical reality.

#### IV. Kant's Mystical Metaphors

We have now explored the extent to which the limitations placed on mysticism in Dreams provide the context in which Kant was able to develop a Critical mysticism in his writings prior to Opus Postumum. A helpful way to conclude this article will be to relate Kant's dual emphasis on the experience of God in conscience and nature to his metaphor of the Critical philosopher as standing on the shoreline between the sea and the beach. As Beck suggests: "Kant speaks of hugging the shore of experience and staying far away from the high and stormy seas of metaphysical speculation. Yet that may have been where his heart was."<sup>45</sup> Indeed, we can picture Kant standing on the wet sand at the beach near K nigsberg, with the waves periodically splashing over his feet, feeling the setting of the sun in his heart and the gradual appearance of the stars overhead. This imagery is admittedly somewhat fanciful, yet it is suggested by Kant's own choice of metaphors, and can be regarded as quite an appropriate symbol of his System of Perspectives. The Critical philosopher stands at the crossroads of immediate experience and casts a reflective gaze over the earth of knowledge on one side and the sea of faith on the other, and recognizes that only on the border between these two can a person fully appreciate the awesome presence of God in light of the conscience within his heart and the majestic stars above. None of these perspectives on its own suffices to define human nature, yet together they suggest the following picture of Kant's mystical world view:

Kant's Four Guiding Symbols

stars above

earth before      man      sea beyond

heart within

These four symbols correspond directly to the main divisions in Kant's philosophical System. The stars represent nature, which is the source of the theoretical knowledge examined in the first Critique; the heart represents freedom and the moral law, which are the sources of the practical knowledge examined in the second Critique; the earth represents experience, which is the source of the judicial knowledge of beauty and purpose examined in the third Critique; and the sea represents faith, which is the true source of the metaphysics examined in his metaphysical works,<sup>46</sup> and so also (following the analogy in Dreams) of what I have called his Critique of Mysticism.

Kant is not called the "sage of K nigsberg" for nothing. As a true sage, he makes his home quietly on the borderlands, denying all extremes, including extreme mysticism. Thus, his world view does not really fit into any of the three categories of mysticism mentioned in section I, but establishes a fourth category instead. He offers the common man<sup>47</sup> a vision of life--a Critical mysticism--which can be enjoyed by any and every person who is willing to submit to the God of the shoreline, the God who always escapes our theoretical grasp, yet speaks to us in the universal experiences of nature and conscience.

Notes to: Kant's Critique of Mysticism (2)

1. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason--hereafter CPrR--tr. L.W. Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p.148. (References to Kant's works will cite the Akademie page numbering. When this number is not included in the translation, the translation's pagination will be added in brackets. The only exception is Kant's Critique of Pure Reason--hereafter CPR--tr. N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), references to which will cite the second (1787) edition pagination, except where material is unique to the first (1781) edition, in which case an "A" will precede the page number.)
2. See "Kant's Critique of Mysticism: (1) The Critical Dreams", in Philosophy & Theology 3.4 (Summer 1989), pp.
3. Immanuel Kant, Dreams of a Spirit-Seer, Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics--hereafter Dreams--tr. E. Goerwitz (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1900), p.373(121).
4. The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, tr. W. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black, 1931), p.1. Schweitzer distinguishes between "primitive" mysticism, which is based on a "magical act" leading to supposed oneness with God, and "developed" mysticism, in which this union "takes place through an act of thinking" [1-2]. He argues that Paul the Apostle does not have "the usual mentality of a mystic. The exoteric and the esoteric go hand in hand.... [For] mysticism is combined with a non-mystical conception of the world" [25]. Schweitzer's interpretation of Paul's mysticism of "being in Christ" is strikingly similar to the interpretation I will offer in this paper of Kant's mysticism. For both forge a middle path between the extremes of magical and intellectual mysticism, and in so doing they avoid the greatest "danger of all mysticism", which "is that of becoming supra-ethical" [297].
5. See Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason--hereafter RBBR --tr. T.M. Greene and H.H. Hudson as Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), passim. In Chapter XI of my forthcoming book, Kant's System of

Perspectives--hereafter KSP--I argue at length for a balanced interpretation of Kant's attitude. In a nutshell, RBBR is not an attempt to reduce religion to morality, as is so often claimed, but to preserve the value of empirical religion by insuring that it remains connected to its rational (moral) root.

6. Clement C.J. Webb, *Kant's Philosophy of Religion*--hereafter KPR--(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), p.14.
7. Dreams is examined in the first paper in this series, and *Opus Postumum* in "What is 'Tantalizing' about the 'Gap' in Kant's Philosophical System?" (forthcoming).
8. Ninian Smart, *Philosophers and Religious Truth* (London: SCM Press, 1969), Chapter 5, paragraph 62.
9. Peter Baelz, *Christian Theology and Metaphysics* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), p.41.
10. Keith Ward, *The Development of Kant's View of Ethics*--hereafter DKVE--(Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), p.168.
11. See KSP, ch.XI. I examine the role of faith in Kant's Critical System (even in its theoretical part) in "Faith as Kant's Key to the Justification of Transcendental Reflection", *The Heythrop Journal* 25.4 (October 1984), pp.442-455.
12. Quote from John Ballie in Don Wiebe, "The Ambiguous Revolution: Kant on the Nature of Faith", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 (1980), p.530.
13. Carl Du Prel, *The Philosophy of Mysticism*, tr. C.C. Massey (London: George Redway, 1889), vol.1, p.xxvi.
14. See my article "Knowledge and Experience: An Examination of the Four Reflective Perspectives' in Kant's Critical Philosophy", *Kant-Studien* 78.2 (1987), pp.170-173.
15. William Wallace, *Kant*--hereafter WK--(London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1901), p.218.
16. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798)--hereafter CF--tr. M.J. Gregor

(New York: Abaris, 1979), p.47.

17. Immanuel Kant, *Of a Gentle Ton Lately Assumed in Philosophy* (1796)--hereafter GT--tr. anonymously (by John Richardson) in vol.2 of *Essays and Treatises on Moral, Political, Religious and Various Philosophical Subjects*--hereafter ET--(London: William Richardson, 1798-1799), p.401n(180n).

18. See my article "The Radical Unknowability of Kant's 'Thing in Itself'", *Cogito* 3.2 (March 1985), pp.101-116. See also section 2 of my article "Six Perspectives on the Object in Kant's Theory of Knowledge", *Dialectica* 40.2 (1986), pp.121-151.

19. Kant emphasizes both the subjective and the mysterious aspects of the supersensible in CF 58-9: "there is something in us that we cannot cease to wonder at when we have once seen it... This ascendancy of the supersensible man in us over the sensible, such that (when it comes to a conflict between them) the sensible is nothing...is an object of the greatest wonder; and our wonder at this moral predisposition in us, inseparable from our humanity, only increases the longer we contemplate this true (not fabricated) ideal." In GT 402-3(182-3) he says of this same "internal predisposition in humanity, and...the impenetrability of the mystery which veils it": "One never wearies viewing it, and admiring in one's self a power that yields to no power of nature..." He then identifies "the mystery which...can be felt" as "the immoveable [sic] moral law", and explains that this gives us practical access to the supersensible "not by a feeling that grounds cognition, but by a distinct cognition, which has influence on (the moral) feeling."

20. Thus he argues that there cannot "be inferred or discovered from a feeling certain evidence of a direct divine influence... Feeling is private to every individual and cannot be demanded of others" [RBBR 114(104-5), emphasis added].

21. Immanuel Kant, *The End of All Things* (1794)--hereafter EAT--tr. R.E. Anchor in L.W. Beck (ed.), *On History* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), pp.69-84. Quotes here are taken from pp.335-6.

- 21a. It is relevant to note here that Kant's theory in RBBR of a moral interpretation of scripture has a close parallel in some medieval theologians, who referred to this type of interpretation as revealing the "sensus mysticus of a scriptural passage" [Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, tr. J. Haden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p.389]. Unfortunately, Cassirer falls into the common trap of dismissing such interpretations as leading "into a mere mystical darkness" [390], rather than as providing ultimate clarity, as mystics claim it does.
22. Elsewhere in the same work [CF 62-3n] Kant toys with the idea of a "mystical chronology" which is "calculated a priori" (using the numbers 4 and 7 in various combinations).
23. Francisco Peccorini, "Transcendental Apperception and Genesis of Kant's Theological Conviction", *Giornale di Metafisica* 27 (1972), p.64.
24. Greville Norburn, "Kant's Philosophy of Religion: A Preface to Christology?", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26 (1973), p.432.
25. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (delivered c.1775-1781)--hereafter LE--tr. L. Infield (London: Methuen, 1979), p.(98); not included in the Akademie edition of Kant's works. See also CF 67.
26. See e.g. RBBR 153(142). He declares in LE (48) that the laws of ethics (as opposed to legal laws) "do not relate to other people, but only to God and to oneself." That is, ethical laws are determined by the mutual participation of God and man in practical reason, which establishes the moral law in each individual.
27. Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797)--hereafter MM--part II tr. M.J. Gregor as *The Doctrine of Virtue* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), p.490.
28. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Education* (delivered c.1776-1787)--hereafter LEd--tr. A. Churton (University of Michigan Press, 1960 [1899]), p.495(215).
29. Immanuel Kant, *On the Failure of all the Philosophical Essays in the Theodicæ*

(1791)--hereafter FPET--tr. anonymously (by J. Richardson) in ET, p.268(210).

30. Immanuel Kant, *Attempt at Introducing Negative Quantities into Philosophy* (1763), tr. G. Rabel in *Kant* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p.200(49). Compare Matthew 6:1,16 and 7:1-5.

31. S.B. Thomas, "Jesus and Kant: A Problem in Reconciling Two Different Points of View", *Mind* 79 (1970), p.195.

32. I have discussed more thoroughly the relation between the moral principles of Kant and Jesus in "Four Perspectives on Moral Judgment" (forthcoming).

33. Robert Oakes argues [in "Noumena, Phenomena, and God", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4 (1973), p.37] that when a person experiences God as present in some sensible object, as for example in the sound of church bells ringing, the person is "having a sensible experience of God, i.e., in Kantian terms, God must be understood as the object of her 'sensible intuition'." In such a case, "the experience of God supervenes upon the experience of the bells... That is, in so far as the experience of the bells is at the same time an experience of God, the woman would thereby be having a sensible experience of God." Oakes is right to claim that the hearing of the bells and the experience of God are both "mediated" experiences. But his view of "God as a possible object of sensible intuition" [37] is mistaken inasmuch as it fails to take into account the perspectival difference between these two types of mediated experiences. Bells can mediate in our experience of God by pointing indirectly to something nonsensible beyond them: they remain symbols of a transcendent ideal which can never become an object of empirical knowledge. Yet the mediate element in our experience of the bells (as bells)--i.e. the sensible intuition of the bells--points directly to a real sensible object of which empirical knowledge is possible. From the standpoint of immediate (nonreflective) experience, both of these are indeed equally valid interpretations. But the fundamental difference between them is revealed as soon as we reflect upon them theoretically: our

sensible intuition of the bells points "forward" to a publicly verifiable empirical knowledge which can be viewed theoretically, whereas our awareness of God's presence in such an experience points "backward" to a transcendent and therefore theoretically unverifiable ground of all empirical knowledge.

34. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, tr. J.W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p.143.

35. See e.g. Willibald Klinker, *Kant for Everyman*--hereafter KE--tr. M. Bullock (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), pp.38,43.

36. G. Rabel, *Kant* [see note 30], p.vii.

37. LEd 495(216); see also Immanuel Kant, *History and Physiography of the Most Remarkable Cases of the Earthquake which towards the End of 1755 Shook a Great Part of the Earth* (1756)--hereafter HPE--tr. anonymously (by J. Richardson) in ET, p.431(95).

38. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790)--hereafter CJ--tr. J.C. Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp.351-354.

38a. The question as to why Kant mentions only two sources of admiration and awe is a difficult one. The account I have given in the main text is the one which seems to fit best with Kant's own explanation. However, there is another alternative. If the "starry heavens" refer not to the limits of man's theoretical standpoint, but rather to the limits of man's judicial standpoint (i.e. not to the first but to the third Critique), then the problem becomes one of discovering something in the former system which Kant views with "ever new and increasing admiration and awe". There are, in fact, several a priori elements or functions of the mind which Kant admits are ultimately mysterious. He says in CPR 180-1, for example, that "schematism...is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze." This is the answer towards which Heidegger points in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. However, the best answer, I believe, can be found by taking

note of the sections of the first Critique which most captured Kant's own attention in an "ever new and increasing" way--namely, "The Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding" and the "Paralogisms of Pure Reason", because these are the only two major sections of CPR which Kant almost completely rewrote for the second edition. The common factor between these two sections is that in both Kant devotes considerable attention to discussing the implications of what he calls "the radical faculty of all our knowledge, namely, ...transcendental apperception" [CPR A114]. This clue suggests that his sense of "I", as the subjective source of the categories, is the "brute fact" against which he "bumps his head" in his theoretical system, and which therefore best corresponds to the starry heavens and the moral law.

Kant's treatment of the "unity of apperception" does indeed have a certain mystical flavor. For Kant is not referring simply to the ordinary man's empirical sense of "I", but to a deeper, transcendental limit of all human experience--a limit which comes into view only as we gradually forget about (i.e. hold in abeyance) the empirical diversity of our ordinary experiences. And this, like Kant's overall a priori approach, is remarkably similar to the mystic's claim that in order to experience God (cf. answer philosophical questions) we must first go through an experience of unknowing. Eckhart, for instance, says "the more completely you are able to draw in your powers to a unity and forget all those things and their images which you have absorbed...the nearer you are to [this experience]. To achieve an interior act, a man must collect all his powers into a corner of his soul...hiding away from all images and forms... Here, he must come to a forgetting and an unknowing" [as quoted by Robert K.C. Forman in "The Construction of Mystical Experience", *Faith and Philosophy* 5.3 (July 1988), pp.259-260]. Forman examines this process of forgetting in some detail, noting that it eventually serves to revitalize the very details of life which had been "forgotten" [see p.263]. In the same way, the "I think" is for Kant the thought-less core or starting point of all thought;

apperception is the perceptionless perception of "I" which enables us to become aware of all our perceptions. And as such it provides us with a new (transcendental) perspective from which to view the empirical details of human knowledge in an enlightened way.

The role of transcendental apperception as the "missing" element in Kant's description of his experience of "awe and admiration" is actually implicit in the text quoted above from CPrR 161-2. For it is "the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me" which give rise to this mystical experience; they are experienced as awesome only when (and because) "I associate them directly with the consciousness of my own existence"--that is, only if I experience them as "at one" with the deepest layer of my self-identity, my transcendental apperception.

39. Kant confirms this assumption in CJ 482n [see also MM 482]: "Both the admiration for beauty and the emotion excited by the profuse variety of ends in nature...have something about them akin to a religious feeling." From an explicitly Kantian (a priori) standpoint, Rudolph Otto expounds in more detail the implications of this view of religious feeling [in *The Idea of the Holy*, tr. J.W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950 [1923]); on Kant, see pp.45,112-4]. Otto's claim that man's deep religious (or mystical) experiences have an essentially mysterious (i.e. nonrational and even nonmoral) factor might seem to be a direct rejection of Kant's emphasis on reason as the source for both natural and moral knowledge. But in fact they are almost entirely consistent. Otto's account of Kant's statements regarding the impact of conscience and nature on his philosophical feeling would be something like this. Kant experiences awe when confronted with the moral law and starry skies because he recognizes these as symbols of a transcendent, mysterious source of the two sides of human existence. They represent the two "brute facts" against which we "bump our heads", so to speak, in our efforts to discover the one ultimate Reason out of which human reason arises. This Reason creates nature and creates morality, but is it itself rational and moral? The fundamental tenet of

Kant's theoretical philosophy is that we cannot know the answer to such a question. And that is precisely the reason why our experience of these two limits arouses such "admiration and awe"! (This paradoxical situation arises, incidentally, whenever self-reference is applied to any fundamental principle: the principle itself cannot be coherently submitted to the criteria to which it gives rise.) Once the perspectival character of Kant's thinking is taken into account, it becomes clear that he would have no trouble accepting such an explanation of his deepest experiences. "Reason" is, for Kant, the ultimately unknowable mystery out of which arise all our human capacities for knowledge and goodness.

40. WK 41. Kant also "sat in meditation" after breakfast from about five until six each morning, a habit about which he once remarked: "This is the happiest time of the day for me" [KE 48].

41. WK 108. Stanley Jaki's recent translation of this book, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*--hereafter UNH--(Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1981) is unfortunately over-literal, and his introduction and notes are grossly unfair to Kant's true position. I have criticized Jaki's approach in detail in "Kant's Cosmogony Re-Evaluated", *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 18.3 (September 1987), pp.255-269.

42. UNH 367(196). This and the previous quote from UNH are my own translation.

43. Immanuel Kant, *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World*, tr. G.B. Kerferd and D.E. Walford in *Selected Pre-Critical Writings and Correspondence with Beck* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), p.410. Kant repeats this phrase several times in *Opus Postumum*.

44. KPR 60. Such a stoic view of Kant is flatly contradicted by the accounts of Kant's personality given by those who knew him personally. One of his closest friends, Jachmann, describes him as "a spirited orator, sweeping the heart and emotions along with him, as well as satisfying the intelligence" [quoted in KE 34], and adds that in social

gatherings he was unsurpassed: "All his friends were unanimously of the opinion that they had never known a more interesting companion" [quoted in KE 45]. Moreover, Kant openly described himself as having a "very easily affected, but otherwise carefree spirit" [quoted in KE 32]. What Kant objected to was not emotion as such, but "emotional thinking" [52].

45. Lewis White Beck, *Kant's Latin Writings* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), p.11. For examples of Kant's use of this metaphor, see his: *The Use in Natural Philosophy of Metaphysics Combined with Geometry...* (1756), tr. L.W. Beck in *Kant's Latin Writings*, p.475; *The Only Possible Argument for the Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1763), tr. anonymously (by J. Richardson) in *ET*, pp.65-66(220); *CPR* 294-295,353-354,A395-396; and *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1783), tr. L.W. Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), p.262. The best example comes in *CPR* 294-5, where Kant describes the domain of "pure understanding" as "an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth--enchanted name!--surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fog bank and many a swiftly melting iceberg give the deceptive appearance of farther shores, deluding the adventurous seafarer ever anew with empty hopes, and engaging him in enterprises which [like dreams!] he can never abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion." Kant's use of the word "horizon" (which occurs 16 times in *CPR* [according to my *A Complete Index to Kemp Smith's Translation of Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (distributed privately, 1987), p.171]) is closely related to his analogy of the shoreline. In *CPR* 353-354, for instance, Kant compares the illusion created by the Antinomies to the fact that the sea appears to be "higher at the horizon than at the shore".

46. That is, in *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, in *MM*, and in *Opus Postumum*. I examine in detail the logical relations between these and the other books which make up Kant's System in "The Architectonic Form of Kant's Copernican Logic",

Metaphilosophy 17.4 (October 1986), pp.266-288. On the role of faith in Kant's System, see note 11 above.

47. Manfred Kuehn, in "Kant's Transcendental Deduction of God's Existence as a Postulate of Pure Practical Reason", *Kant-Studien* 76.2 (1985), p.168, rightly insists that "Kant makes...very clear that he is on the side of the common man or common sense." "For Kant", unlike many of his Enlightenment contemporaries, "the 'crowd' is not an object of contempt." It is important to point out, however, that, even though the philosopher's task should be to defend common sense, it is nevertheless unjustifiable for the philosopher "boldly to appeal to the common sense of mankind [i.e. instead of giving arguments]--an expedient which always is a sign that the cause of reason is in desperate straits" [CPR 811-812; see also *Prolegomena* 259(7)]. Unfortunately, because Kant put in the place of such specious methods a complex tangle of abstract terminology and argumentation, his belief that his philosophical System upholds the view of the common man [see e.g. CPR 859] is often ignored or not taken seriously. Yet the overall purpose of his System is certain to be misunderstood if its aim in this respect is ignored. For the whole of Kant's philosophical effort can be seen as an attempt to place limitations on the various extremes which threaten to sway the common man away from the beliefs and actions towards which his reason naturally points the way [see e.g. CPR xxxif]. Indeed, this emphasis carried over for Kant into his personal attitudes as well. Thus, he says in *CPrR* 76-77 that "to a humble plain man, in whom I perceive righteousness in a higher degree than I am conscious of in myself, my mind bows, whether I choose or not..."