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T H E N O U M E N A L I N K A N T'S E T H I C S

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B Y

JOANNA MONEY-COUTTS.

Montreal

McGill University

1 9 5 0

C O N T E N T S

PREFACE

The most general charge laid against Kant for many years was that of inconsistency. The aim of this thesis is to show that some of the greatest difficulties in Kant's Ethics are due to his attempt to be too consistent - to his attempt to expound his moral theory in the metaphysical terms of the First Critique. That this attempt fails and that, nevertheless, the greater part of Kant's moral philosophy is not thereby invalidated, is proof of the worth and strength of the latter. How far grounds for the rejection of Kant's metaphysical system are provided by the incompatibility of this system with the most important field of man's experience, is not here discussed. It must however be emphasised that far from Kant's moral theory being dependent on the existence or reality of certain metaphysical entities, as some have argued - for example, G. E. Moore in "Principia Ethica" - Kant's very attempt to establish the reality of his metaphysical world on moral grounds is one which can only be held a failure. But it is a failure to be contrasted with the success of his analysis of moral obligation and the authority of the moral imperative, which analysis does not require the phenomenal-noumenal distinction according to this thesis.

The following abbreviations are used in footnotes throughout the thesis : "Kemp Smith" for Norman Kemp Smith's translation of the"Critique of Pure Reason" ;"Abbott" for Thomas Kingsmill Abbott's translation of the "Critique of Practical Reason" etc; and "Paton" for Herbert James Paton's translation of the "Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals." A full citation of these works appears in the bibliography.

CHAPTER I

THE GROUND OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE NOUMENAL AND THE PHENOMENAL.

According to Kant, there can be knowledge only through the co-operation of understanding and sensibility : the understanding supplies the forms of thought, or categories, to the manifold given in sensation. It is the most fundamental tenet of his theory, that *1 "knowledge involves two factors : first, the concept, through which an object in general is thought (the category); and, secondly, the intuition, through which it is given." There can be no knowledge without an object given in intuition to the concept lying ready in the understanding. Thus Kant distinguishes between knowledge proper and mere thought and maintains that knowing an object and thinking an object are by no means the same process, the difference lying in the presence in the one, and absence in the other, of an intuition. Where there is a bare concept without a corresponding intuition there is the form of thought, but since there is nothing to which the thought can be applied no knowledge on Kant's theory is possible by means of it : *2 "thoughts without content are empty." Thus Kant makes a compromise between the extreme views of the rationalist on the one hand, eg. Descartes, who maintained that knowledge could be reached by pure thinking, and the empiricist, eg. Hume, who held that the mind was a "tabula rasa" passively receiving the impressions of sense. Kant's aim is to avoid the dogmatism of the one and the scepticism of the other by analysing experience into two very dissimilar elements, namely, the matter of knowledge obtained from the senses, and a certain form for the ordering of this matter, supplied by the mind.

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 161-162.

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 93

Now the problem is to discover how this analysis of knowledge leads Kant to make, and whether it was necessary for him to make, the distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal, between the appearance and the thing-in-itself. To begin with, the premise of Kant's argument is that the only intuition possible to human beings is sensible intuition. This is established, according to Kant, in the Aesthetic, where he maintains that space and time are the conditions of the very possibility of experience, or intuition, and these forms under which alone objects can be given are sensible forms. Sensible intuition is either pure intuition of space and time themselves, or empirical intuition of things situated in space and time. To quote Kant : *1 "things in space and time are given only in so far as they are perceptions (that is, representations accompanied by sensation) therefor only through empirical representation." Sensible experience, for Kant, consists both of experience through the sensory organs of the external world and experience through introspection of internal states of mind. In the one case we experience the manifold of outer sense, in the other case the manifold of inner sense, the former being necessarily in space and time, the latter just in time alone; and not only must all sensible experience be subject to these forms, space and time, but also this sensible experience is the only experience possible for human beings. Since therefor there can be no knowledge, on Kant's theory, without experience as well as thought, then this means that there can be no knowledge without sensible experience.

Now the theory simply that there can be no knowledge proper without sensible experience in no way involves a noumenal-phenomenal distinction:

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 162

it is the position of some modern positivists, for example Ayer , who maintains that, apart from analytic knowledge, there can be knowledge only of what is empirically verifiable, that is, of what can be given to sense. But obviously the fundamental point about Kant's theory is that these sensible forms of experience, as well as the forms of thought or categories, are subjective forms : they have their origin in the experiencing and thinking agent. In the Aesthetic Kant puts the question: *1 "What, then, are space and time? Are they real existences? Are they only determinations or relations of things, yet such as would belong to things even if they were not intuited? Or are space and time such that they belong only to the form of intuition, and therefor to the subjective constitution of our mind, apart from which they could not be ascribed to anything whatsoever?" Kant's answer is that the last of these three alternatives must be the correct one. His aim in the First Critique is to explain and justify scientific a priori knowledge, more particularly knowledge that is synthetic a priori, in contrast both to that which is analytic a priori and that which is synthetic a posteriori. The basic contention of his whole argument, as H. J. Paton maintains in his work "Kant's Metaphysic of Experience," is, that the necessary and universal characteristics of objects, if they are to be known as necessary and universal, must be due to the nature of the mind which knows. This is Kant's solution to the problem he sets himself of how there can be synthetic a priori knowledge. Thus when he argues that *2 "the categories as yielding knowledge of things, have no kind of application, save only in regard to things which may be objects of possible experience," he means by the phrase "objects of possible experience" things as

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 68

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 162

subject to the forms of experience, i.e. space and time, which are supplied by the nature of the knowing mind. The conditions of the very possibility of experience are subjectively situated.

The logical and necessary conclusion to all this, according to Kant, is to distinguish between things as subject to these conditions, which alone are knowable by us, and the unknowable character of these things as they exist independently of these conditions - the former being called appearances, or phenomena, and the latter things-in-themselves, or noumena. Thus Kant lays down that [*1] "the understanding can employ its various principles and its various concepts solely in an empirical, and never in a transcendental, manner.....the transcendental employment of a concept in any principle is its application to things <u>in general</u> <u>and</u> <u>in themselves</u>, the empirical employment its application <u>merely</u> <u>to</u> <u>appearances</u>, that is, to objects of a possible experience." Objects of a possible experience are objects situated in space and time; space and time, being subjective forms of experience, can characterise objects only as they appear to us, and thus the nature of these objects as they exist in themselves must, according to Kant's theory, be held to be inaccessible to experience. The importance of the non-temporal aspect of things-in-themselves will be seen later in considering Kant's ethical theory.

It has already been pointed out that Kant's real object in distinguishing between phenomena and noumena in the First Critique is the justification of a priori knowledge. The transcendental expositions of space and time in the Aesthetic are arguments from accepted bodies of a priori knowledge to the conditions which alone can make this a priori knowledge possible ie. to the subjectivity of space and time. Kant

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 259

employs a similar argument in connection with the categories or forms of thought. Even if there are certain a priori categories which apply necessarily and universally to all objects, and in virtue of which the latter are objects of experience, there are still two ways, according to Kant, in which ideas, or concepts, could be related to their objects : either the object could be subject to the categories in its own right and thus make the concept possible, or the categories could be subjective forms of thought and the concept make the object, as object of experience, possible. The first alternative is the doctrine of realism; the second, that which, according to Kant, alone can explain the possibility of a priori ideas, and which involves distinguishing between things-in-themselves and things as they appear to us. Kant states his position most clearly in the following passage : *1 "If the objects with which our knowledge has to deal were things in themselves, we could have no a priori concepts of them. For from what source could we obtain the concepts? If we derived them from the object....our concepts would be merely empirical, not a priori. And if we derived them from the self, that which is merely in us could not determine the character of an object distinct from our representations, that is, could not be a ground why a thing should exist characterised by that which we have in our thought, and why such a representation should not, rather, be altogether empty. But if, on the other hand, we have to deal only with appearances, it is not merely possible, but necessary, that certain a priori concepts should precede empirical knowledge of objects."

Now these arguments for distinguishing between a phenomenal and a noumenal aspect of the world are reinforced for Kant by consideration of the Antinomies, for he tries to show that if reality as it is in itself

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 149

is characterised as spatio-temporal or as subject to such categories as cause and effect then it becomes self-contradictory. For example, in the First Antinomy, Kant argues that there are equally good arguments for holding either that the world has a beginning in time and is also limited as regards space, or that the world has no beginning and no limits in space ie. is infinite as regards both time and space. The only solution, Kant says, is provided by his theory of space and time as being forms of our intuition and as therefor not being applicable at all in this case, where we are concerned with objects thought of as going beyond experience: *1 "space and time belong only to the world of sense. Accordingly, while appearances in the world are conditionally limited, the world itself is neither conditionally nor unconditionally limited. Similarly since the world can never be given as complete....the concept of the magnitude of the world is given only through a regress and not in a collective intuition prior to it." In other words neither argument from the Antinomy is valid because considered as a thing in itself the world is neither spatial nor temporal. This is the solution Kant gives to the first two Antinomies. Of the last two Antinomies, he says that both arguments can be true if they are taken as referring the one to the world of phenomena, the other to the world of noumena. An exposition of the Third Antinomy, which is concerned with the problem of freedom, will be found in the third chapter of this thesis. The point here is to show how Kant reinforces the phenomenal-noumenal distinction by consideration of the contradictions of the Antinomies. He is, of course, assuming that the world cannot ultimately be self-contradictory, but this is a necessary assumption if he is to justify a priori knowledge. The contradictions

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 458

of the Antinomies disappear, according to Kant, only if we suppose that the world which we know by means of our categories and as subject to the forms of experience, is not reality as it is in itself, but is only reality as it must appear to human minds.

Now it is necessary to consider some of the criticisms which have been levelled against Kant's distinction, on the epistemological level, between noumena and phenomena. The most fundamental criticism is very similar to that which has always been directed against Locke and his Representationalist theory. It is the old problem of whether there can be a limit set to anything without there being some sort of knowledge of what lies beyond the limit. This can be put by saying that where there is complete ignorance there cannot at the same time be awareness of this ignorance, because this presupposes some knowledge of what accounts for the ignorance. How far in fact is Kant justified in saying anything at all about noumena? Furthermore how is he able to apply any categories to the noumenal? He has laid down that the pure concepts of the understanding, or categories, can never admit of transcendental, but always only of empirical, employment; the categories can apply only to objects of the senses under the universal conditions of a possible experience, never to things in general without regard to the mode in which it is possible to intuit them. Therefor, he says that *1 "in the case of the noumenon, all employment, and indeed the whole meaning of the categories entirely vanishes." How then can Kant apply the category of plurality, for example, to the noumenal, as he does in talking about noumena or things-in-themselves? The noumenal might equally well be a singular

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 269

entity which manifests itself in various different appearances. Though, indeed, to be really consistent on Kant's theory one would have to say that the categories of quantity are just not applicable to the noumenal. Again, when discussing freedom Kant definitely applies the category of causality to the noumenal : freedom is a noumenal power of causality which has effects in the phenomenal world. Though it is not necessary in the ordinary way to regard the noumenal as causing the phenomenal, for example in connection with ordinary physical objects, it is quite a different question when the noumenal is identified with the rational as in the case of human-beings - and here obviously the category of plurality is essential, for how could there be morality unless there were numerically different powers of reason for each "homo phenomenon?" One would have to maintain against this criticism that the distinction between thought and knowledge allows the noumenal to be thought about in terms of the categories - for indeed, it is only by means of the categories that we can think at all; though this employment of the categories cannot be considered to yield knowledge, for no relevant sensible intuition is possible.

Kant is, of course, aware of some of these difficulties : he points out that *1 "the question arises whether our pure concepts of understanding have meaning in respect of these latter (noumena) and so can be a way of knowing them;" and he admits that in allowing the noumenal in the negative sense as that which is unknowable because non-sensible, the understanding inevitably is led to try and form a positive notion which is quite inadmissable and impossible. He says that the understanding *2 "is misled into treating the entirely indeterminate concept of an intelligible entity,

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 267

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 268

namely of a something in general outside our sensibility, as being a determinate concept of an entity that allows of being known in a certain purely intelligible manner by means of the understanding." Kant says that the noumenal in the positive sense could be allowed only if it were possible to have a non-sensible, or intellectual, intuition, and this we not only do not have but do not perhaps even understand the possibility of having : it has already been shown how it is established in the Aesthetic that all intuition for human-beings must be sensible. But what does Kant really mean by allowing the noumenal in a negative sense, when he says that *1 "if by 'noumenon' we mean a thing so far as it is not an object of our sensible intuition, and so abstract from our mode of intuiting it, this is a noumenon in the negative sense of the term." On the lowest level of all, so to speak, Kant maintains that the concept is not contradictory: *2 "the concept of a noumenon - that is, of a thing which is not to be thought as object of the senses but as a thing in itself, solely through a pure understanding - is not in any way contradictory for we cannot assert of sensibility that it is the sole possible kind of intuition." Kant seems to be implying that if the noumenal was conceived of as something which could not possibly be experienced in any manner, or by any means whatsoever, then this would be a contradictory concept. As it is all we can say is that for human beings the noumenal is inaccessible to experience, but that there may be other rational agents capable of experiencing the non-sensible.

Kant also lays down that the concept of the noumenal is a necessary

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 268

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 271

concept [*1] "to prevent sensible intuition from being extended to things-in-themselves," a muddled argument which appears to assume the point at issue. But what Kant is really trying to do is to make the concept of the noumenal into what he calls "a merely limiting concept," by means of which the understanding sets limits to sensibility, at the same time limiting itself as unable to know the noumenal through any of the categories but only under the title of an unknown something. This is open to all the objections about knowledge of a limit involving knowledge of what lies beyond that limit. The only answer to these objections is to show that Kant is giving an analytic and not a synthetic argument for the noumenal, if such terms can be used : in other words, that he is arguing from his epistemological theory - which he holds on other grounds ie. as the only explanation of a priori knowledge - and to what this necessarily entails, and is not trying to establish the noumenal on any independent grounds. The limit is posited not because there is any experience of it - it is not strictly speaking known to be a limit - but because it is found to be a necessary concept in the analysis of the theory of the subjectivity of the forms of thought and experience, which theory itself is necessary, according to Kant, to the justification of a priori knowledge.

If the above argument is accepted as the method by which Kant tries to establish the noumenal, the question then arises of whether this concept is in fact, as he holds it to be, a necessary one to his theory. Can it be rejected as involving too many difficulties and inconsistencies, or is the phenomenal-noumenal distinction so fundamental to Kant's theory that it cannot be removed without bringing down the whole edifice? Kant's theory of knowledge is essentially dual in character : experience is analysed into two components, form and matter. Now since the form of experience is supplied by the experiencing agent, the matter must be

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 272

supplied by something outside the agent if the result of the theory is not to be absolute idealism. If Kant's thing-in-itself is rejected, this means that both form and matter must be the products of mind and therefor all objects and the entire universe. This was in fact the conclusion drawn by some of Kant's successors, in particular Hegel. But the only other alternative, that of holding that neither matter nor form are products of mind, can be accepted only by rejecting the very foundation of Kant's theory : that nothing in a priori knowledge can be ascribed to objects save what the thinking subject derives from itself, and that such knowledge is possible only if things, as known, conform to our ideas and not vice versa. It must therefor be concluded that the noumenal is an integral and essential part of Kant's epistemology and cannot be rejected without destroying his theory in general. Though it may be argued that the positive value of this concept can be considered only in connection with Kant's moral theory, nevertheless his theory of knowledge and his theory of morals are so closely connected that if the concept is rejected in the former as contradictory and impossible on Kant's own grounds, then its significance in the latter is a fortiori ruled out. This is not to maintain that Kant's terminology and some of his statements in connection with the noumenal are always justified, but only to hold that there is an analytic necessity for his theory, of a limit to knowledge where there is no possibility of having a sensible intuition.

CHAPTER II

PHENOMENAL AND NOUMENAL ASPECTS OF THE SELF.

Before making any critical examination of Kant's theory of the nature of the individual man in his moral aspect, it is necessary to examine Kant's doctrine of the self, for a philosopher's theory as to the nature of the self and how it is known are extremely relevant to his moral theory. Indeed it is doubtful whether, without some kind of consciousness of the self, a being would be capable of morality, for he would not be aware that he was the author of his actions, and could not therefor be held morally responsible for them. One of the reasons why very small children and animals are not, as far as we know, really capable of acting morally, is that they have not this self-consciousness. Furthermore theories as to the nature of the self are intimately related to theories as to how moral ideas are come by or moral commands recognized.

Kant's theory is that knowledge of the self is possible only under the same conditions that make possible knowledge of all other objects. The main tenet of his theory is that knowledge of the self can only be knowledge of the self as it appears. This is because the self can be known only through what Kant calls "inner sense" or sometimes "empirical apperception," which means roughly the same as the modern term "introspection," and the form of inner sense is time; that which is subject to time is what alone can be known through inner sense, just as time and space together are the necessary conditions of knowledge through outer sense. There can be no knowledge of things at all except as subject to these conditions, because only as subject to these conditions can they be sensibly intuited. Since time, according to Kant, is merely a <u>subjective</u>

form of experience, supplied by the knowing mind not by that which it knows, this knowledge of the self in time, like knowledge of all objects in time, can therefor only be knowledge of appearance. Kant says: *1 "this inner appearance cannot be admitted to exist...in and by itself: for it is conditioned by time, and time cannot be a determination of a thing-in-itself." That which is conditioned by time is sensible and everything that appears to sense is necessarily phenomenal. Kant argues that *2"everything that is represented through a sense is so far always appearance, and consequently we must either refuse to admit that there is an inner sense, or we must recognise that the subject, which is the object of the sense, can be represented through it only as appearance, not as that subject would judge of itself if its intuition were self-activity only, that is, were intellectual." Kant points out that all theories of the self must account for the paradox that in self-knowledge the self is at one and the same time both active and passive : there is the knowing self and the self which is known; thus *3 "inner sense represents to consciousness even our own selves only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves." Kant maintains that the self can never be known as it is "in itself" because every agent in the act of knowing himself by inward intuition alters that which he is knowing. *4 "If," says Kant, "all that is manifold in the subject were given by the activity of the self, the inner intuition would be intellectual." In that case the self would know itself not as appearance but as it really is. This kind of intellectual intuition, however, is an impossibility. For man there

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 440.

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 88.

*3 Kemp-Smith - P 166.

*4 Kemp-Smith - P 88.

can be knowledge of the self only through intuition of a manifold given to sense, and it follows, according to Kant, that* "if the faculty of coming to consciousness of oneself is to seek out that which lies in the mind, it must affect the mind, and only in this way can it give rise to an intuition of itself." Exactly how it is that the self is affected by being known, Kant explains later. In the 2nd edition of the Transcendental Deduction he contrasts inner sense as a passive faculty, which *2 "contains the mere form of intuition, but without combination of the manifold in it," with the understanding, which, *3 "under the title of a transcendental synthesis of imagination," determines the manifold of inner sense just as it does the manifold of outer sense: *4 "what determines inner sense is the understanding and its original power of combining the manifold of intuition." It is for this reason that we can "intuit ourselves only as we are inwardly affected," for in the act of intuition what is intuited is determined by the understanding. Since the form of inner sense is time, the manifold of inner sense, which, when combined by the understanding, is intuited by the knowing self, can necessarily be known only as placed in time-relations; and furthermore, this manifold, combined under the form of time, is what alone can be known of the self. In other words knowledge of the self can be knowledge only of a temporal empirical self - that is, of the self as an appearance.

Kant's theory so far is similar to that of Hume, in the latter's "Treatise of Human Nature," in that the former is maintaining that in introspection all that is revealed are particular temporal states of mind -

* Kemp-Smith - P. 88

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 166

*3 Kemp-Smith - P. 166.

*4 Ibid.

these for Kant being made up of the manifold intuited through inner sense. He says himself that *1 "consciousness of self according to the determinations of our state in inner perception is merely empirical, and always changing. No fixed and abiding self can present itself in this flux of inner appearances. Such consciousness is usually named "inner sense" or 'empirical apperception'". In contrast however to Hume, Kant maintains that behind this empirical self there is a non-temporal, transcendental self. In the same way that Kant argues that objects in space which appear to our senses have also a noumenal character - can be thought as things-in-themselves - so he argues that the self, which can only be known as an appearance to self in time-relations, must also be thought as having a non-sensible noumenal aspect.

In contrast to other objects this noumenal self is to be thought of positively as being the source of man's rational powers. Before, however, considering how Kant gives positive content to the concept of the noumenal self, another aspect of the self in Kant's theory must be examined. According to Kant knowledge is only possible through consciousness of a unity of experience, or, in other words, of a unity of the experiencing self. Transcendental apperception is the name Kant gives to this consciousness of the underlying unity of the self: *2 "the consciousness of self (apperception) is the simple representation of the I." The unity given by this "pure original unchangeable consciousness" is fundamentally necessary to knowledge, for without it, intuitions both of outer and inner sense would be unrelated to anything and could not form any part of an individual experience. Experience, and a fortiori knowledge, is possible only through the relation of intuitions to such a unity of consciousness. But by definition almost there cannot be know-

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 136

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 88

ledge of this unity for it is transcendental, which means that it cannot be sensibly intuited; (though in any case to demand knowledge of it is to demand an infinite regress, for there would then have to be a further more fundamental unity to which this knowledge itself was related). Thus Kant states that in this unity of apperception *1 "I am conscious of myself, not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only that I am. This representation is a thought not an intuition." What I am in myself remains quite unknown because there is no kind of intuition whereby a manifold can be given to this thought or consciousness of myself.

Kant's conclusion is therefor that *2 "I have no knowledge of myself as I am, but merely as I appear to myself. The consciousness of self is thus very far from being a knowledge of the self, notwithstanding all the categories which are being employed to constitute the thought of an object in general, through combination of the manifold in one apperception." This is an epistemological conclusion. Nevertheless a further conclusion can be drawn, even at this stage, which is relevant to moral theory. The unity of consciousness supplied by transcendental apperception is the fundamental condition of personal identity - it is the consciousness an agent has that such and such experience or knowledge is his experience and knowledge. Thus although this part of Kant's theory is expounded by him as part of, and necessary to, his theory of knowledge, it is also of fundamental importance to morality. If there were just simply awareness of successive states of mind - i.e. knowledge through inner sense of the self as an appearance - as Hume's theory of the self maintains,

* 1 Kemp-Smith - P. 168

* 2 Kemp-Smith - P. 169

without any awareness of the unity of these states in one individual self, moral imputation and responsibility would be impossible. There could not in fact, strictly speaking, even be this knowledge of the self as an appearance, for it is of the essence of a "self" to be numerically different from other "selves," and that which differentiates the self, namely consciousness of its own unity, would be missing. When Hume maintains that through introspection all he can discover are particular thoughts, emotions etc., he is still assuming that it is he himself who is discovering these states of mind and that this self is not itself a state of mind - he is assuming that which he is trying to deny; Kant says of the transcendental subject of thought: *1 "any judgement upon it has already made use of its representation." To demand that the self, as such, be accessible to introspection in the same way as are its particular states or manifestations, is to demand a contradiction. Kant's theory of apperception enables him to say that although all that can be discovered through inward intuition, or inspection, are particular thoughts, emotions, etc., nevertheless to know that these are one's own thoughts and emotions presupposes a conscious unity of the self, or self-identity, as a necessary condition of such knowledge, but a necessary condition which essentially cannot be experienced itself in the same way.

It appears then that this concept of a unity of consciousness is in some form indispensable to morality. But this unity is still only a unity of the phenomenal self, for it is a unity in time and cannot be considered apart from that which is given to sense in space-time relations. Now Kant considers that man not only knows his phenomenal states of mind and is conscious of the unity of this phenomenal self but is also able to form a positive notion of his noumenal self through his awareness of

* 1 Kemp-Smith - P. 331

his rational powers. But although awareness of the spontaneity of reason enables man to think of himself as a noumenal entity, Kant maintains that speculative reason alone can never give knowledge of the noumenal self. This is his position in his refutation of the so-called fallacy of the paralogisms, which must now briefly be examined. For although Kant aims to give the concept of the noumenal self a positive content through analysis of moral concepts, he has first to deny that this can be done on the level of epistemology. The concept of the noumenal self, as of any noumenon, or thing-in-itself, cannot be made to yield any synthetic proposition whatever, since the experience which is the third thing necessary in order to make such synthetic propositions, is here absent. For example philosophers had put forward the proposition that "the soul is a simple substance," and had maintained that from such a proposition could be deduced further propositions about the indissolubility, and therefor immortality, of the soul. According to Kant, such a procedure is utterly fallacious, because, in his own words, *1 "the subject of the categories cannot by thinking the categories acquire a concept of itself as an object of the categories." Kant maintains that the unity of consciousness, which underlies the categories, is here mistaken for an intuition of the subject as object, and the categories of substance, simplicity etc., are then applied to it. Whereas, says Kant, this unity is nothing but a unity in thought, by which alone no object is given and to which therefor the categories, which always presuppose a given intuition, cannot be applied. Consequently this subject cannot be known: "thought, taken by itself,.... does not exhibit the subject of consciousness as appearance," for there is no corresponding

* 1 Kemp-Smith - P. 377

intuition to be given to the thought. On the epistemological level the noumenal self can be thought of only in the same way that all noumenal objects can be thought of: *1 "I represent myself to myself neither as I am nor as I appear to myself. I think myself only as I do any object in general from whose mode of intuition I abstract." The act of thinking is the act of a noumenal being, a being-in-itself, though if a sensible intuition were to be given to this thought what would be thought <u>about</u> would be an appearance. Only if the latter condition is fulfilled can the self be <u>known</u>, but *2 "if I would be conscious of myself simply as thinking, then, since I am not considering how my own self may be given in intuition, the self may be mere appearance to me - the I that thinks- but is no mere appearance <u>in so far</u> as I think; in the consciousness of myself in mere thought I am the <u>being itself</u>, although nothing in myself is thereby given for thought." But the thinking self in order *3 "to determine the mode of its existence, that is, to know itself as noumenon," would have to employ an intellectual intuition which according to Kant's theory is impossible. The inner empirical intuition is always sensible, and can be used only to obtain knowledge of appearance.

Thus Kant rejects any possibility of proving theoretically the immortality of the soul: *4 "we must renounce the hope of comprehending from the merely theoretical knowledge of ourselves, the necessary continuance of our existence." The theoretical proof of immortality

* 1 Kemp-Smith - P. 381

* 2 Kemp-Smith - P. 382

* 3 Kemp-Smith - P.382

* 4 Kemp-Smith - P.380

consisted of conceiving an independent self distinct from all manifestations of that self, and then claiming knowledge of the constitution of the former. Kant denies that this is possible by denying that this independent self is accessible to experience: *1 "the inner empirical intuition is sensible and yields only data of appearance, which furnish nothing to the object of pure consciousness for the knowledge of its separate existence." Now it is reason, in the special sense in which it is distinguished from the understanding, which is led into this fallacy in its search for the unconditioned: in this case the unconditioned unity of the thinking subject. Nevertheless Kant holds that it is through reason's powers that man considers himself as belonging to an intelligible as well as a sensible world, and thus as having a noumenal as well as a phenomenal character. The understanding has the spontaneous power of producing concepts or categories, but it can use these concepts only to bring the manifold of sense under rules. Reason, on the other hand, shows a pure spontaneity which is entirely independent of sense: it is a power of Ideas, and produces concepts which can have no example given to sense. In the "Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals" Kant says : *2"Reason....shows a spontaneity so pure that it goes far beyond anything sensibility can offer : it manifests its highest function in distinguishing the sensible and intelligible worlds from one another....because of this a rational being must regard himself qua intelligence as belonging to the intelligible world, not to the sensible

* 1 Kemp-Smith - P. 382

*2 Paton - P. 120

world." Thus the noumenal self is recognized in the consciousness of a spontaneous intellectual activity of the self. Kant says that the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves may be made *1 "merely by noting the difference between ideas given to us from without, we ourselves being passive, and those which we produce entirely from ourselves, and so manifest our own activity." But speculative reason, it has been shown, is incapable of providing positive concepts of this intelligible world which it discovers. Though by its nature it must seek the unconditioned and venture into the intelligible sphere, it necessarily falls into contradictions when it tries to attain to knowledge of this noumenal world. It cannot therefor supply a positive concept of the noumenal self, even though it is through consciousness of reason's powers that man is conscious of his noumenality, or membership of an intelligible world.

It is practical reason alone which can give reality to this noumenal self, for the spontaneity of practical reason is a spontaneity of issuing moral laws which originate <u>in</u> the noumenal self. Morality is explainable, according to Kant, only in terms of the authority of a noumenal self over the phenomenal self. Thus after Kant has exposed the fallacy of the paralogisms he goes on to say : *2 "should it be granted that we may in due course discover, not in experience but in certain laws of the pure employment of reason - laws which are not merely logical rules, but which while holding a priori also concern our existence - ground for regarding ourselves as legislating completely a priori in regard to our own existence, and as determining this existence, there would thereby be revealed a spontaneity through which our reality would

* 1 Paton - P. 118

* 2 Kemp-Smith - P. 382

be determinable, independently of the conditions of empirical intuition." Because practical reason is self-legislative man becomes aware that in the consciousness of his existence [*1] "there is contained a something a priori which can serve to determine his existence...as being related, in respect of an inner faculty, to a non-sensible, intelligible world." In other words through [*2] "this marvellous faculty, which the consciousness of the moral law reveals to me," the reality of the noumenal self is established. In the moral sphere man considers himself as belonging to the noumenal or intelligible world, and conceives his will as free from determination by sensuous causes and as obedient to laws having their ground in reason alone. In Kant's words, man as a moral agent [*3] "can never conceive the causality of his own will except under the Idea of freedom," and "to the Idea of freedom there is inseparably attached the concept of autonomy, and to this in turn the universal principle of morality."

The noumenal self is thought of positively, then, as a rational legislating self, and in the consciousness of moral commands man is conscious of the activity of his noumenal self : [*4] "it is our reason that by means of the supreme and unconditional practical law knows that itself, and the being that is conscious of this law (our own person) belong to the pure world of understanding, and moreover defines the manner in which, as such, it can be active." Though of course there can be no theoretical knowledge of this self it must be thought of as a moral self, and postulated furthermore, as an immortal self, on moral grounds. It must also necessarily be thought of as timeless and unchanging. Critical appreciation of Kant's moral theory must take into

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 383

*2 Ibid

*3 Paton - P. 120

*4 Abbott - P. 200

account the peculiar nature of the self in virtue of which we are capable of morality.

CHAPTER III

THE POSSIBILITY OF FREEDOM.

Whereas on the epistemological level the noumenal can be conceived only negatively - is "a merely limiting concept" which follows necessarily according to Kant, from the subjectivity of the forms of experience - in Kant's moral philosophy it performs a positive role : the possibility of man being a moral being can be explained only if he is regarded as having both a noumenal and a phenomenal character. If this distinction is not made between man as belonging to a noumenal world, and man as belonging to a phenomenal world, then, says Kant, the possibility of freedom cannot be demonstrated, and to deny freedom is to reject the very possibility of morality. In order therefor to understand the part played by the noumenal in Kant's moral theory it is necessary to examine his doctrine of freedom. Kant maintains that those who try to explain freedom on empirical principles, treating it as merely a psychological property [*1] "deprive us of the revelation which we obtain through practical reason by means of the moral law, of a supersensible world by the realization of the otherwise transcendent concept of freedom, and by this deprive us also of the moral law itself, which admits no empirical principle of determination." Without "transcendental freedom," which must be conceived as an independence from everything empirical, no moral law and no moral imputation are possible.

Although Kant argues on the epistemological level that [*2] "the

*1 Abbott - P. 187-188

*2 Abbott - P. 132

supposition of freedom, negatively considered, is quite consistent with the principles and limitations of pure theoretic reason," nevertheless it is on moral grounds that his argument obtains its full force. In the solution to the Third Antinomy Kant states that if transcendental freedom cannot be shown to be at least possible, then this involves the elimination of all practical, or moral, freedom. It is practical reason, according to Kant, which present speculative reason with its most difficult problems, for *1 "it is morality that first discovers to us the notion of freedom." Although, therefor, Kant must show that the idea of freedom is possible on epistemological grounds if he is to be able to assert its necessity on moral grounds, it is <u>because</u> he wishes to maintain the latter that he sets himself the former task. The argument that there must be a phenomenal <u>and</u> a noumenal world because otherwise freedom would be impossible, is therefor not of the same form as Kant's other epistemological arguments for the noumenal, but is an argument from the datum of moral obligation. Kant argues that since *2 "there is in man a power of self-determination independently of any coercion through sensuous impulses" then the idea of freedom must be shown to be a possible one for speculative reason - even though its positive nature can be demonstrated only through practical reason, or on moral grounds - and this possibility rests on distinguishing between a sensible, or phenomenal world, and an intelligible, or noumenal, world.

Now freedom can be possible, as one of the transcendental ideas of reason, only if it can be shown not to be contradictory to the

*1 Abbott - P. 118

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 465

universality and necessity of the laws of nature, whose a priority Kant has justified by demonstrating the subjectivity of the forms of experience and thought. Kant's aim is to show that the Third Antinomy between natural causation and freedom [*1] "rests on a sheer illusion, and that causality through freedom is at least <u>not incompatible</u> with nature." In sensible nature everything is subject to the laws of cause and effect under spatio-temporal conditions : natural causation is [*2] "the connection in the sensible world of one state with a preceding state on which it follows according to a rule." To search for the causality of each cause is to be involved in an infinite regress : [*3] "that everything which happens has a cause is a law of nature. Since the causality of this cause, that is, the action of the cause, is antecedent in time to the effect which has ensued upon it, it cannot itself have always existed, but must have happened, and among the appearances must have a cause by which it in turn is determined. Consequently, all events are empirically determined in an order of nature." This natural causation must be held to be necessary and universal because it is only as subject to the same that the sensible world can be experienced. On the other hand, freedom is defined by Kant as [*4] "the power of beginning a state spontaneously:" it is a form of causality which is <u>independent</u> of an antecedent cause according to the law of nature. Thus arises the antinomy between freedom and natural causation. Freedom itself is not lawless, but it is a power to act under laws which are independent of the spatio-temporal order, and therefor the problem is how to preserve the uniformity of the

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 479

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 464

*3 Kemp-Smith - P. 469-470

*4 Kemp-Smith - P. 464

latter if causality under these laws of freedom be admitted alongside causality under the laws of nature.

Kant maintains that the only possible solution to this problem is to distinguish between appearances and things-in-themselves : he says that if appearances <u>are</u> things-in-themselves then freedom cannot be upheld, for space and time would be forms of the existence of these things-in-themselves and everything in time and space would be completely and sufficiently determined by preceding natural events : *1 "the conditions would always be members of the same series as the conditioned." Therefor no state could be produced spontaneously, the power to effect which is Kant's definition of freedom - there would necessarily be complete determination. This conclusion can be escaped if it is held that an event in the world can be regarded as having a double determination : from one aspect it is completely conditioned by the laws of nature, from the other it arises from freedom - that is, it arises spontaneously from forces operating independently of the spatio-temporal order.

This power of spontaneous causality is to be found in the nature of man : *2 "if that which in the sensible world must be regarded as appearance, has in itself a faculty which is not an object of sensible intuition, but through which it can be the cause of appearances, the <u>causality</u> of this being can be regarded from two points of view. Regarded as the causality of a thing-in-itself, it is <u>intelligible</u> in its action; regarded as the causality of an appearance in the world of

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 466

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 467

sense, it is sensible in its effects." The thoroughgoing unity of events in the sensible world under the universal law of natural causation is not thereby broken; it is only manipulated, so to speak, so that particular series of events are originated within the framework of the whole series. The theory can be understood on analogy with the injection of a patient with medicine : the effects can all be analysed in terms of the laws governing the human body under certain sensible conditions, and can thus be said to be necessary effects, and yet above this there must be a reason why this particular situation has arisen - that is, a causality independent of the laws governing the patient's body.

It is in man alone that this power of originating a series of events is found. In addition, therefor, to regarding him as having a noumenal character in the same negative way that every appearance, or phenomenon, must be regarded, according to Kant's epistemological theory, as having a noumenal character, man is to be regarded as a noumenon on positive grounds : he has a power of spontaneity or free action, and he has this in virtue of an intelligible character, independent of conditions of time, which apply only to appearances, and therefor of the empirical series in which every event is rendered necessary in the world of sense. Kant says of this intelligible character that *1 "inasmuch as it is noumenon, nothing happens in it; there can be no change requiring dynamical determination in time, and therefor no causal dependence upon appearances." Man's noumenal nature must be timeless and unalterable if it is to be free : *2 "in this subject no action would

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 469

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 468

begin or cease, and it would not therefor have to conform to the law of the determination of all that is alterable in time, namely, that everything which happens must have its cause in the appearances which precede it." This theory that the character of man, in virtue of which he is free, must be completely unchanging and unalterable has implications for moral theory which will be seen later.

Now Kant must hold, on the epistemological level, that this intelligible or noumenal nature of man cannot be known, either by others or by himself, for knowledge of man, as of all objects, can be only of his sensible character as it appears under those conditions necessarily present in any experience : *1 "this intelligible character can never be immediately known, for nothing can be perceived except in so far as it appears. It would have to be <u>thought</u> in accordance with the empirical character - just as we are constrained to think a transcendental object as underlying appearances, though we know nothing of what it is in itself." But the argument from freedom for the noumenal, in the nature of man, as has been pointed out already, is of a different form to the general argument for the noumenal object : it is in the consciousness of a power of acting without necessitation by the laws of nature, that man thinks himself in this way as noumenon. We are here on a different level than when arguing that all objects in the sensible world, which includes man, must be things-in-themselves as well as appearances. The datum from which Kant is arguing here, is the irreducibility of the notion contained in the word "ought" to any form of experience of what actually "is." When man imposes imperatives upon his will in order to regulate his conduct, he is doing something of which no explanation is possible

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 468

in terms of the nature of the physical world and its laws. In Kant's words : *1"'ought' expresses a kind of necessity and of connection with grounds which is found nowhere else in the whole of nature. The understanding can know in nature only what is, what has been, or what will be." As applied to the natural world the term "ought" has no significance, and furthermore when applied to man natural conditions are irrelevant; for *2"reason does not here follow the order of things as they present themselves in appearance, but frames to itself with perfect spontaneity an order of its own according to ideas, to which it adapts the empirical conditions, and according to which it declares actions to be necessary, even although they have never taken place, and perhaps never will take place." Kant is now in the realm of practical reason in general : reason is seen to have the power of influencing conduct. It is not necessary for this argument that the imperatives which reason issues to the will should be categorical only and not hypothetical, for the word "ought" can be used in an amoral as well as a moral sense, though of course it is in the possibility of explaining moral behaviour - that Kant's interest in freedom lies.

Before, however, considering how Kant justifies morality, through freedom as a capacity of man 's noumenal character, it is necessary to make some critical appraisal of the task Kant sets himself in the First Critique - that of showing that freedom, as a transcendental idea, is possible, because not incompatible with the universal laws of nature.

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 472-473

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 473

Now a criticism which must be made of Kant's theory is concerned with his insistence that a man's actions, looked at from a phenomenal point of view, would be capable of complete prediction by a spectator who had sufficient knowledge of the antecedent conditions in the world of appearance. Kant seems to think that unless there can be this prediction the laws of nature cannot be universal and necessary. He says in The Critique of Pure Reason that *1 "if we could exhaustively investigate all the appearances of men's wills, there would not be found a single human action which we could not predict with certainty, and recognise as proceeding necessarily from its antecedent conditions." Yet at the same time he lays down, and must lay down if he is to justify morality, that no action is necessitated by antecedent empirical conditions. Thus he takes the example of the man who tells a malicious lie. The empirical character of this action is traceable to the man's defective education, the bad company he keeps, etc., and to discover these empirical conditions *2 "we proceed just as we should in ascertaining for a given natural effect the series of its determining causes;" yet notwithstanding all these empirical conditions the agent is still to be blamed for his bad action, which must mean that it was within his power to act otherwise: *3 "our blame is based on a law of reason whereby we regard reason as a cause that irrespective of all the above-mentioned empirical conditions could have determined, and ought to have determined, the agent to act otherwise." But in that case how could the agent's

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 474

*2 Kemp-Smith - P. 477

*3 Kemp-Smith - P. 477

action have been predicted with certainty, and recognised as proceeding necessarily from its antecedent conditions, merely through exhaustive investigation of all the appearances of his will? For the man's power of free causality whereby he is capable of morality is necessarily independent of all these appearances, and however exhaustive an investigation there is of the latter this will never discover the above rational power, for this resides in the noumenal character of the man.

In the Critique of Practical Reason Kant makes another, and equally striking, statement about the possibility of prediction. He states that *1"if it were possible to have so profound an insight into a man's mental character as shown by internal as well as external actions, as to know all its motives, even the smallest, and likewise all the external occasions that can influence them, we could calculate a man's conduct for the future with as great certainty as a lunar or solar eclipse; and nevertheless we may maintain that the man is free." A line of criticism on this position is provided by Kant himself in his next sentence. He goes on to say : *2"if we were capable of a further glance, namely, an intellectual intuition of the same subject (which indeed is not granted to us, and instead of it we have only the rational concept), then we should perceive that this whole chain of appearances in regard to all that concerns the moral law depends on the spontaneity of the subject as a thing in itself, of the determination of which no physical explanation can be given." Now the whole point is that if it

*1 Abbott - P. 193

*2 Ibid

were possible to have knowledge of the noumenal side of a man's character, by means of an intellectual intuition, in the same way that one can know his empirical character, through sensible intuition, then indeed one could predict all his actions with certainty. But Kant has said that this intellectual intuition is impossible. It seems that what Kant is maintaining is that since it is on the empirical level that man's noumenal character appears, then knowledge of the former allows an estimation to be made of the latter : he is holding that there is a stability of relation between a man's phenomenal and his noumenal character and that therefor one can estimate the latter in the light of the former. This is a perfectly plausible position. Where Kant is not justified is in saying that because this estimation is possible one can predict with certainty that the future relation between the phenomenal and the noumenal, in the character of a man, will be exactly similar to what it was in the past, and that therefor this man's future actions can be predicted, granted knowledge of all "external occasions." This position is impossible because the noumenal in man cannot be known either directly by an intellectual intuition nor indirectly by observation of his empirical character, for the latter includes not only the phenomenal effects of the noumenal causality but also a great many effects of phenomenal causes eg. psychological characteristics. It is the interaction of these two kinds of effects which makes certain prediction of action impossible. The stability of character mentioned above makes prediction on a probability level possible : in the case of saints and hardened criminals this probability may be of a very high order. But unless it is only with probability and not with certainty that one can predict action, freedom, in particular moral freedom, is impossible. Unless a man's

character however stable in the past is capable of developing differently in the future then he cannot be said to be morally responsible for his actions in the future. He may have been free and therefor morally responsible in forming his character in the past, it is true, but to say that a man's character is completely formed is equivalent to saying he is no longer free. In any case it seems most unplausible to say that at some particular point of time a man's character ceases to be capable of development.

Further criticism of Kant's theory along these lines will be undertaken in a later chapter. But the point made here is that Kant cannot hold <u>both</u> that a man's future actions can be predicted with certainty <u>and</u> that there is freedom. A man's past actions, certainly, can be explained in terms of antecedent empirical conditions, for here the noumenal has actually appeared in a certain way on the phenomenal level; but what phenomenal effects this noumenal power of causality will produce in the future must be held to be foreseeable only as probable effects, however high the probability, and never as certain ones. This conclusion, however, in no way affects the universality and necessity of the laws of nature. The question of what the empirical conditions are determining particular events in a given series of events is quite independent of the question of why one series of events takes place rather than another. Kant's theory of the relation between the phenomenal and the noumenal world, which is to allow both freedom and natural causation, can be interpreted only as meaning that although all events which <u>take place</u> must have antecedent empirical causes - ie. if D, E and F take place then they are preceded by causes A, B and C - nevertheless there are no events which <u>necessarily</u> take place - ie.

instead of events D, E and F, there may take place, J, K, L, determined by conditions G, H, I; and the power of determining which series of events in certain cases takes place belongs to men in virtue of their rationality, which is a cause outside the phenomenal series and which therefor renders prediction of the series through knowledge of the phenomenal conditions impossible.

In a situation where human beings,or rational agents, were not present, it could be held that prediction of future events through knowledge of antecedent conditions would be possible, if the knowledge were sufficient. But the whole point of Kant's theory of freedom is that where rational agents are present, there, in addition to the antecedent phenomenal causes, is an unknown noumenal power of influencing present or future events. Although the law of natural cause and effect is inviolable, man has the power to decide in certain cases, which cause is to produce its effect - eg. the doctor decides which medicine the patient is to take even though the results of the medicine the patient does take operate under necessary laws over which the doctor has no control. By making this distinction, the universality and necessity of the laws of nature may be retained without holding that all events in the world are necessarily predetermined to take place, which would be the case if certainty of prediction were possible. Only on this interpretation is freedom, and therefor morality, possible on Kant's theory, and only thus can meaning be given to his statement that *1"freedom may stand in relation to a quite different kind of conditions from those of natural necessity, the law of the latter not affecting the former, and both may exist, independently of one another and without interfering with each other."

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 478

CHAPTER IV

FREEDOM IN THE POSITIVE SENSE

In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant has shown that freedom is possible as a transcendental idea : it is possible in the negative sense of not being incompatible with the universal laws of nature. When man is regarded as having a noumenal as well as a phenomenal character, it is seen how he can have the power of acting independent of determination by the laws of natural cause and effect. But although Kant has pointed out in the 1st Critique that the notion contained in the word "ought" implies a causality of reason and therefor freedom from natural causation, the reality of freedom in a positive sense has so far not been actually demonstrated. This task is undertaken in the "Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals," and the "Critique of Practical Reason," through analysis of the concept of obligation, or, as Kant usually puts it, of the moral law. Kant maintains that the existence of moral obligation is a fact, recognised by the ordinary man and requiring, and indeed capable of, no proof : [*1] "the moral law is given as a fact of pure reason of which we are a priori conscious, and which is apodictally certain, though it be granted that in experience no example of its exact fulfilment can be found." If, therefor, it can be shown that this fact is comprehensible only on the presupposition of freedom then this will prove for Kant's theory, the reality of the noumenal world, for freedom is a power belonging to man only as a member of this world. Though there can be no theoretical knowledge of what is

*1 Abbott - P. 136

outside the spatio-temporal order, a positive concept of the noumenal will be added to the previous negative one and this positive concept will be shown not to be empty, through its necessary connection with the moral law.

Freedom in the negative sense is defined by Kant in the following way : *1 "will is a kind of causality belonging to living beings so far as they are rational. Freedom would then be the property this causality has of being able to work independently of determination by alien causes; just as natural necessity is a property characterizing the causality of all non-rational beings - the property of being determined to activity by the influence of alien causes." This negative definition of freedom states only that causality is free when it operates <u>not</u> through determination by the laws of nature; but, says Kant, *2 "freedom of will, although it is not the property of conforming to laws of nature, is not for this reason lawless : it must rather be a causality conforming to immutable laws, though of a special kind; for otherwise a free will would be self-contradictory." Kant's conception of freedom is the very reverse of a "liberty of indifference:" an undetermined will would operate from mere chance, if, indeed, it could operate at all, and could in no sense be called free. Kant maintains that a free will would have to act under laws, but that these laws could not be imposed on it by something other than itself, for if they were they would merely be laws of natural necessity, or Divine necessity if they were imposed by God; and in either case the result would be heteronomy and freedom would be impossible. Freedom's laws must therefor be self-imposed and then

*1 Paton - P. 114

*2 Paton - P. 114

freedom becomes identical with autonomy, for the latter is *1 "the property which will has of being a law to itself." Since autonomy is the principle of morality, a free will would be a will under moral laws.

In the "Groundwork" the equation of freedom with autonomy is reached by the above reasoning. In the Critique of Practical Reason Kant comes to the same conclusion by the reverse argument as well : since *2 "the mere legislative form of maxims is alone the sufficient determining principle of a will," the nature of such a will must be found in freedom: *3 "if no other determining principle can serve as a law for the will except universal legislative form, such a will must be conceived as quite independent on the natural law of phenomena in their mutual relation, namely, the law of causality." Thus a will which can have its law in nothing but universal legislative form is necessarily a free will. Here then is the positive concept of freedom : it is the power man has of giving laws unto himself - in other words, autonomy, the fundamental principle of morality in Kant's theory *4 : "independence is freedom in the negative sense, and self-legislation of the pure, and therefor practical, reason, is freedom in the positive sense. Thus the moral law expresses nothing else than the autonomy of the pure practical reason, that is, freedom."

This positive concept of freedom is not reached through an immediate awareness of what freedom is : the first concept we have of freedom is merely negative, and it is only through direct consciousness of the moral law that we are led to the concept of freedom as self-

*1 Paton - P. 108

*2 Abbott - P. 116

*3 Abbott - P. 116

*4 Abbott - P. 122

legislation. No other way of arriving at this concept is possible on Kant's theory. Freedom cannot be inferred from experience, for experience can give us knowledge only of the mechanism of nature, the opposite of freedom. Again, it has been shown that freedom cannot be established by theoretical arguments. Theoretic reason, Kant says, was compelled to assume the possibility of freedom to satisfy a want of its own, but it is the moral law alone which can prove its reality; this it does by adding *1 "a positive definition to a causality previously conceived only negatively, the possibility of which was incomprehensible to speculative reason, which yet was compelled to suppose it." The reality of the concept of freedom can be proved only by "an apodictic law of practical reason" - that is, as being the essential condition of morality, and as constituting its essence in the form of self-legislation. Freedom, then, according to Kant *2 "is no longer merely indefinitely and problematically thought but is even as regards the law of its causality definitely and assertorially known," though this knowledge is only for action and no use can be made of it from a theoretical point of view in forming synthetic propositions, since there can be no sensible intuition of freedom. The problem of what exactly Kant means by this notion of "practical knowledge" will be considered later.

Now to establish the reality of freedom is to establish the reality of the noumenal world, because Kant has laid down that it is only as belonging to this world that man can be said to be free, and the concept of freedom has been given a positive content through analysis of the moral law. Kant says : *3 "the moral law, although it gives us no view,

*1 Abbott - P. 137

*2 Abbott - P. 200

*3 Abbott - P. 132

yet gives us a fact absolutely inexplicable from any data of the sensible world, and the whole compass of our theoretical use of reason, a fact which points to a pure world of the understanding, nay, even defines it positively, and enables us to know something of it, namely a law." Just as Kant's theory of the a priority of the laws of nature leads him to the noumenal conceived of negatively, so his theory of the law of freedom leads him to form a positive concept of the same. In the former case "the noumenal" signifies only that which is necessarily non-sensible - that which is independent of the conditions of time and space, and there - for unknowable for theoretical reason because inaccessible to experience. In the latter case, that which is super-sensible and timeless is further conceived of as a world to which man belongs as a rational agent capable of morality. The law of freedom is the moral law; man is determined by this law only by virtue of his noumenal character; therefor the conclusion seems to be that the noumenal is that which is ruled over by the moral law : the noumenal world can be conceived of positively only as the world of morality, or rather, the totality of moral agents. Kant describes this world as "a super-sensible system of nature," by which he means that the noumenal world can be conceived of on analogy with the sensible, phenomenal world as a system operating according to laws, though the laws of the former world are of a different kind to those of the latter : [*1] "the sensible nature of rational beings in general is their existence under laws empirically conditioned, which, from the point of view of reason, is heteronomy; the supersensible nature of the same beings, on the other hand, is their existence according to laws which are independent on every empirical condition, and therefor belong to the

*1 Abbott - P. 132

autonomy of pure reason." In the latter case the laws are supplied by practical reason and thus [*1] "supersensible nature, so far as we can form any notion of it, is nothing else than a system of nature under the autonomy of pure practical reason." The argument seems to be that although the laws of the phenomenal world are universal and necessary in themselves - that is, there would not be a phenomenal world for us to experience without them - their actual application depends on empirical conditions and no particular law determining phenomena can therefor apply categorically. In the noumenal world, on the other hand, practical reason issues its laws without any consideration of empirical conditions : these laws can never be of hypothetical form - their universality and necessity belong to their actual application. The moral law, "which is the fundamental law of a supersensible nature and of a pure world of understanding," is necessarily of categorical form.

Now the crucial point of Kant's theory lies in his account of how these two worlds, the noumenal and the phenomenal, are related. Here arise some of the greatest difficulties in the theory, even on the level of exposition. In the Critique of Practical Reason Kant lays down that the moral law [*2] "gives to the world of sense, which is a sensible system of nature, the form of a world of understanding, that is, of a supersensible system of nature, without interfering with its mechanism." How is this somewhat obscure statement to be interpreted? Kant's problem is really the universal problem for moral philosophy of explaining both how the notion contained in the word "ought" is related to what actually "is", and, even more difficult, how there is obligation in the first place. The latter problem Kant explains in terms of his phenomenal-noumenal

*1 Abbott - P. 132

*2 Abbott - P. 132

distinction. Only if man is a member both of a phenomenal and of a noumenal world, says Kant, can it be explained how he can be subject to the moral imperative. That which would be objectively necessary if he were purely noumenal becomes, through this duality, subjectively contingent : the determining of man's will in accordance with the objective laws of the noumenal world takes the form of obligation - the will of a being who is not only rational but also sensible *1 "although it is determined by principles of reason does not necessarily follow these principles in virtue of its own nature." Thus Kant's supersensible system of nature is a kind of ideal towards which men must aim, and which could be brought into existence only if the wills of all men were wholly determined by the principles of reason. Kant says that *2 "the moral law, in fact, transfers us ideally into a system in which pure reason, if it were accompanied by adequate physical power, would produce the summum bonum, and it determines our will to give the sensible world the form of a system of rational beings." By giving the sensible world the form of a supersensible world Kant appears to mean acting only as if the latter is to be realised - that is, as if the law of this supersensible world, the moral law, is to become the sole law determining men's wills. Since the categorical imperative, which is the form in which the moral law applies to human beings, can be stated : "act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature," then, if this were always obeyed, the laws of sensible nature would have their place taken, so far as man's will is concerned, by laws of a supersensible nature; and furthermore these laws determining

*1 Paton - P. 80

*2 Abbott- P. 133

the agent's will would be laws of his own making through the principle of autonomy. Thus Kant says : *1 "we are, through reason, conscious of a law to which all our maxims are subject, as though a natural order must be originated from our will. This law, therefor, must be the idea of a natural system not given in experience, and yet possible through freedom; a system therefor which is supersensible, and to which we give objective reality, at least in a practical point of view, since we look on it as an object of our will as pure rational beings."

Kant's position becomes clearer, perhaps, if a distinction is drawn between the notion of a noumenal, or supersensible, world, as expressed in phrases such as : "man belongs to a noumenal, as well as a phenomenal, world," and the notion of a supersensible <u>system of nature</u>, as expressed in such phrases as : "the moral law determines our will to give the sensible system of nature the form of a supersensible system," though this distinction is not in fact clearly drawn by Kant. Only if man is considered as belonging to a noumenal as well as a phenomenal world can it be explained how he is a moral agent, i.e. that his will can be determined by practical reason, and this noumenal world has its laws on analogy with the laws of the phenomenal world. It can therefor in a sense be called a system of nature : Kant says that : *2 "it is allowable to use the system of the world as the <u>type</u> of a supersensible system of things, provided I do not transfer to the latter the intuitions, and what depends on them, but merely apply to it the <u>form</u> of <u>law</u> in general.....for laws, as such, are so far identical, no matter from what they derive their determining principles." But the supersensible

*1 Abbott - P. 133

*2 Abbott - P. 162

system of nature as Kant often talks about it, is also only a possible system which would be realised if men's wills were solely determined by practical reason, i.e. were always autonomous, and which is a sort of ideal state of affairs towards which men strive when they are determined to action by the moral law. Kant himself often talks about the possibility of this supersensible system. After stating that the moral law proves that freedom really belongs to beings who recognise this law as binding on themselves, Kant goes on to say that *1 "the moral law is in fact a law of the causality of free agents, and therefor of the possibility of a supersensible system of nature, just as the metaphysical law of events in the world of sense was a law of causality of the sensible system of nature." Again he talks about practical reason giving *2 "the law of a possible order of nature which is not empirically knowable." That this supersensible system of nature is possible, which must be interpreted as meaning that it is capable of being realised, cannot be established by any a priori intuition of an intelligible world, for this would be a supersensible intuition impossible for us, but rather this possibility rests on the reality of freedom.

"However, we are here concerned," Kant says, *3 "only with the determination of the will and the determining principle of its maxims as a free will, not at all with the result." Man is determined by the moral law to give the sensible system the form of a supersensible system whether his actions can in fact bring about the latter or not : *4 "whether according to these maxims of legislation of a possible system of nature any such system really results or not, this is no concern of the critique, which only enquires whether, and in what way, pure reason can be

*1 Abbott - P. 137

*2 Abbott - P. 134

*3 Abbott - P. 135

*4 Ibid

practical, that is, directly determine the will." The whole problem of whether the supersensible system of nature could be realised in the sensible world, in which man is phenomenal as well as noumenal, is one which cannot be considered out of relation to the notion of the summum bonum, for Kant has stated that its realization also depends on pure reason being "accompanied with adequate physical power."*1 Thus the conclusion seems to be that the fundamental problem of the relation between the noumenal world and the phenomenal world is to be found in the relation between the rational and sensible elements in the nature of every individual man, and not in the relation between these systems of nature : the one in which he finds himself qua phenomenon, and the one which he strives to bring into existence qua noumenon, though of course the second problem follows on the first. Criticism of Kant's ethics must begin with the concept of every individual man's membership of both a phenomenal and a noumenal world, and his theory that it is because of this dual membership that man can be called a moral agent.

*1 Abbott - P. 133

CHAPTER V

THE NOUMENAL AND FREEDOM.

Now it has been shown that the part played by the noumenal in Kant's ethics is held by him to be fundamental to his theory. He holds it fundamental to his Critical philosophy as a whole as providing the concept of a limitation to knowledge, without which the a priority of the latter, according to Kant, could never be justified.

It is equally fundamental to Ethical theory according to Kant as providing the explanation of how man can be subject to the laws of the physical universe and yet at the same time be possessed of freedom to act as a moral agent. Kant's actual analysis of obligation and the moral law is equally bound up with the notion of man as noumenon as well as phenomenon, for noumenal freedom is considered positively in the theory of autonomy, which, according to Kant, supplies the supreme principle of morality. It remains however to consider what are the implications of Kant's noumenal phenomenal distinction in the nature of man, and how far such a distinction can provide a satisfactory account and explanation of morality apart from its essential position in Kant's theory as a whole.

First, a comment which must be made before actual criticism, is that this distinction of Kant's can be of significance only to those who hold that there must be a rational explanation of ethics. The noumenal element in man, according to Kant, is essentially his rational power : he has the power of producing concepts or Ideas, but furthermore he has the power of acting according to principles and of making moral judgments based on reason rather than feeling. It is because Kant holds that man

is more than just a bundle of desires, emotions etc., and is a moral agent only in so far as he transcends these, that Kant is led to make the noumenal-phenomenal distinction. For one who holds, like Hume, that morality is a question merely of feeling or emotion - i.e. that the mainspring of moral action is sensible rather than rational - such a distinction is obviously superfluous and irrelevant. According to the "moral sense" school, the sensible, or in Kant's terminology, phenomenal, nature of man contains the necessary and sufficient condition of moral behaviour. The rationalist, on the other hand, maintains that over and above the sensible nature of man, that is, his particular character, which differs in each individual according to the way in which he has been "determined" by circumstances, etc., there is a universal element in man, and that the authority of the moral command - the notion contained in the word "ought" - is necessarily connected with this faculty of universality. For Kant, the central concept of ethics, that of obligation, is an irreducible concept; since it cannot be reduced to, or deduced from, anything that actually exists in the physical world, as this appears to us, such a concept must have its origin elsewhere; and since it is only through the activity of reason that man appears to be able to transcend his particular "constitution" in the physical world and to recognise necessary truths, his capacity for morality and his rationality are equated in the ethical sphere, and both are thought, by Kant, to involve a supersensible side to his nature. But although to maintain a rationalist explanation of Ethics involves denying that man's character is made up merely of sensible powers and is subject only to sensible influences, it may still be questioned whether rationalism necessarily involves Kant's theory of the noumenal and its implications.

Now Kant's fundamental argument for the necessity of the noumenal in Ethics is drawn from his Antinomy between natural causation and freedom. The only possible solution to this Antinomy, he maintains, is to distinguish between human beings considered as phenomena, and the same considered as noumena, holding the former to be ruled over by natural necessity while giving the latter the property of freedom. The whole argument rests on the premise that freedom can be the property only of that which is timeless, for all that exists in time is a series of conditions, each event in the series being causally connected with a preceding event. This argument of Kant's shows at the same time both the strength and the weakness of his theory. It illustrates its strength, for, by thus introducing the noumenal into Ethics as that which is timeless and therefor undetermined by nature, in contrast to that which is causally determined in time-relations, Kant is preparing the way for his supreme principle of morality, that of autonomy, while at the same time strengthening his epistemological position as to the justification of the a priority of knowledge. Contrary to what many philosophers have maintained the strength of Kant's theory depends very largely on the internal coherence of its structure, especially in the connection established between his epistemology and his ethics through this notion of freedom depending on the phenomenal-noumenal distinction, which distinction he has previously drawn as essential to his theory of knowledge. On the other hand, Kant's argument for the noumenal exposes at the same time the weakness of his theory, at any rate in Ethics, which may be described as an overformality which leads him to the creating of artificial situations and problems. This weakness is particularly illustrated in Kant's treatment of freedom.

In his statement of the problem in the Third Antinomy Kant makes the conflict between thesis and antithesis to rest on an extremely limited theory of causality. Kant is maintaining that all natural causality consists in the mechanical connection of one state with another state which precedes it in time. Now the relevant notion to be considered here is that of purposive causality or intentional activity - the notion of doing something for a certain reason. Such an activity is a form of temporal causality but is the very opposite of a merely mechanical causality. This notion finds no place in Kant's theory; by him all temporal causality, that is, causality which originates in the temporal order, is held to be mechanistic. In his statement of the Third Antinomy Kant formulates the two arguments as follows: on the one hand it can be argued that if the causality of every cause is itself also always in time then the series of the causes can have no completeness, and this series itself taken as a whole is then without a final determining cause; thus the argument that there is nothing but natural causality is self-contradictory and transcendental freedom must therefor be allowed. On the other hand, Kant says that it can be argued in the antithesis that if a power of absolutely beginning a series be allowed then this [*1] "renders all unity of experience impossible," and therefor freedom is an illusion. Kant's solution, as has been shown, is to make both arguments valid if they are held to refer the one to the noumenal, the other to the phenomenal, world. But where Kant's whole argument goes astray is in not allowing causality in time to be anything more than a mere rule of uniform connection between earlier and later events; it is because temporal causality is conceived in this limited way that the antinomy arises. If it can be shown that temporal

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 410

causality where man is concerned involves more than just this mechanical connection of events, then the artificiality of the Antinomy can be exposed and consequently Kant's solution shown to be superfluous, and invalid as an argument for the noumenal in ethics.

Now on Kant's own theory man has a power of causality which can alter the course of natural events without at the same time involving the noumenal self, interpreted as the moral, autonomous or non-sensible self, even though it does involve the use of his reason. This power of causality is employed when man subjects himself to hypothetical imperatives, when he says : "I ought to do x in order to achieve y." Granted that the "I ought" here refers to some end to be achieved, which end is supplied by the desires, fears, etc., of man's "sensible nature." But Kant himself has pointed out that in the natural world conceived as empty of rational beings, no "ought" of any kind can possibly arise : *1 "the understanding can know in nature only what is, what has been, or what will be." Now hypothetical imperatives imply two levels, so to speak, of conflict : there must at any rate be an opposition between what the course of events would be if they were allowed to occur "naturally," and the course of events as they occur when man employs his rational powers in subjecting himself to a hypothetical imperative; there is also the further conflict between hypothetical imperatives themselves. Now even if Kant's theory in fact only makes mention of the former - that is, of hypothetical imperatives, which, though not conflicting among themselves, involve an opposition between what the course of events would be if they were obeyed and the course of events if there were no rationality operating - this is sufficient to establish the fact that there can be intentional, or purposive, causality in the non-noumenal world: man can manipulate causal

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 473

laws in order to achieve certain ends. But furthermore it happens very often that hypothetical imperatives conflict. Such situations are not discussed by Kant, but they supply powerful arguments against his theory that causality in time is always mechanical and therefor freedom must be a causality originating out of time. When hypothetical imperatives conflict man foregoes the satisfaction of one set of desires in favour of satisfying another set; for example, a "gourmet" may forego his gastronomic pleasures in order to retain his health. In so doing he cannot be said to possess noumenal freedom, for both alternatives are prescribed by his sensible nature existing in time, yet he must be allowed to possess a freedom of choice between the alternatives and to be determining the future course of events in an intentional manner, if meaning is to be given to the "ought" of the hypothetical imperative.

It cannot therefor be maintained, as Kant tries to, that temporal causality is equivalent to natural necessity. Kant is in fact creating a false antinomy between this natural necessity and freedom, by not allowing man a power of intentional causality. He says that "will is a power of causality belonging to living beings so far as they are rational," but he then goes on to say : "Freedom would be the property this causality has of being able to work independently of determination by alien causes; just as natural necessity is a property characterizing the causality of all non-rational beings." Between this noumenal freedom and this natural necessity characterizing non-rational beings there is no room for a causality which, though dependent on, is not necessitated by, the merely

*1 Paton - P. 114

*2 Ibid

"natural" order, and which involves freedom, however limited, to alter the latter in order to achieve certain ends. Thus it may be argued that the Third Antinomy arises not because a confusion is made between a world of noumena and a world of phenomena, but because an inadequate account is given of the notion of causality; where rational beings are present causality is not just a mechanical process but includes purpose. It has not indeed been proved that moral freedom need not be noumenal freedom; it has merely been shown that temporal causality is not equivalent to natural necessity because man can manipulate causal laws, or alter the course of events in the natural world, to suit his preferences. Freedom, in this limited sense, can therefor be held to be dependent on reason, without making the latter dependent on a noumenal character in man.

So far, however, only Kant's negative concept of freedom has been considered - that is, freedom from necessitation by the laws of nature. This has been seen to involve rationality but not to require a noumenal-phenomenal distinction. But it must still be asked how far Kant's positive concept of freedom is valid and his view of the rational self as the moral self, and how far these involve the phenomenal-noumenal distinction. Kant's theory is that freedom in the positive sense is identical with autonomy: the will which is negatively free from determination by natural laws is positively free in following its own laws, according to the principle of autonomy, or self-legislation. The autonomous self is the moral self for it alone is subject to the categorical imperative, as opposed to the self which is subject to hypothetical imperatives, according to the principle of heteronomy. Kant thus attempts to establish the moral self as the noumenal self; for he has argued that it is in virtue of man's noumenal nature that he is free, and since freedom is now equated, as autonomy, with the principle of the moral law - i.e. a

free will is a will under self-imposed moral laws - then the morality of an agent is explainable only as being essentially connected with a noumenal side to his nature. How far does this argument rest on the premise that there can be no freedom in the temporal order, and how far is the notion of the moral as the noumenal self also established by Kant through his analysis of the concept of duty or moral obligation? For the former of these alternatives has shown to be fallacious. Thus the question whether the concept of the noumenal is necessary to Ethics depends now on consideration of Kant's theory of obligation. But it must be noted that if the argument that freedom is incomprehensible except the phenomenal -noumenal distinction be made, were valid, this would provide a much stronger argument in general for the moral self as noumenal, than can be supplied by the particular content of Kant's moral theory. For whereas no ethical theory can be constructed unless freedom from natural determination can be established, it is not necessary to the holding of a theory in which moral obligation is absolute, to accept Kant's theory of autonomy. The Christian Ethic, for example, holds that the moral "ought" is inexplainable in terms of anything that exists in the natural order, that is, has absolute authority, yet it maintains that man's actions have <u>supreme</u> moral worth only when they are performed in order to obey God's will, which principle, for Kant, is heteronomous.

Now the argument from autonomy for the noumenal is as follows. Even granted that man has a certain freedom of choice at the amoral level when he subjects himself to hypothetical imperatives, yet the alternatives between which he decides are still dictated by his sensible nature - he says: "I ought to do x, because it will be useful" or "because it will make me happy." The categorical imperative, on the other hand, can be

prompted by no desire, on Kant's theory; it must contain within itself its reason for being obeyed. In acting morally, according to Kant, man is acting in complete independence from his sensible character. In so acting, Kant says, I am conscious of *1 "the subordination of my will to a law without the mediation of external influences on my senses." Moral action is action in accordance with a rational concept. This rational concept is that of a law which is self-imposed, for only so can the imperative it dictates apply categorically: if it were imposed by something other than the self, for example by God, then it would depend on the reality or goodness of this other thing and would not have ultimate and absolute authority. Thus Autonomy involves man's independence both from his own sensible nature and from anything super-sensible other than what is to be found in himself; therefor this principle, the supreme principle of morality, necessarily involves a noumenal nature in man. The moral self and the noumenal self in this way become identical. This argument is not explicitly stated in this way by Kant, but its conclusion is implicit in his Ethical writings.

The suppressed premise upon which Kant seems to build this part of his ethical theory, is that man's rational power, being non-sensible, must be noumenal. In one way this is tantological for Kant: the noumenal <u>is</u> that which is non-sensible. This view however seems to rest on a false antithesis: that drawn by Kant between the sensible as that which is temporal, and the non-sensible as that which is non-temporal and unalterable. Although it is true to say that man has a rational side to his nature as well as an emotional, or one made up of feeling, is it therefor also justifiable to say that because the latter is temporal, the former must be non-temporal? Kant would answer these questions in the

*1 Paton - P. 69

affirmative because for him time is nothing but the form of sensibility, but it is this doctrine which seems to be so unplausible in considering moral theory. In the "Groundwork" Kant does not in fact equate the rational with the noumenal in so many words; there he talks about man's "intelligible faculty" and "the intelligible world:" *1"a rational being counts himself, qua intelligence, as belonging to the intelligible world, and solely qua efficient cause belonging to the intelligible world does he give to his causality the name of 'will'." If this amounted to saying only that man is responsible for his actions because he is rational, the difficulties would not arise. But Kant's ethical theory demands a much more difficult interpretation. Kant is maintaining that man is a rational being responsible for his actions, through his membership of a pure world of the understanding or noumenal world. In the passage quoted above the intelligible world is immediately contrasted with the sensible world; the emphasis is not on the fact that man has this rational power, but on the notion that his possessing this power is explainable only in terms of his membership of this other world.

Thus Kant argues that his positive concept of freedom and his view of the rational self as the moral self necessarily involve the noumenal-phenomenal distinction. Now this argument cannot be refuted in the same way as can the argument that the universality of natural law necessarily involves this distinction. For the procedure employed in the latter case was an analysis of what actually does happen in the natural world when rational agents are present, but this can never be the method of approach in the moral sphere for the categorical "ought" can never be discussed in terms of what actually does happen. What can be done, however, is to point out the implications of the theory of the moral self as a noumenal, non-

*1 Paton - P. 121

temporal self and to see how far these seem to give a convincing account of what is meant by morality. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

THE NOUMENAL AS NON-TEMPORAL.

Now it can be shown that the implications of Kant's theory of the moral self as a noumenal self, are such, that they would be quite unacceptable to the ordinary moral agent, whose convictions Kant holds to be the starting point of his theory. Kant says of the intelligible or noumenal character of man: *1 "in so far as it is noumenon nothing happens in it...there can be no change....in this subject no action would begin or cease." Now if this timeless, changeless character of man is held to be that part of himself in virtue of which he is a moral agent, the implications are innumerable. To begin with Kant's theory cannot account for, but must indeed expressly deny, the fact that a man's moral character is as capable of change, growth or decline, as are all his other amoral capacities eg. for writing philosophy or listening to music. According to Kant's theory a man must have the same understanding of moral principles and capacity for acting on them when he is a child as when he is a man. Any sort of moral instruction should logically be irrelevant - for how can one instruct that which is out of time and unalterable? Practical reason cannot, for Kant, be something which can develop or decline for it is a capacity of the noumenal self. Again this theory involves the difficulty, one of the major difficulties in Kant's ethics, that practical reason must necessarily be infallible. It seems that whereas the moral sense school can explain the fallibility of moral judgments but not their authority. Kant's theory puts him in the opposite position. On this point Kant's theory has been contrasted with that of Butler, by A. E. Taylor in

*1 Kemp-Smith - P. 469

"Philosophical Studies." To the power of conscience, which is his equivalent of Kant's practical reason, Butler ascribed authority but not infallibility. Taylor contrasts this with Kant's extravagant assertion that no honest man can ever be in doubt about the path of duty because he can always discover a proposed action to be wrong simply by applying the test of universalizing its 'maxim', and points out that this is hopelessly unsatisfactory in a complicated situation where many factors must be considered eg. voting in a General Election. Butler with all his insistence on the authority of the "reflective principle" never advances for it such a claim to infallibility. But such a claim is the logical conclusion to Kant's theory that practical reason is the power of a self-legislative noumenal self.

It is indeed the complexity of human moral experience for which Kant's noumenal-phenomenal theory cannot account. For example Kant is right when he says that however bad a man's upbringing, surroundings etc. may be, yet the moral imperative applies to him categorically, and to say that he ought to obey this imperative implies that he has a certain capacity to do so, however limited. But it is just for the fact that this capacity <u>is</u> limited, however absolute the imperative, that Kant's theory cannot account. Since, for Kant, that part of the man's character in virtue of which he can act morally is timeless, unchanging etc, then logically his temporal character becomes irrelevant both to how he chooses and the moral worth of what he chooses. Kant's noumenal-phenomenal theory can account neither for the fact that we consider it just not to judge such a man so harshly if he acts wrongly as we would one who has had every advantage of upbringing, etc., even though by so doing we do not weaken the absolute character of the moral command, nor for the fact that if such a man <u>did</u> act justly and nobly we should judge him to be acting with all the

greater moral worth because of the extra obstacles in the path of doing his duty, with which he had to contend. Indeed any moral conflict is difficult to explain on Kant's theory of the dual character of man and with the sharp distinction he makes between the noumenal and phenomenal in the nature of each man. For the noumenal is that which necessarily and eternally follows the laws of its own giving, and in this way is perfectly free from the time-order, whereas the phenomenal self exists in the time-order and is conditioned by temporal causes and influences. Between these two selves there appears to be an unbridgeable gap: how then can there be moral conflict between them? Where is the individual moral self which makes decisions and choices in the temporal order and is responsible for conduct, which is either right or wrong?

This difficulty in Kant's theory is most clearly to be seen in connection with the problem of wrong-doing. How can Kant explain certain responsibility for actions which transgress the moral law? For the essence of the noumenal self is that it is rational and necessarily obeys the moral law of its own giving, whereas the phenomenal self is subject to natural laws over which it has no control and cannot therefor be morally responsible for anything.

Now it may be argued that Kant does, in fact, in his Ethical writings, especially in the "Groundwork", soften the sharpness of the distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal in the nature of man. He recognises the reality of conflict and attempts to solve the problem by his distinction between a holy will which would of necessity follow the principles of reason, and for which, therefor, the notion of obligation would be irrelevant, and a will which is not governed by practical reason alone but also by subjective conditions and can therefor

be said to be under "obligation" to obey the objective laws. But does not Kant achieve this solution only at the expense of destroying the foundations upon which his theory is built? For it involves saying either that the noumenal self is responsible for temporal acts in the phenomenal order - acts which are the result of inclination and desire and which run contrary to duty - which appears to be an absurd confusion which destroys the essence of the noumenal; or it must be taken to imply that over and above the rational and sensible elements in man there is an individual unified self which combines these elements. This self would be a morally responsible self, for it would be responsible for allowing its will to be influenced either by rational principles eg. the principle of duty, or by sensible desires and inclinations etc. But such a solution would completely destroy Kant's theories of freedom and autonomy. Such a self would exist in time and would have a power of temporal causality which would involve freedom not only in the limited sense of freedom to obey hypothetical imperatives, but also freedom in the fundamental sense of freedom to obey and therefore also to disobey the categorical imperative; and the moral agent's possession of this freedom would not depend on a non-temporal, noumenal side to his nature. His rationality would still constitute the universal element in his character by means of which he would recognise that "he ought to do x" in contrast to "he could not help doing x," but though he would have this power of apprehending moral laws and their authority, this power would exist in time, would be part of his temporal character and therefor Kant's theory of autonomy as the giving of laws by a noumenal self to a phenomenal self would be meaningless.

In Kant's actual treatment of wrong-doing he appears to incline towards some such theory of the self as has just been outlined, and in so doing to break down the exclusive nature of the alternatives of regarding man either as belonging to the noumenal world and so as free, or as belonging to the phenomenal world and so as being determined by the laws of nature. For Kant maintains that neither of these alternatives, by itself, can account for evil in man. Kant says first that badness *1 "cannot be placed in the sensibility of man and the natural inclinations springing therefrom, for not only have these no direct reference to badness, but further we are not responsible for their existence, whereas we are accountable for the propensity to evil." But neither on Kant's theory can the source of this evil *2 "be placed in a corruption of Reason which gives the moral law, as if Reason could abolish the authority of the law in itself and disown its obligation; for this is absolutely impossible." Since evil can therefor have its source neither in the sensible nor in the intelligible springs of action it must be discovered in the choice man makes between the two as to which shall be given predominance. Kant says *3 "hence the distinction whether man is good or bad must lie, not in the distinction of the springs that he adopts into his maxim, but in the subordination :i.e. which of the two he makes the condition of the other." But what Kant fails to see is that such a solution must allow man to have a capacity for choice,in deciding which set of springs are to be subordinated, involving a power of freedom which is <u>not</u> to be explained as belonging to a noumenal side to his nature. For this freedom may be used to make either a good or a bad

*1 Abbott - P. 341-342

*2 Abbott - P. 342

*3 Abbott - P. 343

choice, whereas noumenal freedom is "freedom" only to act in accordance with the moral law i.e. necessitation by the moral law. Furthermore if man is to be held to be a moral agent because of his rationality then a different interpretation must be given to reason than that which alone is allowed by Kant. Granted that if Reason is defined as an organ of moral legislation, then, by definition, it cannot be corrupted. But if it be allowed that man can choose to obey the desires of his sensible nature rather than the moral imperative, then in some sense it must be allowed that reason can be corrupted. When a man says to himself: "I ought to do x, but I am going to do y because I desire it so much," then although his rationality considered as a power of recognising moral laws is uncorrupted, the agent is nevertheless weighing up two possibilities and deciding that one is more valuable to him than the other, and in this sense of reason, as a power of judgment, his reason is corrupted. One might go even farther and say that in some cases reason can be corrupted even as the power of recognising moral laws. Might this not perhaps have been true of certain of the Nazis? But the important point here in connection with Kant is that the moral agent must be considered free to disregard the moral imperative if he so chooses, and this is what Kant fails to recognise or if he recognises it, is incapable of explaining on his theory. For he lays down that :[*1] "to conceive oneself as a freely acting being, and yet released from the law which is appropriate to such a being (the moral law) would be the same as to conceive a cause operating without any law (for determination by natural laws is excluded by freedom) and this would be a contradiction." It would indeed be a contradiction if freedom be defined as action in accordance with the moral law and for a perfect being such a definition might be applicable. But moral

*1 Abbott - P. 342

theory must account not only for what is meant by perfect goodness but also for how it is that man can be either good or bad. As applied to the ordinary imperfect human agent Kant's theory of freedom is inadequate, for it cannot explain how man can be free to choose to act wrongly. Thus the moral self can not be equated with a noumenal self. Man has indeed both rational and sensible elements in his nature, but over and above these he is a free individual who can choose to follow the dictates of either the one or the other. This is not to weaken the authority of the moral command : Kant himself cannot, and does not, maintain that to call the moral imperative "categorical" is to say that it is always obeyed - it implies only that such a command has absolute authority. But it is just the fact that it is not always obeyed and can indeed be consciously disregarded, for which his phenomenal-noumenal theory cannot account. For if free action be equated with morally good action, then when an agent acts wrongly all that can be said is that he is subject to forces over which he has no control and is therefor not morally responsible. To say that man is free to act wrongly is not to maintain that such actions are undetermined. We are not here conceiving "a cause operating without any law" as Kant makes out. Determination by natural laws is not excluded by freedom if such determination be considered not as complete and necessary but as dependent on the agent's assent: the agent says to himself: "I choose to be determined by natural laws rather than by the moral law," and for this choice he is morally responsible. It may indeed still be asked what determines this choice itself - that is to say the choice of which set of determining factors shall influence action. But for the moment there must be further consideration of how far Kant's own ethical

theory fails to fit in to the phenomenal-noumenal distinction.

It has been pointed out that the logical conclusion to holding Kant's noumenal-phenomenal distinction in Ethics would be to disallow that man's moral nature can develop or decline. For in so far as his nature is phenomenal it is amoral, for it has no freedom; in so far as it is noumenal, it is "free" in Kant's special sense of the word, but it is out of time and thus cannot change. Now just as it was seen that his theory of obligation required a unified moral self not reducible either to the one or to the other of these alternatives, nor just to a combination of the two, so the same conclusion can be reached by considering another aspect of his Ethics, and one which is fundamental to his theory: its teleology. To begin with, Kant's refutation of hedonism at the beginning of the "Groundwork" is an argument from teleology.[*1] He says: "in the natural constitution of an organic being - that is, of one contrived for the purpose of life - let us take it as a principle that in it no organ is to be found for any end unless it is also the most appropriate to that end and the best fitted for it." From this principle he argues that if the end of human action were happiness then the organ best adapted to achieve this end would be instinct. Thus in animal life instinct controls action. But human beings have been given the power of reason, and reason, Kant points out, is not only badly adapted to achieve happiness but if used for this purpose may actually increase unhappiness:[*2] "we find that the more a cultivated reason concerns itself with the aim of enjoying life and happiness, the farther does man get away from true contentment." Hence if we assume that reason, like other organs must be well adapted to

*1 Paton - P. 62

*2 Paton - P. 63

its purpose, then it cannot be meant to produce a will which is good as a means to some further end, such as happiness, but rather to produce a will which is good in itself. Now this argument implies that human nature is designed to achieve a certain end or purpose towards which man is meant to struggle.

Kant's teleological view of human nature finds its most complete expression in the last formula of the categorical imperative - that of "the Kingdom of Ends." If each rational being treats himself and others never merely as a means but always at the same time as an end in himself, then *1 "there arises a systematic union of rational beings under common objective laws - that is, a kingdom." Such a kingdom is an ideal which men must struggle to realise; they must struggle to realise it because this is the purpose of their nature as rational moral beings, just as, say, the purpose of animal nature, with its possession of instinct, is to protect itself and further its species. Kant says: *2 "Teleology views nature as a kingdom of ends; ethics views a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature. In the first case the kingdom of ends is a theoretical Idea used to explain what exists. In the second case it is a practical Idea used to bring into existence what does not exist, but can be made actual by our conduct - and indeed to bring it into existence in conformity with this Idea." Teleology in Ethics is therefor the opposite of the mechanistic teleology which can be attributed to objects in the merely natural order: it must involve the struggle of free agents. But here the same difficulty arises for Kant's theory, for he has limited

*1 Paton - P. 101

*2 Paton - P. 104

freedom to that which is noumenal. The agent in so far as he is free necessarily follows the laws of the noumenal world. How then can there be struggle and development? How can man be "meant" to be other than what he is?

This whole difficulty can be illustrated by considering Kant's argument for immortality. Kant maintains that although the immortality of the soul cannot be proved theoretically, nevertheless it is a necessary postulate of practical reason. He argues that *1 "the realization of the summum bonum in the world is the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law. But in this will the perfect accordance of the mind with the moral law is the supreme condition of the summum bonum." This perfect accordance is called by Kant, "holiness," and it is *2 "a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment of his existence." But since the summum bonum must be capable of realization, as being the necessary objective of practical reason, it must be possible for there to be an endless progression towards this perfect accordance. Thus Kant makes the following important statement: that this endless progress, and hence the summum bonum, *3 "is only possible on the supposition of an endless duration of the existence *4 and personality of the same rational being (which is called the immortality of the soul)." The whole point is that Kant does not, on his theory, allow a rational being to have personality, in the sense in which it is here required. In so far as he is considered as belonging to the noumenal world, as a thing-in-himself, his existence is

*1 Abbott - P. 218

*2 Ibid

*3 Abbott - P. 218

*4 Underlining by Author.

out of time anyway; it is nonsensical therefor to talk about its endless duration, and a contradiction to talk about him progressing endlessly towards holiness and therefor changing. If the soul is here meant to be equivalent to the noumenal nature of man taken by itself, then it would necessarily be in accordance with the moral law. It is equally impossible on Kant's theory to say that man considered as an appearance is capable of moral progress, for, however long his phenomenal existence endures, considered by itself, it will merely follow the laws of nature. To make his theory credible Kant must abandon the position from which he originally explains freedom and hence morality; he must do away with the sharp distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal in the nature of man, and allow that man has an individual personality or character not explainable in these terms.

Such a character would not have to be considered as made up merely of sensible constituents. It can be held that man is capable of moral action because he is rational. Willing can be as rational an activity as thinking, for it can be in accordance with principles. To use Kant's terminology, by means of practical reason man can act on a priori principles i.e. can act for the sake of duty. Such a principle is a priori because it is recognised by the agent in the form of a command which applies necessarily and universally. But whether or not he obeys this command depends on his individual moral character which may be good or bad: it is in virtue of this that he chooses whether to follow the dictates of reason or of his sensible nature, and how he chooses itself alters this character for better or worse. It is this character which can progress towards moral perfection or can decline towards moral badness. It is in virtue of his rationality that man has alternatives between which to

choose - in contrast to an animal who has only one path to follow, that of his sensible needs - but which of these alternatives he chooses depends on the goodness or badness of the very essence, so to speak, of his character. And this essence is not something fixed and unchanging. To quote Campbell from "Scepticism and Construction:" "man is ever more than his formed character at any moment. This formed character is an abstraction from personality. The latter involves as its most distinctive feature the constant potency of creative activity." Because man's moral character is not something fixed and unchanging it can be involved in conflict, can develop or decline, which on Kant's noumenal-phenomenal theory is inexplainable.

Furthermore the lack in Kant's theory of a unified individual moral self if the noumenal-phenomenal distinction be consistently applied leads not only to the difficulty that man's free, moral self must be held to be timeless and therefor unalterable, but it also involves a very limited and artificial view of man's "sensible" character. Kant often talks as if man's sensible constitution is something given to him in its entirety, is datum, so to speak, which he must accept, and which, itself is unalterable save in accordance with laws of nature outside man's control. Up to a point, of course, this is true: some men are "by nature" braver, say, or more good-tempered than others. Some men have stronger desires eg. for power or wealth, than others who are "by nature" more contented. But Kant talks as if this constitution of a man's character is exactly equivalent to that of an animal who has sensible needs eg. for food and warmth. The over-formality of Kant's distinction leads him to place on the same level the ambitious man's desire for power and the same man's physical needs for food and warmth. In that he possesses the

latter he does resemble an animal, in that he possesses the former, he does not. A man cannot alter his physical needs, even though to some extent he may ignore or control them. But his sensible character, according to Kant's interpretation of the phrase, must contain very much more than these. According to Kant any action which is prompted by desire is dependent on man's "sensible" character. Now it is perfectly clear that the ambitious man's desire for power or fame is not something like his physical need for food; it is not something outside his power which he must passively receive as "datum." It is a desire which he can either encourage or combat. In so far as he successively chooses to perform actions A,B,C, rather than actions x,y,z, he can make this desire stronger or weaker. There is no law of nature according to which a man must desire power, similar to the law of nature that he must desire food when he is hungry. Thus here again Kant's noumenal-phenomenal distinction is inadequate and misleading. Even if the noumenal be interpreted simply as the rational, so that the rational be contrasted with the sensible without mention of the non-temporal-temporal distinction - even so the contrast is artificial if the rational is not further specified as the morally rational. For the man seeking power is not subject to a blind impulse or desire. Macbeth, for example, or Iago, could in one sense be considered to be the most rational of beings. The vilest desire may be that which is most "rationally" encouraged and followed. Kant himself, of course, recognises this fact. When he is discussing imperatives of skill he says :[*1] "here there is absolutely no question about the rationality or goodness of the end, but only about what must be done to attain it. A prescription required by a doctor in

*1 Paton - P. 83

order to cure his man completely and one required by a poisoner in order to make sure of killing him are of equal value so far as each serves to effect its purpose perfectly." Kant points out in this passage that the morally rational is not here in question, but he does not deny that the poisoner is in some sense acting rationally: he is consciously using the right means to achieve a certain end. But on Kant's theory one would have to say that the poisoner's action, eg. in obtaining his prescription, is morally bad because it is dependent on a desire of his sensible nature ie. the desire to kill someone. This is an absurd conclusion. Anyone may have a sudden desire to kill someone and the actual having of this desire may be outside his control; in some cases the actual killing of a person, as in a fit of anger, may even be outside a man's control. In such a case a man is not considered morally responsible. But in setting about to make preparations in cold blood to kill someone the moral badness of a man's actions is not explainable in terms of his sensible character in this sense: his actions are morally bad not because he has a certain desire but because he fails to combat this desire. Here the rational-sensible contrast breaks down completely. If rational be interpreted in an amoral sense the man is acting perfectly rationally. But furthermore, and this is the important point, if the rational is interpreted in the moral sense as the morally good ie. if one says that the man is not acting rationally because he is not acting for the sake of duty, then all action that is not morally good, including all that is morally bad, must be explained in terms of man's sensible constitution. Such a theory stretches the meaning of the word "sensible" to breaking point. It completely fails to account for the fact that a man can alter

and control his desires and emotions and in so doing it utterly distorts what is meant by morally bad action and responsibility for such action.

An adequate account of moral responsibility must allow for the fact that man is not only responsible for particular actions xyz, but is also responsible up to a point for the sort of character he has in virtue of which he performs such actions. To take the example of the poisoner: this man has certain desires eg. to kill someone, or to achieve a certain end through killing this person. Now for these he may not be entirely responsible. But in so far as he allows these desires to determine his action he <u>is</u> responsible, and he is responsible not only for this particular action, ie. the murder, but also for forming his character along such lines that he will be more likely in future to perform other similar actions. This was what was meant earlier by saying that although it is in virtue of his essential character that man chooses to follow the morally good or morally bad line of conduct, at the same time <u>how</u> he chooses itself alters this character for better or worse. That man has this power of altering his own character is what I take Campbell to be implying, when he says that, in addition to his formed character at any moment, man's personality involves "the constant potency of creative activity." Now this is an answer to the objection pointed out earlier - the objection that even if it be allowed that man can choose which set of factors shall determine his actions nevertheless the question still remains: how is this choice itself determined? One must indeed be careful to ask what is meant by this question, for it is the core of the old problem of free-will versus determinism. The determinist states the question so that it assumes the point at issue is in his favour ie. he denies that choice is anything but an illusion by making the determinants

of this "choice" necessitate what is "chosen." But equally it seems the upholder of freedom must assume that the point at issue is in his favour ie. by stating the question so as to allow for a real possibility of alternative lines of conduct being followed. It is very probable that as Kant says, freedom cannot be either proved or disproved. Nevertheless it can be argued that granted that freedom is necessary to moral obligation and that men do recognise in fact that they have duties, ie. granted Kant's argument that freedom can be established only on moral grounds, then it is still possible to explain freedom in terms of the choices of a unified temporal individual and is, indeed, highly undesirable to explain it in noumenal-phenomenal terms. It can be held that man's character is what it is partly because of forces outside his control but also partly because he has made it what it is and furthermore that at every moment it is potentially morally better or morally worse through man's own power of self-alteration. Man's power of choice and of self-alteration is necessarily limited but within these limits it is actual. The kernel of truth in the existentialist doctrine lies perhaps in its recognition that man in a sense creates the essence of his character by his own choices.

So that when it is asked what determines the choice of which set of determining factors shall influence action the answer must be that man chooses to obey the moral command or his personal desires in virtue of his essential character, which character includes as its most important element the power of self-alteration. Though it may be argued that such an explanation involves a regress yet this cannot be held to be an objection but rather to be in accordance with our actual moral experience.

A man is not judged to be morally responsible simply in virtue of his character at a certain moment. The confirmed drunkard may not at a certain point of time x be capable of giving up his bottle, but he can still be held to be morally responsible for being a drunkard, for during some period of his past life he had the power of denying himself drink ie. he had the power of developing his character along different lines. All questions of moral responsibility must involve a regress, but moral theory need not therefor be involved in the logical fallacy of an infinite regress. A man's decision to do x at point y may be greatly influenced by his previous decision to do w at point z and similarly with this previous decision, but these decisions are not necessitated for man has the power to struggle against the influence of his previous conduct. It may be that a very young child has not this power of "creating" and altering his own character, but his moral development must coincide with the development of such a power. As soon as a child can recognise that he ought to do x even though he wants to do y he must, within however great limits, have some power of forming his own character, and he becomes morally responsible for his conduct because he is morally responsible for what determines his choice of conduct.

Now it is this power of self-determination which is lacking in Kant's theory, for the simple reason that Kant does not allow that there is a unified self to be determined. Self-determination, for Kant, means the determination of a sensible self by a rational self- determination of a phenomenal self by a noumenal self - it is a theory intended to explain what is meant by moral goodness. Kant ignores the far more fundamental question of what is meant by saying that man is a moral agent at all, is responsible for his actions, whether good or bad, and furthermore is

responsible, within limits, for being the sort of person that he is. If Kant equates self-determination with moral goodness and explains moral badness as determination into which the self does not actively enter, then he must eliminate responsibility for the latter, and in so doing actually destroy the distinction itself between moral goodness and badness. For on Kant's theory a state of affairs in which there is self-determination and one in which there is not, just become two different states of affairs, the one not morally better than the other : there cannot be responsibility for a good state of affairs unless there would also be responsibility for the state of affairs if they were bad, as well as vice versa. Self-determination must include both good and bad determination if there is to be moral responsibility, and if the essential distinction between the morally good and the morally bad is to be retained. Thus self-determination, if it is to afford an explanation of morality, cannot be equated with determination of a sensible phenomenal self by a rational noumenal self, but must be interpreted as t h e determination of a unified individual self by itself to follow the path either of duty or of personal desire.

The implications, then, of Kant's theory of the moral self as a noumenal, non-temporal self, are incapable of giving a convincing account of what is meant by morality. Kant's moral theory is, in fact at its best when he is not discussing ethics in phenomenal-noumenal terms. The concept of a non-temporal, noumenal self is not adequate to explain moral responsibility in every-day experience for right and wrong action; nor can such a theory give an account of the unification of all elements, whether rational or sensible, in every individual moral agent and of the continual moral development or decline of every such individual.

CHAPTER VII

THE NOUMENAL AS UNKNOWABLE

In considering the part played by the noumenal in Kant's ethics m one must examine not only the implications for moral theory of the non-temporal aspect of the noumenal, but also its theoretically unknowable character and the relation of this to moral conduct and theory. For the noumenal as expounded in the First Critique is primarily a concept of that which is beyond knowledge and which is provided through the necessity, for Kant's epistemology, of a limit to knowledge. It was seen that on the epistemological level considerable difficulties were involved by this concept of "the unknowable," but that nevertheless it could not be eliminated without destroying Kant's whole theory. But whereas in the First Critique the concept of the noumenal was the merely negative concept of that which could not be known by speculative reason, in his ethical writings Kant holds that positive content is given to this concept by means of practical reason. The question is therefor to discover exactly what Kant means by this practical "knowledge" and to consider how far it is a plausible notion for moral theory.

Kant is careful to anticipate the general criticism which might be levelled at his theory, that whereas in the First Critique he has maintained that strictly speaking nothing whatever can be said about the noumenal except that it is unknowable, his ethical writings are concerned almost entirely with noumena, or things-in-themselves, and only in such terms, according to Kant, can there be an explanation of morality. Kant states this criticism himself in the Preface to the Second Critique

when he says that he has met with "the considerable objection" that *1 "the objective reality of the categories as applied to noumena, which is in the theoretical department of knowledge denied, is in the practical affirmed." How far Kant is successful in meeting this criticism must now be considered. To begin with, he considers the problem entirely from the point of view of the three Ideas of speculative reason and asks whether the necessity with which God, freedom and immortality are involved by the fact of obligation allows us to say that we have knowledge of these noumenal entities: does practical reason, which operates from beyond the sensible world, effect an actual extension of our knowledge beyond the limits which were discovered to confine speculative reason? Kant states the problem and his position regarding it as follows: *2 "Is our knowledge actually extended by pure practical reason, and is that in practical reason which for the speculative was only transcendent? Certainly, but only in a practical point of view." Kant means by this extension of knowledge "in a practical point of view" the affirmation of the reality of that which is noumenal without the claiming of actual knowledge of what the noumenal is in itself. By means of practical reason we know that God, freedom and immortality must exist, but we still cannot know how it is possible that they should exist. To know the latter we should have to have knowledge of their very nature - of what they are in themselves - and this is impossible, according to Kant, because they are not objects of a possible experience. It may be noted that Lindsay makes the remark in this connection in his book "Kant," that the

*1 Abbott - P. 91

*2 Abbott - P. 231

distinctive character of Kant's conception of reason is that by means of it we can affirm the reality of something whose nature we cannot understand. The categories can be applied to the transcendental ideas because these categories exist in the understanding, as the faculty of thought, previously to any intuition, and signify only an object in general. But no particular object can strictly be said to be known unless the categories are given an actual sensible intuition, and this is not possible with the transcendental ideas. Nevertheless, argues Kant, that such objects as freedom, God and immortality do really exist and that therefor *1 "the category as a mere form of thought is here not empty but has significance," is assured by the necessity with which they are required by practical reason. The reality of freedom is affirmed because without it moral obligation would be an illusion; similarly the ideas of God and immortality acquire objective reality as being the source of the possibility of realizing the necessary object of practical reason, the summum bonum, which is the whole object of a pure will, including the moral law as the supreme determining principle. Thus, says Kant, it is possible to conceive an extension of pure reason in a practical point of view without its knowledge as speculative being enlarged at the same time. The latter would be possible only if the three ideas were cognitions of objects, and not just thoughts - the content of which is supplied not directly through intuition but only indirectly through the requirements of practical reason. Only where we have cognition of objects can we determine the application of our ideas and make synthetical judgments about them, in which consists speculative knowledge. Therefor, Kant says: *2 "there is no extension of the knowledge of given supersensible objects, but an extension of theoretical reason and of its knowledge in respect of the supersensible generally; in as much as it is compelled to admit that

*1Abbott - P. 234

*2 - Abbott - P. 233

there are such objects although it is not able to define them more closely, so as itself to extend this knowledge of the objects (which have now been given it on practical grounds and only for practical use)."

Now the first criticism which must be made of Kant's theory of the extension of knowledge "in a practical point of view" concerns this notion of the possibility of affirming the reality of that which is noumenal without claiming actual knowledge of what the noumenal is in itself. For to say that in the moral sphere the reality only of the noumenal entities, God, freedom and immortality, is being affirmed whereas metaphysicians have claimed knowledge about these noumena, is, in fact, to make a completely false distinction. In his moral theory Kant does very much more than just affirm the reality of God, freedom and immortality: he states that freedom is equivalent to autonomy, that God has *1

"a morally perfect (holy and good) and at the same time all-powerful will," and that the summum bonum consists in happiness proportionate to moral goodness. Kant is surely claiming that these propositions are true ie. that he has knowledge about freedom, God and the summum bonum. Kant's notion that we can affirm the reality of something whose nature we cannot understand, to use Lindsay's words from his book "Kant," again, appears to be nonsensical, if taken absolutely: we may affirm the reality of x without knowing anything like all there is to be known about x, but we must know something about it in order to know what it is the reality of which we are affirming. We can obviously have only a very limited idea of God's nature, but we cannot affirm His reality without stipulating what we mean by "God" ie. without laying down that He is supremely

*1 Abbott - P. 226

intelligent or morally perfect etc. Kant cannot therefor maintain that there is "no extension of the knowledge of given supersensible objects" but only *1"an extension of theoretical reason and of its knowledge in respect of the supersensible generally, inasmuch as it is compelled to admit that there are such objects although it is not able to define them more closely." It is just a more close definition of given supersensible objects that Kant is giving in his analysis of moral obligation. The very difference between the noumenal in the epistemological sphere and the noumenal in the moral sphere, is,according to Kant, that whereas the former can be conceived only in a negative way - that is, is only the concept of a limit to knowledge - the latter, on the contrary, is conceived of positively and necessarily plays a positive role in Kant's ethics. To say that through the experience of moral obligation positive content is given to the concepts of freedom, God and immortality, is not just to maintain that something exists corresponding to these concepts : it is to state that in some way, however limited, the nature of these noumenal entities is known. This is true whether Kant's notion of their nature is accepted or not - for example, whether freedom is held to be equivalent to "autonomy" or to consist in some sort of freedom of choice.

The above criticism shows up the difficulties involved in holding such a narrow conception of knowledge as Kant's. For if his theory of knowledge is accepted ie. if it is agreed that nothing that is not accessible to sensory experience can be known, then it would seem that it can not be held that God, freedom and immortality are possible objects of knowledge. On the other hand, if it is accepted that freedom can be

*1 Abbott - P. 233

known to be autonomy, that the summum bonum can be known to consist in happiness proportionate to moral goodness etc., then Kant's main argument for denying knowledge of the supersensible on the epistemological level is destroyed ie. the argument that there can be knowledge only where there is a sensible intuition. It may be that knowledge is acquired in different ways - knowledge through sensible experience can be one of them - but knowledge itself must be defined in the same way whether it belongs to the realm of epistemology or that of morals. What Kant is trying to do is to maintain the contradictory, ie. to allow that there can be some sort of knowledge of the non-sensible in the moral sphere and at the same time to keep his narrow definition of knowledge proper as being a term applicable only to that which can be sensibly experienced. He tries to avoid the contradiction by using such phrases as "knowledge in a practical point of view" in the case of ethics. But in fact all he is doing is showing that knowledge can be acquired by other means than just by sensible experience, and is thereby abandoning his original conception of knowledge.

Kant's statement has already been quoted, that in the case of freedom, God and immortality *1 "the category as a mere form of thought is here not empty but has significance" because of the necessity with which these noumenal entities are required by practical reason. Now in this statement the word "significance" must be taken to mean "application" : Kant is not just denying the modern positivistic position that statements about God etc., are meaningless, but is actually maintaining that the categories can be applied in connection with noumenal entities - for example, that in the case of freedom the category of cause can be applied, in the case of all three ideas of reason the category of necessity, though Kant does not

*1 Abbott - P. 234

in fact give examples of this application of the categories. What he is denying of course is that these noumena can be the objects of sensible intuition, but then nobody in their right philosophical senses would ever maintain that God, freedom and immortality were objects of sensible intuition. Knowledge of God etc. must obviously be acquired in a different way to knowledge of tables, but the point at issue is whether there can be knowledge of God etc., ie. whether it can be admitted that knowledge can be acquired otherwise than by sensible intuition, and it is just this question which Kant answers in the affirmative when he states that the reality of God, freedom and immortality can be affirmed because of the necessity with which they are involved by moral obligation - He is admitting that knowledge can be acquired otherwise than through direct acquaintance, that the categories can legitimately be applied to what is not capable of being sensibly experienced, and in so doing is rejecting the definition of knowledge formulated in the First Critique. The noumenal is still, indeed, inaccessible to experience - for there is no question of Kant's allowing a supersensible intuition - but it is no longer for that reason unknowable.

Now in what way is Kant allowing that knowledge can be acquired otherwise than through sensible intuition? He is maintaining that freedom, God and immortality can be known because they are the necessary presuppositions of considering oneself subject to the moral law. The point may be made that on Kant's own grounds just as it can never be proved theoretically that God exists so it can never be proved theoretically that moral obligation is not an illusion : the "fact of obligation" is the fact that men believe they are morally obliged - one cannot say that it is a fact that the moral law exists in the same way that one can say that it is a fact that giraffes exist. If knowledge can be only of

what is available to sensible experience and since the moral law is not something that can be sensibly experienced, then there can never be absolute epistemological certainty, on Kant's grounds, that we <u>are</u> under an obligation to do x rather than y. This last point, however, can not be called a fair criticism of Kant and it brings one to the heart of the problem under discussion. Because for Kant the moral law is known a priori, it *1 "is of itself apodictically certain," and it is just the proposition that there <u>can</u> be a priori knowledge which Kant takes as the starting point of his whole theory. He states in the introduction to the First Critique that *2 "if we have a proposition which in being thought is thought as <u>necessary</u>, it is an a priori judgment" and his whole ethical theory rests on the premise that just as, for example, in thinking the proposition "every alteration must have a cause" we think this as necessary, so in thinking the proposition "man is subject to the moral law" we think <u>this</u> as necessary : both for Kant are a priori propositions, the one always valid when reason is theoretical, the other when reason is practical. Now in allowing that knowledge can be acquired otherwise than through sensible intuition ie. that there can be knowledge of freedom, God and immortality, Kant is maintaining that propositions derived from a priori propositions must themselves be held to be necessary and therefor held to be true ie. to be known. Thus although it is not known either through any experience or as a priori itself that eg. "God is all-powerful," this proposition according to Kant must be held to be true because it is derived from what <u>is</u> known a priori. In other words Kant is maintaining that God, freedom and immortality are postulates, or essential prerequisites,

*1 Abbott - P. 241

*2 Abbott - P. 43

of moral obligation. He says : *1 "they all proceed from the principle of morality, which is not a postulate but a law, by which reason determines the will directly, which will, because it is so determined as a pure will, requires these necessary conditions of obedience to its precept."

The main comment to be made on this position is that Kant is quite unjustified in lumping together freedom, God and immortality as all being necessary conditions or postulates of moral obligation. He tries to stretch this argument too far. Freedom, it is true, does appear to be an absolutely necessary condition of moral obligation, but even freedom is susceptible to proof in this way only in the sense that "ought" must imply "can." If we hold a priori that we ought to act for the sake of duty then we must also hold a priori that we can so act, that there are no impediments, external or internal, to our acting thus, and that we have the capacity to recognise and act on the principles of reason. This is all that can be said to be necessarily presupposed by morality. It cannot be said that it is a necessary presupposition of morality that freedom should consist in self-legislation. That freedom consists in self-legislation is part of Kant's actual analysis of what he considers morality to consist in : this proposition is neither a priori itself nor is it derived from any a priori proposition. Even if it is recognised a priori that all rational beings are subject to a moral command, it is not recognised a priori that this command is one self-imposed by an autonomous self and that therefor moral freedom is equivalent to autonomy. Kant takes as his premise that all men consider themselves to be subject to this moral command, in the same way that they are subject so to speak to the theoretical command to accept that "every alteration has a cause,"

* 1 Abbott - P. 229

but he must admit that it is by no means universally recognised that obedience to the moral command consists in autonomy - a great many people, for example, believe that the moral command is ultimately imposed by God and that moral freedom consists in obeying God's will.

Nevertheless, it remains true that the reality of freedom in some sense is a necessary condition of moral obligation in Kant's or in anybody's moral theory - without freedom the concept of moral obligation would be meaningless. It would be a contradiction to suppose that one were under a moral command and at the same time incapable of obeying this command. Freedom in this sense is therefor a true postulate of practical reason. But it cannot be argued that the same applies to God and immortality : it would be possible for a man to believe in neither and still recognise that he ought to do x, that he was morally obliged to act in a certain way. This is necessarily true on a theory like Kant's in which morality is held to be independent of religion. For Kant, God and immortality are the necessary conditions of the possibility of achieving the summum bonum, but the summum bonum itself is not a necessary condition of moral obligation; on Kant's theory we are under obligation to obey the moral command, not to produce the summum bonum - whether the latter in fact can result or not is irrelevant to the binding character of the moral law : *1 "we are here concerned only with the determination of the will and the determining principle of its maxims as a free will, not at all with the result." The concept of the summum bonum, indeed includes the moral law as the supreme determining principle of the will, but when it is used by Kant to establish the reality of God and immortality it is not just the notion of virtue which Kant is considering but

*1 Abbott - P. 135

the notion of happiness proportionate to virtue. It may be that ultimately happiness will be proportionate to virtue, but consideration of this is not relevant to determination of the will to obey the moral command : *1 "it needs no further support by theoretical views as to the inner constitution of things, the secret final aim of the order of the world, or a presiding ruler thereof, in order to bind me in the most perfect manner to act in unconditional conformity to the law." Kant does, indeed also hold the view that it is *2 "a duty to make the summum bonum the object of my will so as to promote it with all my powers," but the logical conclusion to such a view would be to destroy the categorical nature as Kant has defined it, of the moral imperative : the latter would be obeyed in order to achieve a certain result, namely the production of the summum bonum, and would therefor become hypothetical.

Thus when Kant asks the question: *3 "Is our knowledge actually extended by pure practical reason and is that **immanent** in practical reason which for the speculative was only transcendent?" The answer must be "Yes, but only our **knowledge** of the reality of freedom." From the a priori proposition : "we are morally obliged" can be derived the proposition : "freedom from natural necessitation is not only possible but necessary." But so far as the extension of our knowledge of God and immortality is concerned, practical reason is impotent, for the reality of the summum bonum is <u>not</u> a necessary presupposition or condition of

*1 Abbott - P. 241

*2 Abbott - P. 240

*3 Abbott - P. 231

moral obligation on Kant's theory. Our knowledge of God and immortality, if there can be such knowledge, must be supplied, without any assistance from practical reason, by theoretical reason alone, in the sense in which "reason" is used in the Dialectic of the First Critique, as a faculty of inference in opposition to the "understanding" as a faculty of judgment. The argument that because a state of affairs in which happiness is not proportionate to virtue is one of only limited - in the sense of incomplete- goodness, therefor there must be an all-powerful Being to bring about this proportionality or absolute goodness, is an inference of the same form and validity as, for example, the inference from the existence of finite creatures to the existence of an infinite Creator, which Kant attacks in his **refutation** of the cosmological argument. Theoretical reason must be equally justified, or unjustified, in making inferences or drawing implications from one fact as it is from another ie. from the fact of limited goodness or from the fact of finiteness. Both facts involve incompleteness or the conditional, and from both reason is led to seek the complete or unconditional, but the process cannot be invalid in the one case and valid in the other. If the Thomist's procedure is unjustifiable then so is Kant's so-called "moral" proof of the existence of God. For the latter is not really a "moral" proof at all : a moral proof of God and immortality would be one in which the intelligibility and possibility of moral obligation depended on the reality of God and immortality, and in which, therefor, the latter were true postulates of practical reason. But in Kant's theory, it has been seen, this is not the case : moral obligation is <u>not</u> analysed in terms of God's will or preparation for a future life. Here,in fact, the "moral" proof resolves itself into an instance of what Kant has called, in the

First Critique, "the physico-theological proof:" it is an argument from limited goodness and power to absolute goodness and power in the person of God, and it is one of those inferences which theoretical reason, according to Kant, is by its nature forced to make but through which it is incapable of achieving knowledge.

To say that the summum bonum is the necessary <u>object</u> of a will determined by the moral law is an illegitimate attempt to make it appear as if the concept of the summum bonum is reached solely through analysis of the concept of moral obligation. In fact, through analysis of the concept of moral obligation is reached the concept of an unqualified goodness in the form of a good will, but an unqualified goodness which at the same time does not constitute, alone, complete and absolute goodness, for the latter would seem to include happiness proportionate to virtue. The concept of the latter, of complete and absolute goodness, is reached by an inference : it cannot be known a priori that happiness must ultimately be proportionate to virtue. This is simply an ideal of reason, and of reason in its "speculative" use, for reason is practical only when it influences conduct, and the concept of the summum bonum cannot, or rather should not, on Kant's theory, influence conduct. So that if Kant maintains that no inference from the known to the unknown, from the limited to the absolute, is justified, then his own theory, equally with the theories he has criticised, is incapable of proving the existence of God and immortality, and of these noumenal entities no knowledge is possible.

Now the problem of whether there can be knowledge of the noumenal - whether the reality of the noumenal can be affirmed - on moral grounds, must be considered in relation again to the first "idea of reason,"

freedom. The notion must finally be examined that there can be knowledge of a noumenal nature of man and a noumenal, or supersensible, world. The whole concept of the noumenal nature of man rests on Kant's notion of freedom as possible only as the causality of a being so far as he belongs to an intelligible or supersensible world. Now just as freedom considered as self-legislation cannot be called a postulate of practical reason, so the same must be said of freedom considered as a noumenal property. For although freedom in the sense of freedom to obey the moral command, is a necessary condition of moral obligation, the equating of freedom with noumenal causality rests on Kant's theory of the nature of causality in the temporal world. If, therefor, the latter is not accepted, then a fortiori it is not to be accepted that man has a noumenal nature in virtue of which alone he is free. Thus Kant is wrong in maintaining that just on moral grounds alone freedom as noumenal can be known and that "with it the fact that a being (I myself) belonging to the world of sense, belongs also to the supersensible world, is also positively known, and thus the reality of the supersensible world established, and in practical respects definitely given, and this definiteness, which for theoretical purposes would be transcendent, is for practical purposes immanent." *1 It is not just on moral grounds that Kant argues for noumenal freedom, but on moral grounds, plus his theory of natural causation as a mechanical succession of events. This theory of causality has been criticised and rejected. Therefor the noumenal is no longer necessary as an explanation of freedom, and the reality of a noumenal nature in man and a noumenal world is no longer affirmed.

Thus it must be concluded that Kant's theory of the extension of knowledge "in a practical point of view," that is, through the requirements

*1 Abbott - P. 200

of practical reason, is in parts inconsistent with the rest of his theory of knowledge, and where it is not actually inconsistent has little plausibility for moral theory in general. In this chapter it was argued, first, that it is impossible to affirm the reality of anything without claiming knowledge of its nature, and that therefor Kant must be claiming knowledge of the nature of noumenal entities, which is inconsistent with his theory that knowledge can be only of that which is given to sense. Secondly, it was argued that Kant cannot escape this inconsistency in the case of the noumenal entities, God and immortality, by calling them postulates of practical reason, because their reality is not in fact a necessary condition of moral obligation but is affirmed by a process of inference. Thirdly, it was argued that the reality of the other "idea of reason," freedom, though a true postulate of practical reason in the sense of freedom to obey the moral law, can be affirmed as a noumenal power of causality involving a noumenal nature in man only if Kant's Third Antinomy is accepted. All that the concept of moral obligation does is to affirm that there must be freedom from natural necessitation; it does not itself supply the notion of noumenal causality : the argument in the First Critique that <u>if</u> there was freedom then it must consist in noumenal causality rested on Kant's analysis of natural determination. The problem of whether there can be knowledge in the realm of the non-sensible is a real problem for philosophy, particularly for moral philosophy, but it is not a problem to which Kant has a consistent convincing answer.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NOUMENAL AND THE RATIONAL.

In the preceding chapters it has been argued both that Kant introduces the concept of the noumenal into Ethics through a false analysis of the freedom versus determinism controversy, and that this concept considered in itself is one which involves an unconvincing account of morality: in the first case the "noumenal" was considered to be unnecessary because temporal causality need not necessarily be mechanical, in the second case, unplausible because the moral self, if non-temporal, would be incapable of change. If these conclusions are sound, the question then remains of whether Kant's analysis of moral obligation would be fundamentally affected by rejection of the concept of the noumenal, that is, whether this analysis could be accepted in other than phenomenal-noumenal terms. In considering Kant's epistemological grounds for making a phenomenal-noumenal distinction it was seen that this distinction could not be rejected without destroying the whole system expounded in the First Critique. If, therefor, Kant's theory of obligation can be interpreted in a way that avoids this distinction, this means that his moral theory is not essentially dependent on his metaphysics. Now it is true that the problem of freedom as Kant states it can be solved only in noumenal-phenomenal terms, but if a different interpretation could be given to the "non-sensible" in Kant's moral theory than that given to the"non-sensible" in his metaphysics, then the problem of freedom itself could be stated differently and the rest of Kant's moral theory left unaffected.

Now Kant himself often equates the non-sensible with the rational. The point that must be established here then, is that the rational need not be equated with the noumenal. There is undoubtedly a dual character in man : he can be regarded as an animal with sensible needs and subject to sensible impulses; he can also be regarded as an intelligent moral agent possessing the power of reason. But it can be argued that a rational-sensible distinction in the nature of man can be made without equating this distinction with that between the phenomenal and the noumenal - without, in other words, contrasting the sensible as temporal and knowable with the rational as non-temporal and unknowable. It can be held that if man were made up solely of sensible elements then he would not have any freedom : he would instinctively follow his sensible impulses, as animals do, and it would be meaningless to say that he was morally obliged in any way, or subject to a moral law. It can be held that because in fact he has reason as well as sensible impulses he can control and direct these latter, and that even if this power of control is only limited, nevertheless a rational agent is to be considered free from natural necessitation and the moral "ought," therefor, as having meaning in regard to him. Where such a theory differs from Kant's is in regarding rationality as a power of causality which exists in the temporal order but is not for that reason subject to natural necessitation. It is in virtue of his rationality that man recognises moral laws and their authority, but it is not in virtue of a non-temporal, noumenal side to his nature. If man's power of rationality is held to be temporal then this does involve saying that it must develop and decline in the same way that everything else in the temporal order develops and declines. But this is in fact in accordance with our ordinary common-sense view of man's

intelligent and moral nature : we do not hold the latter to be something unalterable and unchanging from birth to death. This is not to weaken the authority of the moral law : the latter can be held to be non-temporal, in the sense that the notion of moral obligation is applicable to men in all ages and places, without holding that that part of man's nature in virtue of which he recognises moral obligation is non-temporal.

Now if practical reason is interpreted in this way Kant's analysis of moral obligation is not thereby invalidated; it is only cut loose, so to speak, from his metaphysical theory. His theory of time, as the form of what is sensible only, is rejected, and therefor his theory of how there can be freedom from determination in the sensible order. But his theory as to what is meant by moral obligation is not thereby affected. Even his notion of autonomy, though it may be criticised on other grounds, is still possible as the legislation of a sensible self by a rational self. It could still be held that if a being were purely rational then moral obligation, for that being, would not arise - that there is moral obligation where man is concerned because owing to his sensible character actions which are objectively necessary are, for him, subjectively contingent ie. his will does not of necessity follow the principles of reason. Kant's whole theory of the categorical imperative is independent of his metaphysical definition of the noumenal. What is rejected is the notion that it is as an appearance that man is subject to natural laws and as a thing-in-himself that he is subject to the moral law.

One of the main difficulties of Kant's theory of "the two standpoints" just mentioned, was that it could not account for,or rather, indeed denied, the unity of the self. If man, considered as an appearance, was subject to laws over which he had no control, and only as a thing-in-

himself was subject to the moral law, then there appeared to be no unified moral self which could be responsible for wrong action. Yet Kant himself, when considering wrong action, was forced to admit that it involved a choice by the self whether to obey the moral law or the dictates of sense: *1 "the distinction whether a man is good or bad must lie, not in the distinction of the springs that he adopts into his maxim, but in the subordination : ie. which of the two he makes the condition of the other." If the self is not a unity but is made up of two halves so unlike as the one to be in time and the other out of time, the one necessarily subject to natural law and the other to moral law, then such a power of choice and responsibility for wrong action is impossible. But there is no impossibility in the notion of a unified moral self choosing to obey laws recognised by reason and to forgo the satisfaction of desires, etc., supplied by sense or vice versa. The dual character of man cannot be interpreted so as to annihilate the unity of the self, without destroying the very notion of moral responsibility. Equally, man's moral nature cannot be held to be capable of improvement or deterioration unless it is such a unity. It may be mentioned here that on Kant's duality theory, moral agents, in so far as they were moral, would have no individuality : his theory cannot account for that moral "personality" which seems to be evolved out of each man's striving and achievements, both in relation to external circumstances and to his own character or physical make-up. It would seem that noumenal selves would be just numerically different one from another; only phenomenal selves could have qualitative individuality

*1 Abbott - P. 343

but their differentiating qualities would all be non-moral. At any rate if the moral self is interpreted as a noumenal self then it is incapable of change, and any form of teleology - of considering man as "meant" to be other than what he is - becomes meaningless.

The abandoning of the "noumenal" and the "phenomenal" in favour of the "rational" and the "sensible" - brings to notice another distinction which is never very clearly made in Kant's Ethics, that between reason when it is practical in a moral sense and reason when it is practical in a non-moral or immoral sense. This distinction is implicit in the contrast Kant makes between the categorical and hypothetical, imperatives, but he nearly always uses the term "practical reason" to mean reason as morally legislative. It was pointed out in a previous chapter that Kant gives only a very limited account of man's"sensible" constitution, or that part of his nature in virtue of which he performs non-moral or immoral actions. According to Kant all wrong action and all action which is morally neutral, so to speak, is explainable in terms of the satisfaction of, or attempt to satisfy, desires supplied by man's "sensible" nature. It was seen that such an explanation ignored the difference between purely physical desires such as the desire for food when hungry, which a man cannot avoid having, and "intelligent" desires, such as the desire for power and fame, which a man can either encourage or combat. Even if all action which is not actually morally good is dependent on "desires" it is not for that reason necessarily either out of the agent's control or irrational in its execution. When a man subjects himself to hypothetical imperatives he is using his reason to discover the right means to achieve a certain end, and again this end may be the right means to achieve a further end. Thus a man may employ his reason in order to

find food, but he may also employ it in order to get a certain job, say, which will itself be a means to the furthering of his career. This desire for a good career cannot be said to be dependent on his "sensible" nature without stretching the use of the word "sensible" until it is meaningless. Such desires are certainly not "data," like physical desires, which a man must just accept even though he may try to control them : they are desires which are rationally pursued and encouraged. Furthermore they may be desires which are either intrinsically bad like the desire to oppress, or even if non-moral in themselves, ones which it may be immoral to satisfy instead of pursuing some other course of action.

Thus if a rational-sensible distinction in the nature of man is to be made, both halves of this dual character must be analysed further. Reason may be practical either when the recognition of duty moves one to action, in which case one is obeying the categorical imperative, or it may be practical when there is recognition of means to achieve a certain end, in which case one is subject to a hypothetical imperative. Furthermore it must be emphasised that the employment of reason influences not only conduct, but also, more fundamentally, the character of a man in virtue of which he performs certain actions. In other words in allowing that man has a dual character one must not fall into the mistake that Kant makes of failing to see that both sides of man's nature are influential one upon the other. The sensible may thwart or corrupt the rational; the rational may direct and control the sensible, both in the choosing of means to achieve certain ends and in the actual choice of the ends themselves on either principles of duty or principles of self-love etc. It is through interaction of the two that man's moral nature evolves, in a certain unity and of a certain quality. Such a theory is possible only if both constituents of man's nature are held to be temporal and

capable of change. If reason is made a noumenal power it is difficult to see how there could be any interaction between the two sides of man's nature. Even Descarte's problem in the "Meditations" of how there could be interaction between mind and body if the one were non-spatial the other spatial, at least assumed that both constituents of man's nature were in time. In Kant's theory, if the phenomenal-noumenal distinction is accepted, mind and body have neither spatial nor temporal situation in common. Yet that they do interact Kant himself is assuming, when he explains moral obligation by contrasting a "holy will" which would of necessity follow the principles of reason, and for which, therefor, the notion of obligation would be irrelevant, and a human will which is not governed by practical reason alone but also by subjective, sensible conditions and can therefor be said to be "under obligation" to obey the objective laws.

The conclusion to this thesis is therefor that Kant's moral theory appears to carry most conviction where it can be interpreted not in the metaphysical terms of the Critique of Pure Reason, where the two worlds of noumena and phenomena are proved to have to one another no relation comprehensible to a finite human mind. That there can be a rational explanation of ethics without introducing the concept of "the noumenal" is a fact; that the greater part of Kant's moral theory can supply such an explanation is the suggestion put forward here. However essential a phenomenal-noumenal distinction may be to Kant's theory of knowledge, in particular to his theory of a priori knowledge, it is a distinction which renders his moral theory both inconsistent and unplausible and which, it has been argued in this thesis, is, in fact, unnecessary.

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