Henrik Jøker Bjerre

Kantian Deeds

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Continuum Studies in Philosophy
Series Editor: James Fieser, University of Tennessee at Martin, USA

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Kantian Deeds

Henrik Jøker Bjerre

To my parents

Ketty Bjerre
and
Jens Jøker Bjerre

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Introduction

An action is called a deed insofar as it comes under obligatory laws and hence insofar as the subject, in doing it, is considered in terms of the freedom of his choice.

(MM 6:223)

The central concern of this book is to define a concept of *deed* (German: *Tat*) to describe a specific type of action that is read out of Immanuel Kant's practical philosophy – or, put more boldly, to describe *the* type of action that characterizes Kant's practical philosophy. Deed, it will be claimed, marks the action that represents what Rado Riha has called 'real occurrences of freedom', which are the *sine qua non* of Kantian morality. Indeed, without a substantial conception of what distinguishes a deed from other types of action, the central feature of morality in the Kantian sense can easily be overlooked. The deed, in other words, is interpreted as that which marks the *point de capiton* of practical philosophy; an anchoring point for practical discourse.

The word *deed* does not get much play in Kant's own oeuvre or in the literature on it. Much more common is the broader term *act* or *action* (*Handlung*), which Kant himself uses in a variety of contexts and which is also employed in the definitions of the categorical imperative in the *Groundwork*: 'Act as if the maxim of your action . . .' ('*Handle so, als ob die Maxime deiner Handlung . . .*'), etc. It could therefore seem slightly idiosyncratic to base an entire work on the insistence on 'deed' instead of 'action'. However, the employment of the word deed serves a very specific purpose. It emphasizes a qualitative difference between deeds and other types of action: action as the genus and deed as the species. The claim is that an examination of what distinguishes the latter from other types of action, including some that are commonly understood as 'moral', is of fundamental importance to a Kantian practical philosophy.

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a 'deed' is distinguished from an 'act' in a way that makes good sense in our present context: 'Deed is more

formal and often refers to major acts' (Hornby and Sidney, 1993, p. 12). The 'major acts' in Kantian practical philosophy are precisely acts that must be distinguished from 'ordinary acts'. They contain a certain *surplus of action*, something that marks a difference to other types of action, and which makes of the human being a creature that is more than just a clever animal, able to manipulate with things and do things with words. These kinds of acts are the ones which give the whole question of morality an aura of reverence and solemnity in Kant, e.g. as it is famously put in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where the starry heavens and the moral law fill the mind with 'ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them' (CPrR 5:161). Isn't the moral law exactly that which lifts human out of its natural conditions, and gives it the peculiar, somewhat mysterious, ability to act in a way that fundamentally distinguishes it from anything else in the world? This distinction, or elevation, or surplus, is the theme of this work. Without the dimension of the surplus, the kind of doing involved in morality would not be of such crucial significance and handled with such pathos. The Kantian conception of a free, moral act would not require much more than a pragmatic interest in getting things right and designing our lives comfortably to the best interest of all. Something else is at stake in Kantian moral philosophy. Kant identifies a 'higher interest' of reason – one that goes beyond the survival and enjoyment of the individual. Only by 'rising above' itself can the human being fulfil this higher interest, and one rises only by performing deeds. As Kant says in the *Critique of Judgment*, the value of life 'sinks below zero', when we assess it in terms of our enjoyment, rather than what we do (CJ 5:434).

    In order to reach a point from where to identify a Kantian deed, I will be investigating two different aspects of morality, which can meaningfully be described from a Kantian perspective, namely what I will call 'normal morality' and 'extra-morality', respectively. On the one side, Kant can be seen as the philosopher, who first identified the fundamentally linguistic character of knowledge and experience, and thereby the human being as a creature always already inscribed into a system of meaning and action, which represents the condition of possibility for an individual to at all become a moral agent. 'Normal morality' is the kind of moral conduct a human being learns, while undergoing its transformation into a capable language user, and which it, once initiated, partakes in refining and developing. On the other side, Kant's descriptions of a free, moral act performed out of pure obligation and a 'higher necessity' indicate a dimension of break, refusal and rebellion against that which is considered to be moral

in a community. These two aspects of morality reflect two types of moral action that could be characterized rather precisely by Slavoj Žižek's distinction between, on the one hand, 'speech acts' that make sense and relate to the workings of the symbolic order and, on the other, the 'act as real', i.e. as something that has the character of an 'event' and occurs 'without any phantasmatic support' (Žižek, 1999, p. 374). The latter type of action has been in focus in Žižek's own works for the past 20 years, and has been investigated more systematically in its Kantian origins by his Slovenian colleague Alenka Zupančič, while the former type of action is more commonly discussed in a variety of philosophical traditions. In this book, I take my inspiration mainly from John McDowell and Robert B. Brandom, who have provided rather elaborate arguments for exactly the more general (linguistic) background of the acquisition of a 'second nature', including the ability to act morally responsibly. My claim is that a combined reading of these two traditions (and aspects of Kant) can show how the moral deed transcends normal morality, but is only able to do this *on the background of* normal morality. Only initiated, language using animals are able to strive for more than language allows.

McDowell and Brandom have both identified a highly important precursor of the twentieth-century linguistic turn in philosophy in Kant's understanding of the sentential structure of meaning, and thereby the inseparability of receptivity and spontaneity. An insight, according to contemporary post-linguistic turn Kantianism, which Kant himself was not able to carry through completely, since he maintained a rather mysterious conception of the *Ding an sich*, which did not overcome the age old and mistaken presupposition of a Given external to or beyond conceptual understanding. The linguistic turn in analytical philosophy therefore aims to de-intellectualize Kant and articulate his insights more coherently than he was able to himself. The resulting emphasis on language and language acquisition as compulsory starting points for philosophical inquiry has given a new way of dealing with moral problems as normative problems within the 'space of reasons', i.e. as problems that must always already be articulated and investigated in consideration of the logical and semantical conditions of the language within which they are framed. Moral action itself, in this view, is structured like a language, in the sense that moral actions are – or at least should be – the result of rational deliberation which is inscribed in a whole network of already institutionalized meaning.[1]

Alenka Zupančič, on the other hand, stresses Kant's understanding of the moral law as simultaneously unconditional and the 'law of the unknown', and radicalizes this position by reading Kant, not as the

meticulous formalist, who wanted to establish the rational foundation of society and the principles of right behaviour, but as an acute observer and analyst of the human being and its relation to what Lacanians call the 'real'. Zupančič considers moral action to be fundamentally a response to a pure, traumatic demand to act – without any guidelines or reasoning, and with no path of inference from the already known. The categorical imperative *simply demands*, and in virtue of this somewhat inscrutable or even anxiety provoking aspect of the moral law, morality, to Zupančič, rather lingers on the edge of meaning than in the midst of it.

One of the main wagers of reading the analytical with the psychoanalytical Kant-interpreters, *Brandom avec Zupančič* if you will, is that it is possible to move beyond the view of the human being as a language using second nature being, without falling back into the 'old metaphysical mistakes' of assuming a Given or a 'rampant Platonism' of eternal substances beyond the phenomenal world. Kant, according to John McDowell, wanted to 'protect the interest of religion and morality' (McDowell, 1996, p. 96), and thought that this interest would be served well by acknowledging an 'unknowable supersensible reality', and this was where he went wrong, ending up in postulates that contradicted his own standards of what makes sense. Although I agree that there are cases, where this is true of Kant, I claim that it is possible to interpret him less 'substantially' (i.e. as not necessarily claiming an 'unknowable reality' that is supposedly separated from our real, phenomenal lives), while still maintaining Kant's interest in a more radical type of morality than post-Wittgensteinian analytical philosophy usually does. The step 'beyond', which, to a large extent, can be taken *with* Kant, is merely a radicalization of the implications of having and using language and thereby not a question of religious mythology or rampant metaphysics, but of characterizing the implications of having language, which are 'already there'. Rather than engaging in some speculative metaphysics of a 'third nature', for instance, or a spiritual kernel of the human being, I will therefore merely add a '+' to second nature and define it as 'second nature+'.

In order to avoid terminological confusion, as well as out of systematic considerations, the term 'morality' will be employed as the overall signifier standing for what is at stake in Kant's 'practical philosophy' in general. Morality is the ability to perform moral actions, and the investigation of this ability is an overall, and the fundamental, theme of practical philosophy. The question is: What do we mean, when we say that an action is a moral action? And how is it possible, i.e. which are the capacities that make the human being a moral being? The question of morality is therefore a

broad question, which can be subdivided in two ways. First, in the capacity to perform, on the one hand, what I call 'normal moral actions' (which can be investigated with the tools of analytic linguistic philosophy), and, on the other 'extra-moral actions' or 'deeds' (which can be investigated with help from the Slovenian approach to Kant). Secondly, 'morality' is a broad term in the sense that it covers 'normal moral' and 'extra-moral' action in different regions, or, one could say, in different *ways* in different *situations*. I will therefore make a tripartition of the moral into the 'existential', the 'ethical' and the 'political' in order to show how the broad term of 'morality' can be applied in different contexts (taking as my guideline the category of quantity and categorizing the moral as 'existential' (one), ethical (more) and political (all).) By describing this second division, I wish to accomplish two aims: First, to emphasize the difference between, on the one side, 'morality' as the overall subject of Kant's practical philosophy, and the accompanying focus on the aspects of human existence that enable us to perform moral acts, and, on the other side, the particular realms of actual moral action. Deeds can be performed as existential changes, as changes of interpersonal relations, or as changes of the most general conditions of society – but they are still deeds. Secondly, I thereby hope to contribute to a clarification of what a Kantian position, or at least the Kantian position, I am after, entails on each of the three fields, although I can only define this division and indicate some of the consequences it could have in dealing with contemporary moral problems.

The more secondary outcome of the book, apart from the specific interest in defining a Kantian concept of deed, could be said to consist in a potential opening towards communication between analytical philosophy and psychoanalytical(ly inspired) philosophy. The two might not always get along all too well, but it can nonetheless be a fruitful approach to classical philosophical works – and problems – to employ both in order to obtain a fuller picture of the case in question. This being said, however, this book is unashamedly 'on the side' of the Slovenian Lacanian side of the divide. No claim is being made of a moderate settlement between 'only apparently disagreeing' positions, nor of taking the position of 'striking the golden mean'. On the contrary, one of the division lines between what I define as 'Soft' and 'Hard' Kantians is that the former simply lack philosophical scope when it comes to some of the metaphysical questions that have been asked in philosophy since its early beginnings. Rather than 'overcoming' the need to ask metaphysical questions, philosophy should reinvigorate them and ask them even more radically than ever before. Just like it has always done. Furthermore, this lack has consequences for

the issuing moral philosophy. The relation between the two 'sides' could be paraphrased thus: Reading Kant with an emphasis on the significance of the 'extra-moral' does not contradict embracing the relevance of an investigation of normal morality, even to the extent that some of the pre-conditions of the extra-moral are thereby made more explicit. The normal morality view of the post-Wittgensteinians, on the other hand, is likely to imply a denial of the fruitfulness of an investigation of anything 'extra-moral'. If one endorses both positions, therefore, one must take sides against the latter.

If this work has any relevance for contemporary discussions of morality in a wider sense, it will be that it emphasizes unconditional duty: that there is a type of action that is justified only from the urgent awareness that it *must* be done. In the so called post-ideological age, where actions are only justified if they are in accordance with, or at least don't violate, the explicit norms that govern (the) human community (in question), such an understanding of duty might seem overly radical and metaphysically suspect. Nonetheless, this is what I take to make it worthwhile engaging with Kant today. Duty is unconditional and universal. It tears the human being out of its pre-moral natural condition, as well as from the comfortable stability of everyday moral discourse. There is no escape from it, it applies to all levels of human existence, and it never accepts exculpations of the sort 'that is how we do things around here.'

Chapter 1

The Starry Heavens Above and the Moral Law Within

One of the most quoted passages from Kant's work, of course, is the famous first lines of the Conclusion of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, which are also engraved in Kant's tombstone in (what is now) Kaliningrad:

> Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.* (CPrR 5:161).

This powerful description of the two most sublime aspects of human thinking indeed, I think, encapsulates Kant's philosophical project very concisely. The starry heavens above mark the opening outwards, away, in infinite and mysterious relations, and they connect the immediate sensual impression on a dark, bright night on the outskirts of even the smallest village with 'worlds upon worlds and systems of systems, and moreover into the unbounded times of their periodic motion, their beginning and their duration' (CPrR 5:162). Compared with this overwhelming impression, the human individual appears infinitely small. The starry heavens remind us of our finitude and of the limits of our capacities – there is something fundamentally inscrutable about the universe, which somehow seems to evade us, even in principle, *because* we are finite beings. On the other hand, however, the very ability to *think* about these matters gives a specific sense of elevation; it fills us with ever increasing admiration and awe. The moral law makes this ability to think 'great' things personal: it 'begins from my invisible self, my personality, and presents me in a world which has true infinity' (ibid.). Slightly simplified, you could say that the starry heavens give us a negative elevation, because they concern that which is somehow beyond us, while the awareness of the moral law is a positive elevation, since it reveals 'a life independent of animality and even of the whole of the sensible world' (ibid.), which is not 'beyond' us, but a real presence *in*

our (very own) lives. It is a 'true infinity', because it is an actual and direct presence of something more than finitude and limitation – a relation to the infinite, if you will, which does not forever evade us and escape our grasp.

Now, a crucial assumption of this book is that the two dimensions described in Kant's famous motto should be understood as two closely connected aspects of the supersensual dimension in humans, which represents something 'more' than their capabilities as, say, finite language using animals. This *surplus*, as I will also describe it, is a capacity that separates human from itself; it is in the human being more than the human being; it is a 'higher' capacity; or it is *reason in the narrow sense*, i.e. the 'part' of reason, which goes beyond that which is exhausted in the investigation of the a priori analytical conditions of experience. In this 'higher' dimension, reason becomes practical, or put in another way: the 'fact of reason' which elevates the human being above its own being-there is simultaneously that which enables it to act in ways that transcend the limits of the already known and accepted. This surplus, however, should not be understood as a dimension *beyond* the phenomenological realm – an eternal soul acting on a motivational force entirely detached from the world of the mortals – but rather as the already inherent radical implication of the phenomenological realm itself. In order to strike pre-emptively at such 'childish' views of what the surplus in human more than the human could imply, I will therefore start out by lending a few insights from Martin Heidegger.

1.1. All too childish

In his book on Kant and 'the essence of human freedom', Martin Heidegger identifies what he calls an 'all too childish' understanding of Plato and Aristotle, and thereafter indirectly of Kant himself. In the 'vulgar apprehension' of Aristotle, Heidegger writes, he has been understood as someone who thought that a thing was a realization of a certain form in matter, where the form, *eidos*, is somehow separated from matter. Aristotle, so the 'vulgar' story goes, indeed refined Plato by denying a specific supernatural place, where the ideas exist independently of, or prior to, their materialization here on Earth, (according to Aristotle, the forms should be found 'down here'), but he nonetheless saw forms as somehow mysteriously 'separable' from things. The 'childishness' which is thereby attributed to Aristotle, is the supposed naïve understanding of reality as consisting of separable metaphysical elements that can be combined like LEGOS, and – *voila* – you

have a thing! On the contrary, Heidegger maintains that Aristotle did not actually write about the 'incorporation' of form into matter, or at all about the process of the production of beings, but rather about the characteristics of that which has come into being ('*die Hergestelltheit eines Hergestellten*') (Heidegger, 1982, p. 70).

By attributing a simplified view to Aristotle, or indeed to Greek thinking as such, it becomes possible to renounce it as 'metaphysical', a two-world theory of some sort, while one is really just preventing oneself from engaging with the *real* questions this thinking poses. Much the same, Heidegger continues, happens when Kant is grossly misread as someone who claims that there are 'things for us' and 'things in themselves' in a rigid sense; that the *Ding an sich* is a thing in its real, noumenal, existence *beyond*, while we are left with distorted, somewhat semi-real apparitions restricted in their degree of reality by the limitations of the finite human sensual apparatus. 'Things for us' are *only appearances*, is the view that is often attributed to Kant, meaning: not the *real* stuff. Heidegger strongly disagrees: Kant's point, when he says that we don't know beings as things-in-themselves, is not that we only grasp a semi- or quarter-reality in the appearances, but almost directly the opposite: that the reality of that which is real is to be found in its quality of appearance (*Erscheinungscharakter*) or in *the way in which* it appears to us (ibid., p. 71).

The picture of Kant insisting on a 'real reality' beyond the meagre semblance, we finite beings must dwell with, is reproduced throughout the history of philosophy, until the present day. In *Mind and World*, for instance, John McDowell, who otherwise bases his discussions very much on fundamental Kantian insights about the linguistic character of experience, states that Kant was 'attracted by the idea of an unknowable supersensible reality, apparently in violation of his own standards for what makes sense' (McDowell, 1996, p. 96). The attraction, McDowell explains, stems from the interest Kant had in defending the metaphysical aspects of philosophy, religion and morality. This is obviously true, but my (and Heidegger's) point is that Kant's defence did not turn out as badly as McDowell believes. What Kant was defending was not a 'Platonist' realm of eternal reality external to human cognition, some mysterious realm of things that cannot be described in human language, but the idea of human reason itself in its most radical aspects.

Heidegger, not surprisingly, believes that Kant did not conceptualize in sufficient detail (or 'reveal' as Heidegger puts it) the original connection between the concept of appearance and the radically articulated problem of being, but he nonetheless praises Kant for articulating the connection

between that which appears (*erscheint*) and the totality of that which
appears. What comes to shine, to paraphrase the German *Erscheinung* in
more literal English, is that which is. The thing in itself, on the other hand,
is not any old thing in its 'own' or 'real' being, say a pencil as it 'really'
is, regardless of our perception of it, but rather the question of being as
such, or of the concrete being *in as far as it is*, which again means: in as
far as there is anything at all. What Kant, to Heidegger's satisfaction, did
identify was a particular relation between any instance of being and the
most general question of being, i.e. he saw a specific relation between each
Erscheinung and the totality of which it is part. In order to be understood
philosophically, an object must be seen in the light of the concept of an *in
itself*, which is not that particular object in, *quasi*, another mode of exist-
ence, but that particular object in as far as it is an object that is part of a
totality of objects. The totality is thereby present in and with each of its
instances, and each instance must, conversely, be interpreted in light of
the whole. It is true that the totality itself cannot be the object of a possible
perception (*Anschauung*), and in that sense Kant did tangle with something
more than that which lies within the limits of 'normal' experience, since
the question of totality remains pertinent, indeed crucial for the under-
standing of how reason, and experience, is structured. But a systematic
consideration of the importance of the question of the *totality* of the world
of experience does not entail anything like the necessity of objects of a
supersensible reality *beyond* the world of (possible) experience. This prob-
lematic was pertinent in Kant, although, as mentioned, he did not go far
enough, according to Heidegger.

To philosophy, the relation between that which is, the *Seiende*, and what
it means for it to be, or what it means that there is anything at all, has
the implication that what is discussed philosophically must always be seen
in the light of (its relation to) the whole. Philosophically speaking there
are not separate regions of questioning which can be consistently dealt
with independently of each other as principally separated. Rather, any real
philosophical endeavour must always be an 'Auf-das-Ganze-gehen'. Or
again, in other words: To understand *anything* philosophically, you must
interpret it in the light of *everything*. This does seem like an overwhelm-
ing task, indeed it immediately seems principally impossible to fulfil, and
it is no wonder that philosophers, especially in the post-metaphysical age
of linguistic philosophy, tend to be satisfied with saying at least *something*.
When, however, such 'anti-metaphysical' philosophers deny the possibility
of questioning 'everything' and modestly insist on philosophy as a prag-
matic, piecemeal endeavour that solves concrete questions, say of meaning

or value, Heidegger vehemently disagrees. Even though such modesty immediately seems 'sympathetic', in reality it functions as a *carte blanche* to 'immense superficiality' and reduces philosophy to something similar to calculations in business affairs (Heidegger, 1982, p. 10).

Philosophy, to Heidegger, is exactly not a science, because any science according to its essence is limited by its specific area (ibid., p. 8), while philosophy asks a type of question that cannot be answered in isolation. They relate to a whole in some way. A philosophical investigation of an object for instance does not (aim to) say anything about this particular object and its particular context, but about what it means to be an object in general, and thereby about what objects are part of, relate to, and how they are limited (say, in space and time: are there infinitely many objects, etc.).

Heidegger's point in relation to Kant could be said to be that we shouldn't deflate the Kantian project by regionalizing it. To play with the children's edition of Kant would mean to miss the systematic perspective of Kant's investigations. Kant's critical philosophy should not be understood as independent investigations of say, the conditions of meaningful language in the critique of pure reason; the principles that should govern behaviour in the critique of practical reason (the 'invention' of a formula of measurement of right action, for instance); and then some sort of theory of arts in the critique of judgement. Nor should, therefore, the systematic relevance of the transcendental dialectics, as an opening towards the *supersensible* dimension of the human being, be disregarded as 'just' some metaphysical appendix to the first critique, which may (or may not) be 'in violation of his own standards of what makes sense', as McDowell called it. Rather, the entire corpus of Kant's critical oeuvre should be seen as a systematic unity. It is true that philosophy cannot grasp the whole 'in one stroke' (ibid.), but the constant focus of philosophy should nonetheless be on the whole or maybe more precisely: whether you are reading the transcendental aesthetics of the first critique or the conclusion of the second, you should see it in the light of a systematic, unitary perspective. Kant himself, in the preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, writes that the investigation of the capabilities of the human soul must of course proceed 'one by one' according to the differences between different capabilities and their 'sources, contents and limits', but that a unitary perspective must always guide us in these efforts – the 'idea of the whole' which also enables us to see all the constituent parts in their mutual relation (CPrR 5:10).

Since I agree with Heidegger on this point, this means that the practical philosophy which is the theme of this book should be seen as a Kantian practical philosophy in precisely this sense: as a moral philosophy that

must be interpreted in the light of a broader philosophical endeavour – an 'Auf-das-Ganze-gehen'. Heidegger maintains that it is mistaken to think of philosophy as 'theoretical' investigations that can have 'practical' applications or moral philosophy as somehow a separate branch of philosophy. Philosophy is not divided into regions, such that theoretical philosophy is about description or investigation of the world or of language in separation from something entirely different, say principles of moral conduct. Rather, the philosophical investigation is 'more original than both' (Heidegger, 1982, p. 18). In the ordinary understanding of what it means that something is theoretical, therefore, practical philosophy itself must be theoretical. It concerns the investigation of what it means that something in the world, a particular type of being, can act and consider itself as acting morally, and this investigation must be seen in systematic consideration of that type of being in a wider sense. 'Practical' philosophy is therefore not a question of giving moral advice or rules of conduct. The question is: What distinguishes this creature, the human being, as something that can fall in awe over a 'moral law within', and what does this quality enable it to do, which capacity is this?

The starry heavens above and the moral law within are connected, in ways crucial to a 'real' Kantian, or a 'Hard Kantian' as I will call it, understanding of morality. In order to be able to define a Hard Kantian concept of a moral deed, one therefore has to go through a systematic consideration of metaphysical questions in general. One must begin with 'theoretical' investigations and see how they open up the space for 'practical' considerations. Both must be 'philosophical', i.e. theoretical in the everyday understanding of that word. A moral deed is a truly free deed, and Kant, as Heidegger says, for the first time explicitly connects the problem of freedom to the fundamental problems of metaphysics (Heidegger, 1982, p. 21).

A free, moral act is not some mysterious apparition or a divine intervention in the course of natural affairs. To claim that this was Kant's view would be to make him too 'childish' in Heidegger's term. But this recognition does not imply that Kant's writing on morality does not rely on a metaphysical understanding of a 'supersensible' dimension to humans. In fact, and this is a basic assumption of Martin Heidegger's work on Kant, as well as of this book, it is impossible to see the 'truly' Kantian position on moral action right, if one doesn't see it as a metaphysical problem in a very strict sense. Freedom, the *ratio essendi* of moral action, as Kant says in the second critique, is the 'end stone' to the entire system of pure reason (CPrR 5:3–4), and therefore it cannot be treated separately from the other parts of the system.

The concept of reason, we are after, is therefore one which is both *more* than the rational capacities of a human being as a language using animal, *and* not quite the 'childish' understanding of a spiritual substance separated from the world entirely. Reason (*Vernunft* as opposed to *Verstand*) is more-than and not-quite at the same time. It is both and neither, or it is *in between* both.

1.2. On the reasons for the division of all philosophers into Soft Kantians and Hard Kantians

When Heidegger wrote that Kant did not articulate the question of being in its radicality, he added that this was 'not really Kant's fault' (Heidegger, 1982, p. 71). Given the material he had to work on (the language, philosophy and religion of his time), he did a tremendous job. Nonetheless, Heidegger thought of Kant as another link, albeit a highly praiseworthy and extremely refined one, in the history of Western philosophy which had to be 'destructed', from the present and backwards, to reach back to a revealing of the original understanding of the problem of being in pre-Socratic Greece. To be slightly crude, one could say that Heidegger is looking for that in Kant, which 'points backwards' – towards the more radical conception of the being of beings.

My aim is another – and staying in the crude picture, one could almost say that it is the opposite: To look for that in Kant which 'points *forward*' towards a new understanding of morality. So, while Heidegger moves further back, we will focus more explicitly on what Kant left for his successors. There is a fundamental before and after Kant, which cannot be encapsulated by the unfinished contribution he made to, say, seeing the question of being in the light of the question of time. Kant first of all defined a new position in philosophy – the modern one – by overcoming the seemingly unbridgeable gap between previous striving positions. What points forward in Kant is the refusal to settle for one of the systems of explanation which had hitherto dominated philosophy. The 'battle' between the old, rationalist metaphysics and the new, scientific empiricism that had been fought intensively was to be tried before the court of reason: Dogmatism versus scepticism. While the former relied too blindly on the explanatory force of reason, to the extent that dogmas of beings beyond the realm of appearance (God, soul, cosmos) were accepted on the ground of mere postulates, the latter was too obsessed with empirical evidence, which made it unable to even begin saying something reasonable about the conditions

of possibility of there being something like empirical evidence in the first place. Reason itself had to perform the critical task of testing its limits. Whether philosophy could only validate statements of empirical fact, or whether there was something more than that, which could be a genuine topic of philosophical investigations, had to be settled before the court of reason. This of course is the meaning of the double genitive in the title of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: A critique *of* reason, with reason as its object, performed *by* reason. 'The battlefield of these endless controversies', Kant wrote on the first page of the preface to the first edition of the ground-breaking book, 'is called metaphysics' (CPR: A VIII).

Kant is critical of the dogmatism of the former (religious) metaphysics, and the *Critique of Pure Reason* can, and must, be read as an effort to establish the limits of reason, which make it clear that metaphysical speculation should be restricted from postulating substantial claims about things that exceed these limits, namely the limits of any possible intuition (*Anschauung*). The critical point in the book, if you will, is the last chapter of the second book of the transcendental analytics: 'On the ground of the distinction of all objects in general into *phenomena* and *noumena*' (CPR: B 294). This piece concludes the transcendental analytics, and thereby the two sources of experience seem to have been exhausted. First, in the transcendental aesthetics, the preconditions of any intuition at all have been defined: the pure forms of perception, space and time. Secondly, thereafter, the synthetic power of the understanding has been investigated as the precondition of the intuited to be united in one experience. An experience has a receptive part, and a spontaneous part; both go together in the apprehension of that which is. As Kant famously writes: 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind' (CPR: B 75).

Immediately, therefore, the 'division of all objects into phenomena and noumena' seems to simply serve the purpose of prohibiting the understanding from exceeding the limits thus established. Kant begins the chapter with the striking metaphor of the investigations so far as a journey through the 'land of truth'. This land is an island, 'enclosed in unalterable boundaries by nature itself' (CPR: B 295), and it is important to stay on the island with both feet on the ground, when the foggy surface of the ocean seemingly tries to lure one into believing in great adventures and new lands out there on the other side. The image is not far from the one of Odysseus on his boat, tied to the mast in order to prevent himself from succumbing to the enchanting song of the sirens. Complications and trouble await the one who sets sail to leave the land of truth with the adventurer's

hope of beauty or fulfilment or meaning in an *Anschauung* of that which lies beyond the island.

Kant's breakthrough, however, should be not be seen as merely overcoming the temptations of metaphysics. True, as we shall see later on, the dialectical efforts of reason (on 'the other side' of the safe haven of the land of truth) necessarily end up in contradictions and without any final decision upon questions like the existence of God and the beginning and end of the world. But that speculative reason cannot put the metaphysical aspiration of the human being to rest does not mean that there is no outcome of the efforts. Indeed, Kant both early and late in the first critique, and again in the second, emphasizes that speculative reason by its consequent application opens up the space for the supersensual dimension, which takes on a *practical* shape.

Kant does as a matter of fact offer a way of understanding the supersensible dimension of the human being, which can neither be reduced to the 'childish' understanding of a Platonic realm of infinite ideas, because that would obviously make it a speculative claim, nor to a naturalized understanding of second nature capacity for reasoning in the sense of 'doing things with words', which (other) animals cannot do. There is something 'more' in human – something that separates it from both other living creatures, and 'from itself', i.e. from the normal functioning of a rational, language using animal. My claim is that this 'more' is actualized in the deed.

The 'modern' breakthrough, which Kant represents, I will therefore take to consist in the particular way he solved the tension between the two overall competing tendencies before him – religious dogmatism and scientific empiricism (the latter Kant also calls scepticism, meaning scepticism towards religious or in general rationalist explanations). Kant did not solve this tension by choosing sides, nor did he 'dissolve' it, as it is sometimes claimed, by showing how language does not allow for metaphysical speculation, because it ends up in contradictions and ultimately nonsense, i.e. with some sort of *reductio ad absurdum*. Rather, he solved the tension between the two by *incorporating the tension itself* into his conception of reason. Indeed, this tensed concept of reason, I claim, is the truly Kantian legacy. We sometimes tend to forget, as Slavoj Žižek has emphasized, the radicality of the problems Kant posed for reason (Žižek, 1999, p. 1). The dialectics of reason, which Kant developed, or which he followed to the end on behalf of reason, necessarily ended up in contradictions which could not be resolved in a way which could bring perpetual peace to the battle of metaphysics. They remained after Kant, and any decent philosophy after Kant had to somehow address them. I think it would be fair to summarize the possible

attitudes to the Kantian aftermath in four rough groupings by reviewing their view on the antinomies of reason:

i.   Religious dogmatism, which maintains that the fundamental characteristics of the world, inscrutable as they may be to human beings, ultimately rest in the hands of God. We could call it the party of the theses: The world is coherent, and there is moral responsibility, even if only God can contemplate how this is possible.

ii. Scientism. The idea that the world is ultimately explainable in purely scientific terms, and that any problem that is yet unresolved 'merely' needs to be translated into scientific terms (usually the terms of physics) and will thus be clarified. We could call it the party of the antitheses: There is always more to investigate.

iii. Linguistic naturalism (for lack of a better term). According to this view, the lesson to be learned from Kant's investigation of the limits of reason is much the same as the one Wittgenstein drew in the *Tractatus*: the limits of reason are the limits of language, and a question that cannot be answered cannot be asked either. This view is the one that sees the antinomies as resolved by linguistic analysis: neither thesis, nor antithesis is legitimate, and therefore the whole problem vanishes. We could call it the anti-contradiction party. In many cases its members coincide with those philosophers that I shall call Soft Kantians, who tend to believe that Kant's original insight was roughly the same as the one, which was later articulated in the linguistic turn of the twentieth century.

iv. Hard Kantianism, as I shall call it, is the view that Kant left us with no other option than to embrace contradiction itself. The outcome of the critique of pure reason was that *the language of the understanding* (*Verstand*) did not suffice for resolving the problem of the antinomies, but this does not mean that they should be regarded as illusory or meaningless problems. Rather, the very insolubility of the antinomies should be regarded as the fundamental characteristic of reason itself. The road ahead from Kant must therefore have reason (in the narrow sense, i.e. as that which goes beyond the understanding), and its most fundamental characteristics in the necessary contradiction, as a central focus.

   The point with this division must of course be that in as far as Kant's critical philosophy is to be considered a ground-breaking event in the history of philosophy only options (iii) and (iv) are really genuine choices. The outcome must be that neither religious dogmatism, nor scientistic empiricism

is acceptable to reason. Simply put: Reason will always have more questions than these positions can answer. Indeed, the two parties *themselves* will always provide questions, which the opponent cannot answer, or rather: questions, which can not be answered in any other way than by relying on some version of fundamentalism or authoritarianism (like: 'it is so, because it is so', because 'it is written', because 'God says so', because 'physical science is the only legitimate method for solving metaphysical problems', etc.).

If we look at the consequences for moral philosophy, the four parties described are also markedly different. To religious dogmatism, obviously, morality is ultimately founded in God or the divine; if there were no God, then there would be no direction or point to morality. Scientism agrees, but simply adds that there *is* no God, and therefore there is ultimately no (common) foundation of morality. This view is famously represented by Alfred Ayer in his theory of emotivism (Ayer, 1990), and is a significant player in contemporary discussions of the foundations of morality (neuroscience is expected to directly *measure* the contents of our individual moral sentiments; DNA patterns reveal important information about our dispositions, etc.). Linguistic naturalism holds that there is indeed common ground to be found in morality. It is developed and refined in normative cultures, and one of the key characteristics of humans is that they are brought up to learn to appreciate normative standards, including such that are moral of nature. This view has a wide range of followers, especially in the philosophy of the twentieth century. Hermeneutics, cultural relativism, pragmatism, virtue ethics, multiculturalism, post-Wittgensteinian philosophy of language, and even some more universalist forms of Soft Kantianism (moral norms are universal because they are grounded in the logics of language in a more general sense – lying and making false promises, for instance, are logically unsound in any rational culture) all share the focus on a certain linguistic nature to morality. We are not abandoned by morality without God, nor are we given divine or absolute moral demands to live up to. Our morality is safely and soundly founded in 'the land of truth', which is a land of normative practices – no reason to go searching for absolutes beyond it.

Hard Kantianism, finally, agrees with linguistic naturalism that there is indeed solid ground for moral considerations and guidance in normative cultures. However, the truly moral, what marks the real distinction of the human being as a moral being is founded on something else. It is founded on a capacity to *transcend* the boundaries of the normal morality, rather than to learn its practices and standards. As it will hopefully become clear, I take this capacity to be 'more than' the second-nature normal morality normative practice, without being a supernatural capacity

from a noumenal realm of some sort 'beyond this world'. This is why I refrain from calling the specifically extra-moral capacity a 'third nature', which would immediately seem an attractive position, but rather prefer to see it as a sort of 'second nature$^+$' – second nature *plus* its own extreme or its own radical consequence.

The point in separating a 'Hard' from a 'Soft' Kantianism should therefore not be understood as a refusal of the important insights gained from the linguistic turn in philosophy throughout most of the twentieth century. In many ways, one could say that the linguistic turn in philosophy has meant that what it means to be human has become a question about what it means to have language, rather than about what it means to have reason. But this does not mean that the works of those philosophers that treated reason as the central philosophical problem are simply outdated. It is no coincidence that Kant's investigations of language and experience have been an important source of inspiration for various trends in contemporary 'post-linguistic-turn' philosophy. When Kant investigated the conditions of possibility of experience a priori, and founded them on the categories of the understanding, these were defined and distinguished by their logical structure, i.e. in accordance with the possible form of *judgement*. In other words, Kant identified the sentential structure of knowledge, i.e. the insight that knowledge is not composed by different separated elements (like the Aristotelian LEGOs), but *originally* linguistic of nature. 'One of his cardinal innovations', as Robert Brandom writes, 'is the claim that the fundamental unit of awareness or cognition, the minimum graspable, is the *judgment*' (Brandom, 1998, p. 79). Brandom continues by quoting Kant from the first critique in a passage, which reads: 'We can, however, trace all actions of the understanding back to judgments, so that the understanding in general can be represented as a faculty for judging' (CPR: B 94).

Notably, Kant even goes a step further in what follows Brandom's quotation: 'For according to what has been said above it is a faculty for thinking' (ibid.). The ability to *think* is the ability to judge – and this ability is the fundamental unit of human awareness or cognition, as Brandom paraphrases it. Thereby, Kant already made a kind of linguistic turn. He described the capacity to think as fundamentally linguistic of nature, we think by using concepts, and he showed how the ability to use concepts is crucial for understanding the nature of experience. Humans are *thinking*, when they experience something, and therefore anything I experience is already permeated by language. An experience is the result of a synthesis of the understanding, but this synthesis is not something that is somehow added onto something more original – a sense impression, which is

somehow 'there' to be shaped into a unity by the understanding. It is experience itself that is shaped by language. The form of the way in which the experienced is given is not added in a sort of external shaping of raw immediacy; rather the form *is* the way that which appears, appears. Similarly, that which is experienced is not a bundle of sense impressions which are given to a blank slate of receptivity and connected by a name; rather the very linguistic nature of knowledge, which humans can have, means that receptivity is in a fundamental sense already mediated by language.

What goes on in the transcendental analytics of the first critique has therefore been of profound importance to especially analytically minded twentieth-century philosophy. But my claim is that it is not only the directly applicable parts of Kant's philosophy that can be put to work in a contemporary, i.e. post-linguistic-turn, setting. His metaphysical investigations 'beyond the land of truth' make perfectly good sense, even when they are stated in direct consequence of the (now) linguistic investigations of the nature of experience. When Kant separated all objects into phenomena and noumena, it was indeed meant to rule out the possibility of a philosophical or intellectual perception of anything beyond the limits of possible experience in accordance with the principles put down in the aesthetics and analytics. The problem with rationalism was that it denied, or simply wasn't aware of, this limitation. However, the concept of a noumenon did not thereby become a mere negative to Kant in the sense of something that doesn't exist or which makes no sense. The noumenon, rather, became an identification of the radicalized implications of the 'land of truth' itself. The transcendental dialectics, which follows the separation of all objects into phenomena and noumena, is not an exorcism designed to get rid of spooky apparitions on the ocean of metaphysical temptations. It is much more an investigation of the implications of the knowledge of the world, which had been carefully mapped in the previous sections. Dialectics asks the question: What happens when we pursue the linguistic ability, the ability to move in the 'space of giving and asking for reasons', to its logical conclusion? If moving in this space implies the ability to judge and to infer, then what do these abilities make it possible for us to think? If, for instance, we can infer from B to its antecedent, A, then what happens when we do the same to A, etc. The problem, which issues, is that Kant's own definitions of knowledge – by necessity – end up in contradictions, or, more generally speaking, in unsolvable problems, when they are strictly pursued 'until the end'. Reason necessarily conflicts with itself, and this conflict has profound influence on the structure of human experience, what human experience *amounts to*, if you will, seen in the perspective of its absoluteness

or entirety. The problems that occur from taking the capacity to think to its conclusion are problems that put the experiences we have, and the moves we make, in the land of truth in a specific light. Dialectics says something about what the 'land of truth' *is*, seen as a whole, and therefore it must be investigated in order for the critique of reason to be an 'Auf-das-Ganze-gehen' in Heidegger's term, indeed for it to be *philosophical* at all. The transcendental dialectics is a part of the transcendental logic, and it is thus an element in the transcendental doctrine of elements: an element in the full understanding of human reason.

When I take two representatives of analytical linguistic philosophy, John McDowell in *Mind and World* and Robert B. Brandom in *Making It Explicit*, to be broadly representative of a Soft Kantian trend as described above, this should thus not be understood as a criticism of their contributions to philosophy. Indeed, as I will repeatedly stress, the understanding of the linguistic nature of experience has gained significantly from the influence of works such as these. What I do intend to question, however, is the absence of certain fundamental questions in works such as McDowell's and Brandom's. My claim is that the 'good old' metaphysical questions, which were treated highly seriously, even with 'awe', by Kant, can still be meaningfully posed in the language of post-linguistic-turn philosophy. The clarification that it is *language* that should be the primary focal point of philosophical investigations does not entail that language itself cannot be investigated to the extremes that reason was in the good old days. Indeed, reason itself (in its Kantian sense) should not be regarded as some free floating substance without connection with the empirical world. This would make it 'all too childish', in the Heideggerian sense described above. Reason is already structured like a language.

It should therefore be no obstacle to a 'Hard Kantian' investigation of the metaphysical background of morality that the rational capacity implied by knowing something is today treated as a broadly linguistic capacity. Indeed, one of the founding fathers of the linguistic turn in philosophy, especially in its Anglo-Saxon analytical outlook, Ludwig Wittgenstein, himself very clearly indicated this in the concluding paragraphs of his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Those paragraphs were for a very long time either simply neglected or grossly misread, but I think they quite poignantly refer to the problematic described above. In the very first paragraph, Wittgenstein says that 'The world is all that is the case,' and then he goes to great length in describing what it means that something is the case, what a fact is, a state-of-affairs, a sentence, etc. etc. In other words: He describes the conditions of possibility of knowledge in purely linguistic or 'logico-philosophical' terms. In this sense, you could call the *Tractatus* a *Critique of Pure Language*.[2]

However, in the concluding paragraphs, much like in Kant, Wittgenstein ends up with some radical conclusions of his definitions, which usually leave the reader somewhat perplexed. In §§ 6.44–6.45, he states:

> Not how the world is, is mystical, but that it is. To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view it as a limited whole. The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical. (Wittgenstein, 1993b, §§ 6.44–6.45, my translation)

If the world is everything that is the case, then the question naturally follows, at the end of the investigations of what it means for something to be the case: What is this 'everything', the totality of that which is the case? How many 'cases' are there? Infinitely many – or is 'everything' a limited set of states of affairs? Wittgenstein's 'answer' is that seeing the world under the viewpoint of eternity *is* to see it as a limited whole, and he then adds that the feeling of viewing the world this way is the 'mystical'. The limits of the world are mystical to the language user, in other words: we can feel the world as a limited whole, but it nonetheless remains mystical; we cannot grasp it in the same way that we grasp a normal sentence in language. As we shall later see, the 'mystical' in this way resembles Kant's concept of the (mathematical) sublime, which is a 'given infinite' that transcends the understanding, but which we can nonetheless think (CJ 5:254), and just as Kant relates the feeling of the sublime to morality, so does Wittgenstein. The ethical, namely, somehow lingers on the edge of the world, and the good or bad exercise of the will does not alter something in the world, but only the 'limits' of the world – the world as such must become a different world.

Ethics is about something more than the facts, or it is that which constitutes the limit, the boundary or the frame of the world (of facts). This description, strange as it appeared (and still appears) to Wittgensteinians of very different orientations, summarizes rather well what I will unfold as the Kantian insight of the relation between concrete, empirical knowledge, the totality of all possible empirical knowledge, and the place of morality in relation to this totality. The starry heavens above and the moral law within could be roughly translated into Wittgensteinian as the 'mystical' feeling of the world as a totality and the good will on the edge of the world. The 'real moral stuff', the core of our beings as moral creatures, lingers on the edge of the world. The problem with Soft Kantianism could thus be said to be, not that it is Wittgensteinian (there are indeed extremely constructive approaches to language and experience to be found in such philosophy), but that it is not Wittgensteinian *enough*. Even in Wittgenstein himself, but especially of course in the philosopher known as Early Wittgenstein, you

find clear indications of a much more radical conception of language, which points back to Kant, rather than forward to a second nature-normal morality-normative practice-linguistic naturalism. Soft Kantianism lacks a radical philosophical Auf-das-Ganze-Gehen, which can actually be found in Wittgenstein himself.

1.3. Moralität and Sittlichkeit

Before we turn to the structure of moral revolutions, I would like to make a conceptual distinction that will be useful for that purpose. There are two German words for morality that are rarely distinguished in English: *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität*. In an important sense, these two words already indicate the vital distinction between the 'normal' functioning of human practices and the *more* or the surplus that constitutes an extra-ordinary layer. The reason why the two words are not so often taken into account in texts written in English could very well be found, I think, simply in the lack of two terms that cover exactly the same meaning as the German words. *Moralität* of course could be translated straight forwardly as 'morality', while *Sittlichkeit* would usually be translated as ethics, ethical life or, also, as morality – meaning in all cases something like the normative practices in a concrete, embodied 'moral community'.[3] Another way of defining the objective of this book would be to say that it aims at contributing to the clarification of the capacity for *Moralität* in the human being. *Moralität* is exactly something 'more' than *Sittlichkeit*. It is a certain reflexive distancing from the concrete, embodied practices of the learned norms of a culture or community.

Now, any moral philosophy worthy of the name will certainly have something to say about *Moralität*, even if not explicitly by using this term. Moral philosophy, namely, must include some type of reflection, criticism or at least clarification of what is going on in *Sittlichkeit*. But there are important differences in the accentuation of the two. Moral philosophy can be more inclined towards *Sittlichkeit* or more inclined towards *Moralität*. As it will become clear, the Hard Kantian interpretation of Kant leans toward the latter; so much so in fact that Soft Kantians sometimes argue that it is *cut off* entirely from *Sittlichkeit*.

One of the most common criticisms against Kant has always been that his moral philosophy was too formalist and thus insensitive to the actual moral practices and concerns in human life. Since Hegel, this criticism has been formulated in various ways, and the re-emerged types of virtue

ethics have certainly taken on this tradition. Soft Kantianism in many ways resembles Neo-Aristotelianism – indeed in many cases it explicitly *is* Neo-Aristotelianism.[4] The emphasis on elements of *phronesis* in some version is always predominant; the practical wisdom necessary to 'do the virtuous thing' in a complex world; the ethical formation of an individual through initiation into a moral community; the ability to 'see' the 'morally salient features' of a situation; the *sensus comunis*, which enables a community to judge and infer with insight and moderation, etc. etc. As a result, 'critical philosophy' in its Soft Kantian/Aristotelian outlook usually aims at clarification in two senses: first a moderate, step-by-step criticism of irrational forms of behaviour that fail to live up to the standards of a moral community and often ultimately rest on inherent contradiction (lying, making false promises, performative contradictions etc.) and/or ignorance (failing to know what is implied from what one is doing and saying), and, secondly, a criticism of any type of metaphysical justification of moral action from 'the outside' – a holy scripture, a private revelation, an abstract formal principle, etc. We don't need God or a noumenal realm of rationality to tell us, where we are going wrong – we just need careful reflection on the practices, we are already engaged in.

My point here is that the flat rejection of any indication of metaphysical speculation in moral philosophy, which tends to accompany most post-linguistic-turn philosophers (especially the Kantian/Aristotelians), represents a clear example of 'throwing the baby out with the dirty water'. The animosity towards metaphysics in the good old sense has the unfortunate effect that the really interesting aspects of Kantian moral philosophy are overlooked – that which it is all about to Kant: the starry heaven above and the moral law within. When critical moral philosophy is understood only as critique of metaphysical foundations of moral norms and step-by-step *phronetic* improvements, the risk is – ultimately – as Habermas warned us, political regression, something which Hegel himself was well aware of (Habermas, 1984, pp. 228–229).

The reason why I do not follow Habermas, however, in the endeavour to delineate what *Moralität* then consists in is of course that Habermas pursues this as a search for a way to universalize, reflect upon and criticize concrete moral arguments. In other words: *Moralität* for him would amount to some sort of evaluation, and ultimately testing, of the way things are done, by applying the reflective method of the universalization principle. In the ideal moral discourse, where any hitherto unquestioned dominion has been challenged and overcome, any valid norm must be accepted by all involved parties, down to the entirety of its consequences and side effects. Another

version of a comparable method of moral scrutiny is Friedrich Kaulbach's 'experimental world' (Kaulbach, 1978) that somewhat resembles a military strategy meeting, with generals hunched over a model or map of the current positions, contemplating on different possible next moves to make in the battle. The way to find the best outcome is to draw the map as detailed as possible and then compare the possible outcomes to the 'principle of reason', i.e. the principle of universalization or the agreement of all: What happens if this player moves there – who will it effect, and how serious will the effect be compared with another move that could be made, etc.

The 'transcending' capacity in morality in these, Habermas' and Kaulbach's, approaches are ways of rising above the current situation to readjust or reassess that which is known by contemplating on the possible outcomes and choosing the one most generally desirable. I can think of numerous cases where such an approach is entirely appropriate. The military case is already one, and similar considerations could be relevant in any kind of planning, from daily routines in a family to the structure of the UN Security Council. Listing all the players and all the thinkable outcomes of possible alterations might result in an enlightened alternative to the current one. However, the understanding of morality, which I am after here, is nonetheless another. It is the aim of the entire book to make clear wherein this other understanding consists, but in the context of this chapter it could be said to consist in a transcendence of the language of *Sittlichkeit*, i.e. not 'just' a reflective consideration, a 'lifting up', of a problematic norm from a concrete life situation, but something even more than that. 'Lifting up' something in Habermas' and Kaulbach's sense means preserving the original semantic contents in order to evaluate it and rearrange the situation accordingly. The deed in comparison is rather an extra-linguistic act; something taking place on the edge or limit of language, rather than as a move *in* it. It is a transcendence of language – a breakthrough which cannot be anticipated in so many words, and retroactively sets new standards for what can be expressed in the language of *Sittlichkeit*. The deed, in other words, cannot be calculated; it cannot be tested by any principle of universality before its implementation – for any test that would be drafted, would necessarily be constructed from the words available in the prevailing *sittliche* order.

As some of these considerations indicate, the understanding of the moral deed, which is sought, implicates a more profound investigation of its philosophical preconditions. We will start by sketching the landscape of moral action in a bit more detail.

Chapter 2

The Structure of Moral Revolutions

In order to define the concept of a deed as a specific type of action, it should be helpful to first make an analytical distinction of it from other types of action. As Friedrich Kaulbach has described in illuminating detail, the concept of action (*Handlung*) is essential to Kantian philosophy, not only in the works on practical philosophy. From the very outset of his *Das Prinzip Handlung in der Philosophie Kants*, Kaulbach recognizes that Kant did not himself define a concept of action in systematic detail, but he nonetheless insists that the fundamental importance of *Handlung* can be made clear by a careful reading of the corpus of Kant's works. His reading shows that a theory of action can be woven by threads that run across Kant's philosophical writings (Kaulbach, 1978, p. vii). From the mechanical movement of things in the natural world to the reflective *Entwurf* of a morally improved structure of society, the concept of action is always at the centre of Kantian deliberations.

Although I certainly think Kaulbach gives a convincing survey of this approach to Kant's philosophy, my concern here will be slightly different, as indicated already in the preceding chapter. There is one important similarity: I want to take action as the guiding principle to make a Kantian point in a way which Kant did not explicitly do it himself. Similarities aside, though, you could say that my approach is both narrower and slightly broader than Kaulbach's at the same time. Narrower in the sense that I am not after a general reading of *Handlung* throughout Kant's oeuvre, but only in as far as it has direct relevance for the understanding of a Kantian *moral* philosophy. Broader, however, in the sense that I want to claim the relevance of a concept of deed that is not really taken into consideration in Kaulbach's discussion, just as it generally tends to be neglected in comments on Kant's (practical) philosophy. Deed, it will be claimed, is a species of action that is 'more moral than moral action', and in this sense it is not considered by Kaulbach. To make this point, I will sketch a tripartite structure of actions in as far as they are of relevance to morality. This structure is inspired by

Thomas Kuhn's description of the structure of scientific revolutions, and it could thus be said to be an attempt at analysing 'the structure of moral revolutions'. I will, accordingly, label the three types of action pre-moral (to be outlined in section 2.1.), normal moral (2.2.) and extra-moral (2.3.) action, respectively. As the inspiration from Kuhn indicates, I will also treat the relation between the three different types of action as a dynamic relation. The capacity to act 'normal morally' and 'extra morally' will be seen as abilities that emerge from certain conditions. The relation between the pre-moral and the normal moral is generally treated here, I think it safe to say, very much in line with the Soft Kantian view of the acquisition of language, culture and normativity in the broadest sense as a process of initiation. I differ from Soft Kantian philosophy in the search for exit strategies, and thereby in the attempt to articulate an 'extra-moral' dimension. The aim in this chapter is first of all to establish the *structural* relation between the three different types of action, but I will end by taking a short detour around Schopenhauer, who provides something which could rather straightforwardly be called an 'exit strategy' and it will be discussed as a first attempt at situating the deed as something extra-moral.

2.1. The route to normal morality

The one, who is not cultivated, is raw; who is not disciplined, is wild.
(ÜP 9:444, my translation)

The first human being could therefore stand and walk; he could speak [. . .] and indeed talk – i.e. speak with the help of coherent concepts [. . .] – and consequently think. These are all skills which he had to acquire for himself (for if they were innate, they would also be inherited, which does not tally with experience); I assume, however, that he is already in possession of them, for I wish merely to consider the development of human behaviour from the ethical point of view, and this necessarily presupposes that the skills in question are already present.
(CBH 8:110–111)

By 'pre-moral' action, I understand any kind of action that is not guided by the normative standards implied by being member of a community of language users. The close connection between morality and language thus implied should be elaborated in this and the following section, but

it should be clear from the beginning that I subscribe to this view. To 'develop the moral capacity' one must presuppose language, as Kant says in the quotation above. Initially, by way of definition, pre-moral action will be identified as pre-linguistic action. It covers the range of action that is performed by what Kant in *Groundwork* calls things (*Sachen*) (as opposed to *Personen*): 'beings without reason' (Groundwork 4:428). Within this definition, of course, it is possible to distinguish a wide variety of types of action, such as the movement of particles, rain falling, plants growing, cows mooing and new born children gasping for air: Things without language doing things without words. In other words, the definition echoes what John McDowell (among others) has referred to as a 'first nature'. First nature action is pre-moral: we do not apply categories of morality to the behaviour of any type of being that is not initiated into a community of language users, i.e. which is not considered to be 'one of us', to use Robert Brandom's expression.

In an important sense, this can even be considered one of Kant's great achievements – what you might want to call the Copernican revolution of moral thinking. While rationalist metaphysics before Kant, famously of course in the example of Leibniz, sought moral explanations for ('first nature') natural events, Kant denied the possibility of such explanations. To justify natural events that harm humans by postulating some inscrutable greater good is so unacceptable, says Kant, that it doesn't stand in need of refutation, 'surely it can be freely given over to the detestation of every human being who has the least feeling for morality' (THEO 8:258). First nature is not 'evil', nor can any event in nature that causes pain and suffering be relativized as good-when-seen-in-a-bigger-perspective. Things happen, but we do not seek moral justifications for them, if they are not caused by someone with a capacity to have done otherwise. Thereby, a division is made within nature: between non-moral beings (and the actions they perform) and moral beings (and the actions they (can) perform). This division is a minimal precursor of a Kantian perception of morality.

While this definition today seems relatively uncontroversial with regard to rocks, trees and non-human animals, (we do not hold stones morally responsible for rolling down a mountain in an avalanche, nor lions for feeding on the occasional gazelle), it is much less clear that moral responsibility should not apply to (human) children – they are not to be compared to horses or chimpanzees, are they? Nonetheless, we do make use of such distinctions. The penal code in Denmark, for instance, (and similarly in most countries), operates with three different standards: children below

the age of criminal responsibility (15 years), juveniles (15–18 years), and adults. This seems to make good sense. And intuitively, to make the point as clear as possible, we would find it difficult to hold a new born baby morally responsible for *any* action it performs. But how does a child *become* a moral agent, then? Would a two months old infant be responsible for any of its actions? Would a two year old? What marks the difference? It seems that there is in fact no non-contingent point in time that marks the moral graduation of the child.

The easy, Wittgensteinian way out would of course be to say that 'light dawns gradually upon the whole.' However, even though this is obviously true, there is more to say – also from a (post-)Wittgensteinian point of view. There might not be a specific moment of transformation, where the child is suddenly considered as a full-fledged moral agent, but maybe at one point we realize that we *have been* treating it as such for some time. We look back and realize that the child has displayed enough reliability in its tampering with words and actions to be counted as an agent 'inside' the game of giving and asking for reasons. A good way of describing this fluctuating point, I think, is Robert Brandom's definition that one has to, as he calls it, 'make enough of the right moves' (Brandom, 1998, p. 636). To be in the game at all, you must know how to make moves in the game. At one point, when it makes '*enough* of the right moves', this ability to make moves has developed to such an extent that we consider the child a reliable player. Obviously, the complexity of the actions expected from this type of ascription does in fact develop gradually – say, from 'Don't throw your food!' over 'Please, collect your toys' to 'You should have done something to encourage your sister, when she was feeling depressed.' The complexity rises, and although we cannot pinpoint exactly wherein membership of those who make enough of the right moves consists (there is no standard of *counting* right moves . . .), a reliable, 'already initiated', player would usually increasingly treat newcomers as reliable players as they make more and more of the right moves, and at some point we will be treating them equally as 'one of us'. A parrot doesn't seem to undergo the same development. When a parrot has been trained into saying for instance 'That's red!' as a response to certain stimuli, it does not make any more than this one move, which is why in effect it makes no move at all. Reacting on certain stimuli with an appropriate response (which will, for instance, be rewarded by a sugar cube) does not mean that you are making a move in the more complex game of language. The parrot might, more precisely, possess a certain ability of *responsive* classification, but no ability of *conceptual* classification, which means that it does not

know anything about what follows from its utterance: 'The parrot does not treat "That's red" as incompatible with "That's green," nor as following from "That's scarlet" and entailing "That's colored"' (Brandom, 1998, p. 89). It responds, but it does not infer, which is why we do not attribute to it any entitlement to claiming that something is red – or indeed anything else. We do not treat it as one of us. In Kant's words, in the quotation from the *Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History* above, you could say that the parrot 'speaks, but it does not talk' – it does not talk in 'coherent concepts'.

The ability to talk in interconnected and coherent concepts differentiates humans from non-linguistic animals, and treating each other as creatures with this ability marks an elevation from first nature immediacy. 'There were no commitments before people started treating each other as committed; they are not part of the natural furniture of the world' (Brandom, 1998, p. 161). Becoming a subject of the linguistic community therefore means gradually displaying more and more reliable skills of linguistic practice. When a child says 'That is red', it might not be able to infer that 'That's coloured', but already by showing that it is aware of the incompatibility of 'That's red' and 'That's green' it effectively hands in its application of membership as a player in the game of giving and asking for reasons. The difference, then, between (merely) exclaiming or uttering that something is red and knowing what it implies marks a crucial distinction. A parrot knows nothing, or does not display any knowledge, of the implications, while a child might know a few implications, without having a clear overview of what its utterances do and do not imply. Gradually, sort of through a quest of trial and error, the ability to infer and substitute correctly is developed. Learning to speak, while still mastering only fragments of language, the child sometimes has to make very creative, 'illegitimate' moves in order to finish a sentence or complete a thought – which incidentally, I think, is a perfect explanation why 'kids say the darndest things'. At a certain point, however, these involuntary slips are minimized, and we realize that we are in fact treating the kids as reliable, responsible creatures. This then, in turn, is formalized or celebrated in various forms of rituals (like initiation rites) or legislation. In Kantian terms, once again, ascribing moral agency to an individual presupposes the skill of, among other things, being able to talk in interconnected concepts.

John McDowell has shown how this relation between linguistic agency and moral agency can be understood as the acquisition of a 'second nature'. Second nature is a 'habit of thought and action' in McDowell's idiom, which is instilled in human beings through 'ethical upbringing'.

You could also say that it is mastery of the game of giving and asking for reasons. We are 'intelligibly initiated into this stretch of the space of reasons' (McDowell, 1996, p. 84). Although this mastery is of course never accomplished to perfection, it does display itself more and more visibly in the usual development from infancy to adulthood. The crucial point is that moral behaviour is acquired through a process of initiation. We learn how to speak and how to relate areas of speech to each other. As Wittgenstein says; knowing that something is red means to have learned the English language. In the same vein, he describes how we learn what to describe and understand as, for instance 'fear' or 'pain'. The word 'pain' does not 'mean' or describe the cry of pain, which the child would formerly use to express its pain; rather, it learns a new pain behaviour, where the word 'pain' *replaces*, what McDowell would call, the first nature reaction to e.g. physical injury (Wittgenstein, 1993a, § 244). The initiation into language gives us an entirely new mode of being – the things we do and experience simply mean something different from what they did before. Or even more radically: There *was* nothing they meant before, they just happened, since meaning is only acquired with language. And isn't the same logic obviously valid for more explicitly moral concepts? I learn that incest is a taboo; that tearing down food and plates from the table is unacceptable; that it is called 'trust', when my mother tells me that she expects a certain type of behaviour, while she is gone, and so on, and so on.

Having learned enough of the 'moral language', one could say, the child is considered by its surroundings as a responsible moral agent. Because of the gradual nature of this acquisition there is a certain element of discovering that we *have been treating* the child as 'one of us' already, when this has finally become clear. The same temporal structure applies to the first person perspective – only much more obviously so. For the child itself, there is no 'outside perspective' from which it can evaluate its own status. It does not *consider* itself to be a pre-moral first nature being before the initiation, and there is certainly no way of defining a point in time, where it actively 'chooses' to become a member of the linguistic/moral community. It might only, at one point in its development, discover that it already *has been* a moral agent (for some time). Therefore, the existentialist emphasis on the necessity of assuming one's own life, taking over responsibility for it, etc., is inherently paradoxical. Ultimately, taking moral responsibility for one's own action is a *forced choice*, to use the Lacanian term. You can choose to become a moral agent, but you cannot not choose to become one. Once the very idea of moral agency becomes an issue, you have already been a moral agent.

When Kant talks of 'radical evil' as 'a natural propensity' in all humans this should be understood in light of the same paradoxical status of the moral agent. We shall return to evil later on, but for now just note how a person's becoming a responsible moral agent implies that it might suddenly become aware that is has been doing things, which it now finds doubtful or illegitimate. Evil is, since it is a moral category that applies to free, moral agents, something you choose to be. The paradox in Kant is that this choice is initially an unconscious choice. Evil is 'radical' in humans because it applies to all of us, before we even start considering it *as* evil. Or put in another way: We have chosen to be evil, even though we don't know it (yet). Turning linguistic on Kant, this could be explained in the way that we become responsible moral agents as soon as we are able to do things with words and manipulate with our surroundings while relying on a tacit universalism – i.e. employing general concepts and more or less understanding what they imply. Initially, however, we just choose and act without paying systematic interest to the moral implications of our actions – therefore it can come as an uncanny experience to become aware that there *were* moral implications of everything one did, from the very beginning. Isn't this why teenagers are very often spontaneous existentialists? A young person might suddenly think: 'My God! That's evil, how I am behaving' – and become a vegetarian, typically . . . The point being that when you start gaining awareness of what follows from an action or an utterance, i.e. when you start 'playing the game', you loose the innocence of the child of first nature.

2.2. Normal morality and its discontents

Parents generally tend to raise their children only so that they fit into the contemporary world, even if it is depraved.

(ÜP 9:447, my translation)

Gaining mastery of language means being initiated into a culture which is always already also a moral culture. One learns how things are called, how actions are performed and how they are valued by the community. As the example of 'radical evil' shows, a child gradually gains mastery and thereby responsibility of its actions. We *hold* children responsible at a certain point. From the point of view of the child, one would have to imagine a sort of spontaneous naturalism. This is how things are done;

we have learned what it means to be good, what is praiseworthy, condemnable, etc., and nothing really indicates that there should be other ways of understanding what is moral. I want to eat my sister's ice cream, e.g., but am taught that this is immoral, and when the only thing I have to contrast to the moral consideration is my lust for the ice cream, it is quite clear that my inclination is selfish, greedy and 'emotional', while the concern and respect for my sister's right to have her ice cream is moral (especially since I have already eaten my own).

There is as a matter of fact morality. This can be established by simply looking at very common experience as Kant himself does it in the first section of the *Groundwork*. The question is not, 'is there morality or not', but 'what do we understand by morality' – and in the subsequent move: how is it possible that there is (as a matter of fact) something like morality? That human culture is a moral culture is a sign of our civilization and disciplining, and every child that is growing up in a moral culture gradually acquires a second nature on the basis of it. We teach each other to behave properly, and this ability is even a great evolutionary advantage. We take others into consideration and are thus able to handle very complex situations with a lot of individuals (cooperation in hunting or construction work, division of labour, relative stability in community life, etc.), where other creatures lack the ability to think in totalities and see several links of consequences of their actions.

The advantage of the philosophies like those of Robert Brandom and John McDowell is that they, each in their own way, investigate what it is that makes us able to act morally and not just react on 'first nature impulses', if you will. The two share a fundamental insight with a broadly influential approach, especially within relatively recent Anglo-Saxon philosophy, that the role of language is crucial to understanding how morality is possible and what it is. Morality, in this view (and I am generalizing it here), is basically a matter of giving and asking for reasons, critically examining and improving our convictions and behaviour, and a fundamentally *social* phenomenon – something that takes place in a common, public sphere.

When I distinguish between Soft Kantianism and Hard Kantianism, however, one of the main criteria is the *status* of normal morality. To a Hard Kantian, it is not enough to investigate how moral language functions – there must also be ways of explaining a subject's relation to the entirety of its moral culture as somehow foreign or imposed, as well as the possibility to aspire for something *more* than the gradual acquisition

of linguistic norms and a creative input to or gradual reform of them, if one is talented. Soft Kantianism is much more occupied by understanding what it is that we do, when we are able to commit ourselves, give reasons, use language and behave morally. Allow me to illustrate this general difference through a short look at John Searle's famous question 'How to derive ought from is?'

John Searle, in 1964, published his famous text on the possibility of deriving an ought from an is as an investigation of what is logically implied by using certain words and performing certain acts. The overall ambition of the article is to give a counterexample to the so called naturalistic fallacy and prove that it is sometimes, often indeed, possible to infer from certain descriptive statements to certain normative statements. To do this, Searle relies on a distinction between 'brute facts' and 'institutional facts'. The tradition that has endorsed the idea of a naturalistic fallacy (which was originally identified by David Hume) does not acknowledge this distinction – which is a fundamental mistake according to Searle. The maybe intuitively convincing idea that descriptive and normative statements are separated by what one could call a qualitative gap is nonetheless wrong. Searle claims that they are not, and his argument relies a lot on the distinction between brute and institutional facts. The well-known example is that Jones has promised to pay Smith five dollars: When Jones is uttering the sentence 'I hereby promise to pay you, Smith, five dollars,' he is – as a matter of fact – obligated to actually pay Smith five dollars. He is *doing* something, when uttering his sentence and it is an action which puts him directly in an obligation to pay Smith five dollars. The novelty of Searle's approach (which is in line with the whole post-Wittgensteinian tradition) is to see that Jones is not describing anything, when he is uttering his sentence; he is doing something different than describing something – he is already involved in a game that has another kind of rules than those of observation reports. *We* might of course describe Jones as doing this, but this description is a description of an institutional fact. As Searle says: 'Once promising is seen as a speech act of a kind different from describing, then it is easier to see that one of the features of the act is the undertaking of an obligation' (Searle, 1964, p. 51). Learning how to use language thus includes learning how to distinguish between and use different kinds of statements. You have to learn what is a 'brute fact' and what is an 'institutional fact', in order to use language right, and you would not be able to function normally if you didn't see the difference.

To even understand what it means that someone has five dollars, one must know a lot about institutions: 'Take away the institution and all he has is a rectangular bit of paper with green ink on it' (ibid., p. 54). Searle identifies the new approach to questions of the relation between description and evaluation in this awareness of language as a practice; something one does, and something which involves different systems of facts. If you are writing a science report, you will probably be using mostly descriptive language, like 'Smith has brown hair,' but if you are trying to understand what is going on, when Smith says 'I promise to pay you five dollars,' you have to understand the utterance in its institutional context. '[F]or me to state such an institutional fact is already to invoke the constitutive rules of the institution. It is those rules that give the word "promise" its meaning' (ibid., p. 58). Language has much more ways of functioning than what has traditionally been assumed in philosophy – the ideal of pure, descriptive statements has been treated as the 'real' or neutral language, while anything evaluative of nature has been considered 'subjective', 'emotional' and so on. Searle emphasizes that this is a too rigid understanding of language – it doesn't see the fundamental illocutionary force that makes language what it is, and thereby it fails to account for the rich variety of uses language has. The outcome of Searle's approach is therefore not only a novel way of making sense of evaluative statements as something more consistent than merely subjective, unverifiable expressions, but also of making the very idea of what counts as a fact much broader than it has been: Institutional facts are just as much facts as 'brute' facts, they are only of another kind. (This is why one can describe an institutional fact, an 'is', and derive an obligation from it, an 'ought'.) In the terms of a McDowellian/Brandomian approach, one could say that becoming a language user means being able to distinguish these different types of uses in the right way and see that there are – as a matter of fact – rules and meanings that apply in an orderly fashion to evaluative statements. Using one type of word in one type of context means something specific, and one is already committed to a net of meanings, when uttering the word. Indeed, the insight of early post-Wittgensteinian philosophy has been further developed as the realization (which I think was in a way already almost there in Searle's article) that any kind of language use is already a kind of normative practice, which one has to learn. Language is an assembly of institutions, if you will, and it is an *institutional* fact that something counts as a brute fact.

John Searle thus indirectly indicated the potential for a systematic investigation of the nature of language as a system of commitments and

entitlements, which was fully elaborated by Robert Brandom in *Making It Explicit*. This is Searle again:

> Once we recognize the experience of and begin to grasp the nature of such institutional facts, it is but a short step to see that many forms of obligations, commitments, rights, and responsibilities are similarly institutionalized. (ibid., p. 56)

Indeed. The implications of early post-Wittgensteinianism were systematically investigated in different forms of theory of science, pragmatism and social philosophy in the following decades. I take Robert Brandom's 1994 monumental book to be something of a culmination of these investigations. Brandom generalizes the system of commitments and entitlements as the essence of what language is and what one must learn to become 'one of us' – one of those creatures that are reliable users of language. The insight, which Brandom unfolds, could tentatively be boiled down to the acknowledgement that the relation between subject and world is never one of unmediated description or interaction. There is always a third party involved, an institutional representative, if you will: the deontic scorekeeper, or the ascriber as Brandom calls it, who ascribes commitments and beliefs to the agent, and ultimately decides on his or her part whether or not the move she/he made in the game of giving and asking for reasons was legitimate. If I am uttering a sentence like 'I promise to pay you five dollars', it has meaning in a system of language, which it is not up to me or my intuition to decide. Given certain circumstances (that I am not for instance playing a role and that things are generally 'normal'), there is already a cluster of meaning that I am inscribing myself into. The institution of paying money, which I am referring to when uttering the sentence, already knows what it is that I am doing. The scorekeeper is the image of someone who knows, what I am objectively doing, when I am uttering a sentence.

Learning how to use language in its many different shapes is thus like gaining mastery of a variety of institutionalized practices, and it is the institutions that decide, what it is that I am doing (whether I am entirely aware of it or not). Ultimately, we are enrolled in languages with functions and institutions of such variety that we cannot be expected to realize the implications of what we are saying in the last detail. Just like the child makes very obvious mistakes in stating something which it does not entirely master or overview, so does any (mature) agent ultimately lack the total mastery of her own language. You enter into language through the procedure of

initiation, which gradually confirms your status as one of us, but you never acquire a total overview of the entirety of implications of the sentences you gain mastery of. Nonetheless, you can make statements that obligate you to something specific. We realize more and more about language and become able to do more and more with a clear sense of what it is that we are doing. But principally, the institution is 'objectively' there, when we start using its elements. Fundamentally, therefore, the perspective of the utterer is not the privileged perspective. It is always the deontic scorekeeper that grants validation.

> That I acknowledge commitment to *p* does not (according to the score-keeper) mean that I *do* or *will* acknowledge commitment to its conse-quence *q*, only that I *ought* to – that I am, whether I realize it or not, *committed* to *q*. (Brandom, 1998, p. 627)

I can be committed to the consequences of my actions or statements with-out knowing it myself. If I promise to pay you five dollars, it obliges me to perform a certain action, even if I would somehow not be entirely sure about that – if I had misunderstood what it means, *hic et nunc*, to prom-ise someone to pay him five dollars. But Brandom's observation is even more radical. In a very important sense, I might not even know myself what I *believe*: '[M]y acknowledged beliefs can commit me to more than I acknowledge; so I can end up with beliefs I do not know I have.' (ibid., p. 507). Brandom actually makes it plausible that we objectively believe something, even though we are not aware that we believe it. A belief is not always something one needs to be aware of: ultimately, the ascriber ascribes it to a subject. As Brandom says: 'Believing that Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia *is* believing that Philadelphia is to the East of Pittsburgh, whether one knows it or not' (ibid., p. 195). The very concept of something being 'West' entails that something else is 'East', and if you believe that A is 'West of' B then it follows that you must believe that B is 'East of'A, whether you know it or not – the concept functions in that way. Belief is justified, furthermore, when the ascriber ascribes entitlement to the subject. The belief that Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia might for instance be justified by a subject's ability to recognize on a map that something to the left of something else is to the *West* of it – that ability entitles her to hold the belief. We ascribe a justified belief to her when we see that she knows that West means 'left' on a map. And the truth of a sentence, finally, is decided when the ascriber (herself) undertakes a commitment – namely that of ascribing truth to the subject's commit-ment (the *map* could be wrong, but the ascriber knows that it is not). We

take Robert Brandom to be an educated citizen of Pittsburgh and thus we undertake the commitment of concluding that Pittsburgh *is* to the West of Philadelphia, if we seriously believe that he is not pulling our leg. (As individuals, we might of course be mistaken about Brandom, but that would just mean that we do not occupy the position of the ascriber). In effect, Brandom's reformulation boils down to the awareness that in a profound sense, *I don't know* whether or not my belief is justified and true (in a specific sense, I don't even know which beliefs I have) – but the ascriber does.

Now, the linguistic normativity which, in Brandomese, goes 'all the way down', i.e. is always already in play such that there is no immediate apprehension of a Given of some sort, which is then subsequently articulated in language, has its direct impact also on what is considered *morally* relevant and justified. 'We are always already inside the game of giving and asking for reasons', as Brandom says (ibid., p. 648) – it is a forced choice; there is no alternative to being brought up with a bulk of beliefs and commitments already working in one's very first utterances, including, I claim, what is considered morally right. If I say that Peter is hurting Jane, you might ask me in which way (physically or emotionally, for instance), how long it has been going on, and so on. There is a whole network of meanings that must apply, if my sentence is meaningful, including some that will probably lead you to say: 'But then we must do something!' (A child, on the other hand, might sometimes just say 'Peter is hurting Jane' without really knowing what follows, which exactly shows that you have to have learned more language to be able to see a situation in its full moral weight). In McDowell's phrase,

> . . . any intelligible case of agency [. . .] must be responsive to reasons. It makes no sense to picture an act that brings norms into existence out of a normative void. So the insistence on freedom must cohere with the fact that we always find ourselves already subject to norms. (McDowell, 2002, p. 276)

The freedom which McDowell thus identifies is what one could call normal morality freedom: one that is seen as a responsible and responsive behaviour subject to norms. My Hard Kantian point against McDowell (to be unfolded in Chapters 3–6) is that there is another kind of freedom, without which Kant's practical philosophy is massively devalued, but for now we need only to accept the freedom one gains as a second nature creature as the freedom to do things with words in accordance with the institutional meanings that words already have. It is a process of liberation to learn language, one could say; the more you know, the more you are able to do.

Take McDowell's statement from earlier again: 'human beings are intelligibly initiated into this stretch of the space of reasons by ethical upbringing, which instils the appropriate shape into their lives.'

However, the forced choice of initiation and upbringing simultaneously produces a certain uneasiness. Already McDowell's somewhat clinical wording that 'ethical upbringing *instils the appropriate shape* into their lives' fosters the image of a young little moral agent with an arm twisted on its back. Ethical upbringing instils the appropriate shape in the sense of one being able to act and judge morally at all, but an upbringing is always concrete, and it therefore instils this shape (if by shape we mean language) with a whole system of concrete norms and evaluations that the child must comply with. Not only is the standard teenage uprising against the commands of the parents quite predictable from these considerations: 'Why do they always tell me to do as *they* want?!' Even more fundamentally, and much more uncannily, a question might naturally occur that cannot be resolved by a simple confrontation with e.g. one's parents: 'Why do they always tell me what *I* want?!' or 'Why is what I want always already mediated and ultimately to a large extent determined by what was there already before me?' ('Why have I been eating meat for 15 years?! Gross!')

A radical illustration of what it means that it is the ascriber who determines what I am committed to, is provided by Brandom himself by way of the example of 'taking the queen's shilling'. Besides its logical point, this story could function as a parable of what it means that an individual is subjectivized or initiated into a normative practice. It shows, namely, how this initiation happens behind one's back, and how one necessarily realizes that 'too late', when one has already become and done a lot of things. 'Taking the queen's shilling' was a practice performed by British military officers in the eighteenth century. Since a lot of people fit for the army were unable to read and comprehend a written contract, 'taking the queen's shilling' was invented as an alternative procedure of recruitment. If you accepted a certain coin from an army officer, you could be enlisted with all the commitments and responsibilities of any soldier, without having to sign an actual contract. This procedure however made possible some foul play. Recruiters could go to taverns and inns and offer the 'queen's shilling' to people who had used all their own money for drinks. When someone accepted the kind gesture, they were already enlisted in the army, although they didn't know the symbolic meaning of the gesture. The ascriber, in this case the disguised officer, knew what the drunken subject was objectively committed to in the moment he had accepted the queen's shilling, which he thought was only a means to get himself another pint (Brandom, 1998, p. 162). As indicated, Brandom uses this example to

illustrate a *logical* point. What goes for this extreme case goes for ascribing commitments and entitlements in a much broader sense. The very terms 'commitment' and 'entitlement' are explicitly chosen to underline the logical and semantic problems they describe, as opposed to some ideological construct or brute force – the more traditional terms 'obligation' and 'permission' contain some stigmata that betray their 'origin in a picture of norms as resulting exclusively from the commands or edicts of a superior' (ibid, p. 160).

However, notice Brandom's reasons. The traditional terms contain certain *stigmata*, which preclude that commitment and entitlement is not a question *exclusively* about commands or edicts. But maybe his example about taking the queen's shilling says more than it was supposed to? Brandom describes the production of subjects as subjected to the normative standards within the language they (are forced to) speak. Maybe there is a more fundamental level of subjectivity that is not even considered, (or unconsciously repressed?) in Brandomian Soft Kantianism. The ascriber always has the upper hand, because it is always him/her/it who knows how the game is played. But the subject nonetheless, as a minimum, has the capacity to ask the question: 'Why have I become what you told me to become?' At the very least, it seems highly likely that the newly appointed soldiers might wake up with a massive hangover, when they discover what they are now objectively committed to, and then soon ask themselves the question: 'My God, why me?!' Isn't this hangover structurally similar to the one any language user and moral agent might feel at a certain point? Isn't it exactly this hangover that makes young people read Kierkegaard and Sartre? Put in another way, there is a fundamental aspect of morality, which Freud famously analysed by way of the concept of the superego that has not only formative, educative etc. qualities, but *at the same time* (thereby) repressive and controlling aspects, which produce a certain uneasiness in the subject.

Normal moral action, in my definition, is the kind of action that is displayed in the space of reasons, which the subject is initiated into – and brings with it – whether it wants to or not. The 'game' of giving and asking for reasons was there before my arrival, filled with institutions, and I have a place in it already before I start playing. Becoming a competent player therefore does not mean becoming an autonomous being with a sense of having freely chosen to be such a player. It is very well possible to understand and define autonomy as being treated as one of us; as being liberated from the very limited perspective of first nature inclinations and impulses, if you will. But it is an imposed autonomy – an ability to act 'freely' within a space that one has not chosen. Acquiring a language, learning how to

substitute terms, make inferences, etc., always has an element of taking the queen's shilling. You agree to have a pint, you are rewarded for something which is not entirely clear to you, and before you know it, you are enlisted in the army of giving and asking for reasons. The discontent, which any competent language user usually experiences at one point, is the indication of something more than what has been taught in normal morality. 'There must be somewhere out of here' – is the thought that starts growing in the independent mind, and even if the 'exit' is never found, the thought itself represents the possibility of another mode of existence; a way of 'rising' above the moral conditions, one has been initiated into. The 'rising' is what I want to identify as an extra-moral dimension to human existence – which again is the possibility of performing deeds. What distinguishes this position from a Soft Kantian position is that the latter does not recognize or treat the problem of 'extra-moral' action.

2.3. Opening the field of the extra-moral

The imitator (in moral matters) is without character.

(APP 9:293)

Brandom's example of taking the queen's shilling indirectly shows something central about the concept of interpellation, which was famously investigated by Louis Althusser. In his text on *Ideological State Apparatuses*, Althusser showed how a subject is being subjected as member of an order by acts of interpellation that define the subject as belonging to the order in a specific place. It is not entirely coincidental, I think, that Althusser uses the same word, 'institution', to identify ideological state apparatuses, which John Searle used to identify 'objective' practices already in place independently of a subject's 'personal' or 'individual' thoughts, emotions, etc. The apparatuses, Althusser refers to, are identified as 'distinct and specialized institutions' and include churches, schools, families, legal system, parties, trade unions, media and cultural organizations (Althusser, 2001, p. 96). All of them contribute to the ideological reproduction of society by making the subjects of the state (aware of) what they are. You become someone by being told that you are *this one*, and this happens through a number of different processes. The paradigmatic example of interpellation in Althusser is the police officer in the street who exclaims 'Hey you there!' which makes everyone near turn around, momentarily convinced

that they did something wrong. The reaction to the call shows how we are *already* interpellated and ready to answer to the demand of policeman/government/employer/parents/teacher, etc. Becoming a subject means to be sub-jected, i.e. literally to be 'cast under' the conditions of the community and the language in one's surrounding. The place one is going to occupy is prepared already before one's arrival. To illustrate this in yet another way, one could simply take the example of a newborn baby. When the midwife lifts it up and exclaims 'It's a boy!' a whole set of roles and expectations have already been articulated (which also illustrates the difference between biological, 'first nature', sex and symbolic or societal, 'second nature', gender). You are in the game, in a way, already before you make your first move.

As Mladen Dolar has described it, however, the procedure of interpellation contains (not one but) two voices: One that tells me positively what to do, and one that 'interpellates without any positive content' (Dolar, 2006, p. 122). There is a certain fundamental inscrutability to the voice that interpellates. In a sense it is simply mostly *as if* one has been interpellated, although the actual interpellation in the shape of a live voice is seldom explicit. Although the voice of the interpellation tells me what to do, it also (secretly) at the same time tells me to do it fundamentally simply because it told me so – there is no 'external' legitimacy of the things demanded, and this quality of the demand (that it, in effect, legitimizes itself) is what we can sometimes hear in the background: 'The ideological interpellation can never quite silence this other voice, and the distance between the two voices opens the space of the political' (ibid., p. 123). A space is opened, because we not only learn and appreciate different standards and commands throughout our ethical upbringing, but also do this on the background of something that might suddenly acquire a shed of unexpected contingency. We understand and appreciate a variety of institutions but we only sometimes sense that these institutions somehow rely on our acceptance of them. Dolar is not trying to prove Althusser's theory wrong, but to refine it a little bit, one could say. The addition of the second voice 'opens up the field of the political', which means that an Althusserian interpellation functions most swiftly if the second voice is not clearly heard. Nonetheless, it is still there. If the first voice announces statements and commands, the second voice is the additional 'Just do it!' to which, if one hears it, one is likely to respond 'Do what? Why?' In our context here I think it would be fair to say that the 'second voice' opens not only the field of the political, but of extra-morality as such.

Engaging in a bit of folk psychology to explain what this means, we could paraphrase the point by saying that interpellation initially does follow the

Althusserian model. The child simply treats the directions of others (especially of the parents) as unquestionable rules of the game, through what I called a spontaneous naturalism. The second voice is almost silent, therefore, or it is articulated in frequencies that the child doesn't hear. However, as the child matures and learns how to do more and more things with words, it also gains a self-reflective ability of questioning itself: 'Am I doing this right?' As the performances expected from the child grow more and more complex, then, it naturally begins to see more delicate nuances of the situations and therefore also more possible routes to take. When, furthermore, the number of agents around the child grows, (when for instance it sees other children doing things the 'wrong' way), it gets accustomed to the fact that it is not always easy at all to know what everyone expects from you. Gradually, the volume of the second voice is turned up. At a certain point, usually, the child even begins to hear it directly in the voice of its parents: 'You have to do it in this way – because I say so!' (Indeed, sometimes the parent explicitly *says* the 'because I say so', which is the first indication of his or her ultimate impotence).

Dolar's description of the 'second voice' indicates a general condition in normal morality. There is as a minimum always a question of judgement involved in a moral decision, which means that the subject is prone to some level of insecurity about the 'righteousness' of the act it performs. Some decisions and actions, of course, are very clear and uncontroversial, indeed most of the things we do as normal, initiated second nature creatures, is done without too much reflection. If I say to Jones that I will pay him five dollars, I will usually not start a philosophical discussion with myself or with him about the implications of this promise (this, in a way, was exactly Searle's point). Nonetheless, the comfortable feeling that one is generally doing things all right can always be disrupted – the second voice is always there and can suddenly be turned up. Even in situations, where the normative standards of the linguistic community of which I am a member are known and clear to me, I might very well be left with an anxiety provoking lack of foundation of the act, I have to perform. The 'schematizing' of the situation in question always opens a minimal crack for insecurity about how to interpret it 'right'. I can always stop and think to myself: Why am I doing things in this way? Was this the right thing to do?

The second voice is therefore the one, which indicates some of the traits that we shall investigate more carefully in the following chapters. It indicates, for instance, that there is a significant difference between being counted as a responsible moral agent, i.e. an 'autonomous' subject, in normal morality and then the kind of autonomy that Kant demands. Being a

competent player and being counted as 'one of us' – one ('autonomous') player among a group of ('autonomous') players – is not the same as being an autonomous person in Kant's understanding. On the contrary, Kant would agree (with Dolar) that the autonomy of a player that has learned how to play a lot of different normative games, including explicitly moral games, goes perfectly well hand in hand with ideological domination. 'True' autonomy comes not from being a stable player, but from 'fidelity to the "foreign kernel" of the voice which cannot be appropriated by the self' (ibid., pp. 122–123).

The second voice can be (almost) silenced in many different ways – when one eagerly tries to fulfil the expected wishes of the order, one is living. The child, in as far as it is 'normally' or 'healthily' brought up ('initiated into the space of reasons') will most probably spend a lot of time and effort trying to guess what it is that the others want from it. When it makes the right moves, and starts being treated as a responsible agent, the reward, which I think can hardly be overestimated, is the one of being 'one of us'. Along the way, the child will make many mistakes – not just because it doesn't understand the individual signs or sentences, but also because it doesn't choose the right interpretation of them or because it makes its moves with too much haste. A child wants to help its parents, e.g., take care of the plants in the house and knows that they need water, but ends up drowning them, because it is too eager to fulfil the wishes of the parents and thereby 'runs ahead of itself'. In the long run, hopefully, the willingness to live up to what is expected from one, will be more in balance with the things one is doing, and the expectation that there is a right answer will become an incentive that gives 'right' answers to an increasingly wide variety of problems and tasks. But simultaneously, the second voice will become more and more audible. Moral problems will appear that inspire the thought of a certain insecurity or even estrangement in relation to oneself.

Moral action in normal morality is a matter of interpretation, and learning the language of normal morality always implies learning how to 'read' situations adequately. Becoming a good reader is therefore a necessary condition of becoming one of us, and you may seek help from experienced readers, if the text is difficult to grasp. In some cases, visualizing the moral character of a role model or a moral authority might help us see the situation in the right way, so that we can choose the virtuous or prudent way to deal with it. We might not see the answer to our predicament clearly, but we can seek advice or imagine what someone who sees everything clearly and knows the connections or commitments and entitlements in the relevant

institutions would have said or done. The appeal of Aristotelian virtue eth-
ics to Soft Kantianism is therefore relatively obvious. Virtue, as Aristotle
said, 'is a purposive disposition, lying in a mean that is relative to us and
determined by a rational principle, and by that which a prudent man would
use to determine it' (Aristotle, 1976, p. 102).

It is therefore tempting to already here define the extra-moral action
(the deed) as a refusal of what 'the prudent man' would do. If normal
moral action depends on 'right interpretation', then maybe extra-moral
action could be defined as over-interpretation or misinterpretation, or
maybe as reinterpretation or even *destruction* of the 'right' interpretation.
Since it is the aim of the entire book to circle in on the deed, however,
the definitions here can only be preliminary. Indeed, the examples stated
below represent first takes on what a deed could be, and almost nothing of
the logical and metaphysical considerations that follow. Nonetheless, they
open up the floor of how one could be said to refuse to act on the instruc-
tions initiated through second nature 'appropriate upbringing', because
of a higher aim. In that way, they can help us establish the structure of the
extra-moral; they can open and hold the place of such actions until we will
get a firmer grip on them.

An example of *over-interpretation* could be the well-known 'work by the
rules' campaigns that are sometimes employed in labour conflicts. In such
campaigns, employees take all too literally what is asked from them and
refuse to 'see' the situation in the way that will ensure the normal func-
tioning of things, i.e. they refuse to fulfil the expectation of interpreting
the unspoken demand of the institution/company/boss. This might very
quickly create a rather chaotic result. If, say, nurses in a hospital suddenly
start working meticulously in accordance with the explicit conditions of
their employment (spend so much time for an injection, so much time for
a coffee break at 9.30, never lift one patient alone, etc.), the system loses its
flexibility and is quickly threatened with collapse. A *misinterpretation* could
be an action that creatively circumvents the 'original intention' of the law
or moral order, like when law-abiding Jewish orthodox believers inter-
pret the prohibition of keeping pigs on Jewish land by elevating pig farms
30 cm. from the ground. They abide by the letter of the law, but 'misinter-
pret' its spirit – and thus invent a new mode of existence within the law.
A *reinterpretation* could imply undermining the very legitimacy of the cur-
rent order and establishing a new – when for instance a game is redefined
by a player taking on a new identity: A child playing with cars suddenly
'obtains' the right to *fly* with one of them, soldiers at Kronstadt take charge
of their own divisions, Rosa Parks refuses to sit in the back of the bus, a

loyal party member suddenly betrays his commitment to the official party line in favour of a pressing, more universal concern, etc. Common to such actions, and a preliminary definition of the deed, is thus a *refusal to fulfil the demand or wish of the Other* – refusing, in other words, to act 'normally' or in accordance with 'how things are done around here'.

Arthur Schopenhauer, of course, took refusal to its extreme. Any kind of action that appears as an attempt to influence the course of the world is just another manifestation of the will, and thus a result of partiality, greed, lust, etc. Ultimately, as part of the world – as part of the *game* of giving and asking for reasons – human is *unfree*. Kant did, as the first, analyse this fundamentally pathological aspect of human life as in fundamental disagreement with the 'real' concept of freedom – that of a 'pure' will. But Kant did not draw the consequences of his insight radically enough. There is, according to Schopenhauer, fundamentally no way of connecting the two realms – you cannot both be free and actually *do* something in the world, participate in it. Whenever you think that you can change something in the world or indeed change 'your self', as it manifests itself, you are basically lying to yourself. Even though we might experience ourselves as being in charge of our conduct, we will eventually learn, through experience, that we were subjected to necessity all along (Schopenhauer, 1996, I, pp. 174–175).

Therefore, the only real action is a kind of non-action, a refusal of the will itself. To stay in the terminology of Soft Kantianism, you could say that the initiation into the space of reasons, or the game of giving and asking for reasons, marks a gradual maturation of the intellect; being able to abstract from one's immediate inclinations and instead learn and acknowledge that there are reasons to act that transcend one's natural instincts. But learning to play the game does not mean that you are free. For Schopenhauer, the 'maturation' process or liberation process ideally *continues* and drives the best of humans to refuse *any* inclinations, including those imposed by the community/society, however rational and benevolent they may appear. There is, to Schopenhauer, what could almost be called a possible *third* nature in humans – a level of pure insight and contemplation, which denies the importance and relevance of worldly matters altogether. Employing 'Christian mythology', Schopenhauer describes the three stages as (1) an early stage before the passage into the moral community (eating from the tree of good and evil), (2) the condition of being in the moral state of life and (3) the ultimate exit from it (redemption). Morality accompanies human on his journey from confirming the will (in the original sin) to refusing the will (in pure faith) (Schopenhauer, 1996, II, p. 77).

In other words, there is pre-moral innocence, moral commonality (where morality is the 'light' that accompanies human on its journey) and extra-moral denial of the will. What humans can come to realize is that the world as it appears to us, in our *Vorstellungen*, is not the result of some divine or natural necessity, but a manifestation of the will. This realization itself, in turn, opens up a more radical perspective than the one implied by merely 'being in' or 'having a' world. 'Having a world', in Soft Kantian terminology, means having language and (thereby) being able to relate to the world – as opposed to first nature creatures, who live, not in a world, but in an environment. Hans-Georg Gadamer, for instance, emphasizes how it is language that 'elevates' the human being from its environment (*Umwelt*) to its world (*Welt*) or to world as such. Having-a-world is simultaneously having-a-language (Gadamer, 1990, pp. 446–448). The initiation into second nature is the passage, or *Erhebung*, from environment to world, and thereby a liberation process; having a world, in turn, means being able to relate freely to one's environment. To Schopenhauer, however, coming to awareness of this opens the possibility of a further *Erhebung* – an overcoming of the world as such, which is ultimately the only way to sustain ourselves as *really* free beings. Arriving at this peak of human existence is a moment of silence. In the extra-moral act of denial of the will, speech is pointless. We are not free, because we are able to do things with words and relate ourselves to meanings and implications in a reflected or distanced manner, but because we are able to recognize the very foundation of the world as a will that has manifested itself. Once the will is manifested, it becomes necessity – cf. the 'forced choice' of following the standards and norms within the community. We are indeed more clever than (other) animals, but the cleverness of second nature itself can become transparent, and only then can we really free ourselves (from life as such).

Although Schopenhauer is thus certainly to be counted among the Hard Kantians, his understanding of what I call the 'extra-moral' act is in a way simply acceptance of a loss. We were forced to be here, and there is nothing we can do about it, except give up on the whole damn thing. In this way, his understanding of the act resembles the psychoanalytic concept of passage to the act (*passage à l'acte*). In Lacan's definition, a subject that cannot cope with the world, or with the 'symbolic order', can depart from it altogether. This does not necessarily mean committing suicide, but rather entirely giving up on 'playing the game' – of giving and asking for reasons. 'The passage to the act,' as Dylan Evans has defined it, is 'an exit from the symbolic network, a dissolution of the social bond' (Evans, 1996, pp. 136–137).

Isn't this exactly what Schopenhauer sees as the only 'salvation'? A flight from the symbolic network, a dissolution of the social bond altogether, in order to 'rise above it' and prove that one can escape the choice of normal morality, which has been imposed on one. In other words, the *anders wollen*, which Schopenhauer encourages, is a *nicht wollen*. Compared with the provisional description of the deed as over-interpretation, misinterpretation or reinterpretation, Schopenhauer's passage to the act could thus be said to mark an *end of interpretation*.

Nonetheless, Schopenhauer does provide us with a scheme for the division into pre-moral, moral and extra-moral acts. His conclusion that the *only* way to perform an extra-moral act – a truly Kantian deed – is to disavow the will altogether and *not* act, is not the one I am after. The concept of deed, which I think can be read out of Kant, rather includes focus on abilities like creativity, spontaneity and a fundamental understanding of (what it means to be such a creature that is a) being in *this* world. But it agrees with Schopenhauer that the interpretative faculties evoked by Soft Kantians in an important sense do not tarry with that which it is all about: the extra-moral acts. In relation to the idea of morality as interpretation, we can therefore summarize the three levels as follows: pre-moral acts represent the absence of interpretation (not knowing what or indeed *how* to infer (anything) from 'that's red' for instance), normal moral acts represent a result of an interpretation ('Mom said I should be nice to the cat', 'Don't leave your luggage unattended') and extra-moral acts represent an over-/mis-/ or reinterpretation. What the concept of the deed should bring us, once it is fully developed, is an understanding of an extra-moral act that results in a new beginning, rather than in an end (of the interpretative relation to the world/symbolic order/game of giving and asking for reasons).

So, back to Kant.

Chapter 3

The Other Side of Inference

From this we see that reason, in inferring, seeks to bring the greatest manifold of cognition of the understanding to the smallest number of principles (universal conditions), and thereby to effect the highest unity of the manifold.

(CPR: B 361)

On the other hand, the moral law, even though it gives no prospect, nevertheless provides a fact absolutely inexplicable from any data of the sensible world and from the whole compass of our theoretical use of reason, a fact that points to a pure world of the understanding, and, indeed, even determines it positively and lets us cognize something of it, namely a law.

(CPR 5:43)

The consequence, which Schopenhauer drew from the impasse of the Kantian concept of freedom, could seem to be the only legitimate one, or at least the only way to take the Kantian description of a free, moral act to its logical conclusion. In order to act freely, you have to give up on acting altogether, because any concrete action that wants to change something in the world is always already 'infected' with the pathological, empirical dimension of everyday inclinations and temptations, regardless of the reassurance from moral common sense in the community that you are doing something 'good'. Even apparently 'good' actions might very well be performed on grounds that are ultimately morally suspect – like hopes of future rewards or honour, which might not even be clear to the subject itself. I might have beliefs without being aware of them, to paraphrase Brandom again. I think, for instance, that I am acting out of pure moral duty, but in reality I just want to impress the girl, I am hoping to charm. And indeed, the habits and mores of normal morality could be depraved and immoral *in totu* without most people being aware of it. On a strict reading of Kant,

there is no way to ensure the actual realization of the 'right thing to do' – there is no manual for applying the categorical imperative. The *real* moral act always seems to escape us, to forever remain unattainable. It is exactly this quality of the moral act in the Hard Kantian version which makes it 'more moral than moral action', i.e. gives it a dimension, which cannot be exhausted in investigations of the moral grammar of any one particular community. There is something 'more' to it, which lifts it out of any concretion. This, of course, has simultaneously been the great objection to Kantian morality. Of what use is a moral philosophy, which ultimately cannot connect to the world of living and breathing human beings? Isn't this basic intuition the rationale behind the critique of Kantian 'formalism' since Hegel? It seems impossible to fulfil the radical demands of the categorical imperative, and thus the only way to be sure that your will remains 'pure' and unpolluted, is by *denying* it any manifestation in the world.

Already in the *Grundlegung*, Kant himself admits that no certain example can be cited of the 'disposition [*Gesinnung*] to act from pure duty' (Groundwork 4:406). Action performed in *apparent* accordance with the moral law does not in itself make a truly moral action, and it is therefore *impossible* to give one single example through experience of a purely moral act. Nonetheless, the demand of the moral law is exactly to act unconditionally and undisturbed by worldly influence, i.e. without being thwarted by any pathological impulses. In this specific sense, the categorical imperative demands from the rational human being to *do the impossible*. We are asked to act in such a way that the impulse to act comes from something 'higher' – and not from anything we might validate or foresee in our surroundings. In *Religion*, Kant even sharpens his apparently paradoxical demand by stating about the action that one wants to perform that with respect to it 'I must not only judge and be of the opinion that it is right; I must also be certain that it is' (Religion 6:186). The unconditional act is not one that is probably the right one, as far as we can tell. Kant explicitly reproaches the 'probabilism' which is content with the conviction that 'an action may well be right'. 'Probabilism' holds that it is enough, as much as you can ask from a finite human being, to be able to say of one's action that it *might* be, or is *likely* to be, the right one. To Kant such modesty on behalf of one's moral competence is not a praiseworthy quality. On the contrary: '[T]he consciousness that an action which I want to undertake is right, is unconditional duty' (ibid.).

On the one hand, as it is described in *Groundwork* and in the second critique, there is an unconditional demand in all rational beings to act in accordance with the moral law, although this demand can never be

said to be fulfilled beyond any doubt in any concrete instance. On the other hand, we *must* – according to *Religion* – not only act, but be *certain* that the act, which we undertake to perform, is the right one. Indeed, it seems like the only act that meets these harsh criteria of certainty of being motivated by something else than one's habits and inclinations, is Schopenhauer's act of denial of the will, the act to end all acts. Only if you deny the will itself, so it seems, can you be sure that you are escaping un-moral motivations.

However, what we are after here is something else. It is a Hard Kantian understanding of the deed as an extra-moral act, which is performed in the world, rather than as a departure from it. To pass from the 'pure' moral law, however, to the concrete ambient of human cognition and volition, we seem to need something like a *passage from the impossible to the possible*. If the real moral act is perceived like an absolute purification of the will in which we must undo all the pathological bindings we have to both biological inclinations and heteronomy of the will through social conventions and the hope for esteem, it seems difficult to make any sense of what such an act could be at all – we see in front of us a literally end-less process of purification. We can be secretly influenced and controlled in ways, we are not even aware of, and therefore we will never reach the purity of the moral law, it seems. If you see this from a Brandomian perspective, you could say that the total overview of our language and norms will never fully be obtained, and therefore we cannot be said to purify our behaviour entirely – if you start from normal morality and try to 'work your way' to the extra-moral through a process of improvement and purification, you will never arrive. Therefore, the whole idea of an extra-moral act has an obsessive ring to it – it seems to be a wish for a kind of perfection that is 'otherworldly' and maybe even *immoral*, since it is not something one can justify in normal morality terms. It is important here, however, as Alenka Zupančič has reminded us, that the 'patholo-gical' in Kant is not to be understood in opposition to the 'normal'. On the contrary, the two coincide. The actions that one performs in nor-mal morality, are not only pathological because of the incompleteness of our prudence or lack of overview of what it is that we are saying and doing, but because *normality as such is pathological*. What is pathological is entirely normal, it is what we do and how we behave, *zunächst und zumeist* (Zupančič, 2000, p. 7). The opposite of the pathological is the *moral*, which is thus literally 'unnormal', or impossible, as I have called it. The question is: how is an 'unnormal' act that can not be recognized with

certainty, and indeed seems to be impossible from the normal morality point of view, nonetheless be performed? To answer this, we must reverse the relation between moral law and pathological normality and see it not as an endless process of liberation and purification (nor as the pure denial or refusal of action in general), but as an intrusion of the unnormal *into* normality. Here is Zupančič' acute observation, which turns the critique of formalism on its head:

> The crucial question of Kantian ethics is thus not 'how can we eliminate all the pathological elements of will, so that only the pure form of duty remains?' but, rather, 'how can the pure form of duty itself function as a pathological element, that is, as an element capable of assuming the role of the driving force or incentive of our actions?' (Zupančič, 2000, pp. 15–16)

The question is, in other words, how to invert John Searle's old slogan and instead ask: 'How to derive an is from an ought?' How can something be a real action and nonetheless be motivated by a pure ought that involves no other relation than that of a pure demand of reason to a reasonable subject? To investigate this, we shall first elaborate further on the background of the appearance of the 'pure form of duty' or of the categorical imperative as a demand of reason to itself, and thereby as something which enables the human being to reach 'beyond' both pre-moral and normal moral types of action. The moral law, according to Kant, is a 'fact of reason' (*Faktum der Vernunft*), i.e. it is something that shows itself as a fundamental quality of reason. It is undeniably there, it imposes itself on us, and there is no way to go 'behind it' to justify it. It simply demands. You could even go one step further: The fact of reason itself, the fact that *reason is*, is proof of the reality of the moral law. Reason, namely, is structured in such a way that it necessarily poses the demand of the moral law to its subjects, reasonable beings. The wager of this chapter is that the 'fact of reason' should be understood in the following way: as the structural necessity that reason as a whole is open-ended, and that this very open-ended-ness is the precondition of morality in the Hard Kantian sense. It is a fact of reason, if you will, that reason is not just a navigation instrument in a space of giving and asking for reasons. It also, by necessity, aspires for something more and this *more* opens up in the open-ended-ness, or the lack, of any 'normal' order, because it does not find rest in speculative reason. First of all, we must therefore

identify the crack in the edifice of normal morality. We will take the first step towards deriving an is from an ought by identifying the ought itself as the demand that reason poses to itself.

3.1. Normativity all the way up?

All our cognition starts from the senses, goes from there to the understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is nothing higher to be found in us.

(CPR: B 355)

In Chapter 1, we saw that the Heideggerian ambition of an 'Auf-das-Ganze-gehen' in the investigation of freedom and morality marks a separation line for what was defined as 'Soft' and 'Hard' Kantians. You could even talk of a kind of shibboleth, which separates the doves from the hawks: Do they ask the question of Being – the question which Heidegger identified as the question of metaphysics: 'Why is there anything at all, and not rather nothing?', i.e. do they have anything to say about the relation between the 'starry heaven above' and the 'moral law within'? Even though this question immediately sounds like the exact opposite of something relevant for a consideration of moral principles, namely like an ontological question, and thus something belonging to 'theoretical' philosophy, rather than 'practical', it plays a fundamental role in (Hard) Kantian thinking on moral action. This question, namely, has a practical impact on human thinking and thus exactly on what is 'possible' for humans. Indeed, there are theoretical questions of two sorts that are important to a discussion of Kantian morality: one concerning the cognitive discursive structures of normal morality (how to derive an ought from an is), which can be investigated in the capabilities of a language using animal that has been initiated into the ethical, or *sittliche*, life of second nature, and one concerning the lacking closure of the linguistic reality of normal morality *as a whole* (which opens the space for the pure form of duty and thus the 'ought' from which an 'is' is to be derived). Soft and Hard Kantians get along on the first part, but are separated on the second. Therefore, Hard Kantians tend to believe that Soft Kantians stand back from going-onto-the-whole (while Soft Kantians, on the other hand, sometimes consider Hard Kantians to have gone off the rails).

According to Robert Brandom, '[t]he category of cognitive discursive commitments [. . .] enjoys a certain explanatory priority over that of

practical discursive commitment' (Brandom, 1998, p. 233). The practical commitment is a commitment to act, but it is dependent on the same structure of inferences that pertain to the cognitive status of knowing and believing-that. The cognitive structure of the type of action, which I have described as normal morality, is explicated by Brandom as follows:

> Action depends on reliable dispositions to respond differentially to the acknowledging of certain sorts of commitments (the adoption of deontic attitudes and consequent change of score) by bringing about various kinds of states of affairs. (ibid., p. 235)

Cognitive and practical discursive commitments are both fundamentally normative, but also fundamentally linguistic in character. *Responding* to a situation in a certain way depends on a reliable *disposition* to doing so, which has been acquired or learned in the process of initiation into the whole network of signification. Just as believing that Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia means being 'objectively' committed to believing that Philadelphia is to the East of Pittsburgh, a 'competent agent under suitable circumstances responds to the acquisition of a commitment to flip the light switch by flipping the light switch' (ibid., 235). If she does not flip the light switch, we will start doubting in her commitment to doing so. This game of being committed and entitled takes place within the realms of the 'space of reasons' or the 'normal morality', as I have called it. In normal morality, any action is always already embedded in a network of signification. To think 'I want to flip the light switch' entails commitment to the action of actually flipping the light switch. This thought has been made possible only through the gradual coming to awareness of an important chunk of socio-linguistic reality, including knowledge of what it means to flip light switches, when it might be a good idea, etc. As Brandomians like to put it, there is 'normativity all the way down'[5] – we do not have a non-normative Given of some sort, which informs our intentions without mediation. The inclination to flip a light switch, to stay in the terms of this example, is not 'merely' caused by sensual impulses of darkness and some desire to see, etc., *nor* is it caused by 'first' some sensual impulses, and *then* some rational considerations of the sort 'how do I respond to these impulses?' The flipping itself is a sort of action that is integrated in mastery of a language. We *know* how to do something, because we are rational creatures endowed with a language, and this doing is not the result of a piecemeal construction of sense impressions + categorization + deliberation + intention. It is the sort of thing that creatures like us do. Once you are in the game, you

are a linguistic creature in everything you do, and the knowledge you possess is always already articulated in language. This means, in other words, that the 'second nature' receptivity towards the surrounding environment is markedly different from 'first nature' receptivity, in the sense that second nature is not just an 'additional layer' that we possess besides our receptive faculties. Although our eyes, ears, tactility, etc. do have obvious physical resemblances with those of other creatures, we *employ* them in a different way. In a discussion with Gareth Evans (in *Mind and World*), John McDowell has made this point very convincingly, I think:

> Instead we can say that we have what mere animals have, perceptual sensitivity to features of our environment, but we have it in a special form. Our perceptual sensitivity to our environment is taken up into the ambit of the faculty of spontaneity, which is what distinguishes us from them. (McDowell, 1996, p. 64)

Acquiring the ability to use language is like dissolving tea in a cup of hot water; it changes the very substance, but it nonetheless remains within the frames of something that can be rather straight forwardly explained in naturalistic terms. There is water in both a cup of water and a cup of tea, but the cup of tea tastes differently – not of 'water and tea', but of 'tea'. Just like a cup of tea, once it has been made, is not separated in two elements, which together constitute the cup of tea, so is human experience not separated in two elements, which together constitute experience. Language permeates our mode of being, just like tea permeates water. Here is John McDowell again:

> Exercises of spontaneity belong to our mode of living. And our mode of living is our way of actualizing ourselves as animals. [. . .] This removes any need to try to see ourselves as peculiarly bifurcated, with a foothold in the animal kingdom and a mysterious separate involvement in an extra-natural world of rational connections. (McDowell, 1996, p. 78)

Once you have 'risen' to second nature, spontaneity permeates your entire being, and there is normativity 'all the way down' to your most animalistic impulses and inclinations. If you have learned a language, your impressions, inclinations and desires are always already guided or structured by the language, you speak. You are wearing glasses, which cannot just be taken off again, to see how that which you see 'really' or 'immediately' or 'originally' is. Your vision is changed (and this can be understood even non-metaphorically (as opposed to the glasses).) Once you are inside there is no return to

pre-linguistic immediacy – a fundamental insight in both Kant and Hegel, which has been articulated and refined in various ways in post-linguistic turn philosophy, whether it be Gadamerian hermeneutics or Sellarsian analytics. The question to ask in our context, therefore, is not whether there is *really* normativity all the way down – I agree with and admire the treatment of this question in both Brandom and McDowell – but whether there is (also) normativity all the way *up*. And whether there is nonetheless a genuine question of a 'peculiar bifurcation' to be asked, which can not be reduced to a 'childish' dualism, which Platonists and Kantians supposedly hold. The real question is not whether something magical flies in from another realm, but whether the essence of *this* realm, in which we live and breathe, produces a certain surplus, which introduces a loop or an opening. Granted that the receptivity of the human animal is like a natural substance ('water') permeated by a cultural form of life ('tea'), the question, we are after is, whether that is all there is to say. Are human beings moral creatures only because and in virtue of language, tradition, culture, i.e. broadly speaking because of the learned ability to *do things with words*, or is there another 'level' that enables us, as if from outside, to overrule the uses and practices, which we have otherwise come to appreciate and respect? My claim of course is that there is *not* normativity all the way up, and that this realization is the precursor for the understanding of the place of the categorical imperative as an ought that 'interrupts' and changes the normativity that otherwise permeates our being. Seeing the human being as 'second nature⁺' entails that the human is 'peculiarly bifurcated' between itself and its own excess. The relation between these two dimensions is not one between two substances, but between the second nature linguistic being in all its concretion and *itself in as far as it relates to this concretion as a whole.*

3.2. A capacity that separates human from itself

Now, a human being really finds in himself a capacity by which he distinguishes himself from all other things, even from himself insofar as he is affected by objects, and that is reason.

(Groundwork 4:452)

The entrance into the game of giving and asking for reasons separates the human mode of existence from the first nature animal kingdom. It even gives sensuality an entirely new meaning. Our sensuality or receptivity becomes another sort of capacity once it has been endowed with

linguistic normativity; once it has been 'enriched' with the all-pervasive tea bag of language. This actualization 'distinguishes us from them', in John McDowell's phrase. A human being becomes 'one of us' by displaying adequate capabilities of making moves, inferences, substitutions and anaphora, within the space of giving and asking for reasons, in ways which parrots and dogs and trees do not. However, to a Hard Kantian there is a further separation which takes place – namely one of 'human from itself.' Human cannot only be separated from 'all other things', but also 'from itself' – as the quotation from the *Groundwork* above indicates. This latter capacity, to be separated from oneself, is Reason – and more specifically reason in the narrow sense. It separates us, drives us out from our own normality – or: from ourselves.

Reason in Kant, has (at least) two meanings: a broad and a narrow. While reason in the broad sense of the word means something like the entirety of the ability, which creatures like us (and possibly others) have to experience, judge, infer, deliberate and speculate, it also has, what Axel Hutter has called a 'narrow' meaning (see e.g. Hutter, 2003, p. 26), which specifies the famous Kantian distinction of *Verstand* and *Vernunft.* The shibboleth that distinguishes Hard from Soft Kantians could also be defined as the question of the status of reason in the narrow sense. The narrow sense of reason, namely, refers to the capacity, which goes *beyond* what is exhausted in the investigations of the transcendental conditions of intuition (*Anschauung*) and understanding (*Verstand*), and thus beyond the investigation of the intimate connection between receptivity and spontaneity. Reason in the narrow sense concerns the dialectical employment of reason, which is a result of the ability to infer from one set of facts or convictions to another, and which ultimately deals with the most fundamental philosophical questions: What is there and why? The drive towards the absolute is a logical drive. It emanates from the same capacity to infer, which marks the distinction of language using human animals. Inference, moving around in the web of language, separates us from first nature beings, but it also separates us from ourselves. The first is the result of *acquiring* the ability; the second is the result of *applying* this ability to its own results. It leads us into thinking thoughts which reach beyond what we (as second nature concept mongers) can comprehend. We can, in other words, discern two different aspects of the capability to infer: a broadly rational aspect, and a narrowly rational. Both imply an 'ought': a normative force in reasonable discourse in a broad sense, you could say a normativity that permeates the human mode of being, and a 'narrow ought' which is the categorical imperative.

The 'ought' of Soft Kantianism is indeed a *rational* ought, as Brandom emphasizes. There is an inherent obligation in using concepts, which applies even when we are not consciously aware of it. When I do or say something, I am always already making a move in a game that has an enormously complex set of rules of connections. If, for instance, my move has damaging consequences for someone, I might be obligated to stop doing it, and someone (maybe someone else, an observer) might be morally justified in informing me about that. Say I want to be nice to a waitress in a restaurant, which I often visit, and give her a good tip every time I eat there. Maybe this friendly gesture at one point generates suspicion and jealousy from her boyfriend, and one of her friends asks me to stop doing it. If my reaction simply is 'But I just wanted to be kind to her,' the friend might reasonably respond by saying: 'Then stop doing it!' When I get to know some of the connections, which I was not aware of, my obligations might change (or more precisely: I can become aware that they were other than I thought).[6] If I am committed to being nice to the girl, I might be committed to *stop* treating her in the way, I have been. I can be told that other kinds of action, than I thought, follow from what I am thinking or intending or that I ought to do something, which I am not aware of at all. It is a kind of infliction of reasons, which we do to each other: '[S]omeone with those beliefs and those desires is rationally obliged or committed to act in a certain way' (Brandom, 1998, p. 56). This holds for morally important situations like the tip in the restaurant, but also generally, and therefore something can be made clearer about the morally relevant dimensions of the (Brandom-type) 'rational ought' by looking at the cognitive dimensions more carefully. A fundamental quality of our commitments and entitlements, to Brandom, is that they are *inferentially connected*, whether we know it or not.

It follows from a set of beliefs (conscious or unconscious) that we ought to act in a certain way, and the ability to appreciate such inferential relations is exactly what distinguishes 'us' from first nature creatures and apparatuses, as we gradually acquire more and more conscious mastery of our vocabularies. Concepts are essentially inferentially articulated (ibid., p. 89), and when you grasp in practice what can be inferred from your beliefs, you are already a player in the game; you master 'the proprieties of inference that govern the use of other concepts and contents [than the one you are articulating, HJB] as well' (ibid., 90).

Brandom's view is a sort of 'inferentialist holism'. He changes the perspective of traditional (analytic) philosophy of knowledge and almost performs an inverted Copernican revolution to answer the much debated

problem 'What is justified true belief?' To Brandom, the justification and truth of a sentence is not a matter between a speaker and a fact 'out there'. It is always already a socially mediated matter of commitments and entitlements, which is ultimately decided, not by the individual utterer of a statement, nor by some independent, 'objective' procedure of verification (which the utterer could perform on the world), but by the scorekeeper. Instead of representation, therefore, inference becomes the central focal point of knowledge, because getting it right means knowing what is implied by, what can be inferred from, statements just as much as knowing what a case of its fulfilment 'looks like'; indeed you wouldn't even understand the latter without the former: (human) receptivity is structured like a language. Kant's great achievement in this connection was to emphasize the sentential structure of experience, i.e. that our experience is linguistic in nature. He famously wrote that the 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations (*Vorstellungen*), but the 'I think' was not to be understood as a self-conscious awareness of oneself in all apprehension of the surrounding world. Rather: 'That action of the understanding [. . .], through which the manifold of given representations (whether they be intuitions or concepts) is brought under an apperception in general, is the logical function of judgments.' (CPR: B 143). What the 'I think' represents is a synthesis of the manifold in a representation for a consciousness, which means that there must be a structuring principle behind anything being represented at all. This structuring principle 'through which the manifold of given representations is brought under an apperception' is the logical function of judgement.

Brandom, as already noticed, praises Kant for having identified judgement as the 'fundamental unit of awareness or cognition' (Brandom, 1998, p. 79), and emphasizes that the implications of this insight should be explicated as practice (in a linguistic community) and de-intellectualized. Although, namely, the insight into the discursivity of experience was a genuine philosophical breakthrough with Kant, the radical consequences of this insight were not explicated by Kant himself. He did 'systematically create' the division of the categories 'on the basis of the common principle of the capacity for judgment', but then concluded that the pure concepts of the understanding derived from this capacity were somehow 'contained in the understanding a priori' (CPR: B 107). Kant's mistake was, in other words, that he canonized the categories as eternal, intellectual structures (Brandom, 1998, p. 86). The linguistic turn in philosophy since the beginning of the twentieth century could in this context be seen as the investigation of the consequences of Kant's original insight, which Kant passed

in too much haste, if you will – referring them to 'hidden' capacities in the depth of the soul or to a blind functioning of nature, which must remain inaccessible to us. To take the Kantian insight further was therefore rightly considered to be what could be called a project of a 'critique of pure language', be it in strictly logical investigations, pragmatic philosophy of language, post-Hegelian intersubjective rationalism, or other varieties. Again: I consider myself a relatively loyal subject of the linguistic revolution – there are certain short cuts to 'the depth of the human mind' where Kant places a number of capacities, which are no longer eligible. However, refraining from insisting on the 'eternal structure of the understanding' or the 'blind but indispensable function of the soul' (CPR: B 103) does not mean that you can't follow Kant in drawing crucial conclusions from the way judgement and inference function – conclusions that do in fact point in direction of something in the linguistic capacity 'more' than the linguistic capacity itself without falling into 'rampant Platonism'.

Brandom-type inferentialism does not consider one particular aspect of the capacity in competent language users for inference, which is of fundamental importance to Kant. If the capacity of inference were a coin you could say that Brandomians consider only its upper, pragmatic, side, while Hard Kantians – and indeed Kant himself – consider the other side as well. In other words: Even if you accept the context-sensitive holistic inferentialism in Brandom (and implicitly in McDowell) a question remains of a further use, to which the capacity for inference can be put.

To infer not only gives us the ability to manoeuvre in the 'space of giving and asking for reasons', but also to follow a *line* of thought to its conclusion. More precisely, the ability to infer can be put to use by the *understanding* or by *reason* (in the narrow sense). In the *Verstandesgebrauch*, inference, to Kant, serves much the same purpose as it does to Brandom. It enables us to make a statement in the awareness of its conditioned relation to other (meaningful) statements of more or less generality. In the *Vernunftgebrauch*, however, inference forces the subject to move beyond the understanding or the realm of that which can be object of a possible experience. Inferring from A to B fosters the inclination to infer further from B to x: If A is depending on B, then what does B itself depend on? The *Vernunftgebrauch* is thus not a scholastic speculation on imagined questions from another realm, but another way of making use of the same, reasonable capability that we use in everyday discourse – another direction it might take, if you will; following a line of thought by applying the capacity for inference on its own results. Once you have learned how it is done, inference *can* take you on wild journeys: How far can this ability take us? Is there a way to find

the first link in such a series of dependency? Ultimately, the ability to infer and 'speculate' leads to the 'ideas of Reason', i.e. the ideas of some-thing at the end of a series of inferences – something without further conditions, which conditions the conditioned. We 'are brought to' pure concepts of reason by 'necessary inferences of reason' (CPR: B 397). One of the main results of the transcendental dialectics is to show how we necessarily tacitly rely on such ideas in our everyday discourse, with a sort of implicit under-standing that we *would have* reached them as fundaments of our knowledge and practices, by way of inference, *if* we had made the dialectical effort of spelling it out. The dialectics of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is supposed to spell it out, to make it explicit, by taking the capacity of inference to its (own) conclusion. Kant is applying reason to itself and investigating what status and function the ideas can ultimately gain from a critical philosoph-ical scrutiny, in other words: he makes explicit what we usually pass over in silence. The question is, however, if this explicitation has the same result as the one, which is performed in analytic philosophy – i.e. philosophy that investigates the preconditions of meaning and experience – does it arrive at a closed economy, where there is normativity all the way up, or is the result of dialectics itself two-sided, such that it partly explicates the ideas of reason that we must rely on, and partly, simultaneously, shows that there is something fundamentally illusory about such a reliance? I claim, as it might have become clear, that the latter is the case and that this has liberating implications for thinking and action.

Metaphorically speaking, a competent user of language is like a com-petent wanderer in a forest: she is not only able to orient herself in the forest, to find connections and pathways and know how different trees are different, but also to follow paths that are directed *outwards* of the forest. And, as it is well known, the one sure way to find a way out of the forest is to continue walking consistently in the same direction. Because of the ability to move consistently in one direction, she might get an idea of the whole forest – and of its status: is there only forest, and could there only be forest? In other words: the very same ability, which gradually makes competent language users able to infer from 'That is red' to 'That is not green', i.e. to manoeuvre in and take responsibility for the language, they use, also installs in them an ability or a drive towards the universal.

Inference makes us able to organize and make explicit our knowledge. If I say that 'all hats in this room are red', and 'this hat is in this room', and 'therefore this hat must be red', then I give a concept of the totality of hats in this room and draw some implications from it. The ability to thus think a predicate 'in its whole domain' (CPR: B 379) is a useful means of

becoming aware of what follows from what we are saying and doing. To be able to think something in its 'whole domain', however, we must have an idea of an entirety or universality as such. We can, so to say, go from the particular to the universal and back: This hat -> all hats -> 'Well, not *all* hats in the universe, but nonetheless all hats in this room.' Speaking pragmatically, there seems to be an inherent grasp of universality already in the very first linguistic practices. Having learned that something is red implies having gained the ability to see something red as an instance of something being red in a general sense – and thereby being able to infer from what it means to be red to what it means not being green, etc. You can only *say* that something is red, if you know in a more general sense what it means that something is red (although you can, like the parrot, *utter* the sounds 'This is red' without knowing anything in general). Thereby, we could say that learning language is at all only possible when you have obtained a sense, if not an explicit idea, of the universal. Holism is inherent to language as such; some dialectics of particularity and universality must always already, consciously or unconsciously, be at stake in order for someone to be a competent speaker. Otherwise, she/he would exactly only be like a parrot responding to stimuli without *saying* anything. Speaking in terms of the passage from first to second nature, you could say that children *learn* universality by learning language. They come to see red hats and red bicycles *as* red, and thereby implicitly rely on a concept of the totality of all things red.

Again, from another angle: The Wittgensteinian slogan that light dawns gradually upon the whole, should be read with an emphasis on 'whole'. We presuppose the world as a whole, even when we perceive something red, although we silently accept that this 'whole' cannot be grasped as such. In this sense, language is a Stalinist phenomenon, as Ernesto Laclau once remarked[7]: we must proceed as if there were a coherent, total overview – as if our concepts made sense, one could almost say. The initiation into a language and a (moral) culture is a forced choice, as we saw in Chapter 2, and once you are in, you are part of a network of signification, which no one masters in its entirety. The relation of any competent language user to the absolute is thus always already paradoxical: unavoidable and impossible at the same time. It is unavoidable in the sense that it is both inherent in language 'from the beginning' and appears as a problem of fundamental interest to reason 'in the end' – and impossible in the sense that the idea of the absolute totality of conditions, or of things, remains inaccessible to the understanding. The point of separation between, in this case, Robert Brandom, and the understanding of Kant's view of reason as a whole, which

I am after, is that according to the latter, the relation to the whole, to every-thing, must be tacitly presupposed in even the simplest experience. It plays a role – and this role is what can only be made explicit in a metaphysical investigation that takes the form of an 'Auf-das-Ganze-gehen.'

Timothy Williamson, in his investigation of the concept of 'Everything' (Williamson, 2003), has shown how 'everything' must be understood as absolutely, unrestrictedly, everything in order for language even to work as it does. When, about to take a flight, I say that 'Everything is packed into my carry-on baggage,' I do not mean everything in the entire universe, but everything which I need to bring with me on the journey. But the grasp of the very idea of 'everything' presupposes an understanding of everything pure and simple, not 'everything except a few grains of sand in Australia' (Williamson, 2003, p. 417). I would say, paraphrasing Williamson: To even use the concept of everything to describe 'everything packed in to my carry-on baggage', one must have a pre-philosophical understanding of everything, pure and simple. Williamson argues against what he calls 'generality-relativists', i.e. someone who claims that it is impossible to gen-eralize over everything and therefore infers that a statement of generality must always be constrained to a specific domain. 'Everything' must always be understood as relative to everything-something, the generality-relativist claims; a set of objects over which alone the quantification generalizes, like the sentence 'everything is packed into my carry-on luggage'. Williamson shows that generality-relativism is self-defeating in two senses, and I shall shortly summarize one of them here.

The generality-relativist maintains that it is impossible to quantify over everything. And, as Williamson continues, 'the generality-relativist, who does not pretend to do the impossible, therefore admits' that 'I am not quantifying over everything,' whenever generalizing. But I think Williamson would want to say that this means chickening out: If you say, for instance, that 'no donkey talks', you are not just saying something about a limited set of things (donkeys). You are saying about everything that there is no such thing as a donkey that talks: 'Generality-relativists have not earned the right to employ an absolutist understanding of "every donkey" while rejecting as illusory an absolutist understanding of "everything" ' (ibid., p. 444). If you say 'I am not quantifying over everything', you are saying that there is *something*, which you are not quantifying over. In Brandomian, the generality-relativist is, by implication and whether she/he knows it or not, committed to the sentence 'Something is not being quantified over by me' when saying 'I am not quantifying over everything.' But the sen-tence that 'Something is not being quantified over by me' is a *predication* of

something, in the sense that something must satisfy the condition of being thus described – i.e. there must be something over which this sentence is being quantified. This gives the paradoxical conclusion that: 'Something over which the generality-relativist is quantifying at t_0 is not being quantified over by the generality-relativist at t_0' (ibid., p. 428).

Williamson's analysis exactly shows that the absolute generality of everything must be presupposed (as an idea, I would say) whenever quantifying over any specific, context-dependent domain. But simultaneously, I believe, he ends up showing that the idea of the world as a totality or a whole in the Kantian sense cannot be some thing external to the things that exist within it. Williamson shows, in a strictly technical manner and of course without describing it in this way, that language is a Stalinist phenomenon, but he does not show that what is being quantified over when someone uses the phrase 'absolutely everything' is an unproblematic unity that can be apprehended by the understanding *as* something. In other words, Williamson is doing logics, not ontology, and he runs the risk of making an illegitimate move from the first to the latter when beginning to speculate *what* everything is, which he seems to be tempted to do. As a constitutive concept, 'everything' must be relative to a domain, but this does not mean that it cannot have a perfectly meaningful regulative function: indeed, the constitutive use presupposes a tacit understanding of the regulative use. In a sense, which will hopefully become clearer throughout this and the following chapter, Williamson makes explicit the tacit presupposition of an idea of 'everything' – the whole of which everything is a part. He can therefore be said to make an 'Auf-das-Ganze-gehen' in this specific sense. However, by making explicit the necessity of a reliance on some idea of everything, he does not do two things: He does not say or (intend to) prove what everything is, and he does not answer the question of whether the logical necessity of a concept of everything means that 'everything' is an unproblematic problem in Kant's sense. In other words: By showing that one *must* rely on a concept of everything, one does not show that the concept of everything that one relies on is coherent and unproblematic. As I shall make explicit, Kant's point is exactly that the idea of everything is *both necessary and illusory*.

What all this is supposed to say is that if there were normativity all the way up, there would be no such thing as dialectical reason, or maybe more precisely: *because* there is dialectical reason (reason in the narrow sense) there is not normativity all the way up. Although 'everything' is a necessary and meaningful concept in its absolute generality, it does not provide us with a closed ontological economy. Rather, the lesson to be learned from

Williamson's investigation is similar to the one sketched above that language has an inherent (and paradoxical) totalizing aspect. We proceed by and with an implicit understanding of the 'whole' of 'everything' or of 'universality', a pre-ontological relation to the 'absolute', but this understanding cannot be made explicit, or rather: making it explicit means something entirely different from making other 'normal' commitments and entitlements explicit. The dialectics of reason, which can exactly be seen as the making explicit of the implications of the dialectics of the particular and the universal, ends in the inherent tension of reason, and any attempt at 'closing the gap' by an explanation to end all explanations, a designation of something as 'everything' or rather of 'everything' as something ('everything is water,' 'everything is atoms,' 'everything is nature,' 'everything is nothing'), only results in new questions. Making explicit the concept of totality, which we are implicitly committed to in the way we use language, thus means making explicit an inherent tension in language itself.

The implicit grasp of universality, which a competent language user acquires, *the very idea of universality*, can become an explicit topic of thought itself – and thus foster questions of the unconditioned. If inferring from A to B fosters the thought of which x B itself depends on, then this thought gives rise to the question of an X, which is not depending on anything else, the first link in the line, the unconditioned, the 'highest unity', as Kant calls it in the quotation that opened this chapter. The pure concept of reason arises through the concept of the unconditional as such – that which conditions the conditioned. Is there something which conditions the most universal domain imaginable – everything – and is not itself conditioned?

Kant distinguishes three different modes of inference and accordingly describes three metaphysical problems that issue from them. The chain of inferences in the *Vernunftgebrauch* of reason 'ends up' in three metaphysical ideas: The categorical mode of inference 'contains' the idea of the complete subject; the hypothetical the idea of the completed set / line of conditions; and the disjunctive the idea of a complete totality of everything possible. (Prolegomena 4: 330, CPR: B396–398). Employing the ability to infer from something to something else, which was the central parameter to distinguish a language-user from a parrot, in other words, leads us into metaphysical thinking. It enables us to navigate in the enormous field of language, but also dares us to move *beyond* it, or to move towards the limits of language, if you will. In the first type of *Vernunftschlüsse*, the categorical inference insists on the existence of a subject that is identical to itself regardless of, or 'outside', any phenomenal appearances (A=A). In the second, the hypothetical inference (A->B) leads to the idea of a complete, or

closed, line of grounding. And in the third, the complete concept of the possible is created from the disjunctive inference (AvBvCvD . . .). We get, in other words, the ideas of the soul, the world and God, from employing our capacity for reasoning to its conclusion. In each case, however, we have to realize that the concluding point in our reasoning has led us out of bounds. Once the very idea of universality has been coined in an image of some concrete *noumenon*, some-thing which may or may not exist, (a 'highest thing' (*Seiende*) to once again humour the Heideggerians), we have trespassed the limits of what can be expressed in language. What we encounter at the end of inference is therefore really an 'other side of inference', a sort of 'quantum leap'. To finish a line of reasoning by putting a concrete conditioning but not itself conditioned idea at the end of inference is what could, exactly, be called 'jumping to conclusions', which is clear, for instance, from the example of redness. The fact that different things share a quality of looking red does not at all necessarily imply that there is a red 'substance' or even an idea of 'redness' in the (childish) Platonic sense that is distributed among them. Learning that something is red means to learn a language. It is a perfectly legitimate endeavour to move from a statement, e.g. 'The hat is red', to its implications in any part (of any size) of the linguistic web of inferences, e.g. 'The hat is coloured' or 'The hat is not green' or 'Something is red in this room' (if the hat is in the room), but to establish some point of reference without any further possible inference, e.g. 'Redness exists in a different realm of reality, into which we cannot inquire, but only partake,' is a violation of the rules of the game. This is simultaneously, I think, a rather precise explanation of why McDowell and consorts do *not* go down that road. In other words: To accept the 'last' inference and conclude to the existence of a noumenon in a mode expressible in our language would be to make an illegitimate move. Ideas of reason cannot be constitutive in this sense – we cannot legitimately infer to their existence. It would be a postulate of an empty concept, since there would be no (logically) possible *Anschauung* of a noumenal existence (while, for instance, inferring from the existence of Aristotle to the existence of his parents does not imply the postulate of a concept which cannot logically have a meaningful content, although we are practically speaking very unlikely to ever have anything that would resemble an *Anschauung* of Mr and Mrs Aristotle. We might in fact stumble on some remainders from their time, and we certainly, if we have a good imagination, might *picture* directly what they could have looked like.)

For a post-Wittgensteinian quietism, the conclusion to be drawn from the illegitimacy of treating the ideas of reason as constitutive is that

metaphysics in the classical sense should be abandoned. The task of philosophy is to show that what we considered to be problems were no problems at all. As Justus Hartnack once described it, Kant's aim could be seen as a very Wittgensteinian one: 'to cure us from the dialectics of reason' (Hartnack, 1969, p. 132). He sees the purpose of the dialectics of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as directly comparable to Wittgenstein's description of the philosopher as a therapist of philosophical problems: The philosopher treats a question, like an illness. Hartnack claims that there is no important difference between Kant's use of 'reason' and Wittgenstein's use of 'language', and goes on to 'translate' the purpose of the *Critique of Pure Reason* into a purely linguistic setting, e.g.: 'The aim of the critique of pure reason is to free ourselves from the antinomies and to show that reason is not in conflict with itself' can be translated into: 'The aim of the critique of the logic of our language is to free us from the problems and perplexities and to show that language is in order as it is' (ibid., p. 133). According to Hartnack, in other words, the critique of pure reason is in fact 'translatable' into a critique of pure language, and thereby the Kantian project becomes fundamentally the same as a post-Wittegensteinian therapeutic philosophy of language. Hartnack, however, as most Soft Kantians, reads the *Critique of Pure Reason* only until (B 294): On 'the ground of the distinction of all objects in general into phenomena and noumena', or more precisely: he takes *seriously* only what is going on before that division. The rest is therapy.

On the great metaphysical ocean outside the land of truth, which we travelled through on the journey of the transcendental aesthetics and analytics, foggy clouds of metaphysical speculation tempt us with promises of insight into the fundaments of the world – but we should not be fooled: they are promises that cannot be fulfilled. Hartnack draws the conclusion that what we have to learn is that they cannot be fulfilled – and that we should therefore stay on the Island of Truth.

My point here is almost exactly the opposite of Hartnack's. It is precisely in the antinomies of reason that the real interest of reason lies. They represent the culmination of the critique, rather than an obstacle that is overcome. In other words: doing semantic philosophy, investigating the grammar of linguistic communities, etc., is a perfectly legitimate business. But claiming that the dialectics of reason is just a ladder one has to climb only to throw it away means missing the most important aspects of dialectics. Although the comparison between Kantian 'reason' and Wittgensteinian 'language' does make a lot of sense, it is taken too far when the post-Wittgensteinian therapeutic project is taken to be the measure of any legitimate philosophical endeavour. More specifically, it

overlooks the most important outcome of Kant's theoretical project – and (thereby) also the relation between theoretical and practical philosophy: the passage from the former to the latter.

Brandom and McDowell are usually more modest (than e.g. Hartnack) about the scope of their work. Although they too read almost exclusively the transcendental analytics in Kant's first critique and turn it into a theory of language, they do (implicitly or explicitly) acknowledge that there might be philosophical problems of another kind to investigate as well. But the explicit admonitions of this awareness are few and rarely taken literally for what they are: *de facto* acknowledgement of the existence of problems to philosophy which are left untouched in pragmatic, post-Wittgensteinian analytic philosophy. In *Making It Explicit*, Robert Brandom does actually himself acknowledge, admirably honestly, what must remain untouched in his writing:

> [T]o explain why there are singular terms is in an important sense to explain why there are objects – not why there is something (to talk about) rather than nothing (at all), but rather why what we talk about comes structured as propertied and related objects. (Brandom, 1998, p. 404)

What there is, to a creature endowed with language – brought up into a second nature – comes structured as propertied and related objects. The land of truth, in Kant's metaphor, consists of propertied and related objects, which are 'what we talk about' and thereby the basis for the commitments and entitlements, we distribute among each other. We are always already inside the game, once we start thinking about questioning its fundament, and it is not like we can 'undo' our entrance into our second nature and re-enter in a more 'authentic' way. To explain the features of linguistic reality, however, is not the same as digging into the question of why it is at all *there*. This latter question remains rather intangible to Soft Kantians – something that lures in the back of our heads, but which can't really be a theme for philosophy. Maybe for the Church it can, but not for philosophy. The limits of my language mean the limits of my world (as Brandom quotes Wittgenstein), and it is *in* the world that I have to navigate and act. 'Normal morality' exactly consists in acting in accordance with what is (already) considered moral or 'the right thing to do' within the limits of that language, which alone I understand (cf. Wittgenstein, 1993b, § 5.62). However, there are (at least two) different ways of interpreting the failure of a positive externality to the world, we inhabit. One is to deny any significance of metaphysical questions to philosophical endeavours (or to pass them over in silence); another is to analyse the consequences of the

failure itself. My whole point here is that the very fact that we do *not* find a dogmatic, metaphysical explanation of the origins of the world at the end of the speculative employment of reason is itself a fact of the utmost importance to understanding the preconditions of Kantian moral philosophy. The absence of certain metaphysical answers provides the background on which alone deeds can be properly understood. And – crucially – *the absence itself is only identified by employing the tools of the metaphysical drive in the most radical way.*

One of the main purposes of critical philosophy is indeed to dismantle dogmatic metaphysics with its insistence on a (typically rationalist) explication of what this some-thing at the end of inferences is. However, this does not mean that the questions posed by dialectic reason are simply to be dismissed – on the contrary. As Kant put it famously in the *Prolegomena*, the metaphysical drive is essential to human reason, and it would be just as absurd to give up on metaphysical thinking as it would be to expect us to stop breathing out of fear from unclear air (Prolegomena 4: 367).

Refraining from following a series of thoughts to a possible conclusion would for Kant represent something very much like an outright repression. This does not mean, of course, that a philosophy of language cannot be interesting and worth while without taking specifically metaphysical questions into consideration, but it does mean that understanding the 'human condition', necessarily entails an investigation of the metaphysical drive and its effects. What does it mean to us that we do in fact have a tendency to move from the 'space of reasons' to the ultimate reasons at the bounds of reason? The human cup of tea is added something more in Hard Kantianism; there is a third element to the human being besides receptivity and spontaneity: Reason in the narrow sense, and this third element is the significant element – without it, humans would only be clever animals that communicate in more complex ways than other species. The addition, however, should be seen as nothing but the question of the cup itself. The addition that is made in 'reason in the narrow sense' is not the addition of some spooky substance; rather, the 'third element' is the very ability to *have* the two other elements in the shape that we have them. Staying in the metaphor of a cup of tea: If the tea didn't have some structure or borders, there would be no tea at all, only a wet fluidity mixed up with everything else. The 'additive' in Hard Kantianism is therefore the question of the 'whole' or the structure or the background of the game of giving and asking for reasons as such.

Indeed, as it was shown above, the *way* we communicate seems to *entail* an implicit understanding of ideas that are pursued explicitly in dialectical

reason. We do as a matter of fact rely on some tacit understanding of the universal or 'everything', even when we make an everyday statement like 'The hat in that room is red,' and therefore you could say that experience itself has a third, structuring element, which makes it possible to have a concrete experience, make a concrete statement. We must have an idea of entirety, unity, order, in order to be able to employ even simple inferentially articulated concepts. (The hat is in the room, the room is in the house, the house is in this world). You could say that the dialectics of reason is the quest for this 'entirety' – what is it that we presuppose in our everyday discourse? *Which* kind of 'whole' is it that every experience is part of? Or if you speak in terms of a 'game of giving and asking for reasons': what is this game about? Can you win something?

Dialectics therefore can be said to be an investigation of what it is always already all about to 'creatures like us'. It is only, as Axel Hutter has emphasized, in reason in the narrow sense that we encounter the very interest of reason (*Interesse der Vernunft*): the investigation of pure concepts of reason, including those of the subject, the world and God. However, the interest of reason is an *inter-esse*, a being-in-between, something caught in its own deadlock: reason itself does not allow us to remain standing at one ultimate explanation, or an explanation obtained through an illegitimate leap out of the network of reasons, but it nonetheless continues to move beyond the realm of the understandable. This gives the ideas of reason a 'highly ambiguous' status in terms of the two different ways they may appear – simultaneously as the 'real purpose' of transcendental philosophy and as a mere 'appearance' (*Schein*) which must be criticized from the point of view of 'experience' (Hutter, 2003, p. 26).

The easy, Soft Kantian, way out of this dilemma of course is the one, Hartnack took: to focus entirely on the '*Schein*' that should be criticized from the standpoint of experience – dissolved in a philosophical therapy. The slightly more delicate approach would be to bite the bullet and embrace the, to my mind, unavoidable tension within reason itself as the essence of its own inter-esse. What naturalist or 'common sense' philosophies usually overemphasize is the phenomenal dimension: the 'noumenal sphere' was a transcendental illusion to be overcome and dissolved in philosophical analysis – all there is, is phenomenal. End of story. The straw man of this approach is some sort of 'rampant platonism' (to use McDowell's expression) or a metaphysics of the 'beyond', a substantial noumenal realm, which the human being aspires to be part of or is considered to be part of (through its capacity for freedom, self-consciousness or thinking). McDowell writes, for instance: 'We get this supernaturalism

if we interpret the claim that the space of reason is *sui generis* as a refusal to naturalize the requirements of reason' (McDowell, 1996, p. 78). The space of reason is *sui generis*, to McDowell, only in the sense that it changes water to tea – the human, second nature, condition is something different from first nature responsiveness and instinct. In that way it is indeed distinct. But it is still fluid and drinkable and inside the same cup. What 'rampant platonism' is supposed to do is to lift the space of reason out of nature and make it *sui generis* in the sense that there is nothing at all phenomenal about it, which makes the human being 'peculiarly bifurcated' with one foot in each realm – in the phenomenal as receptive creatures, and in the noumenal as spontaneous. Here is where I disagree with McDowell: The problem is not whether there is a fundamental, metaphysical divide between first and second nature. As indicated in this and the preceding chapter, I endorse the treatment of this question in McDowell. The problem is whether, to a creature endowed with language, culture and the ability to think (dialectically) there is something more than what can be exhausted in terms of moving around within the space of reason, something which *points outwards* in a non-trivial way, although it is not necessarily separated from the space of reason in a 'rampant platonic' realm of spiritual substance. The question is not of the absoluteness of the *sui generis* character of second nature, but of the relation of a thinking, linguistic creature to the totality of that which she/he talks about. Hutter's position is to read Kant as neither of the two alternatives: not a 'phenomenalist', nor a 'rampant platonist' – but the philosopher who identified the paradoxical being-in-between both. The in-between as a philosophical position does not indicate that humans are 'peculiarly bifurcated' with one foot in the phenomenal realm and one in the noumenal, but nonetheless that we *are* peculiarly bifurcated: with one foot in the phenomenal realm and one foot in the *tension between the phenomenal realm and something more than it*. There is a dimension to human beings which is more than merely phenomenal, but not yet noumenal: in-between both, a *je ne sais quois*, an additional layer, a supersensible dimension, which is more-than and less-than at the same time. The ideas of reason are not expressing the noumenal, in any way tangible to the understanding, but they are nonetheless more than merely phenomenal. They indicate the very idea of the absolute and thereby already point beyond the limits of that which can be explicated within the space of reasons. The resulting tension between the space of reasons and something-more-than the space of reasons is the interest of reason – and this tension is absent in Soft Kantianism.

3.3. The institution which overrules all institutions

As Hegel stated in the introduction to his *Science of Logic*, the exact formulations of the antinomies, which Kant employed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, might not have been very fortunate, but he nonetheless for the first time gave a fundamentally important characterization of the necessary contradictions of reason. He removed the air of contingency around dialectics and showed that reason itself contains contradiction. The idea was right, although its formulation remained doubtful (Hegel, 1999b, p. 40).

Similar objections have been made by Schelling, Schopenhauer, and – indirectly – Wittgenstein, who in the *Tractatus* stated that all modes of inference could be reduced to the 'Sheffer's stroke', which would mean that Kant's three metaphysical problems could be reduced to one (the totality of true elementary sentences). Roughly speaking, Wittgenstein declined the question of the paralogisms (the soul) and the transcendental ideal (God), and accepted only the relevance of the cosmological question: Why is there anything at all, rather than nothing? Or, in Wittgensteinese: 'Not *how* the world is, is mystical, but *that* it is.' The *principle* import of the dialectics of reason, however, was uniquely identified by Kant and elaborated further by his successors.

I will partly follow Hegel here in insisting on the principal importance of Kant's insight, rather than going into a detailed analysis of all the three types of problems, ensuing from the dialectical employment of reason according to Kant. But I will nonetheless set the stage for the following chapters by a relatively careful reading of the four antinomies, since they – in my opinion – still represent principal challenges and important insights.

First of all, it is worth noticing one aspect of Kant's considerations, which is not always appreciated. Namely, that there are two types of antinomies – mathematical and dynamical – and that there seems to be an explanatory relation between them that lies in the background of the conditions of possibility of the categorical imperative. The first and the second antinomy concern the extension of the world in space and time, and the division of the world into smallest units (atoms), respectively. They are called mathematical antinomies, because they represent the unconditional thought of the world as a whole – 'the mathematical whole of all appearances and the totality of their synthesis' (CPR: B 446), as Kant puts it. The third and the fourth antinomy concern the causality of the world: the existence of a type of causality that cannot be explained in mechanical terms (according to the laws of nature), and the existence of a cause behind the world as such,

'an absolutely necessary being' (God), respectively. They are called dynamical antinomies, because they represent the unconditional thought of another kind of causality (in or behind the world) than the one described in mechanical (scientific) explanations of causality.

The two 'mathematical' antinomies identify a *lack* – the absent explanation of the world in its totality, or: the absence of a normativity that reaches all the way up, while the 'dynamical' antinomies identify a possible ('positive') surplus to the phenomenal world. My claim is that the two latter become a theme because of the irresolvable conflict in the two first.

The first antinomy consists of proofs of both of the two contradicting claims that 'the world has a beginning in time and is final in extension' (thesis) and that 'the world has no beginning and is infinite in extension as well as in time' (antithesis). On the one hand, the world must have a beginning and be final in extension (otherwise, how could it be at all?). On the other, it cannot be final, since this would immediately raise the question: What is on the other side of the world, then? And: What was before the world? Facing these alternatives, reason ends up in contradiction. Now, it is true that the dissolution of the antinomies consists in showing how the categories of the understanding are applied out of their bounds here. There is no possible experience of the world as a whole, and therefore the question is in an important sense illegitimate – namely in the sense that if we expect an unambiguous answer acceptable to the understanding, we will never be satisfied. But what we can nonetheless say is that the ability to infer from one set of beliefs to another leads us to thinking a thought of something which *goes beyond the understanding*. Reason in the narrow sense forces us to think contradictions which cannot be explained away by a stubborn insistence on what can be the object of a possible *Anschauung*. Contradiction *remains*, although we deny it an understandable object. Put in another way: If there were normativity all the way up, reason would not end in contradiction with itself. It would have an explanation of the world as a whole, which would be acceptable to the understanding. But neither thesis, nor antithesis, can be accepted as the final answer (since the opposite is equally true), and therefore there is 'something about' the idea of the world in its entirety, which remains undecided, or even: fundamentally obscure. Since thesis and anti-thesis are equally true and yet contradictory, there is something 'more real' about the contradiction itself than about each of the two candidates.

Because there is no final solution to the mathematical antinomies, the field is opened to the dynamical. It becomes possible to *think*, in other words, if only as a possibility, that there is a type of causality 'outside'

the mechanical laws of nature, which has caused and continues to cause change, although its workings are unpredictable to the understanding. The question 'why is there anything rather than nothing?' could also be interpreted thus, as having two sides: the world does not 'explain itself' – it merely presents itself to us in the appearances. The world itself, seen not as individual appearances, but as what Kant calls the mathematical whole of all appearances, is not given in any way that can be grasped by the understanding. This fundamental lack at the core of our lives opens the realm of the 'mystical': why do the most fundamental characteristics of the world remain 'inaccessible'? Are they somehow 'hidden' from us, i.e. is there something more than the natural appearances which form the content of science, something which 'escapes' the understanding?

An attempt at dealing with the relation between the two kinds of antinomies (although here I am moving with caution, partly because of the warning Hegel expressed of taking each word of Kant's formulations too literally) could be to imagine that the two theses of the mathematical antinomies were unproblematically true. The world is limited in time and space, and it consists of simple parts. Wouldn't this render the discussion of the metaphysical question of freedom somewhat obsolete? We could imagine the world as a closed economy of a limited set of objects that can be arranged in a vast number of ways, but which basically makes sense. The question of freedom in such a world would indeed seem to be a question of more or less knowledge, ability to oversee more or less complicated situations and act to the best possible outcome. There would be no mysterious speculation on the question of the limits of the world, and therefore no reason to think of freedom as something challenging them or lingering on the edge of them, nor as 'breaking into' the world. (Maybe it is no coincidence to virtue ethics that Aristotle lived in a world that made sense). Put differently, Kant's concept of freedom cannot be merely a question of solving puzzles within the realm of an ontologically closed reality, because this reality itself is not closed or coherent. For all Kant's emphasis on architecture and systematicity, he identified a 'crack in the ontological edifice of reality', as Slavoj Žižek has described it (Žižek, 1997, p. 208), and it is this crack that opens up the questions of freedom and causality in their specific (Hard) Kantian outlook.

The antithesis of the third antinomy says that 'There is no freedom, but everything in the world happens solely in accordance with laws of nature' (CPR: B 473). In the terms stated as the criteria of a free, moral act (in the *Groundwork* especially), the antithesis seems to be confirmed by experience. Or maybe more precisely: It seems to be negatively confirmed by

experience. We can never be sure that an act was really free, and not determined by some pathological (natural) impulse. However, the experience which denies us proof of something happening by 'another kind of causality' is by necessity itself an incomplete experience. Not in the sense that 'a black swan might turn up,' but in the much more radical sense that the totality of that which is experienced is an incoherent concept. The mathematical whole of all appearances is lacking, and it is this lack that produces the possibility of an excess to the world – something that breaks into it, disturbs its normal functioning. Theoretical (or 'speculative') philosophy cannot determine how this something should be imagined to break into the normal order of things. Therefore the third and fourth antinomies cannot be settled either (proving the theses would require a violation of what could principally be accessible to the understanding – it would be a fake proof), but a place is opened, which cannot be closed again by the understanding, because this place is the lack of understanding itself – the wound cut in it by the dialectics of reason. In the second critique, now, Kant writes about this open wound/place at the heart of reason (in the broad sense):

> But I could not realize this thought, that is, could not convert it into cognition of a being acting in this way, not even of its mere possibility. Pure practical reason now fills this vacant place with a determinate law of causality in an intelligible world (with freedom), namely the moral law. (CPrR: 5: 49)

The moral law takes the place of the wound opened by dialectical reason. Thereby, a specific mode of action is made possible. It is one that is neither governed by 'laws of nature', nor by a divine intervention in the world through a noumenal, other-worldly, causality.[8] The case is one, where 'the wound can only be healed by the spear that caused it' (as Parsifal says in Wagner's opera). Reaching out for the unconditional – following a line of thought to its logical conclusion, reason encounters its own lack; the absence of an ultimate explanation of the world of appearance, and therefore it prescribes itself the only possible medicine: 'Fix it!' Things are not functioning according to a coherent, rational principle, so they must.

We derive an is from an ought, when we act on this pure injunction to 'fix it!' Kant's contention is that human beings as rational creatures are capable of acting in a way that transcends mere manoeuvring with and exchange of reasons in a more or less pre-established order, because they must act. We might exist as concept mongers in a world of giving and asking for reasons,

which delineates the coordinates of how and why we are committed and entitled to an infinity of actions, which can never be said to be 'entirely' pure, because we are only 'finite' and 'sensual' creatures.

> But to put everything below the holiness of duty alone and become aware that one can do it because our reason recognizes this as its command and says that one ought to do it: this is, as it were, to raise oneself altogether above the sensible world. (CPrR 5:159)

Reason, therefore, does not give in to 'those grounds which are empirically given, and it does not follow the order of things as they are presented in intuition' (*Erscheinung*) (CPR: B 576), but legislates to itself regardless of the regulation of action and behaviour in the natural world. The very fact of reason, that it is possible to think a type of action that does not comply with the regulations of normality, makes possible a transcendence of normality. As the reader has probably guessed, my wager here is that this transcendence must be understood not only as a transcendence of first nature regularity according to mechanical laws of nature, but also of second nature regularity according to 'institutional' facts of objective ties to commitments and entitlements in giving and asking for reasons. 'The thing is strange enough,' as Kant says, 'and has nothing like it in all the rest of our practical cognition' (CPrR 5:31). The moral law is the institution which overrules all institutions. You can, because you must.

We shall return in Chapter 5 to an investigation of how this 'ultimate institution' might impose itself on a subject directly, i.e. without appearing as a result of an entire critique of reason, but for now the point is exactly that the scrutiny of reason identifies the logical place of the moral law as that which occupies the empty place left by the lack in speculative reason. When the abilities that enable us to experience anything at all – the abilities to judge and infer – are applied to themselves, we end up identifying the 'order of things' as itself lacking, and thereby the possibility of transcending it. The moral law is therefore really the other side of inference. It is the fact of reason, which presents itself to us – we somehow sense it in us, because it is an inherent logical feature of reason itself, and therefore of the capacity which we employ as soon as we learn how to use language.

Chapter 4

As If . . .

[T]he mob of sophists makes a hue and cry over absurdities and contradictions and rails at the regime whose inmost plans they are unable to penetrate, although they too have its benevolent influences to thank for their preservation and even for the culture which puts them in a position to blame and condemn.

(CPR: B 697)

In the paragraph on the 'interest of reason' in the first critique, Kant describes the interest as a double interest (which gives the background for Axel Hutter's description of the interest as an *inter-est*; an in-between). On the one side, there is the practical interest of reason, which is described in the theses of the antinomies. On the other, there is the speculative interest, which is described in the antitheses. You could say that the first is a striving for stability, order and reproduction, while the second is a striving for further inquiry, answers to new questions, and thereby potentially change and instability. Seen from the perspective of practical reason, (1) the world is a limited whole, (2) constructed of basic elements, (3) with free and responsible beings, namely humans and (4) originally created by a necessary creature, namely God. In such a world, things are meaningful and understandable, morality is well founded and its subjects are 'elevated above natural compulsion' (CPR: B 494). The speculative interest of reason, however, does not let us dwell by such dogmatic explanations. It emphasizes the always lurking contradiction to each thesis, which 'robs us of all these supports or at least seems to rob us of them' (ibid.). Seen from the perspective of speculative reason, (1) the world is unlimited in space and time, (2) always more refined in its structure than we expect, (3) endowed entirely with natural causation of the type which can be explained in scientific terms (4) and without any ultimate explanation or a necessary creature.

Don't we have here something like a definition of two different world views – the premodern and the postmodern? In the premodern, religious

dogmatist view of the world, there is coherence, stability and morality – ultimately ensured by divine foresight. In the postmodern condition, there is no guarantee of meaning ('incredulity towards metanarratives', as Jean-François Lyotard defined it (Lyotard,1984, p. xxiv)), only an infinite delay of final answers, and a lack of foundation under morality – ultimately, there are only the rules which we make up as we go along, individually or (maximally) in culturally and historically defined groups. If this description is tentatively right, then Kant's position is of course the one in between: the *modern* world view. Although it is obviously a generalization that threatens to oversimplify matters, I will allow myself to follow the guideline found in Kant's criticism of, what you could call 'ideology of the theses', and 'ideology of the anti-theses', respectively. The first, then, resembles premodern ideology; the second postmodern. It follows, naturally, that this description should be read systematically, rather than historically or chronologically, since there is plenty of premodern ideology around today (isn't the whole debate, for instance, about 'intelligent design' a struggle between premodern and postmodern ideology exactly in this sense?), while Kant's critique of (what I call) postmodern ideology applies to philosophical texts throughout history – especially of course in *pre*-Kantian empiricism.[9] Nonetheless, I use these terms because I think that there is in a fact a very general sense in which you could say that pre-Kantian religious dogmatism and post-Kantian (including contemporary) naturalism fit the description very well, which gives a rough background horizon of understanding for what I am trying to get at. The modern breakthrough, in its Kantian outlook, does have a critical potential that is still highly relevant – not the least in the face of the postmodern conviction of the 'end of ideology'. Reaching back to Kant has the historical dimension of rearticulating something that might have been lost in post-Kantian, linguistic turn philosophy and cultural studies, etc., but it also (and partly thereby) has a normative dimension: We *should* be modern; we should acknowledge the fundamentally tensed quality of reason and the type of criticism and moral imperative it – as a matter of fact (namely the *Faktum der Vernunft*) – engenders. There is a strong tendency not to be modern, if you will, by letting yourself be guided by an 'as if' that structures the everyday, unreflected, culturally mediated apprehension of the world. This 'as if' is not a fictional structure, in the sense that there is 'real' world out there, which we only inauthentically represent in our pragmatic, day-by-day, instrumental models and views, but it is an 'as if' that covers up the fact that all the concrete, and very real, experiences and actions, we have and perform must be guided by an overall sense of coherence and meaning, which enables us to carry

on doing what we do with the implicit or explicit conviction that there is something right about doing it this way; that we are on the 'right track', so to speak. Normal morality is prone to ideology, it *is* ideology, which means that ideology is a 'necessary illusion' in Kant's sense, an 'as if' that cannot be avoided – whether it is an explicit or an implicit ideology. They both share the same structure.

4.1. *Focus imaginarius*

Kant, as it is well known, resolves the tensions of the antinomies of reason by way of the so-called regulative ideas. The transcendental ideas of reason do not have constitutive use, but they do have an eminent and indispensable regulative use, 'namely that of directing the understanding to a certain goal' in what Kant calls a *focus imaginarius,* where 'all its rules converge at one point' (CPR: B 672).

What these ideas show, however, is not so much that the impasse of reason has been overcome, but that we *zunächst und zumeist* necessarily act *as if* they had been resolved. Kant denies the ideas of reason a constitutive use, i.e. he does not allow for the possibility of putting into words a final solution to the problems posed by the antinomies. Nonetheless, we must proceed in our practical dealings as if there were a definite solution to the problems posed by the drive towards the unconditional. Slightly simplified, when we look at ourselves as moral creatures, we must proceed as if we were free, responsible agents, and when we look at ourselves as scientific, speculative creatures, we must proceed as if nature were an infinite network of relations, which can (only) be explained step by step in purely naturalist terms. The two little words 'as if' recur on a number of occasions in the final chapters of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and my claim is that they represent a crucial moment in the conclusion of the dialectics of reason.

In order to orient ourselves in the world and get things done we must proceed as if the metaphysical quandaries were only problems of *Schein* and the world were in fact understandable according to principles (which it *is* – but only when we accept the necessary illusion of the *focus imaginarius*). This does not mean that every moral or scientific endeavour must be accompanied by the conscious awareness that 'I am now seeing myself as a free person/a scientific inquirer', just as little as a concrete everyday experience must be accompanied by the conscious 'I think'. We rely on implicit understandings of the unconditional. Most of the time, we act as pragmatic Brandomians. But the reason for pragmatism in everyday affairs (and in 'normal morality'!) is not that the contradictions of reason have

been overcome by therapeutic post-Wittgensteinian analysis of language. On the contrary: *If* the principle problems of reason had to be resolved – or even effectively *dis*solved with the best of philosophical therapy – before we could really trust our linguistic practices, they would not work at all. We would be caught in a deadlock like the computer in John Badham's 1983 film *War Games* that was set up to play tic-tac-toe against itself.[10] We would, literally, become mad. On the other hand, the mere denial of contradiction as the *mob* would have it (in the quotation from the opening of this chapter) is equally unproductive. Whether you take the standpoint of religious dogmatism or scientific naturalism, you exclude yourself from the most important feature of humanity by insisting on the unproblematic stability of your position.

The easiest way to avoid the madness of the antinomies is to presuppose that someone or something has solved the problem. Obviously, this is what Kant would say is happening in religious dogmatism. The infinite totality of the world/everything/all that is possible is beyond human cognition, but there is another, divine, type of cognition which is in fact capable of understanding that which reaches beyond the understanding. But the opposite standpoint is equally one-sided. Claiming that scientific inquiry relies on an unproblematic concept of the world (as for instance 'infinite') is just as imaginary as religious dogmatism. Early Wittgenstein, the Hard Kantian, described this very precisely as the illusion that the so-called laws of nature were a definite explanation of natural phenomena. Believing this means treating laws of nature as something inviolable, just like God was treated in past ages. These two views are in a way equally right and equally wrong (Wittgenstein, 1993b, § 6.371–372). People who 'believe' in the so-called laws of nature, and people who 'believe' in God and destiny are in one sense right, because we must proceed *as if.* But they are wrong in as far as they 'remain standing' by these explanations as though they were inviolable – unproblematic or, indeed, constitutive. This is the reason why Laclau's remark was pertinent: Language is 'Stalinist' in the sense that it necessarily covers 'the whole' – it is by nature 'totalitarian'. We stand in the middle of something we cannot overview, and yet this 'something' itself must be taken to somehow *be there* as a whole in order for us to believe in the functioning of its parts. The paradox of the competent language user is that the 'totalitarian' aspect of language must be assumed as a sort of necessary illusion: We must proceed as if . . . , but it remains an illusion that *this* language, the one we are now speaking, has covered 'it all'. It is important to proceed with care here. 'They are both right and both wrong.' The claim that language has a 'totalitarian' aspect which hinges on a necessary illusion should not be understood in the sense that language is a fake

or 'illusory' or even inadequate to represent reality. Indeed, there is no unmediated reality outside or 'on the other side' of the order in which we articulate our experiences. This was exactly the point in the Brandomian/McDowellian insistence that there is no immediacy of the 'Given' which is somehow transformed into a linguistically formed experience through random procedures of culture or morality. Initially, the emphasis should therefore not so much be on *illusion*, as on *necessary*. Without the idea of an ordered whole within which we play our games of giving and asking for reasons, there would be no games at all. You could say that language in general relies on a tacit Stalinism – a necessary illusion of an unproblematic concept of the 'whole' such that we may proceed in the mode of inquiry or action, which we have embarked upon. We must proceed as if we had a coherent grasp of a whole, before 'light can dawn gradually' *upon* that whole.

The problem occurs when the presupposed understanding of totality is made explicit in an endeavour of philosophical dialectics. Kant's claim is that such an endeavour necessarily ends up in contradictory claims of reason. We proceed by the regulative ideas as if the problems had been overcome, but we must nonetheless preserve them in the background, if for no other reason then because they allow us to change perspective. Say a certain framework of a certain practice is taken for granted. Insisting that this framework is the only possible framework and could never be challenged would be passing from the *necessity* of a framework to an *illusionary* understanding of a framework, or of what it means to have an 'overall picture', i.e. although it is true that *some* principle of ordering must be relied on in any linguistic endeavour, it is illusory to claim that *one* specific way of doing it is and remains the right one. When the Stalinist illusion is made explicit and taken literally, we pass from a necessary to a repressive illusion. The phrase, then, whether there is 'normativity all the way up' relates to the question of whether the normativity of our scientific, moral or other practices is closed in the sense that it does not allow for an outside – even as the X, which constitutes the limit of reason in the Kantian sense. This is the precise sense in which the noumenon does play a critical (in both senses of that word) role in Kant's philosophy, which is why it is a much too hasty conclusion to merely dismiss it as 'out of bounds' in the sense of a meaningless concept that must be overcome through therapy or logical analysis. Although the noumenon cannot be the object of any possible *Anschauung*, it remains a necessary concept to reason. By *not* being 'reached' it gives principle boundaries to the status of the current state-of-affairs or the language spoken at any given time: '[T]he concept of a noumenon, taken

merely problematically, remains not only admissible, but even unavoidable, as a concept setting limits [*Schranken*] to sensibility' (CPR: B 311).

To put our *Sinnlichkeit* in *Schranken* does indeed mean to deny it the ambition of making a move outside the bounds of sense. But it *also means* that we should be aware that any linguistic practice necessarily relies on an implicit understanding of everything (cf. the Williamson-discussion in Chapter 3), which becomes problematic when it is made explicit. The concept of the noumenon is precisely therefore, *taken merely problematically*, not only acceptable, but unavoidable.

In the following, I will therefore outline an understanding of ideology, which has two different applications: an explicit and an implicit. Explicit ideology is the one which is openly stated in dogma of church, party, family traditions, etc., but also in a scientific theory. It gives order and coherence to reality on the basis of a set of beliefs guaranteed by some ideological institution. Since this type of ideology is rather obvious and has been heavily criticized for a couple of hundred years, I will pay more attention to the implicit type of ideology – not only because it has been less scrutinized (although, of course, already Marx defined ideology such that 'they do not know it, but they do it'), but also because it is a more predominant contemporary type of ideology: in its purest form as the conviction that 'we *don't* have any ideology'. The word 'ideology' will be used in a slightly unusual way. I will take ideology to be literally a 'logic of ideas' in a strictly Kantian sense, i.e. a way of understanding how ideas regulate our lives. This usage is obviously some what broader than what is mostly associated with the term 'ideology', since it is most commonly used as a political term. We shall return to more specifically moral and political applications of the word in later chapters, but for now focus on the general point to be read out of Kant.

4.2. Ideology

The task of critical philosophy since Kant has certainly been to criticize explicit ideologies that deny the contingency of their standpoint. As if their rules or principles were the direct mediation of God's own words or objective historical necessity or what not. However, a more subtle critique of ideology has also been carried out in the critique of practices that pretend *not* to rely on any ideological convictions. In terms of Kant's regulative ideas, the task of critical philosophy could in this regard be said to be to make explicit the hidden 'as if' in such no-nonsense, 'realist', pragmatist and/or naturalist positions. The job is, in other words, to

show how ideology is *both* necessary and illusory. An experience does not only consist of 'sense impression' and 'concept' – it also relies on a sense of overall structure. The ability to infer from one to another statement, which is at least tacitly presupposed in any concrete utterance (like 'That is red') relies on some sense of order or meaningfulness, into which the concrete observation or utterance 'fits'. Ideology in this sense means ideas tacitly regulating our experience; without which there would only have been a manifold of semantically fragmented and ultimately meaningless signs and sounds. Ideas give us reality; they make it possible for us to even have reality – a 'place' where our experiences *take place*. But we thereby must rely on an *as if,* which can always be made explicit, which lurks underneath the established order. To get things done, we must proceed as if reality is given in a full and coherent manner, but we can become aware of the 'as if' itself and see that things could have been otherwise. Most of the time, we proceed by a sort of necessary and benevolent repression of the fact that there is no ultimate ground under what we are doing. Reality itself is taking place as a kind of 'cover up job'; we have to proceed as if reality were coherent and meaningful – otherwise we would be confronted with the dilemmas of absolute reason without halt, which would literally drive us mad. To exemplify the point in a slightly different way, Sigmund Freud lends us a good story, which has been interpreted and generalized through Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek.

In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud tells the story of a father, who has lost his son due to fatal illness. After some exhausting days without sleep, sitting near the bed of his son, the father finally gets some rest, while an old man keeps watch over the body. But his sleep is disturbed by the child:

> After sleeping for a few hours the father dreamed that the child was standing by his bed, clasping his arm and crying reproachfully: 'Father, don't you see that I am burning?' The father woke up and noticed a bright light coming from the adjoining room. Rushing in, he found the old man had fallen asleep, and the sheets and one arm of the beloved body were burnt by a fallen candle. (Freud, 1997, p. 353)

One of the rather simple ways of interpreting dreams before Freud was to take all dreams to have a direct physical cause. If the alarm clock goes, we dream of a giant bell banging to our head, if the duvet slides down, we dream we are in Siberia, etc. By incorporating the external irritation into the dream, we are able to prolong our sleep. In much the same way, the appearance of the child in the dream could be caused by smoke from the

next room. Freud, however, thought that the purely physical interpretation was too simple. There are almost always elements in a dream, which can simply not be explained by physical interpretations. His interpretation of the burning child, based on his principle of dreams as wish fulfilments, was that the father wanted to imagine that the son was still alive. This wish was granted for a moment in the dream. Lacan radicalizes this interpretation: Whatever the reason why the child *appears* in the dream, the reason why the father wakes up is more interesting. It is, namely, likely not to be the irritation of the smoke that gets unbearable, but the Real of the dream, i.e. the extremely traumatic feeling of guilt in front of the child: why didn't you save me? In this precise sense, the dream is not an escape from reality, on the contrary: awakening into reality is an escape from the Real of the dream. The father escapes into reality by awakening – he rushes into the room, stops the fire, etc., and thereby gets away from the terrifying image of his guilt. Here is how Slavoj Žižek concludes his interpretation of the burning child (which is roughly the same as the one I have just given):

> It is exactly the same with ideology. Ideology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape insupportable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our 'reality' itself. [. . .] The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel. (Žižek, 1989, p. 45)

Ideology serves the purpose of supporting our reality itself. Pressing the point, there would be no reality, if there were no ideology. Žižek's point here is both political-polemical and principal: 'fantasy', in the strict Lacanian sense, does not mean that we are 'imagining' some better state of affairs than the ones we have, or even that we are falsely representing the current state of affairs as 'better than it really is'. On the contrary: fantasy provides us the very basic coordinates in order to at all *have* a reality. The trauma of the father to the burning child is unbearable, and he is confronted with it in his dream. To escape it, he needs reality. Isn't this indeed a familiar trait of how we deal with someone dying from us, especially a close one who dies too early? If the death of the loved one is too overwhelming to cope with, it is beneficial that there are a number of precautions that must be made – family to talk to, practical arrangements, funeral etc. Reality helps us escape from the traumatic impact of guilt, sorrow or anxiety. Using the word 'fantasy' for the structure of reality may seem coy (to a non-Lacanian), but the point is not that different from Kant's, when he talks of the necessary illusion.

The 'traumatic, real kernel' in the Kantian terminology, I have used, is of course the paradoxes at the limits of reason. It is the tic-tac-toe that lies beneath any cognitive order. In order to have some guideline in the world, we must proceed 'as if' the world were a coherent unity in accordance with the – implicit or explicit – principles that we structure our knowledge by. We thus 'escape into reality' – for perfectly good reasons – because it would be an unbearable pressure to be constantly confronted with the underlying tension within reason itself. Ideology is what we have – there is no way to escape it once and for all. It gives us our very 'reality' in Žižek's phrase – without ideology there wouldn't be any reality. Kant's statement that without the categories of understanding there would be no experience at all, but only 'a rhapsody of impressions' (CPR: B 195) should therefore be supplemented by the observation that without the principled 'as if' of reason, there would be no reality at all – only a rhapsody of individual experiences without any structure or direction. This supplement is usually passed over in silence in Soft Kantianism: sense impressions must be synthesized into a sentential structure to constitute an experience, but individual experiences must, in turn, be guided by some unspoken understanding of the absolute, some idea of the 'whole', to constitute any coherent system of knowledge. In a concrete experience this of course all happens 'at once', i.e. we are not constructing experiences like we construct LEGO-castles, by adding one element on top of the other. But we can nonetheless be more or less aware of the different aspects involved in having any one, meaningful experience. There is receptivity, there are concepts, and there is the sense of the 'whole', where experiences take place. There is a cup of tea *and* the cup itself. The structure 'behind' is always already there for anything to be reasonable. The architectonic power of reason is the 'art of systems', as Kant himself says – a fundamentally important quality of reason: 'our cognitions cannot at all constitute a rhapsody but must constitute a system, in which alone they can support and advance its essential ends. I understand by a system, however, the unity of the manifold cognitions under one idea' (CPR: B 860).

The ability to create coherent knowledge systems, and belief sets (including moral) is a fundamental, indispensable dimension of reason. It is a regulative function of reason: although we cannot spell out a sense in which the whole 'is there', we can employ the idea of the whole in the systematization and attribution of meaning to our concrete experiences and actions. In the third critique (to which we shall return in the following chapter), Kant says something similar in the following way. The infinite as such cannot be perceived, since that would require a synthesis (*Zusammenfassung*) which would provide a measure for the infinite in something determinate,

which is impossible, or a contradiction in terms: there can be no such *Anschauung*. However:

> But – and this is most important – to be able even to think the infinite as *a whole* indicates a mental power that surpasses any standard of sense. [. . .] If the human being is [. . .] to *be able even to think* the given infinite without contradiction, it must have within itself a power that is supersensible, whose idea of a noumenon cannot be intuited but can yet be regarded as the substrate underlying what is mere appearance, namely, our intuition of the world. (CJ: 5: 254)

It is thanks to this capacity of reason that we have systems and coherence at all. There is some sense of 'it all', which accompanies every concrete experience or statement in as far as it makes sense and is considered part of a rational 'space of reason' in relation to endless other (possible) experiences and statements. What 'underlies mere appearance' is not a constitutive idea of a noumenon, but rather an 'intuition of the world' as one, unity. This background intuition tacitly guides our concrete experiences. Like the scientist, who as we know from Thomas Kuhn, works within a paradigm, which gives meaning and direction to individual observations, we acquire a mode of understanding that relies on a tacit universalism. How do you learn what a paradigm demands of you? By reading text books, studying exemplars, and repeating experiments in the lab. You gradually learn to see the universal pattern in the individual case, and it seems like you have to presuppose a coherent totality within which each case is articulated, in order to make progress at all. Isn't this the same technique, which Pascal famously recommended for people, who wanted to believe in God, but couldn't convince themselves? If you want to believe, you have to go into the cathedral, kneel down in front of the altar, fold your hands, and say a prayer. Once you have repeated it often enough, you already believe – you acquire the tacit *focus imaginarius*, which will allow you to be comforted and encouraged to continue the struggle within the framework of your belief.

It would thus be more precise at this point to distinguish between *belief* and *faith*. A belief is something you can have in a sentence. One can believe, for instance, that Philadelphia is to the West of Pittsburgh, and thereby be committed to a number of related convictions. Beliefs can commit us to more than we know, and we can even be said to have beliefs that we don't know that we have. We can talk about a set or a system of beliefs, a cluster of interrelated sentential structures which make sense of and refer to each other. Faith, on the other hand, would be the conviction that the

system as such, overall, makes sense. We find again the quantum leap – this time from beliefs to faith. The space of reason gives reasons for everything within it, but it does not give reasons for its own existence as such. To follow a line of arguments to their conclusion, from anywhere inside the forest of linguistic reality, means to either end up in contractions of reason, or to make the leap of faith and return to reality as if it were in order. The difference that was suggested earlier between making explicit what follows from concrete statements and making explicit the implicit, pre-ontological sense of the 'whole' could now also be termed as the difference between making explicit unacknowledged *beliefs* and making explicit unacknowledged *faith*.

Now, the point to be made here is precisely that there is a fundamental priority of faith over belief. Although you can, in the logics of dialectics, describe the movement from a certain set of beliefs, 'outwards of the forest', to their ultimate foundation in the 'as if' of a regulative idea, this unfolding is an unfolding of the implicit faith always already at work for language to even work. You could say that what we encounter in the antinomies of reason and the necessity of regulative ideas to 'overcome' them, is that we always already relied on some implicit as if. This priority could be spelled out in different ways: in more analytical terms, it would be an investigation of the relation between particular statements and the totality of particular statements (such as Wittgenstein's investigations in the *Tractatus* or Timothy Williamson's in 'Everything'); hermeneutically, you could talk of Hans-Georg Gadamer's '*Vorgriff der Vollkommenheit*' or Donald Davidson's 'principle of charity' – to grasp the meaning of a text or an utterance, you must have an expectation of a meaningful whole in advance; or you could draw on psychoanalytic insights on how a subject acquires language and becomes a subject at all – the whole is there first; only later comes separation and difference. Let me therefore again draw on an example from Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Initially, there is only the mother. She provides nutrition, comfort and love. Before there is even 'world' in Gadamer's sense, there is no differentiation, no fluctuating signifiers – only immediacy and total dependency. The mother, which interests psychoanalysis, is the mother as the 'primordial Other', i.e. the original, immediate guarantor of coherence and stability. There is no crack in the edifice of reality – indeed, there is not even any *question* of stability or instability; only immediate outbursts and their immediate interpretation by the big (M)Other. She decides, what the child's sounds mean, and there is no (possible) scepticism as to wrong and right. Mom is *it*. Now, as Freud described it in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* a

crucial moment in the child's maturation comes, when it discovers that mother is not unambiguously, unconditionally there only for its sake. She has other things to do and other things to care about. At a certain point she even starts being absent for longer periods! A split is thus inserted into the peaceful unity of the world – mom is there, but (sometimes) she isn't. Freud tells the story of his observation of a 1½-year-old (his grandson), who had invented a game, which apparently was played to cope with the absence of the mother. The child had a wooden spool with thread wound around it and played a game where he tossed the spool away, uttering a long, loud '*o-o-o-o*', which the family interpreted as a '*Fort*' ('gone'), following upon which he 'rewinded' the thread and greeted the return of the spool with a merry '*Da*' ('there'). Freud called this game a 'cultural effort' of the child (Freud, 1999b, p. 13), since it represented a symbolic articulation of the absence and reappearance of the mother – an attempt at mastering the loss. Maybe one could say that the 'Fort-Da'-game symbolizes an effort at dealing with the very first antinomy. What appeared to be a whole, uncomplicated unity of safety and love is split into absence and presence. She is there, and then she is gone. *Da-fort, fort-da.* There is mother, and there is not mother. The world is a coherent, meaningful totality, and it is not. You let loose the unwinding of the thread of dialectics, and you rewind it until you feel comfortable again – as if there was no problem. She will be back. We could also say that the game was about maintaining faith in the absence of justified belief. The child was naturally unable to construct a meaningful, explicit formulation to make sense of why the mother had to leave, and which good reasons there might be for her to return – there was (probably) only an unarticulated, and fragile, sense that she *had* to come back. She was the mother, and mothers come back. The cultural effort of the child was to invent its own regulative idea: Based on the evidence there is no solution to the problem whether she will be back or not, but we must proceed as if she (definitely) will.

The split introduced into the child's world is a split in the child itself. If, before, there was only immediacy and uncomplicated unity, there is now a potential uncertainty inscribed into reality, and thereby a secret distance towards the Other. We must proceed as if, but *what* if . . . Can the Other be trusted? Why does she leave me? What do I have to do to get her back? The symbolic effort of the *Fort-Da* must be translated into an effort of interpreting what the Other wants from me. Thus arises the possibility of error. Did I do something wrong? Can I trust *myself*? Why did I do that? Not seldom, children start talking to themselves, as if in a dialogue between two parties, on what went wrong and what should be done to make things right

again, and games such as the *Fort-Da* could of course also be interpreted as a sort of conversation on the same topic. (Why do children play role games about 'father, mother, and children' if not to investigate and confirm the stability of the family order?) Maintaining faith in such circumstances is indeed a cultural effort. Typically, the place of the Other is later assumed by the father, who gives the paternal law: you must do like *this* in order to get our recognition. Although authoritarian patriarchy has had a bad press for quite some time, there are obvious benefits to the child of being able to rely on an authority that maintains that 'reality is like this . . . because I say so!' The anxiety of the choice of the right thing to do can be softened by a parent that takes responsibility on behalf of the child. Nonetheless, the little doubt that was introduced, still (potentially) prevails: 'Why must I do it this way?' Again, a loss of the flawless Other threatens in the horizon. A risky state for any child is exactly the revealing of the father's impotence. Although it is a constant endeavour of great interest to most children to test the father's borders, actually reaching them can be a horrific moment. When he suddenly doesn't have answers any more, a radical openness threatens to undermine reality itself. If *he* doesn't know it, then who does? If the one who was supposed to know how everything is doesn't know, then the very foundation of our lives can be shaken. Obviously, this is what seems to be the case, when someone 'loses their faith', as it is called, be it in divine foresight or even in a concrete person. I must have some faith that my actions are basically significant (to someone) and that they are roughly okay, whether this faith is founded on my 'own' convictions, or on – nonetheless – assuming the patterns of the family or of some other group. Now, covering up uncertainty could be a definition of ideology. Ideology means: it is done this way; we are doing it right. The *as if*, which must accompany all ordering of concrete experiences, is silenced.

  Jacques Lacan famously said that 'the big Other doesn't exist, but it functions nonetheless', i.e. there is no ultimate explanation of how or why the world is ordered, but nonetheless it is. As if there was some grand scheme behind it all – as if something or someone wants it to function *this* way. We have to presuppose some sort of coherence in the manifold that confronts us in order to orient ourselves at all. We have to assume it. Kant himself formulates similar thoughts in 'What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?': '[T]o orient oneself in thinking in general means: when objective principles of reason are insufficient for holding something true, to determine the matter according to a subjective principle' (WO 8: 136).

  What we saw in the dialectics of reason was exactly that knowledge in an important sense 'lacks'. If you follow the metaphysical drive to the end,

you realize that there is no safe haven in speculation. Because knowledge is thus ultimately lacking, there is a 'lack of knowledge' (ibid.), reason itself stands in need, has a need, of some quilting point or guideline to give structure and meaning to its knowledge. Kant calls the solution to this need a rational faith (*Vernunftglaube*). He differentiates between two different concepts of 'Glaube', which mirror the distinction between belief and faith, defined above. In German, there are no two similar concepts to belief and faith, which is why a clarification of the two uses of 'Glaube' is needed. Kant's differentiation is between 'historical belief' and '*Vernunftglaube*'. An 'historical belief', for instance of the death of a great man according to reports in some letters, can become knowledge, if it is confirmed by the right sources (official documents like death certificate, testament, etc.). 'Glaube' in this sense resembles the Brandomian concept of a belief, which one can have of a concrete state of affairs, and the truth of which is validated by an ascriber, or by the 'symbolic order' in Lacan's term. Believing that the man lived in this or that place at a given time and occupied such and such a position will guide us through the labyrinth of language and knowledge that might prove our beliefs to entail such and such. In the best case, we end up with something like a full knowledge of the circumstances of his death. 'By contrast,' says Kant:

> . . . pure rational faith can never be transformed into knowledge by any natural data of reason and experience, because here the ground of holding true is merely subjective, namely a necessary need of reason. (ibid., p. 141)

Kant calls the faith of reason a 'roadmap' or a 'compass' (ibid., p. 142) and explicitly acknowledges that the compass he is talking about is the concept of God. As long as humans exist, the need will remain, to *presuppose* the existence of a highest being, but never to demonstrate it (ibid.). This is exactly the difference between the necessary *as if* and the dogmatic postulate of a constitutive concept of God – let alone an *Anschauung* of the divine. The crucial point here is that for Kant, the necessity of a concept of God, or the as if, is not strictly speaking a religious point, but a *logical* point. Because knowledge does not order itself, we need a principle to order it by. We need to see it *as if* it was ordered – in this way it *becomes ordered* in reality – thanks to our ability to think the whole as a regulative idea. In order to order, we need to presuppose order.

We see again the structure of the relation between the antinomies: Because the totality of the known (antinomy 1. and 2.) is not a coherent,

self-contained concept, we have to rely on a real effect of the unknown (antinomy 3. and 4.) to guide our experience. In other words, we can relate to an ever so large part of the space of reason, being committed and entitled even to more than we are actively aware of, but the entirety of this space is itself lacking. It does not explain itself, and we need some 'external' principle to guide us in it. Going down the road of dialectics means making explicit, becoming aware of, the necessary illusion that guides our everyday discourse.

4.3. What does it mean to be critical?

It is possible to find in post-Wittgensteinian 'critical' philosophy a thera-peutic, and 'anti-ideological', ambition to dismantle both of the two ideo-logical extremes, I have identified in Kant (or rather: that I have identified Kant as identifying). In John McDowell's terms, they would be called 'rampant Platonism' and 'realm-of-law naturalism' respectively. The first is the ideology of the theses, the second of the anti-theses.

Roughly said, critical philosophy in its McDowellian, post-Wittgenstein-ian, Soft Kantian version is the therapeutic effort to show that we don't need either of the two alternatives. We should not accept the realm-of-law reductionism that denies any *sui generis* form of human rationality – but we should not accept the idea either that this rationality is founded in some supernatural realm. What there is, is a hot cup of water with tea. We need to 'see ourselves as animals whose natural being is permeated with ration-ality, even though rationality is appropriately conceived in Kantian terms' (McDowell,1996, p. 85).

McDowellian therapy consists in getting rid of the need for both 'bald naturalism' and a conception of rationality that 'disconnects' it from our animal being. This is achieved through the (Soft Kantian) idea of a sec-ond nature space of reason. Once comfortably settled within the space of reason, philosophy can investigate the rules of inference, what consti-tutes experience, and how to understand the evolution of languages and cultures. Human beings are 'intelligibly initiated into this stretch of the space of reasons by ethical upbringing', although '[t]he point is clearly not restricted to ethics.' The initiation that we undergo is one 'into conceptual capacities' in a more general sense (ibid., p. 84).

Being initiated into second nature is a process of *Bildung*, McDowell maintains, and this process is best understood as a development of lin-guistic skills, which cannot be exhausted in bald naturalist terms, but do

not imply a distinct 'rational realm' outside nature, either. Philosophical criticism should challenge the inclination to reduce the capacity for reasoning to either of the two extremes. In terms of contemporary public debate, one could say, the task in McDowell's eyes is to refuse reductionist scientism (e.g. in some philosophical interpretations of neuro-science or social Darwinism) as well as religious dogmatism (e.g. in creationism or fundamentalist moralist rhetoric). What is left, when we have analysed and overcome these temptations, is normal, balanced philosophy of language-culture-formation etc., seeing development as a gradual process of improvement of our skills and abilities: 'Like any thinking, ethical thinking is under a standing obligation to reflect about and criticize the standards by which, at any time, it takes itself to be governed,' but the appropriate image for such criticism 'is Neurath's, in which a sailor overhauls his ship while it is afloat' (ibid., p. 81).

The illusion of supernaturalism and bald naturalism both is that we can reach some sort of absolute point of reference; an extraordinary metaphysical explanation, which grounds and directs all our endeavours: By doing philosophy, we can reach a safe harbour, where everything can be reconstructed, if it isn't in order. Once we know whether idealism, theism or scientific realism is ultimately right, we can always consult the harbour for answers to our queries. McDowell is flatly opposed to such a way of thinking: Language is a natural phenomenon, and there is no question to be asked about its ultimate foundation or 'limit' – when we start speculating about that, we end up in senseless problems. We are abusing language for something, it was not meant for. It is just there. Relax! McDowell typically says: 'I think the response we should aim at being entitled to, if someone raises a question like "What constitutes the structure of the space of reasons?", is something like a shrug of the shoulders' (ibid., p. 178).

You could say that McDowellian criticism has a negative and a positive side. The negative is the criticism of metaphysics. It should be shown to be superfluous and/or simply wrong. The positive sort of critique is the one that goes on, on Neurath's boat, as we go along. McDowell doesn't say very much about what such a critique consists in, but it is probably in the league with considerations like: 'If the light won't switch, mend it.' We grow into language, we occupy it or absorb it, and as we get to know more and more, we acquire abilities to compare, exchange and expand the already known. Take a simplified version of the occurrence of mobile telephones as an example. Knowledge about (cable-based) telephones and (airborne) radio communication was fused into a new and more practical device. Two bits of knowledge combined and a third created – all while still aboard

Neurath's boat. Another example could be ethical questions that arise from new technological possibilities, like organ transplantation, or indeed, more mundanely, rules for children's use of mobile phones in schools or kindergartens: should they always have one to be able to inform their parents, if they are too late, or in some kind of danger, or is it stressful to always be within reach – in ways that start resembling a 'control society'? A genuine 'critical' endeavour is to investigate and clarify which moral, health, and economic etc. considerations should be made in such a matter. What goes wrong is when we try to leave the boat and apply language out of bounds, speculating on possible 'independent' meanings of words, for instance, which have been given no rational practical use (like 'unicorn' or 'spooks'), or indeed when we import such ideological convictions into the actual, current problems, we have to deal with – and judge them according to a much too rigorist and old fashioned system of beliefs. A caricature example being, for instance, that there is no mention of mobile telephones in the Bible, and therefore we should not use them at all. The end of a thorough session of post-Wittgensteinian therapy would therefore leave us with a pragmatic everyday sense of normality. Once we have traversed the fantasy of metaphysical speculation, we are told that 'language is in order as it is', 'the fly is let out of the bottle' and other similar reassuring phrases.[11] What remains is a pragmatic, day-to-day mending of the problems we encounter.

To Kant, language is *not* in order as it is. True, the aim of the first critique was to give science a solid grounding in the necessary structures of experience. But these necessary structures imply a necessary *illusion* – the as if. What we get in Kant's story is not a relaxed naturalism or a relaxed anything else – it is a sort of controlled madness. The 'order', the language or the culture, must rely on some *focus imaginarius* to uphold itself. This is in an important sense, of course, 'in order', since this is how we are able to construct systems, order, etc. at all, which is a fundamental quality of human creativity that can hardly be overestimated. But nonetheless, any existing order is always already a specific way of keeping madness at bay, to withhold the 'confrontation with the traumatic excess of the antinomies of reason' as I have described it. Broadly speaking, normality (and more specifically, normal morality) is a controlled madness, a way of keeping it at bay, by proceeding as if. I think Kant, here, can actually be seen as a precursor of some of the insights later developed by Schelling and Freud. Schelling himself describes mental illness – or *Wahnsinn* – as an illustration of the relation between ground and existence. The occurrence of what we call and treat as *Geisteskrankheiten* is not so much a question of the appearance or intrusion of some pathological element from the outside, but rather

the reactivation of a fundamental cognitive impasse, which has been kept in check. Actually, one shouldn't say that madness occurs or is inflicted on someone, but rather that it 'steps forward'. It is there, latently, in the ground, and *steps forward*, when the equilibrium of the sane mind can no longer be maintained.[12] Schelling's view is remarkably similar to the one, Sigmund Freud later developed. The true scandal of Freud's writings was not only that they emphasized and reinterpreted the role of human sexuality, but also – and significantly – that they claimed to be investigating *general* traits of the human psyche; not just the anomalies of a few hysterical women. In what we call 'mental illness', some of the fundamental cognitive impasses of the psyche have *stepped forward* and taken control, run amok, while 'sane' people are usually able to control or 'live with them'. To both Schelling and Freud, the ability of humans to establish order is indeed a 'cultural effort' – the mark of civilization and spirit. But this ability should not be understood as the ability to 'free us' from insanity altogether and make us able to see that everything is in order as it is. Rather, the 'normal' condition could be seen as a 'normal neurotic condition' – a reasonable, controlled, constructive kind of neurosis. With Lacan, the problem explicitly becomes, not how to overcome neurosis, but how we *relate* to neurosis – as a fundamental condition of being a subject at all. Neurosis 'is a question that being raises for the subject', as Lacan describes it (Lacan, 2006, p. 432).

Now, the Kantian point here should be that the breakthrough, which lurks beneath the current order, need not be a (psychotic) break*down*. *Au contraire*: The openness at the end of dialectics is the condition of possibility for 'real' moral acts – deeds. It is the possible coming to awareness that the world as we see it is not locked in a coherent system of necessity, which enables us to see ourselves as free agents with a task: to 'fix it'. The categorical imperative becomes a real, influential force in the world, because the world does not explain itself, or even: because it is not 'in order as it is'.

Hard Kantian type criticism is therefore not a type of criticism that is primarily concerned with 'explicit' ideologies of dogmatism or scientism. Of course, the Leibnizians or the Humeans of this world are in an important sense 'wrong', but peculiarly enough this is not because they are 'too metaphysical', but rather because they are not metaphysical *enough*. The problems of the antinomies of reason are principal problems of the necessary contradictions of reason – and these are not taken into sufficient consideration by neither religious dogmatism, nor by empiricist scientism. Kant really did write a 'prolegomenon' to any possible future metaphysics. This should be taken quite literally, I claim. If the necessary contradictions of reason are 'more real' than the theses and antitheses both, then there

is something 'even more metaphysical' than traditional metaphysics to be investigated. Any future metaphysics, 'that will be able to come forward as science', as the title to the *Prolegomena* reads, must take into consideration exactly this: that religious dogmatism and scientist empiricism *do not go far enough*, neither of them represents a real solution to the inescapable problems that reason poses to itself. The regulative ideas resolve the problems only to the extent that they provide us with a structure of reality through a necessary illusion. There is, therefore, a question of a genuine metaphysical project to be dealt with to anyone seriously claiming to be Kantian followers.

The main concern in our present context, however, will be to criticize the kind of ideology that is not itself aware of its ideological status. Claiming that 'language is in order as it is' – even in its refined and much appreciated post-Wittgensteinian linguistic outlook – is an ideological gesture *par excellence*, because it covers up the *necessity of the illusion* that language is not standing on the edge of madness. Doesn't 'the shrug of the shoulders', which McDowell advocates, remind one of the *indifferentism*, which Kant himself criticizes in the (preface to) the first version of the first critique? After having described the long, despotic rule of the dogmatists, and the impending wars led by the 'nomadic' scepticists, Kant describes a contemporary state of 'indifference' towards metaphysical questions – better not to touch them at all! But human nature does not allow us to be indifferent and indeed, by necessity, the indifferentists, 'to the extent that they think anything at all, always unavoidably fall back into metaphysical assertions, which they professed so much to despise' (CPR: A X).

The indifference towards metaphysics itself ends up relying on metaphysical postulates, because it has nothing but a shrug of the shoulders for them. In terms of my exposition here: When the 'as if' that necessarily accompanies our apprehension and ordering of reality is not challenged or is taken to be ultimately unproblematic, it effectively functions as an *implicit constitutive idea of reason*.[13] The point is structurally the same, which Kant makes in his discussion of 'radical evil' (there can be no such thing as an indifferent, neutral position), and which could also be termed in the more usual, political sense of 'ideology': taking the current state of affairs to be a neutral, post-political administration of day-to-day matters. In this precise sense, there is a (maybe surprising) similarity between Stalinist socialism and Clintonist post-Berlin-wall liberalism in the 1990s. Both periods were strongly influenced, if not dominated, by a self-perception as the era in which ideology had finally been overcome.

In 'What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?' Kant poses the opening towards the categorical imperative in a way comparable to what

he writes in the second critique about the 'empty place' left behind by speculative theory: speculative reason is not able to realize the idea of a creature which 'we must think of as God,' *not even as a possibility*, but we must assume it nonetheless (WO 8:144), i.e. in our everyday ordered reality. The difference lies in the meaning of 'how we assume it' – is it something we do, because it is unavoidable in the way we always already use language, or because we give our selves the task of *making things* hang together? Is it a result of a cultural effort to 'fix it' or are we just following the safe old routine of supposing that everything is basically in order? When madness lurks behind such a regulative idea, we need a firmer grounding than merely a shrug of the shoulders. As Axel Hutter has described it, overcoming the contradictions within reason must rely on at least one principle that is not 'only regulative, but constitutive' (Hutter, 2003, p. 146).

The necessity of regulative ideas is in an important sense insurmountable, i.e. there is no directly accessible, ideology-free real reality outside the *as if.* But what nonetheless makes a difference is *how we relate* to theses premises. The idea of freedom could not (just like the other ideas of reason) be proven theoretically, at least not as 'theory' is construed in the first critique, but it obtains its positive worth in the practical implementation or use of reason. If we allow ourselves here to make the parallel to Lacan once again: if neurosis is a question, which being poses to the subject, and the answer, which the subject must give is how he relates to the neurosis, then we find a parallel to Kant. The question is not how we can overcome the necessary illusion of reason, but how we relate to this very necessity: Do we assume it as our own? Are the regulative ideas, in other words, a result of a sort of exhaustion – 'we tried thinking it through, but there was no ultimate solution' – or are they a result of a conscious, cultural effort?

To Kant, giving ourselves the maxims of our use of reason is a necessary precondition of being a free, rational being. And, importantly, the lack of a positive awareness that we must take it on ourselves to give ourselves our maxims freely means that we are left not only with a 'lawlessness of thinking', but even with a positively *unfree* use of it:

> The natural consequence is that if reason will not subject itself to the laws it gives itself, it has to bow under the yoke of laws given by another; for without any law, nothing – not even nonsense – can play its game for long. (WO 8:145)

There *is* structuring of our reality, whether we like it or not. If we do not take it on ourselves to 'fix it', to assume the unconditional demand of reason to create order in the manifold of immediate experience, we will be led

by those maxims of the same, which others have chosen for us. The 'as if' is a necessary illusion – but it is one which can either be given by ourselves or by others. Claiming that we stand in no need of thinking the unconditional is therefore, to Kant, identical with agreeing to have ones maxims decided by others.

Now, the point to make here is that a human being might live and function very well in accordance with the rules that 'another gives him'. The implicit grasp of the universal might be put to use in the service of the understanding, in the sense that we get some sense of ordering and meaning in the manifold of experiences as if there was a necessity in doing it exactly this way. Reason can be the servant of the understanding, the guideline of order and structure. The understanding is dealing with concrete experience and is a refined tool for human that gives the ground for comprehending, committing, agreeing, negotiating, acting. Reason gives guidance and coherence to this endeavour. In that sense, reason can be the structuring tool of the second nature kind of being, permeated with language, which enables human to do and understand things, which less refined animals can't and don't. The interest of reason in as far as the understanding is concerned is, crudely put, survival. Reason in the narrow sense concerns another interest, namely the interest of a 'higher worth' or dignity, which separates human not only from animals, but even *from itself* in as far as it is considered as a tool-using, linguistic, second nature, normal morality kind of being. Second nature naturalists are right, of course, that having language and *Verstand* separates us from (other) animals, but only in the sense of partly making us better survivors (because of a systematic fine grained understanding and shrewd manipulation of detailed workings of nature), and partly – basically – giving us more refined types of fun.

The very idea of Kant's practical philosophy, on the contrary, is that it is a 'realization' of the supersensible, if you will, of something more than the finely grained techniques and habits of a linguistic animal. This is already very explicit in the preface to the second edition of the first critique, where Kant sketches the outcome of theoretical philosophy (or 'speculative reason'), i.e. the *Critique of Pure Reason* (the passage which was also quoted in Chapter 1): since there is no further possible advance for speculative reason in the field of the supersensible, we must reach beyond the boundaries of all possible experience *from a practical standpoint* (CPR: B XXI).

In the *Groundwork*, Kant ruminates about the kind of *surplus* to the understanding, and it is clear that it is essential to his conception of freedom. There is 'something' which separates us from ourselves, which tears us loose of the prevailing habits of behaviour and thought and confronts

us with an imperative to act in accordance with universal laws – to pre-
scribe universality to (the maxims of) our own actions. But this 'some-
thing' remains a rather obscure concept that is hard to make concrete: 'but
of this more [*Mehrere*] I have no further cognizance,' as Kant himself writes
(Groundwork 4:462). In chapter 3, the logical structure of the *Mehrere* was
described as the fact of reason: the demand that presents itself to reason.
Reason wants universality – it is Stalinist – and the demand of reason is,
not to settle for anything less. If things are not in order, they should be.
What has been shown in this chapter is how we *zunächst und zumeist* must
rely on some principle of order, as if the universalist demand of reason
had already been fulfilled. So, you could say that reason has both sides,
there is a certain fundamental good-cop-bad-cop-routine in reason: On
the one side, everything must be in order as it is; some fundamental faith
in the coherence and meaningfulness overall of our endeavours is a pre-
condition of us being able to do and see anything at all. On the other side,
the wholeness is always preliminary. There is a saying among environmen-
talists that we only borrow the planet from our children. The same could
be said about the *as if* of reason: We only borrow it from the ones that will
overthrow it.

The 'Mehrere' is the precondition of assuming the task of breaking out
of the culturally defined normativity of normal morality. What is of funda-
mental importance is that the *possibility* of so doing is what makes human
lives (potentially) dignified. We cannot run amok every second day and
overthrow the moral guidelines of our community, but without at least the
awareness of the possibility of doing it, we become 'indifferent' language
users, guided by the 'laws that someone else laid down'.

The Fact of Reason indicates that the potential opening towards 'the
starry heaven above and the moral law within' is already present in a
reasonable member of any linguistic community. However, I think Kant
has something more specific to say later on in his work, about how the
'Mehrere' might suddenly show itself directly, step forward, if you will, in
an overwhelming experience of the supersensible. I am talking, of course,
about the discussion of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgment*, to which we
shall now turn.

Chapter 5

Surplus Experiences

We have seen that there is indeed in Kant a 'capacity that separates human from all other things' and that it is reason – in the narrow sense. The separation is twofold – not only from 'things' in the sense of the first nature stuff, like chairs, bodies and inclinations, which we run into all the time out there, but also from the human itself – i.e. from the characteristics that otherwise distinguishes human from the other things, namely that the *human way* of being afflicted by objects is permeated by spontaneity all the way down.

In the third critique, the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant early on indicates a parallel tripartition by differentiating between the ways we can relate to pleasure, which is an overall theme of the book. There are three different 'relations that presentations have to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure' (CJ 5:209–210), and they are expressed in the agreeable (*das Angenehme*), the beautiful (*das Schöne*) and the good (*das Gute*). Now, what separates humans from 'mere' animals, and 'from itself', can in an initial sketch be indicated by the three different sorts of pleasure mentioned:

> Agreeableness holds for nonrational animals too; beauty only for human beings, i.e. beings who are animal and yet rational, though it is not enough that they be rational (e.g., spirits) but they must be animal as well; the good, however, holds for every rational being as such. (CJ 5:210).

The 'agreeable' is something both animals and humans can feel pleasure by. The beautiful separates humans from animals; it gives pleasure 'only to humans' in their capacity of being creatures with both reason and sensibility. The good, however, is separated from both of the other categories – it arouses pleasure in creatures endowed with reason in virtue of *that capacity alone*. The human being, seen entirely in virtue of its rational capacity, i.e. as separated from not only 'first' nature, but also from 'second' nature (the water with tea), has *something more* than itself seen as a sensible creature

endowed with language/rationality/spontaneity-in-McDowell's-sense. This surplus is a certain 'in human more than human', which gives us the distinct pleasure at the good. The sublime experience is the one, which points to this surplus in us; to something which transcends the understanding, i.e., in contemporary post-Wittgensteinian jargon, something which is beyond the limits of the describable, *das Unaussprechliche* – as Wittgenstein himself named it in the *Tractatus*. Kant writes about the pleasure, which the sublime arouses in us:

> It is true that the pleasure we take in the sublime in nature, since it is a pleasure involved in reasoning contemplation, also lays claim to universal participation; and yet the feeling it presupposes is already different again: it is a feeling of our supersensible vocation, a feeling which, however obscure it may be, has a moral foundation. (CJ 5:292)

While the pleasure at the beautiful is a comfortable, playful feeling that things somehow fit, the (indirect) pleasure at the sublime is more like admiration or respect ('*Achtung*') (CJ 5:245). I will use the two terms 'quintessential experience' and 'surplus experience', respectively, to describe the experience of the beautiful and the sublime. They both represent an additional type of experience that is not exhausted in the way experience is defined in the first critique. They are experiences that require a different type of philosophical explanation. In this chapter, however, the main focus will be to show how the two are also importantly different exactly with regard to their significance for moral thinking. While the beautiful gives us a distinct pleasure of feeling 'at home' in the world, and, roughly said, that things are as they should be, the sublime elevates us *out* of the current order and reminds us of the higher, moral, interest of reason. I will therefore end the chapter by indicating why I think Hannah Arendt's version of Soft Kantianism is wrong when it takes its point of departure for moral and political thinking in the concept of the beautiful.

In Chapter 3, the wound cut in the understanding was investigated as a 'theoretical' outcome of the early critical work, and in Chapter 4 the first reply to the impasse of reason was given in terms of the regulative ideas; these, however, remain within the limits of 'theoretical' or 'speculative' philosophy, as necessary guidelines for the structuring of our ('second nature') linguistic reality as a whole. We saw that, regardless of their status as a 'cultural effort', there is an element of unfreedom in the way regulative ideas *zunächst und zumeist* function, and it was indicated that the way to give them a more autonomous grounding that satisfies the 'higher

interest' of reason goes through practical philosophy. What remains to be described, before we turn to a more explicit definition of a Kantian concept of freedom, is therefore an opening towards practical philosophy, a more tangible one, if you will, or something that connects theoretical and practical philosophy. What is it that makes it possible for us to realize, concretely, that we are guided by an *as if* that cannot be the final solution to our interests? How are we confronted as 'normal neurotic' human beings with the demands of the moral law? Is it only the one who has read the *Critique of Pure Reason* (or thought similar thoughts in all their overwhelming detail) that has found the 'empty place' at the end of the dialectics of reason? Or put in another way: Could it be demonstrated in more concrete terms, why Soft Kantians do not go far enough, why they are too modest when they abstain from the question of whether there is something *in* the world, which breaks the confinement of 'linguistic reality' and reminds us of the excess of the supersensible? In this chapter, we will look for such explanations in Kant's third critique, and claim that they are closely related to the concept of the sublime. The sublime indicates a direct access to the 'Mehrere', which could not be determined further above, and thereby to a concrete ('surplus') experience in each human individual of the ability to perform deeds.

In parallel to the division of pre-moral, normal moral and extra-moral action, I claim that it is possible to discern three levels of receptivity – 'raw' first nature receptivity (pre-linguistic sense impressions), mediated second nature receptivity ('normal' experience, normative all the way down) and surplus experience receptivity (receptivity for something that disrupts or contradicts 'normal' experience). The last of the three is the experience of the sublime, which reminds us of or even awakens in us the possibility of the extra-moral. To gain a more concrete take on the concept of the sublime, let us start out with making a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime through an illustration.

5.1. Quintessential and surplus experiences

There are two caves in Slovenia which illustrate rather well what is being discussed in Kant's concepts of the beautiful and the sublime.[14] The one is the Postojna cave, some 50 km. South of Ljubljana. It is one of the most visited sites in the country, because slowly seeping mineral water has created remarkable stalactites and stalagmites in the old dripstone caves. There is an almost solemn atmosphere, when you pass through the impressive

'galleries' and witness spectacular sceneries with these peculiar shapes created by nature through hundreds of years, untouched until recently by human intervention. The sight of some of the dripstones, and especially the sight of some of the galleries, gives a common feeling of pleasure in the visitors at this inscrutable natural beauty. The other cave is the Škocjan cave, 20 km. further South West. Here, you come for a rush, rather than for a sigh. Škocjan, too, has countless dripstones, although in somewhat less picturesque formations, but it also has something, which Postojna does not: an abyss so deep that the bottom sometimes vanishes for the beholder, when the warm air from the outside is mixed with the ice cold water of the underground mountain river. While the visitors in Postojna can enjoy the sight of the beautiful dripstones, which are majestically lit by carefully staged artificial lights, and have fun finding recognizable figures in their structure, the guests in Škocjan have to pass the frightening abyss with trembling legs, thinking mainly about how to get out alive. In Postojna, you see objects and sceneries that are discernible and clear, although indefinably beautiful; in Škocjan you look down and don't really know what you are looking at. In this way, the two caves echo Kant's definitions in the *Critique of Judgment*. While a beautiful object can be rightly called so, because this object in front of us (the stalactite) is indecisively impressive and seems to demand a general concept, which cannot really be found, it is not really the 'sublime' object itself (the abyss below the bridge in Škocjan), which deserves the name sublime, but rather the feeling of the unboundedness or the unlimited or of the colossal powers of nature, which it arouses in us (cf. CJ 5:244). The beautiful causes a merry play between the senses and the understanding, and thereby a 'positive pleasure', while the sublime much more consists in a certain gravity or solemnity of the imagination and is therefore called a 'negative pleasure'. There is almost something violent about the effect, which the sublime can have on us. Even though we are in reality at a safe distance from the abyss below us, it is almost as if it threatens us, or draws us to it and encourages us to jump. It is as if it reminds us of something. We cannot oversee it and therefore imagine, if only for an instant, that it is unlimited. At closer view it thus appears that it is in fact not the object itself, which is sublime. It is what the object arouses in us. Even in Škocjan the abyss has a bottom, but the shock, it gives us to look down, is bottomless.

When Kant does not simply state that we are frightened, terrified or dizzy when confronted with overwhelming phenomena of nature, but defines this as the sublime, a very specific feeling of pleasure, this has a systematic point. On the face of it, we might of course observe that there is apparently

a certain intriguing pleasure connected to a good thrill. As long as you are on a safe distance from that which horrifies you or makes you uneasy, it might even be an experience, which you actively pursue. Why should we rent horror movies or jump in parachutes, if this were not so? We shiver, are shocked, frightened, etc., but simultaneously experience an indefinable pleasure, which can almost make us high. In contrast to the immediate joy or pleasure, which you can have from contemplating something beautiful, the sublime seems to arouse a 'negative pleasure' or an *indirect* pleasure, because it appears as a reaction to an immediately *unpleasant* feeling. This observation is not merely 'psychological' in the sense that it can be stated as an anthropological matter of fact alongside other feelings and behaviour. To Kant, the fact of the sublime calls for philosophical explanation. It is not just a feeling like any other feeling; it has something peculiar about it, which is not explained by straight forward descriptions of 'fear', 'shock', 'bewilderment', etc. We can feel a vast variety of things – safe, warm, sad, aggressive, grouchy, compassionate, in love or satisfied, but the sublime has a whole other structure.

To be precise, this goes for the feeling of pleasure at the beautiful, as well as for the negative pleasure of the sublime. Both feelings have a peculiar structure that sets them apart from 'normal pathological' feelings. But they are also different. The beautiful is an indefinite concept of the understanding, which is characterized by a pleasure at the play of the imagination. We sense something, an object in a wide sense, and try to categorize it as some-thing with such-and-such characteristics, as we would normally do with any other thing, which we encounter in experience. But the beautiful object resists categorization – or more precisely: the object as such can be categorized as some-thing here and now, but its *beauty* escapes a clear description. It is there, but we can't really grasp wherein it consists. At the same time, we don't have any immediate idea of what to do with the beautiful; it serves no purpose for us. The pleasure, we experience in the beautiful is thereby different from the merely 'agreeable', and from the 'good', because it is without interest: 'we are not compelled to give our approval by any interest, whether of sense or of reason' (CJ 5:210). While it is therefore true, when we talk about the *Angenehme*, that 'everyone has his own taste,' the beautiful makes us expect a common sense of agreement to its beauty, because it is not particularly agreeable just to (the inclinations or comfort of) any one particular subject. The taste of the beautiful, which we expect to encounter in all humans, is in a specific sense taste-less, or it is not to be understood in analogy to sensual taste, which varies in accordance with the make-up of the individual, who tastes. This quality about the beautiful gives us a peculiar type of pleasure without interest. It is difficult, if

not impossible, to pinpoint exactly why the object in question is beautiful, and it is not encouraging us to *do* anything (with it), but there is a certain gratification in experiencing *that* we can find something beautiful without any interest at stake. We feel 'a pleasure in the harmony of the cognitive powers' (CJ 5:218), i.e. we feel that we, the humans, are somehow in tune with the world – there is something *right* (in general) about the way our sense impressions are mediated through the imagination grasped by the understanding. 'The beautiful objects indicate', as Kant wrote already in 1771, 'that the human being fits into the world' (Nachlass 16:127, my translation). The experience of the beautiful is not an experience like any other. Where the imagination usefully 'negotiates' between the senses and the understanding to find the right concept for what is perceived, ultimately resting on our prescription of the categories of the understanding to any manifold encountered or intuited, the beautiful escapes all determination in a playful challenge of the imagination, which allows for no definitive description of wherein the beauty consists. We have to point: '*That* stalactite *there*, isn't it beautiful?!' This playful feeling is pleasurable because we somehow feel that the others must feel the same way. We expect their confirmation of our experience, although we cannot communicate the experience to them in such a way that they can agree without actually seeing for themselves. In short, the beautiful encourages us to think that the gap between senses and concepts is somehow overcome. One might even be tempted to say that the experience of the beautiful is a confirmation of the feeling that there *is* indeed normativity all the way down. I therefore call the experience of the beautiful a *quintessential* experience – the experience that confirms our experience: it shows us that we are somehow right; that our cognitive capacities are rightly tuned.

The sublime on the other hand, is an indefinite concept of reason (not of the understanding), which is characterized by a negative pleasure at the solemnity, it arouses in us. The 'violent' effect of the sublime is more precisely an effect in relation to the imagination, because it confronts us with the thought of something, which we literally cannot imagine, i.e. make an image of: What would an infinite abyss look like? We can make an image of the beautiful – it even offers itself in the playful engagement of senses and understanding (the problem lies in the *description*, not in the imagery). But there is no image, we can imagine, of the infinite, although we cannot help ourselves from thinking (about) it. We are, in other words, forced by a phenomenon of nature to think a concept of reason (*Vernunftbegriff*), the sensual parallel of which, we can give no content. This is in the first instance painful or unpleasant – it shows our finitude and the limitation of the sensual – but in the second instance, it causes pleasure. There is a specific

sort of elevation in the feeling that something transcends the understanding; something which we must think, but cannot grasp. It is exactly because there are such surplus experiences, i.e. experiences of something that shows the limitation of the sensual (and which is thereby strictly speaking not an experience in the sense of something that is normatively constrained by the categories of the understanding – which is why I instead use the phrase 'surplus experience') that the human being can come to see itself as endowed with an extrasensory quality. As indicated already, I take the sublime to be a 'direct route' to reason in the narrow sense: without going into the whole dialectics of reason, you are suddenly directly confronted with the contradictions at the limit of reason, i.e. with the relation to the absolute which is tacitly accompanying all our (everyday, second nature) experience. This recognition gives a sensation of dignity and meaning, and thereby a 'pleasure', which is infinitely more valuable than the sorts of joy, excitement or satisfaction, which we might find in the sensual apparition. The 'negative pleasure' is thus displeasure and pleasure at the same time – but exactly as a pleasure *at that which immediately causes displeasure* (limitation, finitude, lack of understanding) it is fundamentally different in character from the everyday pleasures and displeasures of immediate emotional inclinations.

It goes for both the beautiful and the sublime that the analysis of it can say something central about the entire system of reason (reason in the broad sense or reason as such). The very fact that there are these two examples of experience, which cannot be unambiguously determined by the understanding, opens up a dimension of the human being, which connects its theoretical, epistemological side with its practical side. The power of judgement as the ability to mediate between a sense impression and a concept suddenly steps forward in its essence, when it is confronted with the task of a mediation, which *cannot* be completed. Just like we cannot determine exactly, wherein the beauty of an object consists, we cannot determine exactly what it is in the sublime that both draws und threatens us. But the reality and the significance of the beautiful and the sublime can nonetheless be felt by every human being. Therefore, it must be possible to give these 'unbounded' concepts a transcendental, philosophical explanation. Which significance does it have to us that we do in fact experience these peculiar conditions of pleasure – the pleasure at the beautiful and the negative pleasure at the sublime?

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant acknowledges and unfolds a specific form of necessity and generality connected with the concepts of the beautiful and the sublime. The two concepts might be concepts of particular

feelings, but not such that can be adequately described by empirical psychology. Therefore, they must be 'pulled over into' transcendental philosophy (CJ 5:266).

'Pulling the beautiful and the sublime over into transcendental philosophy' means acknowledging that they represent something that must be accounted for a priori – a job which was not finished in the first critique, because it was dealing 'only' with the preconditions and limits of knowledge, not taking into account the structures of desire and pleasure, which were therefore to be investigated in the two following critiques. The feelings of pleasure at the beautiful and the sublime are not just 'finer emotions'; they are feelings that show something central about the human being. The 'quintessential experience' of the beautiful, as I have called it, gives us the sensually grounded feeling of being endowed with (second nature) qualities that 'fit' the world, while the 'surplus experience' of the sublime indicates that we are not only (as if it wasn't enough) at home in the world and able to do and enjoy things which no other creatures can; we are also something 'more' than this – there is something in us which makes us able to think something which cannot be perceived by us or any other creatures. The sublime gives a sensually grounded addition to the negative description of freedom in the theoretical philosophy (only its logical *possibility* could be shown). A surplus experience of something, we are confronted with 'out there' and take in with the senses, awakes in us the dimension which could only be outlined negatively in the theoretical philosophy – the *extra*sensory dimension. The fact alone that we can (indeed must) think something, a necessary concept of reason, which transcends what can (possibly) be perceived, indicates another, more 'elevated' capacity. Negative pleasure is the pleasure at discovering that we are more than clever animals with a capacity for moving in the space of giving and asking for reasons. It reminds us that we have other capacities than receptivity and spontaneity, and that we are therefore able to transcend our immediate experiences and motives in a much more radical sense (than Soft Kantians tend to think).

5.2. The sublime as the condition of impossibility of morality

The sublime has two different forms, depending on which of the themes of the two first critiques it is related to: knowledge or desire. This emphasizes that the critique of judgement does not outline a 'third sort of reason' (after the 'theoretical' and the 'practical'), but rather mediates between

the two sorts of reason that are investigated in the two first critiques. It is a critique of the *power of judgement*, not a critique of the 'judging reason.' So, the new theme of pleasure is related to the old themes of knowledge and desire. It supplements or transforms them – makes them tangible. In the first case, the sublime is called 'mathematical', because it concerns the limits of our knowledge – or the absent totality, as described in Chapter 2, (and of course, the two forms of the sublime echo the two types of antinomies in the first critique). In the second case, the sublime is called 'dynamical', because it is related to the incomprehensible forces of nature and their implicit threat of destruction of the subject (and its desire). The 'mathematical sublime' thus shows itself in those of nature's apparitions, which remind us of the unlimited or the unbounded, while the 'dynamical sublime' shows itself, where nature is experienced as threatening and overwhelming. In the Škocjan cave, you could say that there is an experience of both aspects of the sublime at the same time: The sensation of the endless abyss and thereby of infinity, and the threat or the lure of the abyss, which is emphasized by the roaring underground mountain river, which runs through somewhere down there. The heaven could be another example of something that can appear sublime in both ways: The quiet starry heaven, which gives rise to the thought of the infinite universe, and the stormy heaven with clouds and thunder and lightning, which threatens to annihilate us. In both cases, the human being experiences its own inadequacy towards the colossal dimensions of nature. In what follows, I mainly take the mathematical sublime to represent what the sublime is all about, but as we see, the two dimensions can be interconnected in the same phenomena.

In the first critique, Kant does leave us (in the section on the antinomies of reason) with an undecided oscillation between the purely mechanical or scientific determination of events in the world on the one hand, and a 'causality determined by freedom' on the other. Although, as I have claimed, the outcome of the first critique is that we are confronted with an imperative to rise above the sensual realm and 'fix it', it remains a difficult task to imagine what this concretely means. How do we ascribe any actual actions to this ability? I lift a book, for instance. How does this action distinguish itself from the case, when a chimpanzee does the same, or when a robot does it? Could not such actions be dissected into some minimal causal networks, which enable us to see each occurrence as the result of a previous? The hand moves towards the book, grabs it, and lifts it, because some muscles are activated. The muscles in turn are activated by nerves, which carry orders from the brain. The brain is activated by

some chemical substance that appears from the impression of the book and an accompanying pleasurable sentiment from the memory of reading (or from a pleasurable sentiment of the girl, who I impressed by my reading) in a complex set of connections of memories, pictures and signals in an immense neural network. What, besides this, should make a 'causality determined by freedom'? A spiritual intervention in the world? But anything that happens in the world can be explained in naturalist terms. In as far as an event is at all considered as causally determined, it seems that our only way of understanding it, is to see it as the result of a specific number of co-determining factors according to the laws of nature. Based strictly on the premises, which Kant presents in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, it is impossible to understand wherein a causality of freedom should consist, which leaves us with a disturbing feeling of an undermining of morality as such.

The first answer to this problem is the one provided by McDowell and Brandom. Kant should not be understood, even in the first critique, as someone who reduced all human endeavours to something that can ultimately be explained in 'realm-of-law' terminology. Rather, he should be seen as someone who offers a picture of how humans are able to construct meaningful practices, including scientific ones, which improve our orientation in the world. Receptivity and (conceptual) spontaneity together constitute a broadly linguistic capacity that is not reducible to the specifically scientific way of organizing knowledge and seeing connections. When a human being is 'in' language, it has a broad spectre of linguistic capabilities which enables it to do and understand endless amounts of very different situations and possibilities. 'Permeated by language', this second nature creature experiences and acts in accordance with a highly complex and diversified network of interrelated signification in a myriad of institutions. Flipping a light switch, taking a bus, participating in a discussion on Greek mythology, and examining plankton in a microscope are all things one can do, when one has a broad linguistic background understanding and a specialized knowledge of concrete situations. As John McDowell has shown, however, a one-sided focusing on the cognitive structures of natural science (the 'realm of law') tends to lead to a reductionist and in effect distorted understanding of what the human being is. In the example of lifting a book it is of course possible to describe the event in Realm-of-Law naturalist terms like a series of chemical and mechanical transformations, but such a description will not get to the core of what one is really doing. The significance of an action cannot be exhausted in the language of natural science (although

it can *also* be described from the viewpoint of natural science); it must be interpreted as a meaningful action that is guided by reasons, in order to be properly understood.

The approach to the world in terms of natural science is an utmost productive skill, which humans have developed to a grand level, but it is an historical irony that this specific skill, or mode of understanding, which carried the breakthrough of the modern scientific revolution ended up having such massive importance that it was taken to be the *only* philosophically relevant capacity. We tend to forget that the physical stance is also a stance, as Brandom rightly emphasizes (Brandom, 1998, p. 57). In an historical perspective, this forgetfulness ended up *limiting* the understanding of what and who we are. McDowell therefore wishes to reassign the realm-of-law type of thinking to its place – reminding us that it is 'just' a stance. The modern scientific revolution gave us a 'clear-cut understanding of the realm of law', but we do not have to equate that with a new clarity about nature. Nature contains both first nature, realm of law, and second nature – with a spontaneity that is *sui generis* in comparison with the realm of law (McDowell, 1996, p. 78).

The realm-of-law naturalism that reduces human to – well, to first nature, is also the sort of thinking that would reduce the beautiful and the sublime to 'finer emotions'. The ideology of scientism can be criticized by a more careful consideration of the relation between linguistic capacities in a broad sense, and the specialized scientific endeavour of the natural sciences. Indeed, any linguistic practice depends on the power of judgement to see that *this* is an instance of *that*. To identify an organism in a microscope, you have to know a whole lot – or 'speak a language' – just as you have to know a lot to read a map and follow it to a specific tree in a forest. A schematism is always in play, which cannot be made explicit by explaining or justifying the rule, one is following, by another rule.[15] If we would only be left with unconnected dots of impressions, we would not have any clue as to what kind of picture, we were looking at, be it scientific or anything else. Judgement is needed to connect the dots. The beautiful, I claim, represents a broader confirmation of our cognitive capacities; as if giving us a hint that we are not only following the rules (connecting the dots, if you will) correctly, but that the rules themselves make sense. It gives us the sense of being in tune with reality on the basis of the capacities of perception and understanding in the broadest sense, and not limited to any specific application of them. The sensation that something is beautiful is not just an emotion like any other – it induces in us a very special form of pleasure, namely the one of experiencing the play between imagination

and understanding. The 'sensus comunis', which we presuppose, when we expect others to find the same things beautiful as we do, is the indefinable quality of being a creature endowed with language. The beautiful, in other words, elevates us above the purely sensual by 'reminding' us of the common sense of language and normativity and their indefinable source in the power of judgement and the ability to schematize. By having a quintessential experience, we are thus reminded of the *general capacities* of the *senses comunis*, which cannot be reduced to mechanic application of the same, limited view of reality to all instances of experience, emotions, thinking and judging. Understanding is the genus; scientific understanding is 'just' a species.

My claim here, however, is that the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime enables us to add a further qualification. The sublime is more than a finer emotion in yet another sense. It 'reminds' us, not of the quintessence of the understanding, but of reason in the narrow sense. Besides our foothold in the first nature of mechanical interdependent causation, we are part of a 'space of reasons' with a *sensus comunis*, *and* an extrasensory dimension of reason in the narrow sense. It is the aim of this chapter to establish that (Kant's insistence on) this dimension cannot be disregarded as 'rampant Platonism'. Kant himself does not reject his early descriptions of freedom, he does not 'change his mind' about freedom, but you could say that he goes on from the first critique to unfold some of the implications of the 'reason in the narrow sense', which was initially difficult to grasp as much more than a kind of juggling with contradictions.

5.3. An extension of the mind

The power of judgement has two modes: a determinate and a reflective. The determinate makes it possible that we can recognize concrete impressions as instances of a common, general concept. I see, for instance, this as a horse, because the determinate power of judgement mediates between my sense impression and the concept 'horse'. The reflective judgement goes the opposite way – from the particular to the universal. I have a horse and search for a more universal concept – like 'mammal'. You could say that it is a question of moving 'downwards' from our knowledge to empirical reality, or 'upwards' from empirical reality to the limits of our knowledge. Now, there is in Kant, as we have discussed in Chapter 3, normativity all the way *down*, but not all the way *up*. The lacking closure in the 'upper end' is what can be reached by reflection and

opens the space of the sublime. Reflective judgement is the capacity to search for a common concept that gives unity and meaning to concrete impressions and experiences. We can place our concrete knowledge in larger contexts, which give it perspective and meaning. Once we know that horses are mammals, a perspective opens up with a manifold of relations, which make it possible to give us a more refined and complete understanding of what it means to be a horse. The capacity for reflective judgement is gradually developed, but already very young children often play with the extremities of its application. A common fascination, which many remember from their own childhood, is to move from the particular to the universal in definitions of their place in the world. This is how I did it myself, for instance: 'Henrik (name), Bjerre (family), Tingkærvej (Road), Bindeballe (Town), Randbøl Sogn (Parish), Jylland (Peninsula), Denmark, Europe, Earth, Milky Way . . .' The slight thrill that ends this line is the sublime. What is the most overall, meaning-giving concept for our placement in the world? What is the last word in the most complete address? The Universe? The child that can settle for that answer is a calm child. But it is also a dogmatic child. For what is the 'Universe' other than a word? Does the Universe have an end or is it infinite? If it has an end, then what is there on the other side? If it is infinite, then how can it be one? It is as if we are confronting the necessary and the impossible at one and the same time, just by writing our address! We feel that there must be some sort of answer to the question about, what 'everything' is, but it is an answer which we cannot give any sense without ending up in contradictions. A creature endowed with language which looks at the starry heaven above it, suddenly realizes that there is a limit to that which can be understood in 'normal' language. The problem is that wherever we are zooming in on the address, we can always imagine something bigger or smaller, but we cannot imagine what the 'biggest' or the 'smallest' would concretely be – how it would look like, for

> . . . nothing in nature can be given, however large we may judge it, that could not, when considered in a different relation, be degraded all the way to the infinitely small, nor conversely anything so small that it could not, when compared with still smaller standards, be expanded for our imagination all the way to the magnitude of a world. (CJ 5:250)

This is exactly the reason why the sublime is not the object as such, one specific object, but what it arouses in us. The sublime is here very close to Wittgenstein's definition of the 'mystical' as the feeling of the world as a

limited whole. The *Anschauung* of the world as a limited whole, Wittgenstein says, is its *Anschauung sub specie aeterni* (Wittgenstein, 1993b: § 6.45). In Kantian terms, of course, there is no such thing as an *Anschauung* of the world as a limited whole (that is exactly the problem), but the surplus experience of the sublime comes rather close, nonetheless. The sublime is 'beyond the understanding'. It is a state of mind, which we enter, when we confront that which cannot be handled by the understanding, i.e. which transcends the limits of what a human being can come to grasp. While we are indeed filled with an indefinable fear, when we slightly dizzy cross the bridge in the Škojcan cave, we also in a glimpse sense the most fundamental inscrutability of nature. What if the abyss just continues indefinitely? This is a thought, which we cannot really handle, even if it can be almost brutally persistent for a moment. It exceeds our understanding and shows us its limitation – an idea occurred which the understanding could not come to terms with. Regardless of all possible factual information about grottos and stalagmites and rifts and underground rivers, we are confronted with an overwhelming sentiment of the unlimited. The sublime therefore reminds us of the provisional character of all our knowledge, and hence 'nature is sublime in those of its appearances whose intuition carries with it the idea of their infinity' (CJ 5:255).

Even though we can investigate all sorts of events and phenomena in the world, we can always ask further questions to them and to their placement in relation to everything else in the world. What we can *not* do is to give an ultimate explanation of the coherence and absolute totality of the world, which can put an end to the metaphysical speculation. The starry heaven, the colossal ocean, the cleft – they are all there to give us occasion to think the limits of our understanding. The abyss can suddenly open beneath us. Nature, in some of its apparitions, 'causes' the idea of the infinite – an idea which remains undecided and impossible for the understanding to grasp. Through a sudden glimpse or shock, the sublime reminds us of the limitation or *lack* of the understanding. However, we can become aware of this lack, or of the fact that we are such creatures that can even think something as a problem, which lies outside the categories of the understanding and of the sensual experience.

Thus, the ability alone to *think* the infinite (as a concept) proves the status of the human being as a creature endowed with reason (in the narrow sense) – an ability in the mind, which reaches beyond any sensual measure. We cannot imagine the infinite as a limited whole, we cannot make a picture of it, but we can *think* it. The starry heaven above us arouses in us an indefinable sense of the infinite: it is out there, it goes on and on, it

is everything. We can think it as a whole, but we cannot imagine how this whole is. It becomes a *focus imaginarius* which rests on or covers up a fundamental contradiction of reason. The world as a limited whole is an idea, and '[i]f we speak literally and consider the matter logically, ideas cannot be exhibited' (CJ 5:268). They are at once necessary (we must think them) and impossible (we can't grasp them). We can recognize a horse grazing in a field. The horse is there, it is chewing. But where is the world? How should we be able to perceive it? Is it bigger than our solar system? Is it bigger than anything we have ever imagined? Is it infinite? The world is, but we cannot perceive it – we can only perceive things *in* it.

What goes beyond the understanding is thus not an x-file entity of some sort. It is reason in the narrow sense. Reason is the very transcendence of the understanding. What makes the human being an extrasensory creature is precisely its ability to think the *lack* at the end of reason. The sublime is a result of an effort of reflective judgement, which appears instantly, because we are already in the middle of 'everything'. The sublime creates the direct line, the hot line, if you will, between our experience and the totality of which it is part. We reach for the ultimate (understanding) and don't find it, and exactly because of *not* finding it, we are directly confronted with the supersensible dimension that is 'in us more than us'. The expression 'extrasensory' should thus be read quite literally here: The human being has some surplus, an 'over', something that transcends the senses, something which is triggered by surplus experiences. The ability alone to think the infinite constitutes an 'extension of the mind' (*Erweiterung des Gemüts*) which makes us feel able to 'move beyond the limits of sensibility' (*die Schranken der Sinnlichkeit zu überschreiten*), if not theoretically, then practically (CJ 5:255). An extension of the mind – a peculiar expression. If one allows for a moment a more Schopenhauerian understanding of what it means to have an experience than we have employed so far (i.e. one which does not emphasize the division between first and second nature types of receptivity), one could say that my experience that a horse is grazing in a field probably in important ways resembles the experience, a horse might have of a horse grazing in a field. The horse might even be said to experience (again, in a very loose sense) that a bunch of fellow creatures are running towards it. But the horse probably does not have the slightest idea, sensation or anything else of the thought that this bunch is part of a totality, the concept of which goes beyond any possible perception. *This* ability is what markedly distinguishes human from first nature animal – *and* from itself. It is in this specific sense that we can talk about an extension of the human mind, something reaching beyond the limits of sensibility: the

ability alone to think it reveals a dimension of the human, which distinguishes us as extrasensory creatures . . .

> For though the imagination finds nothing beyond the sensible that could support it, this very removal of its barriers also makes it feel unbounded, so that its separation [from the sensible] is an exhibition of the infinite; and though an exhibition of the infinite can as such never be more than merely negative, it still expands the soul. (CJ 5:274)

We don't 'find' anything to hold on to when we seek the supersensible, but thereby we see that the limits set up by the understanding in a concrete linguistic order are in an important sense arbitrary, the *Schranken* fall away, and therefore the imagination 'feels' unlimited, unrestricted by a dogmatic metaphysical explanation to keep it in check. In other words: the unboundedness of the imagination coincides with its limitation. Imagination, in its reflective endeavour, does not find any fixed point beyond the sensual, but exactly this lacking point simultaneously sets imagination free. If we used to imagine that there was a specific fixed point beyond sensibility, which could explain to us, why things appear as they do (a sublime object of ideology, to use Slavoj Žižek's term), we realize in the surplus experience that they could have been in indefinitely many other ways. We realize, in other words, that we *are* guided by an (necessary illusion of an) as if. This is what the Soft Kantians overlook. True, there is no Kantian way to justify a 'rampant Platonism', which seeks to establish some sort of noumenal entity beyond language/culture/normativity, but the *absence* of rampant Platonism itself has profound importance. It is the experience of the unsuccessful attempt at the unlimited which is at the same time the dizzying, intoxicating experience of the transcendence of the limited. Reflection aims at a total, all encompassing understanding of everything, but constantly fails to find something to hold on to. The world thereby opens itself. The 'Mehrere', the surplus, is a *lack*!

Here is how this relates to morality. What constitutes a 'real occurrence of freedom', a deed, is not that we are (even in principle) able to justify the linguistic network of implications from our actions – that we can somehow see, from a God-eye's point of view, what will happen, if we do like *this* . . . Rather, it is the very endeavour of reaching for the unconditional, which constitutes morality itself. Only through such an endeavour, namely, can we set new standards for what is possible. The moral law *can* not be fulfilled, but it *must* be fulfilled – and therefore it *can* be fulfilled. The slogan that 'you can, because you must' relates exactly to that which is in human

more than human: It is the *must* – the pure, unconditional demand of rea-
son – that makes it possible for us to *do it*. You could say that the lack, we
encounter in ourselves, and which is simultaneously an 'extension of the
mind', is filled out with the categorical imperative and an accompanying
urge to let the barriers fall – to do that which no one thought was possible.
This paradox is the heart of Kantian morality, since it is the very impossi-
bility of its fulfilment that makes it real (and derives an 'is' from a pure
'ought'). As noted already, Kant in the second critique claims that *one can
because one ought to*, and he goes on to say that it is the consciousness of the
moral law that functions as an incentive (*Triebfeder*) that enables us to 'rule
over sensibility' (CPrR 5:159).

A '*Triebfeder*' of a capacity which rules over the sensual or 'pathological'
realm. We are finally approaching an answer to the question posed (in the
words of Alenka Zupančič) at the beginning of Chapter 3: 'How can the
pure form of duty itself function as a pathological element, that is, as an
element capable of assuming the role of the driving force or incentive of
our actions?'

We are reminded of the 'capacity which rules over the sensual' in the
sublime, or rather: With the sublime we get a sensual, or an *aesthetic*,
access to the extrasensory. We are reminded by the world of our extra-
sensory side – and thereby of the fact that we *can* do it: we can elevate
ourselves above the sensual realm. By reflecting, searching for the
concept of the infinite, the human being realizes that the world as a
limited whole can only be given as an idea. But this realization exactly
frees us from any provisional picture of how things must be. The ability
alone to think it constitutes a transcendence of the sensible, and this
is why the sublime is tightly connected to the concrete experience of
oneself as a free and moral being. We do not have to do that which we
have been taught (normal morality), or which our inclinations demand
(pre-morality). The negative pleasure at the sublime could therefore
be paraphrased as a kind of (surplus) experience of the condition of
impossibility of morality. We cannot experience an absolute guarantor
of meaning and coherence, but exactly when we experience the impossi-
bility of such a guarantee, we can come to see ourselves as meaning
giving and direction setting.

Remember that the 'empty place' left by theoretical philosophy was
defined as 'the intelligible' and that its place was left open to be filled
out by the unconditional. This unconditional is the moral law. But the
realization of the moral law is difficult to imagine – theoretical and practi-
cal philosophy seem impossible to connect, which therefore becomes the

central task of the third critique. The human being is free, because it is extrasensory, and the extrasensory in the human being is the experience of the empty place itself. The 'intelligible' is thus tightly connected to the experience of a fundamental lack. The noumenon is indeed a negatively defined extremity, but through the surplus experience of the sublime, this negativity is directly confronted – a confrontation which highlights the empty place to be filled out by the moral law. The moral law is a power which . . .

> . . . actually reveals itself aesthetically only through sacrifice (which is a deprivation – though one that serves our inner freedom – in return for which it reveals in us an unfathomable depth of this supersensible power, whose consequences extend beyond what we can foresee). (CJ 5:271)

The human being is extrasensory, because it is, or because it can come to be, conscious of its own lack (a lack which other beings, as far as we know, don't have). Rado Riha has claimed that exactly in this somewhat paradoxical aspect of the human mind lies the root of a 'liberation of sensuality': 'Sensuality is liberated in that moment, when the subject lets the illusion fall of something beyond the particular appearances, which could possibly be grasped' (Riha, 1993, p. 84, my translation).

In the sublime lies the possibility of seeing very clearly in an instant: You must change your life! The sense of necessity and unchangeability that we (implicitly) presuppose in our everyday life, suddenly falls away in the sublime (surplus) experience, it is invalidated, becomes nothing. This sensation is completely real. It gives us the faith that action is possible, that things *can* be changed – that we are able to do the good. Even though we cannot, seen from the point of view of the understanding, reach the moral law as an object, i.e. even though we cannot theoretically prove that an action is performed out of good will alone, and thus freely, we can actually reach this impossibility itself. We can experience in an instant that the impossible is possible, because we 'reach the impossible object' *as impossible*, when the impossibility itself becomes sensually present (via the sublime experience) (Riha, 1993, p. 91).

Humans can not read the law of God in the great book of nature (those who believe that are either religious fanatics or science fundamentalists – or both), but they can prescribe a law to themselves about how the world ought to be arranged. The sublime reminds human that it is a free creature – that we can perceive and design the world in infinitely many new ways. The sublime therefore effectuates a 'liberation of sensuality'.

The boundaries of sensuality are eliminated, as Kant himself describes it. We are not limited by the way things are currently constituted. It can all be turned around. An act that springs from this ability is a free act.

In the sublime, the human being faces an abyss. Here, it is confronted at one and the same time with its own lacking ability to make sense of the most fundamental character of the world, and with its own extra-sensory side, the extension of the mind: If I could create a meaningful unity out of this chaos, how should it look like? The frightening dimension of the sublime can be replaced by an imaginative consideration of how to create order out of chaos. The one who remains calm when confronted with the sublime is therefore often described with a *morally* grounded admiration. Isn't this why traumatic events like ship wreckages, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, conflicts and wars always create heroes – someone who maintains dignity and overview in situations that seem to be outside any human control? There is even some admirable quality in someone who passes a bridge over an abyss in a Slovenian cave without hesitation or fear.

The ability, which can be mobilized in the sublime, is the ability to handle the immediate helplessness towards the abyss, the traumatic experience that the ground is disappearing beneath you. In one terrific moment we see that there is no final fundament under our knowledge or society/culture/normativity, or that it isn't stable and given for good. Hence the simultaneous potential for liberation. Warfare can, for instance, have an effect of formation and maturation in as far as it contains a fundamental element of putting everything at stake: In it we (re)discover that society is fragile – that it could have been entirely differently constituted, both positively and negatively. We can fight for changes, we believe in, or suddenly have to deal with an aggressor who wants to destroy what we already have. We discover, in other words, that we can and must influence how the world should look like. That we can, *because* we must.

> A prolonged peace, on the other hand, tends to make prevalent a merely commercial spirit, and along with it base selfishness, cowardice, and softness, and to debase the way of thinking of that people. (CJ 5:263)

When you only linger on what Robert Brandom calls the 'discursive marketplace', you tend to get a 'debased' way of thinking. In my terms: too much normal morality without any deeds becomes an insipid morality.

5.4. Hannah Arendt and the *sensus comunis*

We see, in other words, yet another way of distinguishing between Soft and Hard Kantians. The former focus on language, culture and *sensus comunis*, when they set out to explain moral phenomena, the latter set out from reason (in the narrow sense), the higher, the ability to exceed, transcend, transform.

As Hannah Arendt very precisely says, the presence in an individual of (a sensation of) *sensus comunis* indicates that she/he 'fits into a community' (Arendt, 1992, p. 70). 'The *sensus comunis* is the specifically human sense because communication, i.e. speech, depends on it' (ibid.). A definition, as it will be noted, much in tune with the McDowellian/Brandomian understanding of second nature (the water with tea, etc. etc.). As it has been shown, I agree that *sensus comunis* is a 'specifically human sense'; it separates us from first nature creatures. What must be added, however, is the experience of the sublime, as that which separates us also *from ourselves* (and the concrete community, we fit into).

Interestingly, Arendt goes on to quote Kant from *Anthropology* on what happens, when someone loses the 'common sense':

> The only universal characteristic of madness is the loss of *common sense* (*sensus comunis*) and its replacement with *logical private sense* (*sensus privatus*); [and Kant goes on, which Arendt does not quote, HJB] for example, a human being in broad daylight sees a light burning on his table which, however, another person standing nearby does not see, or hears a voice that no one else hears. (APP 7:219)

If you lose *sensus comunis*, you become mad. This is the 'only general mark of madness'. Isn't this in perfect correlation with the controlled madness that we investigated in Chapter 4? The world is kept together by a necessary illusion, an *as if* – it were meaningful and coherent, and underneath it lies a luring madness, which is kept in check. Arendt, however, seems to have another kind of 'madness' in mind – one that seems to be actually more precisely described simply as *egoism*. She interprets Kant's description of the 'loss of common sense' as a warning that the only correct or fulfilling way of realizing one's potential as a human being is to do it in cooperation and together with others. The 'madness' to Arendt is to stick to one's own view of things without going a step further and realize that we have something in common, all of us, and that this is actualized in the delicate judgements of taste and impartiality. (Arendt seems to understand by

'madness' what Kant understood as baseness and depraved morality, in the quotation from the *Critique of Judgment* above, after long periods without *sublime* experiences, which is an entirely different matter).

> The less idiosyncratic one's taste is, the better it can be communicated; communicability is again the touchstone. Impartiality in Kant is called 'disinterestedness', the disinterested delight in the Beautiful. (Arendt, 1992, p. 73)

Instead of aspiring for that which is immediately *angenehm*, we realize ourselves as human beings in community. Again, me and Bob and John all agree, although Arendt does add something here to the descriptions of 'normal morality' so far offered. Arendt, as far as I can see, does not offer anything like a 'private language argument' in the Wittgensteinian sense, so her point is in fact not that in order to at all make a statement, which is meaningful and says something, you have to be part of a network of signification, etc. Rather, she describes a 'private' sense, which is perfectly meaningful in a logical sense, but somewhat base or uncivilized in a *moral* sense. A retreat from the public, common world, it could probably be called, which keeps the 'private' person from fully realizing his human potential (just as Robinson Crusoe could of course talk to himself in a perfectly meaningful way, because he had learned a language in England, so a morally 'private' person can refrain from engaging with others, although they have taught him how to speak and understand). There is something 'more' you have to learn, besides uttering meaningful sentences, in order to truly become a moral being, and this is what is learned in the *sensus comunis*: an expectation, maybe even a feeling of solidarity, that 'this goes for the others as well as for me'. 'Impartiality' in Arendt's interpretation thus means disinterestedness, because it is a way of disregarding one's own immediate interests, while giving preference to 'impartial' standards or aims.

Although this might be a fruitful way for philosophy of addressing the interconnectedness of humans in a *sensus comunis* that applies to all second nature human creatures endowed with language, it is hardly Kantian – and this for one specific reason. The disinterestedness, which Kant identifies in the beautiful, marks what I have called a 'quintessential' experience, a mere pleasure at the playful exchanges between senses and imagination, but as a kind of pleasure *without* interest, it has no moral value. In Brandomian you could maybe say that the beautiful highlights what it means to be 'one of us'; one of those creatures that use language. Arendt's move from disinterestedness to *impartiality* as a moral value, however, is not a Kantian move. Arendt does indeed seem to say that the move into *sensus*

comunis is a moral one – you *should* be disinterested in order to fulfil your moral capacities as a human being. In my interpretation, however, there is no obligation following from quintessential experiences. Its disinterested-ness is not a moral impartiality; it is 'just' a confirmation of who we are and what we can do with our cognitive capacities. The type of impartiality that has value to a Kantian conception of morality, on the other hand, is exactly endowed with interest – the *highest* interest even: the interest of rea-son. The *Angenehme* is interesting, because it gives us sensual pleasure, we want to eat it, touch it or get something from it, and the *Gute* is interesting because we want to be such creatures that can act universally and morally. 'Impartiality', I think, is best understood in this sense – as something we are and should be *most* interested in.

It is this higher interest of reason, which we are reminded of in the sub-lime experience. The pleasure, we feel at the sublime is, as already partly quoted in the opening of this chapter 'not so much a positive pleasure as rather admiration and respect' and therefore deserves to be called a neg-ative pleasure (CJ 5: 245). 'In presenting the sublime in nature the mind feels agitated', as Kant later says, 'while in an aesthetic judgment about the beautiful in nature it is in restful contemplation' (CJ 5:258). The move-ment of the mind indicates its interest in that which the sublime relates to, whereas the calm, disinterested contemplation of the beautiful indicates its quintessential, but morally indifferent character. The feeling of disin-terested pleasure at the beautiful is therefore not the 'moral feeling', if you will. It is no coincidence that Kant in the famous quote from the *Critique of Practical Reason* refers to the 'starry heavens above and the moral law within' and not to, say, 'the beautiful cornfield in front of me and the moral law within'. As Kant says in the *Grundlegung*: 'All so-called moral interest consists simply in respect for the law' (Groundwork 4:401). It is clear that Arendt is cheating, if I may say so, when she ends one of her lectures on Kant by saying that '[t]he beautiful is, in Kantian terms, an end in itself' (Arendt, 1992, p. 77). It is not. Only creatures endowed with reason are.

Arendt gives high praise to examples as the way to understand particu-lars. Examples are the 'go-cart of judgments' as she quotes Kant (ibid., p. 76). By seeing how it is done, we learn how to do it. And this goes for seeing the moral thing to do as well: 'Courage is *like* Achilles. Etc.' (ibid.). Because of the common sense, which is directly connected to speech, we can learn to see something as of this and that value, regardless of our own immediate inclinations. As it should be clear, I can very well agree with this – this is what I have called initiation into second nature normal morality. However, the question of how an individual is gaining access to the com-mon sense of any given community can never be of principal interest to

moral philosophy (at least in the sense, I am trying to define). Indeed, Kant himself even emphasizes that examples are not the right way to go around moral education of children; rather, they should learn to have awe for the principal force of the moral law. In philosophical explanations of morality, examples are entirely secondary to Kant. The very quotation of examples as 'go-cart' that Arendt highlights immediately continues to emphasize that 'they are indispensable *for the one who lacks natural talent for judgment*' (CPR: B 174, my translation and italics). Examples are good tools, if you are entirely unable to evaluate anything; they get you started. In terms of children's moral maturation, you could say that they of course must see how it is done, how the parents distinguish between good and bad, who is considered to be moral role models (relatives, teachers, politicians, etc.), in short: they must get to know the institutions in order to speak the moral language, but only to learn their way around, to see how people expect you to behave in order to live a pleasant and peaceful life. After having learned all this, of course, a subject has a starting point for 'real' moral evaluation and higher ambitions. What is of utmost urgency is to become aware of the ability to rise above any concrete example and see it in a broader, more universal light. I am almost tempted to say that moral education, according to Kant, should take place by staring at the starry heaven at night, while talking to someone about the mystery of life – not by being told edifying tales of persons and actions commonly agreed to be good. In the *Groundwork*, Kant goes on to say that one couldn't 'give worse advice to morality than wanting to derive it from examples', since any – however good – example should still be appraised in accordance with principles of morality, and could therefore never provide the concept of morality (Groundwork 4:408).

Acting morally, to Kant, means acting in accordance with the moral law. Since there can be no evidence of a concrete instance of the realization of the moral law, we are ill-advised by trying to learn the truly moral from examples of what is generally considered to be moral. I would add: It can indeed be taught – through examples – what is considered to be moral, and what 'we do around here'; this is what I call normal morality. But for Kant – and Hard Kantians – the aim of morality is higher than what can be imitated. It is to act freely out of pure duty towards the moral law – only in this way can we create 'real occurrences of freedom'. What should be trained, is not the ability to interpret and appreciate examples, but the ability to 'rise over the sensual realm' altogether – something that cannot be guaranteed to work in each instance, but which through frequent attempts can give hope of real effects, 'so that gradually the greatest, but purely moral, interest in it may be produced in us' (CPrR 5:159).

Chapter 6

Self-inflicted Immaturity

This idea of personality, awakening respect by setting before our eyes the sublimity of our nature (in its vocation) while at the same time showing us the lack of accord of our conduct with respect to it and thus striking down self-conceit, is natural even to the most common human reason and is easily observed.

(CPrR 5:87)

The concept of the sublime echoes a number of times in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.[16] How *sublime* are not duty, deeds and the extrasensory dimension to human! What we have called the interest of reason, i. e., the 'higher interest' or the dignity of a person, is, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, formulated in terms of a higher capacity for desire. Kant divides between a 'lower' and a 'higher' capacity for desire, which echoes what you could call the 'lower' and the 'higher' interest of reason – one related to the *Angenehme* and survival, and one related to the *Gute* and the sublime. If there were no purely formal law of desire, Kant now says in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, there would not be any higher capacity for desire at all (CPrR 5:22). This is formulated in a footnote in the way that the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom – for if there were no such thing as the moral law in us we would not be justified to assume that we were free. (Freedom, on the other hand, is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, for if we were not free, there would be no point in attributing a moral law to us.) (CPrR 5:4).

We have seen that Kant's approach to freedom thus takes different forms in his different works. What I am suggesting here is that these approaches are not contradictory and that they should rather be seen as different points of view or different angles at the same issue, three different registers of freedom: the symbolic, the imaginary and the real. Roughly, the point is the following.

– In the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant describes the *logical structure of freedom*. Freedom is the 'end stone' in the

entire system of reason, i.e. it is through an 'Auf-das-Ganze-Gehen' of reason that philosophy can come to identify, say, the 'logical place' of freedom. We saw that the moral law takes the empty place of the lack in speculative reason, and that it is because there is lack that there is freedom.

– In the investigation of the concept of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant describes the confrontation with the lack of speculative reason in an individual experience. You could say that he thereby describes the *consciousness of freedom* – the shock of the sublime surplus experience reminds a human being of its supersensible side and of the ability to transcend the bounds of the existing order. By being aware of the lack, the empty place, we become aware of that which fills it – the moral law – the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom.

– Scattered through the second and third critique and in *Religion*, Kant, then, describes the *realization of freedom*. Freedom is only 'really' realized in the performance of a specific type of actions, namely such that are motivated directly by respect for the moral law. Kant calls the ability to perform such actions 'absolute spontaneity' and the resulting deeds you could call the *effects* of freedom. Characteristic of the effects of deeds is that they cannot be directly proven in the experience. We therefore have only indirect evidence of them.

Now, the consequence of this tripartition is that human beings can be said to always already *be* free (because of the logical structure of freedom), to be able to become *aware* that they are free (through the experience of the sublime), and simultaneously potentially able to *become* free in another sense than they already are. To make sense of this tripartition, it is necessary to distinguish between freedom as an ability to choose and perform particular actions within normal morality, and freedom as a genuinely moral category, according to which one is responsible for the entirety of one's actions and character. Kant's treatment of this issue is delicate in that it does not count moral character as a *sum* of individual actions within the space of giving and asking for reasons, but as a *totality* or a unity that encompasses everything one is and does as a language-using creature within the space of giving and asking for reasons.

The freedom that we gradually gain through our ability to monger with words is a freedom to choose. When we learn how to do things with words, we learn that there are alternatives – that we can choose different paths in every situation. Should I buy a red or a black pair of shoes, should I take the train or the car to visit my relatives – should I join the army or work as a grass-root volunteer? Such choices can be perfectly described in

the normal morality vocabulary which was presented with aid from John McDowell and Robert Brandom. If I enter a dimly lit room, and there is an apparently functioning light bulb that can be turned on by a flick of a switch, and I have the relevant, partly linguistic capability to understand these conditions, I may choose to turn on the light. Circumstances will give better or worse reasons for such a choice. If I want to read a book or teach some students something by using the blackboard, it would probably be a good idea. If, on the other hand, I would want to have a private conversation with a colleague or sneak out for a secret kiss with my girlfriend, there would be good reasons to be otherwise committed. In as far as we use the term 'freedom' to describe the option of such choices we should qualify it as *normal morality freedom*. The more options there are, and the less you are hindered in trying them out, the more you are free with respect to normal morality freedom. There is, in other words, an obvious quantitative dimension to this type of freedom, although there is also undeniably a qualitative dimension: when you know how to do certain things with words that relate to the situation in a dimly lit room, your perception of a dimly lit room is qualitatively different from the perception of it in someone who doesn't. Parrots can undoubtedly learn how to flick light switches, even as a response to the light in the room, but they probably won't do it because they want to teach someone about Kant's philosophy and need to make some distinctions between concepts on a blackboard.

Freedom as the realm of possibilities within the space of giving and asking for reasons marks a distinctive advantage and privilege of the human being. However, Kant still maintains that we can – and must – aim higher than learning how to create and exploit the options that can be articulated in alternatives within the culture and language that we have been initiated into. The freedom which is the 'essence' of morality to Kant is more radical, or maybe more precisely: it has another dimension beside the fact that we are able to do things with the words, we have learned. Freedom in the strictly Kantian sense implies that we are not only responsible for the concrete choices that we make on the 'discursive marketplace'; we are responsible for the whole market place as such – and thereby for rising above it, when morality requires it. The normal morality freedom is therefore typically *more free* than it is aware of.

6.1. Being and becoming free

The tripartition of the question of freedom in its symbolic, imaginary and real register makes possible a new approach to a very fundamental and

very difficult question within Kantian practical philosophy seen as a whole:
Are we free and thereby always already responsible for the totality of our
actions or do we only *become* free, when we act in accordance with the mor-
ally right, i.e. the moral law? There are good reasons to interpret Kant in
both ways – because they are both true. We are free, because we are able
to do things with words, and thereby become responsible for how we do
things. Slightly simplified, you could say that we are responsible for how we
get around in the (linguistic) world and that our course of action always
depends on the ability to discern the relevant features of the situation and
judge when and how to act upon the information that we retrieve. Gaining
in competence, one could thus say, means gaining in freedom. Still, there is
in Kant a type of liberation, which relates to something else than being or
becoming a creature endowed with language. One could say that learning
language and morality is an *evolutionary* process, which gradually makes us
more and more free to do things with words, while the 'truly' moral free-
dom, which makes morality a pressing, personal question is a *revolutionary*
process that demands a leap out of evolution. Kant, in *Religion*, calls this a
'revolution in the disposition [*Gesinnung*] of the human being' – a concep-
tion which can be hard to even make sense of, but I will make an attempt
in the following sections, after having considered a little more carefully
the opening remarks of the essay on enlightenment ('An answer to the
question: What is enlightenment?') in which Kant demands us to 'make
use of our own understanding without direction from another'. Although
an intuitively obvious understanding of autonomy would be exactly to rely
on one's own judgement rather than the 'direction' (*Leitung*) of another,
Kant complicates the relation by describing it in a way that doesn't really
fit with the gradual takeover of one's own conduct. The opening indicates
that even though we are adult and apparently self-controlling 'linguistic
animals' or second nature creatures we can still be said to be unfree, or
'immature' as Kant calls it here, in a significant sense.

Kant's essay opens with a definition of enlightenment that strikes the eye
as somewhat paradoxical: 'Enlightenment is the human being's emergence
from his self-inflicted immaturity' (WE 8:35, translation modified, HJB).
How can immaturity be self-inflicted or 'one's own fault'? Compare the
immaturity of a human being to an apple that is unripe, a situation that is
not yet ready for intervention, or a theory that is too crude to really explain
the problematic it touches upon – the word, in most connections, means
that something is not ripe; that it hasn't grown enough to fulfil a certain
function, etc. We use it as a descriptive word, almost in an organic sense, to
define something as not-yet. It would hardly make sense to blame a theory

for not being fully developed (but maybe the researcher), let alone an apple for being not-yet ripe. Taking over the 'direction' of one's own life in the same way intuitively seems to be a gradual process, where one needs the guidance of another until one can really manage alone. The usual idea of an exit from one's immaturity could probably be best described in the image of a child that learns how to ride a bicycle: The parent literally directs the cycle until at one moment, usually unnoticed, he or she lets go, and the child directs itself. How could the child be said to be guilty of not being able to ride a bike, when the training starts? The German word *Unmündigkeit* even makes the case stronger: when you are not '*mündig*', you are simply not yet counted as 'one of us' in relevant ways – a literal translation (and in many or most cases the most correct one) could render *unmündig* as 'under age'. Can you *blame* someone for being 15 and not yet 18 years old? Or put in another way: isn't it a meaningless addition to state that the immaturity is self-inflicted? Couldn't Kant just (and more consistently) have written that enlightenment is the 'human being's emergence from its immaturity'? In that case, it would be much more obvious, for instance, how scholars, encyclopaedists and teachers can educate humanity and help us all to improve and gain more and more independence and self-governance, as we learn more language and more facts, and as we appreciate more and more connections between statements and what follows from them. If someone is to blame for immaturity, it would seem to be the ones that are supposed to 'bring up' the not-yet mature, just like a farmer could be blamed for not watering his apples during a draught, or a parent for not teaching the child how to ride a bike. The 'initiation into second nature', which McDowell and other Soft Kantians write about seems to have the clear character of an upbringing, where someone, the already initiated, bring up the innocent and uninitiated, lift them up into the realm of language and responsibility, elevate them, evolve them. When you learn language, you gradually become the master of your own behaviour in a much more radical sense than any other creatures can become. You are lifted up into a realm of commitments and entitlements (to speak Brandomian), where there are better and worse reasons for doing something in each situation, and where you will gradually be held more and more responsible for your actions and their implications. The difference lies exactly in (having the capacity for) 'giving and asking for reasons', which we would never expect from a first nature animal. In the Soft Kantian interpretation of coming to moral maturity, the problem is one of gradual mastery, which is accomplished by the aid of others. You 'leave' your moral immaturity, when you have learned enough to be counted as 'one of us'.

Kant's addition of 'self-inflicted' indicates that this gradual upbringing and self-mastering is not all he means by enlightenment. Rather, enlightenment means that one takes responsibility for something, which one is already responsible for. Living without the direction from another does not simply mean that I can suddenly ride my bike without my father's hand on the seat, but that I somehow acknowledge that learning how to ride it was my own project all along. And the point must be made even stronger: Kant makes the subject responsible not only for learning how to ride the bike – it is responsible for not having learned it until it does. Paradoxical as it may sound, this figure is, I think, crucial to Kant's understanding of freedom and it recurs in a number of cases as a sort of double freedom: The emergence, or the exit, from immaturity is not only a necessary accomplishment, which can be attributed to the subject once it 'directs itself', it is also a departure from a condition of immaturity which was the responsibility of the subject itself already *before* it was mature enough to 'choose the exit'. Kant would be able to agree that we are initiated into language and moral culture; we learn how to behave and we learn which aims are thought of as virtuous. We have a kind of freedom as language users, which enables us to do things and appreciate things, other beings cannot. In virtue of our capacity as rational creatures, we are already, as soon as we are 'one of us', morally responsible and free to act in infinitely many different ways – whether we acknowledge it our not. But there is a further process of moral maturation, if you will, in Kant. One where we 'exit' not just the first nature animal kingdom of immediate inclinations and lust, but also an 'immaturity', which is potentially in perfect harmony with the otherwise 'mature' and civilized condition of a moral agent of age. You can be respected, well functioning and in charge of your own business (current as the King's coin, as Kierkegaard would have said) and still be grossly immature on this reading of Kant. This, I claim, can only be understood in light of the fact, which was emphasized earlier, that 'normality' to Kant in an important sense is pathological.

In *Religion*, Kant describes human as 'radically evil' in a way that throws light on this problematic. We have touched this problematic earlier, but shall rephrase it here to adopt the point to the current context. To be radically evil does not mean to do something which is extreme, extravagant or diabolically malicious. Indeed (as we shall see in the following chapter), Kant even denies the possibility of what he calls diabolic evil, i.e. doing something simply for the sake of it being evil. To be radically evil means something else – it means to invert or 'pervert' the relation between our self-interest and the moral law – something which we quite spontaneously

tend to do. In fact, it is a condition we are in until we have overturned it and carried out the 'revolution of the mind' that enables us to exit from self-inflicted immaturity. Humans are 'naturally' all evil; there is an inclination in us to further our own advantage, and this inclination is the one, we first follow (when we gain some mastery of our surroundings). When Kant says that evil is 'radical', one could almost say that he just means that it is widespread. In *Religion*, evil is furthermore called 'one's own fault' ('*selbstverschuldet*'), which echoes the opening of the essay on enlightenment. Evil is a moral concept, and therefore not a 'natural predisposition', but it is nonetheless a 'natural propensity' which is 'somehow entwined with humanity itself and, as it were, rooted in it'. It is in all of us, 'naturally', but must still be considered as the choice of each of us (Religion 6:32).

The 'natural predisposition' (*Naturanlage*) of which Kant speaks here (and denies as the explanation of human evildoing) must be seen as a first nature capability. The inclination towards evil is something that cannot be explained away by referring to Nature – it must be ascribed to the human being (something it 'can be held accountable for'). However, in our human being, because of the way human beings are constituted, we are all 'even the best of us', as Kant says (ibid.), 'naturally' inclined towards evil (the title of this very chapter is: 'The human being is by nature evil'). So, we are naturally evil, but not as a matter of a natural capability . . . If contradiction is to be avoided here, there must be two conceptions of what is 'natural' at stake. One that is morally innocent or indifferent, the mere development of things in the 'natural world', and one that is morally relevant – the kind of being a human is, which is also called 'human nature'. The distinction between first and second nature, I think, is most precise to capture, what Kant is aiming at here. Put once again in post-Wittgensteinian terms, when we learn how to manoeuvre in the realm of giving and asking for reasons, when we start to see connections and possibilities (which parrots do not see), we obtain the capability of furthering aims much more refined than the animal instincts of food, sleep and reproduction, as well as much more refined and shrewd *ways* of obtaining the primary needs themselves. The 'physical propensities' we might have are not evil as such (in the natural world things just happen and can therefore not be condemned) – only when they are chosen or preferred by a subject that is able to do things with words, do they become morally significant. 'Radical evil' is an interesting conceptualization in Kant for several reasons, and one of them is that it makes more sense, when you emphasize the gradual mastery of language, which a child gains – the ability to manoeuvre in the 'space of giving and asking for reasons' or the 'linguistic market place'. When you consider

'radical evil' as the propensity to put one's own needs and inclinations over moral consideration, it becomes much more obvious that one has to learn language before one can be held responsible for one's actions, and thereby that the post-Wittgensteinian accentuation of language acquisition is a plausible refinement of Kant's view of the relation between reason and language.

Kant is also clear, however, that 'once you are in' there is no escape from responsibility. In a footnote in *Religion*, he explains that there can be no moral neutrality (once you are 'inside'/one of us), and in a note to the note he explains what *would have been* a morally indifferent action, if such an action existed, which clearly he thinks it does not to a linguistic being: it would have been entirely without relation to the moral law (Religion 6:23). Implicit in this conjunctive is the necessity of denying the very fact of reason in order to claim that there could be something like a morally indifferent action. And denying the fact of reason (the moral law) is impossible. The moral law is here also referred to as the 'law of freedom', which indicates that freedom is directly interwoven with the moral law (as the *ratio essendi* of the moral law), but there is also a certain necessity connected to the moral law: you must act in accordance with the universal principle – or you are messing around in random choices of inclinations and prudential hypothetical imperatives. Only when we act in accordance with the moral law, are we 'truly' free. So are we free or aren't we?

The relation between freedom and necessity is of course an age-old question in philosophy, but the claim here is that Kant offers a rather precise and ground-breaking approach. We are, logically speaking, free, whether we know it or not – because of the logical structure of reason. In the terms of contemporary linguistic moral philosophy, we are free when we know how to do things with words; when we have gained the competence as language users to an extent that we are counted as reliable members of the space or the community of those who give and ask for reasons. But the crucial point of Kantian morality is that we have a task of *becoming* free, even if we master language perfectly and behave 'responsibly' in any usual sense of the word. What is more – freeing ourselves from the arbitrariness of the choices and affairs of normal morality implies obedience to a 'higher' *necessity*. That is to say that although we are as a matter of fact (namely the 'fact of reason') always already free, we do *become* free in a crucial sense – we 'realize' our freedom in a double sense: we realize, i.e. we become aware of what we always already are, and we realize, i.e. actualize this awareness in deeds. We *are* free (because already responsible for our being) and we *become* free (because we have to free ourselves from self-inflicted immaturity).

Kant, thus, formulates a position that shows some similarities with a problematic, which was touched by stoicism and Spinozism before him, and especially by Schelling immediately after him. The truly free human being has somehow found a kind of 'higher necessity' or a way of relating to necessity that lifts it up from the immediacy of sensual inclinations and everyday mongering with words and actions. The choices and behaviour of a linguistic animal does not interest moral philosophy, exactly because they carry such an immense weight of *arbitrariness* with them – even to the extent that one can meaningfully see entire cultures as 'arbitrary' and finite. Morality must have something do to with that which is not arbitrary, something unconditional and necessary, trans-cultural and timeless.

In the stoic and some religious traditions, one could say that freedom is a question of one's *attitude* towards necessity. However things are going, we can relate calmly to it, since there is something 'in us', a spiritual kernel, which is not touched by the earthly affairs of causes and effects. We could call it the '*Que será será*'-attitude, and find it even in Leibniz' rationalist justification of divine foresight: God has seen that this course of the world was the best possible, all we can do is to study the laws of the world more carefully to gain insight. The Kantian approach is another. The 'free necessity' that lifts us up is a necessitation of another sort. We are necessitated by the unconditional demand of the moral law, which compels us to act universally. We must do it, but the necessitating impact of the moral law is radically different from the *Que será será*-attitude. It has the character, not of *insight* into, say providence or the natural ways of the world, but of *Verbindlichkeit*, i.e. a morally binding universal demand that imposes itself on all rational creatures.[17] Morality, in the strict Kantian sense, is not a question of learning, appreciating, mastering, knowing (it is not an epistemological problem), but of being *verbunden* (it is a practical problem). It begins, where knowledge fails (remember the definition in the second critique of the place of the moral law as the 'empty place' left by speculative reason).

> [T]he moral law is for them [rational beings, HJB] an *imperative* that commands categorically because the law is unconditional; the relation of such a will to this law is *dependence* under the name of obligation [*Verbindlichkeit*], which signifies a *necessitation*, though only by reason and its objective law, to an action which is called *duty*. (CPrR 5:32).

We are committed to the moral law, whether we want to be or not. The moral law demands us to act – it necessitates us – in such a way that the

maxim of our action could be a universal law. We enter into morality (or in my terms here into something more than '*normal* morality') when we are necessitated by the moral law to act. Unconditionally, and mediated through nothing but reason itself. The commitment or obligation which thus lies in Kantian *Verbindlichkeit* is of an entirely different sort than the commitment which is articulated in Soft Kantian linguistic philosophy. (The moral law is the 'institution which overrules all institutions', as I have called it.) The 'higher' necessitation, I am trying to identify, must therefore be different from the rational necessitation, which John McDowell addresses, when he says that it is constitutive of freedom *and that* 'the space of reason is the realm of freedom' (McDowell, 1996, p. 5). True, we are committed to meanings and implications of actions because of the inherent logics of the words we use, and the actions, we perform, in a way that could even be called something like a tacit universalism. It has to make sense, and meanings embark on a whole of meanings, which makes us committed to much more than we even acknowledge. But *Verbindlichkeit* is a kind of commitment that can commit us to perform one singular act, regardless of any linguistic ties. I can be necessitated to act like *this*, suddenly, without any explicable reasons, only because it is right. 'Verbindlickeit', as it is defined again in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, 'is the necessity of a free action under a categorical imperative of reason' (MM 6:222). Such action cannot be taught, it cannot be fed to one through examples, and it is not something one is initiated into doing. Morality is not prudence. It does not consist in following virtues that others have set up, or doing what seems best to do in light of all the advice, one can muster: 'The maxim of self-love (prudence) merely *advises*; the law of morality *commands*. But there is a great difference between that which we are *advised* to do and that to which we are *obligated*'(CPrR 5:36).

We thus approach the central feature of the moral law: It tells us only *that* we must act in accordance with it, not *how* we act in accordance with it. There is no manual, one can get, where it is written what it means, more specifically, to act in accordance with the moral law. The categorical imperative only demands, it does not instruct. It establishes a direct line, between reason (in the narrow sense) as a universal quality and concrete human beings in concrete situations, but it does not come in parcels with descriptions of adequate measures in different situations. Indeed, religious fundamentalisms are often (rightfully) reproached exactly for believing that such explications have been given. If the call of the categorical imperative establishes a hotline between reason and concrete problems, it is a prank call, or maybe even more *unheimlich*: It is a call

that we place to ourselves. What is demanded differs over time; it is never inscribed into one book or culture once and for all. And Kant is even more radical: Morality is 'significantly different' from what one can be advised to do, by anyone at any given time (including, i.e., contemporaries), however shrewd they may be. Ultimately, one might very well have to *free* oneself from good advice.

The deed is the answer to the prank call of reason. There is something 'excessive' about the call, because of its character of an almost aggressive indifference to the condition, the phenomenal subject is placed in. The categorical imperative simply demands, and it does not accept no for an answer: You can, because you must. The excess, the 'more-than' or surplus, indicates a dimension of reason which reaches beyond the merely 'rational' in the sense of what can be justified within a McDowellian realm of freedom. The alternative here, which is illustrated by the prank call or the call to oneself, is not some mystical realm *beyond* the space of reasons, from which a mysterious voice speaks and demands concrete actions, it is something *in* the space of reasons *more* than the space of reasons itself: A tension, an excess, which is inherent to the very linguistic structure of morality itself. If anything 'speaks', one could say that it was the lack itself – the lack of the coherent order of the world, the empty place – the 'fix it!'[18] The moral subject is therefore divided between the realm of rationality and reasons and something more, something in rationality that points beyond it. The 'more' is however not a substantial set of anything, but a 'mere more', the very fact of the not-all of the world(view), we inhabit, the fact of reason. (*The surplus is a lack* as it was defined earlier). In *Religion,* Kant wonders what that is, in us, 'in virtue of which we, beings ever dependent on nature through so many needs, are at the same time elevated so far above it' and concludes that it 'lies in the idea of duty', which anyone must feel the force of deeply within himself, and which 'first and foremost derives from this law', i.e. the categorical imperative(Religion 6:49).

Anyone must emphatically feel this 'what is that in us', this *je ne sais quois*, even if he hasn't conducted strict philosophical research on the essence of the moral law. You feel it already by looking at the starry sky at night. Indeed, children should be instructed to behave morally, not by learning about virtuous examples in respected persons or canonical actions, but by wondering about exactly this 'what is that in us', which anyone can detect. The pupil that wonders about this secret force, the call that it can place to itself, soon feels the impact of the question: '[W]hat is that in you that can be trusted to enter into combat with all the forces of nature within you and

around you and to conquer them if they come into conflict with your moral principles?' (MM 6: 683).

The division which is implicitly understood as repressed or unacknow-ledged in Kant's understanding of what one could call 'adult immaturity' is a division between the human subject and the demand of it to be more than it is, to answer to the demand of reason. Only an immature creature could not be elevated by the sublime effect of the moral law and want to get busy changing something, somewhere. Giving good reasons and manoeu-vring well on the linguistic marketplace is not enough. It is indeed only 'normal' (and thereby to Kant pathological), and the subject must there-fore somehow become more than itself. Put in the somewhat paradoxical wording of Jacques Alain Miller (whom Zupančič quotes): The subject is divided by the fact that he has to choose between his pathos and his division. 'Choosing the pathological realm' would quite straight-forwardly mean choosing the space of reasons without its lack, i.e. without the excess of the radical openness that confronts the subject in the experience of the sublime. In other words, it means accepting that 'language is in order as it is,' as Wittgensteinians like to call it. Only by 'reaching beyond' can the subject free itself from the order as it presents itself to the subject, and become more than it is. This does not mean that some noumenal substance materializes on Earth, but exactly that the human being lives up to its status as *Zwischensein* – as placed between the phenomenal and the noumenal. We do not choose between the phenomenal and the nou-menal, but between the phenomenal and the position between the phe-nomenal and the noumenal. By performing a deed, one could say that the subject chooses its own split nature, rather than staying in the safe, normal morality pathology. The 'self-inflicted immaturity' thus lies in the failure to choose the division, which is the failure to answer to the demand of the more-than, the excess of the situation. As long as you 'merely' answer to the claims and questions put forward by 'rational necessitation' in the sense of giving and asking for (good) reasons, you have not yet met the challenge of 'higher necessitation', which is the true and *higher interest* of reason. A 'truly moral' subject to Kant is someone who has answered to this demand, through deeds.

6.2. Two jokes about *Gesinnung*

A few pages before the reflection on the 'what is that in us', Kant writes the famous passage about the revolution of the character. So long as the

foundation of the maxims of a human being remains 'impure', it cannot become 'morally good' through gradual reform, but only through 'a revolution in the disposition' and the becoming of a 'new man' through a kind of rebirth 'as if it were a new creation' – i.e. a fundamental 'change of heart' is required (Religion 6:47).

It should be obvious by now that the 'intelligible character' in my view should be understood as the 'more', the 'surplus', the 'supersensible' dimension. But how does the revolution of this character appear? How can a human change its 'whole' character, and not just change something concrete in the world, i.e. build a house, buy a coke, get married and work as a judge in the supreme court? It seems like there are moves one can actually make in the game of giving and asking for reasons, and then there is 'The Move', which turns everything upside down. A revolution of the mind, a 'change of heart' – how can such a thing make sense at all? I think the best way to approach this problem is to tell two jokes.

In one of the old Marx-Brothers radio-shows, two persons meet. One of them exclaims: 'Hey, you remind me of Emmanuel Ravelli!' The other answers: 'But I *am* Emmanuel Ravelli . . .', to which the first in turn replies: 'Then no wonder that you look like him!' The conclusion seems to be that Emmanuel Ravelli looks a lot like himself, which of course marks the typical 'Marxist' non-sensical pun of the joke. However, there is also some truth in it (which is why it is not *just* non-sensical – like it would have been to say 'Then no wonder that you look like Vladimir Putin'). The repetition of the comparison of the gentleman to Emmanuel Ravelli after having heard that he is Emmanuel Ravelli installs a division or an estrangement into Emmanuel Ravelli. He is himself, but he nonetheless looks like himself, as if 'himself' was someone else – closely related to him, but someone else. Actually, we do use some similar expressions at times, mostly, though, in the negative: You can say about someone that 'she doesn't look like herself,' if she is for instance tired or stressed. We can be somewhat 'out of ourselves' and 'besides ourselves'; so why shouldn't we also be able to be 'like ourselves', when the two coincide? Although I think this anecdote can serve as a model for discussing personal identity in a wider sense, the focus here should of course be on morality and moral character, and Kant's 'Mehrere', which separates the moral agent from himself. If there are two different kinds of freedom – one that is given in and with language, and one that separates the linguistic animal from itself (as a linguistic animal); if there is some 'was is das in uns' that is in us more than ourselves, a Mehrere, that separates us from ourselves and makes us 'truly free', then it seems like there is in fact a relevant resemblance between Ravelli and the

Kantian moral agent. It is almost as if Kant is saying something along the lines of the Marx-Brothers joke, which could be thus paraphrased:

- I choose to be a moral agent!
- But you have already been that from the beginning . . .
- Then no wonder that I choose to be one!

The choice thus paraphrased is a sort of spiteful choice. I *insist* that I am a moral agent – although I have already been that from the beginning. As we saw in Chapter 2, the evolutionary process of a child's moral maturation will at one point (in, exactly, 'normal' circumstances) be considered fulfilled. We count the human organism as one of us, when it performs certain actions in an adequately reliable way. From the point of view of the individual, however, the choice to become one of us never took place. There was no point in the language-learning process, where the infant was given a real alternative: 'Would you like to be one of us or not?' Like with the question 'It's your life or your money,' the choice is not really a choice at all. When our Ravelli-replacement in the paraphrased joke, therefore, chooses to become a moral agent, it is not at all meaningless. He repeats a choice, which, unwillingly, he has already made. No wonder that I choose to become one, if I have always been one! However, this second choice also gives rise to a new mode of existence, if you will. It indicates what Kant is really addressing, when he talks about the 'exit from a self-inflicted immaturity'. The evolutionary coming-into-existence as a moral agent was a forced choice that must be turned over and/or reconfirmed by a second, free choice, in order for anyone to be 'really' free. Thus, as a moral agent, you *are* always already responsible for your words and actions, although you can *become* responsible for them in a specific way. You must, on a Kantian view, 'take charge' of your moral conduct *in tuto* – otherwise you will be condemned to a life in the charge of rules and ideas laid down by others. This gives, then, a concrete moral interpretation of the quote from 'What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?' that was considered in Chapter 4 and which emphasized that you are always subjected to a general law, such that if you do not want to give this law to yourself, you will be forced to apply to the law of another.

Morally speaking, a revolution of the mind is required to liberate yourself from the law that someone else has put down. You have to do again that which you never really did, but which it is nonetheless presupposed that you did actually do: Choose your own *Gesinnung*.

Zupančič relates Kant's discussion of the choice of *Gesinnung* to the psychoanalytic concept of a '*Neurosenwahl*': the claim that the subject (of the

analysis) must have chosen its own neurosis. She calls this the 'postulate of freedom' inherent to psychoanalysis. Concretely: If psychoanalysis does not consider the neurosis that the patient is treated for to be his or her own (choice), then analysis does not make sense. The whole idea of analysis is to undo certain pathological patterns of behaviour, which are haunting the subject of analysis, but this would not be possible, if everything would merely be considered as imposed from the outside. The symptoms cannot really be attributed to someone who is not responsible for them. If I am like this, for instance, because my parents taught me to be like this, it is difficult to see how I should be able to change it at all. If my entire being is so permeated by the procedures of initiation and outside control that my most intimate rituals and thoughts are controlled by something external to me, then I can hardly be expected to be able to take over and 'decide' to change them, just like you decide between a Pepsi and a Coke. Often the problem to the person in analysis will take the form of something like: 'I do this, but I don't know why', and the very purpose of analysis is to understand why I am doing it, and if possible change it. The subject has to 'let go' of the pathological patterns in some way, and in order to at all reach a point where this might be possible, it has to be able to consider these patterns as its own (choice). It must have 'chosen' its neurosis by itself.

Psychoanalysis aside, Kant articulates very similar formulations in *Religion*: *Gesinnung* is the 'condition' one is in, so to say, the (back)ground of one's behaviour. To change one's background for acting the way, one does, seems like a big task. How can I change what has happened to me – the society into which I was initiated? Kant maintains that this is nonetheless the task, and that in order to do it, one must consider the (back)ground of one's actions to be one's own choice.

> The disposition, i.e. the first subjective ground of the adoption of the maxims, can only be a single one, and it applies to the entire use of freedom universally. This disposition too, however, must be adopted through the free power of choice [*durch freie Willkür*], for otherwise it could not be imputed. (Religion 6:25)

For a Kantian perspective, the interesting point here lies in the accentuation of there being in effect two choices: The first choice is the forced choice, the one that you have already made, once you realize that it was imposed on you. The second choice is the choice of transformation of that which was imposed – it is the 'then no wonder that I choose to be a moral agent!' or the 'taking charge' of your own life as existentialisms would have it. On a closer inspection, however, it appears that *neither* of the two

choices are really, strictly speaking, choices. The first choice is not a choice, because it has already been chosen for me, when I discover it, and the second is not a choice, because I do not really choose between alternatives. It is not like I have the world that I inhabit with all its links and implications, and then another world that has different conditions of being committed and acting, so that I choose between World A and World B. The teenager, for instance, that grows increasingly discontent with the whole charade, does not have an alternative world to leap into. Of course, subcultures, slang language, vegetarianism, reading Dostoyevsky, backpacking and new age religions provide something that feels a bit like 'other worlds', but only in a way that needs culturalist interpretation much unlike Kant's to retain the title 'world'. Kant's world is the totality of everything that is the case, including subcultures of any kind, Buddhism, tofu, punk and the foulest of language. The world is still with me – and it is still lacking. The 'second choice', the coming to awareness of the fact that you are already free, is therefore not a choice between world views or life styles, but a choice of *Gesinnung*, of character, in relation to *everything*. An appropriate slogan for the choice of *Gesinnung*, which is not really a choice, is: You can run, but you cannot hide.

We could thus define choices as choices of *something*, while the 'choice' of *Gesinnung* is not really a choice, because it does not relate to *some*-thing at all, but to everything. Choices appear between different possible alternatives. When you know how to open the drawer in your father's desk, you may choose to do that, and you may choose not to. You will be held responsible for the choice, you make – especially if he told you *not* to open it. You can choose to study medicine, and to ask the girl you love to marry you. To a more absolutist way of thinking, if you will, the choices that impend themselves on normal morality human beings are choices that are never really *it*: What does it really matter whether I choose marmalade or cornflakes for my breakfast, or whether I support Manchester United or Liverpool, when the real issues are at stake? In a 'free country', as we have come to like calling it, there is abundance of choice. You can decide for yourself, whether you want to marry and to whom, and you are free to express (almost) anything you choose, just as you can choose between an endless amount of commodities for your entertainment. But you can choose as much as you like, between all the alternatives available to you, and on the best of your ability to scrutinize and judge the 'morally salient features' of the situation: if you are just following the necessities of the culture or habits, you have acquired throughout your life, there is no real value, or no real difference, in any of the choices.

This is not to say, of course, that I deplore the kinds of freedom obtained in countries such as my own, nor, certainly, that Kant would deplore the increased level of mobility, trade and options for many more people, which has resulted from the development of especially the past 30–40 years, and not least since the so called 'end of history', when old frontiers broke down and new possibilities opened themselves to millions of people. The point is another: However well developed the historico-political conditions; a human being is still confronted with the imperative to fix the world and seek in its own culture the crack, the lack, which makes it possible to aspire for something more. In an important sense, I think, you could say that every human life *begins* with the end of history. A child is initiated into a culture, a world view and a language, which it cannot choose not to have, as if there was no substantial alternatives, as if we lived on the culmination of history. What transpires is that you move towards the acceptance that history hasn't ended. We begin with the end and work our ways towards the beginning.

The second joke, therefore, relates to the problematic of choosing or wanting something within the frame of the possible versus the sudden awareness or even urge to break out from it. Here is the joke. Two American psychoanalysts exchange their recent experiences of slips of the tongue: 'You know,' the first says, 'the strangest thing happened to me the other day. I wanted to buy a ticket to Pittsburgh, but when I reached the rather attractive woman at the counter, it instead burst out of me: "I would like a picket to Tittsburgh, please"!' 'That's interesting, the other replies, I also made a slip of the tongue recently. I was having dinner with my wife and wanted to ask her to pass me the salt, but instead of saying "Would you pass me the salt, please?" I said: "You stupid bitch, you ruined my life"' The joke, of course, consists in the surprise of the second 'slip'. It exaggerates what a slip could be and inserts an unlikely leap from the sentence which the second analyst wanted to say to the thing he did actually say. A slip would usually be something that is provoked by a homophony or a semantical vicinity between what a person intends to say and what he actually says – in the case when the closely related term articulates some secret desire, usually inappropriate for the situation. The first type of slip is therefore a 'genuine' slip, and even one that can be investigated and explained in relatively straight forward Brandomian terms: the guy was committed to more than he knew, and this commitment – what he *really* wanted – was articulated in a slip, which is easy to interpret by a short line of association. You could say that he unwillingly imagined an alternative choice to taking the train to Pittsburgh. His desire, in the best pathological sense, ran ahead of

him. The second slip represents something else. It is not so much a 'slip' as it is a sudden outburst of what could be called the primordial repression: the fact that our lives are guided and controlled by an immense multitude of factors outside our control, which we have tacitly (forcibly) chosen to live by and with. Although getting married of course usually must be considered a choice, the entirety of the life situation, which a person finds himself in, can often seem to have been forced upon one, even if only by 'the circumstances' as we call them. Was this really the life, I wanted to live? If it is necessary to have faith in the overall sense of the order, you are living in, then it could be said that what the second analyst suddenly became aware of was that he had lost faith. What he suddenly cried to his wife was the repressed or unarticulated knowledge of someone suddenly experiencing their conditions of life to have been forced upon them. A question, which I think must sometimes pop up to Soft Kantians: 'How did we get into this mess in the first place?' The difference between the two kinds of slips can, in other words, be rephrased as the difference between belief and faith, as it was discussed in Chapter 4: The first analyst believed that he wanted a ticket to Pittsburgh, but then unwittingly articulated another belief, which he was maybe more committed to. The second analyst articulated the sudden realization that he had lost his faith.

Again, the Kantian point to be made is not that the second analyst should divorce his wife or find a younger lover to solve his problem. He might *choose* to do that, but the problem at stake is something more deeply rooted. His 'slip' might almost have been 'I choose to be a moral agent' – something has to change; everything has to change, and it is suddenly clear that the initiative must come from him. The outburst also signifies something else important in the problematic of choice and change of *Gesinnung*. The cry 'You ruined my life!' is not the result of a conscious deliberation. It comes out, because it *has* to – because something is fundamentally wrong and the guy cannot withhold his deep dissatisfaction any longer. It is almost as if he is driven by a 'higher necessity' (compared with just desiring a bit of salt on his meal), although of course we should remember here that we are paraphrasing a joke and not describing a 'real' change of *Gesinnung*. A more precise remark by Slavoj Žižek, however, could be used to describe what the second analyst expresses from a more strictly psychoanalytic point of view 'That is the basic lesson of psychoanalysis: in our everyday lives, we vegetate, deeply immersed in the universal Lie; then, all of a sudden, some contingent encounter – a casual remark during a conversation, an incident we witness – brings to light the repressed trauma which shatters our self-delusion' (Žižek, 1997, p. 130).

6.3. Absolute spontaneity

Gesinnung is described by Henry Allison as 'an underlying set of intentions, beliefs, interests, and so on, which collectively constitute that agent's disposition or character' (Allison, 1990, p. 136). The uncharacteristically careless addition of the 'and so on' indicates the difficulty of demarking the concept precisely. *Gesinnung* is something like the entirety of a lot of different characteristics or maybe of a whole lot of beliefs seen in connection or of one's 'real' intentions, all of them, together. Maybe one could even say that *Gesinnung is* the 'and so on' itself. The human person is constituted by a broad spectre of capabilities, choices, habits, and so on. I am everything that I do and wish and think, and so on. I play a number of different roles and perform very different functions as son, brother, student, friend, lover, colleague, and so on. *Gesinnung*, you could say, unites all of these differences in the character of one person. Allison calls it the 'maxim of the highest order' which 'provides a direction or orientation for the moral life of the agent viewed as a whole' (ibid., p. 141). We have in other words the problem of the 'whole' again, and like good Heideggerians we should of course consider this a challenge to go 'towards-the-whole'.

I think the problem makes sense in this way. A child is initiated into a moral culture. It learns how to do and see things, and it begins to perform actions and make choices that relate to bigger and bigger parts of reality. Initially, it is attributed a limited number of roles, say of 'son' and 'brother', and along the way the scope of these roles is gradually expanded. The types of things, the person does, and the differences of the environments in which it moves are becoming more and more complex and varied. Moral judgement is trained and developed as the ability to respond reasonably to and choose between the possibilities that thus occur. At some point, however, the person is liable to think the 'and so on': 'Who am I – *really*? How did I get here, and where do I want to go? Where does this end?' Thought prolongs itself towards the infinite – and just as the dialectics of reason showed that we end up with the question of the whole in the antinomies, so does the question of the unity of the self occur to anyone who starts thinking about the coherence of all the different roles and functions he or she performs. Who am I behind the veil of all these different appearances? When the lights are turned off, when I sit alone in my room, I wonder: 'Who am I really, what is the connection between all these characters that appear on the theatre of my life?'

In the first critique, this problematic is termed, in the language of the transcendental logic, as the one of 'paralogism': Does the subject exist

independently of all its sensual apparitions? Is there a spiritual substance of sorts that remains identical throughout all the empirical changes that the subject undergoes? Kant of course denies this, and maintains that it is the pure *form* of the subject which must accompany all experience: 'the simple and in content for itself wholly empty representation I' (CPR: B 404). The 'I' is not even a concept, but 'a mere consciousness that accompanies every concept'. (The famous definition from the transcendental deduction says the same: 'The I think must be able to accompany all my representations' (CPR: B 131–132).) In order for anything to appear for a consciousness, there must be a certain unifying feature of consciousness to capture it. The subject is the very form of experience, and therefore not a thing alongside other things that can be identified, let alone perceived.[19]

Of course, the investigations of the first critique are logical investigations. Kant's project is to give the necessary preconditions, or the 'conditions of possibility', for there to be any experience at all. He is not describing what it means to be a moral person with a *Gesinnung*. Nonetheless, I think the logical considerations are pertinent for the understanding of *Gesinnung*, and in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant does indicate the relevance of such a comparison when he says that 'everybody has a Metaphysics of Morals', even if he or she is not aware of it, but then 'only in an obscure way' (MM 6:216).

The *Gesinnung* of a person is the totality of the 'intentions, beliefs, interests, and so on, which collectively constitute that agent's disposition or character'. It is the *form* of the moral character, the structuring principle of the highest order – the maxim that underlies all maxims. One could therefore say that the logical considerations of what goes for anything being a subject at all is *personalized* in the concept of the *Gesinnung*. *Gesinnung* is the answer to the question: 'Who am I?' but it is an answer which is not given in the same way that any other answer is. When I ask, for instance: 'Who is Robert Brandom?' the answer could be 'The professor with the long beard, who works at the University of Pittsburgh.' This answer can be verified and expanded with more information. I point out something in the world. But if I ask: 'What is Robert Brandom's *Gesinnung*?' there is no direct answer to be given. I would have to somehow communicate the entirety of his moral character, (who he, morally speaking, *is*), which literally cannot be done. *Gesinnung* is the entirety, the unity and the form of the moral subject, not its 'true kernel'. There is not a variety of identities spread out in the different roles, a person plays, and then a 'real' or 'true' self, which can only be encountered on rare occasions. You do not meet the *Gesinnung* in empirical reality.

Gesinnung, Allison writes, dictates 'a basic orientation of the will' in a way that is 'broadly logical rather than causal' (Allison, 1990, p. 142). The will is orientated in accordance with the *Gesinnung* of the person, or as Kant himself puts it, with the 'supreme subjective ground' of all one's maxims (Religion 6:32). In the actions that I choose to perform, therefore, my *Gesinnung* is actualized or revealed (although not necessarily for anyone to detect), transported into reality. I adopt maxims of my behaviour in accordance with the 'subjective highest ground of all maxims'. When Allison calls this orientation of the will 'broadly logical', it must be seen in the light of the 'and so on': The totality of one's moral character constitutes the background of the maxims, one adopts in concrete situations, but since this background is an indefinite sum of everything the person is, there is no direct deduction of maxims from the 'highest order maxim' to be made. I do not deduct the right action to perform in a concrete situation from my most general principle of action. I do it. Kant's claim is that one's *Gesinnung* is as a matter of fact 'oriented' or 'orienting' in a specific way – namely either as good or evil: either in accordance with the moral law, or not.

It is no secret that Kant himself does a rather inconclusive job at explaining wherein the orienting force of the *Gesinnung* lies, let alone what it 'is', in any comprehensive way. Indeed, when Kant talks about the 'ground' of something, the 'Mehrere' (as in *Groundwork*), and the 'depth of the human soul', it is usually an indication of an almost Wittgensteinian 'whereof one cannot talk'. Nonetheless, *Gesinnung* plays a fundamental role to morality, and the revolution of the *Gesinnung is* what we are after here. The imperative of an exit from the self-inflicted immaturity of human kind, together with the description of radical evil, gives us an indication of wherein the revolution must be sought. In order to become an autonomous, free, moral agent, the subject has to undergo a revolution of its *Gesinnung*. It has to free itself from any habit of thinking or doing and act out of pure reverence for the moral law. Only through such an effort can it live up to the demand of reason. Maybe a way to handle this problem can be found in the distinction between 'normal' spontaneity and 'absolute' spontaneity. The type of spontaneity that is articulated in Soft Kantianism is one, as we saw, that is rooted in the faculty of the understanding. The space of reason is the realm of freedom, as John McDowell says. Normal morality is in this sense a sort of know-how, a spontaneous ability to apply concepts and perform actions in accordance with the most prudent alternatives. Kant, however, operates with another type of spontaneity; one that is 'absolute'. There are two types of spontaneity in Kant. The first is the one that is developed with

the acquisition of language. When you have gained a sufficient mastery of the language, you inhabit, you are considered to be a free, and thus responsible, moral agent. You are always already free, when you know how to move around in the game of giving and asking for reasons. The second type of spontaneity, however, is 'absolute spontaneity'. It is rarely spelled out, but in *Religion* Kant says that there can be no incentive that co-exists with 'the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice (of freedom)', other than the moral law (Religion 6:23–24).

Only one kind of incentive (*Triebfeder*) can co-exist with freedom, which is now equalized with 'absolute spontaneity': one which the subject has made a universal rule 'according to which he wills to conduct himself', namely the moral law. Freedom as absolute spontaneity is a kind of direct determination of the will by the moral law itself. To be more precise: *Willkür* ('the power of choice') is what Allison calls the 'executive' function of the will – the one that carries out the actual action, which the subject undertakes to perform. *Willkür* is doing the dirty job, so to say, of carrying out the action which it is the will of the subject to do in a more general sense. It is the will, as *Wille*, which 'legislates' (again Allison's choice of words), i.e. the will sorts out the maxim of one's behaviour.[20] The will legislates on the maxim for one's actions. Unlike the *Gesinnung*, therefore, the will of a subject can meaningfully be investigated. We can infer from what we are doing, and what meaning our actions have, to the general principles that guide them. Roughly said, an investigation of the will of a subject as the legislative function would resemble a mapping of the commitments and entitlements of the person. If I am acting in such and such a way, what does this imply? Someone who borrows money from another person, for instance, is logically committed to paying them back. She acts on the maxim of borrowing and lending money and is therefore committed to returning the money in due time. Someone who fails to return a loan, consequently, acts on a maxim that cannot be meaningfully willed as universal law in the conditions of a community with institutions like those that existed in John Searles's USA of the 1960s (or in Kant's Königsberg or my Denmark, etc). By describing the meaning of the elements of a situation and the (possible) actions involved, we can make a picture of what we actually will, in what we are doing, and, significantly, what we should will, on the best of our interpretation. In normal morality, the will is open to scrutiny.

Granted, the details of our considerations of the right thing to do can be made so fine tuned that the universalization principle can seem redundant ('Can I will that someone who sits in an office at 3 in the afternoon and has just received a phone call from his sister, in which she talks about Christmas

presents and international terrorism for 5 minutes and 48 seconds, would make coffee only for himself and not for his colleague as well', etc. – the standard mockery of the fruitlessness of Kantian formalism). But on the normal interpretation of a morally relevant situation we would usually be able to distinguish the relevant aspects from the irrelevant. Moral judgement allows us that, just as we can distinguish red from blue and establish the nonsense of going into extreme details of a situation to understand its general traits. We can 'freeze' the situation, as Kaulbach describes it, and lift it up, to consider different paths of connections and possibilities, and then decide on what is the most moral thing to do, according to the best of our judgement. A person can even investigate him- or herself: What is it that I want? When I engage in this problematic, what should I consider, which options do I have, and how could I act in a way that best serves everyone's interest, etc. In a more psychoanalytic vein, you could thus also talk about 'going backwards' in the sense of investigating maxims that I didn't even know I had. Was I really seeking the benefit of all, or was I motivated by some emotional inclination that I was not even aware of at the time? By examining your own motives, you can learn about how to design your course of action in a more suitable way; in a way that 'takes everything into consideration', as we say.

However, 'taking everything into consideration' means taking everything *we know* and everything we count as possible, into consideration. It means speaking our language in the most perspicuous way possible. It means getting an overview of the situation. It even means to imagine a 'veil of ignorance' behind which you agree on the division of goods and rights without knowing about your own position in the society in question.[21] Plenty of situations can and must be meaningfully handled in such a way, from political and military strategic decisions to everyday planning of your career and family life. How do I want my child to spend the years in Kindergarten (or should it attend Kindergarten at all)? Should we move to another place before it starts at school? Do I accept a promotion at the expense of my friend? How can I do something to counter climate changes – in my own behaviour and politically? Pausing, reflecting and choosing according to the most universal maxims available (or indeed imaginable) to one is a most meaningful enterprise to a good Kantian. The choices that we thus make commit us to future action. Spontaneity as the faculty of freedom means the ability to act on the knowledge, capabilities and moral awareness that any language using second nature creature possesses.

Deeds are of a different nature. They depend on 'absolute spontaneity' – an ability that does not rely on knowledge and reflection, but only on a

direct motivation of respect. Put in game metaphors: To perform a deed is not to make a move in the game of giving and asking for reason; it is to invent a new game. Kant's vision of what I have called an extra-moral act depends on the ability to transcend the rules of any moral game that is currently played. Consider the totality of infinite possibilities as the background of an action: A move in the space of giving and asking for reasons represents a meaningful action within a domain, defined by culture, morality, *Sittlichkeit*. Although the specific action, which I undertake to perform has of course never been performed before (the situation is never exactly the same), it is nonetheless understandable, communicable, it makes sense. I can give reasons for it, and reasons are articulated in language – that language which I understand. I can make a move, when I know a language within which moves can at all be made. A deed, by contrast, appears in the empty place of the language within which moves can at all be made. It occurs in the excess of language itself, of the space of giving and asking of reasons. The deed is a 'more'; a surplus to the current state of affairs. There are no reasons for a deed – only a direct motivation by respect for the moral law. Therefore, a deed cannot be communicated. It can only be performed. And it cannot be chosen, in the sense of choosing between alternatives, as described above. You '*make*' the moral law the *Triebfeder* of your action, and thereby the action is guided by the absolute spontaneity of the will (by freedom). It is crucial here that Kant acknowledges *Achtung* as 'the only a priori feeling', i.e. the motivational force of the respect for the moral law lies not in reasons one can give for acting so and so, but in the pure, moral feeling of respect for the moral law (CPrR 5:73).

Performing a deed is something one does when things suddenly fall into place. The action, one performs *feels* right. This feeling is the one of *Achtung* or respect – the moral feeling. It is no ordinary feeling, but the only feeling which has a morally motivating force: The feeling of rising above the situation or indeed the sensual world, and acting on behalf of the mere demand of the universal moral law, only because one must act. The sensation of performing a deed is therefore the sensation of doing something, one didn't know was possible. It only becomes possible to perform the deed, because one must perform it. A deed might be something that takes a while, and in the process you might think: 'Is this really happening?!' Through such 'real occurrences of freedom', one changes the conditions of what is in fact possible.

Through a deed, therefore, one changes *Gesinnung*. One becomes another – almost as if one was 'reborn'. The end of history has been overcome, and a new beginning made, because the 'highest order maxim' of

one's behaviour – the 'and so on' of one's personality – has been changed. The moral law as the *Triebfeder* becomes a *TRIEBfeder* in the Freudian sense – a drive – that disregards any existing order or convention and 'challenges everything that exists' (Lacan, 1997, p. 212), but it is also, just as Lacan's reformulation of the drive, 'a will to create from zero, a will to begin again'. When things fall into place, and the absolute spontaneity determines the will, something new happens. As Alenka Zupančič says[22] about what she calls the 'act' (and which in many ways resembles what I call the 'deed'): 'The act differs from an "action" in that it radically transforms its bearer (agent). After an act, I am 'not the same as before' (Zupančič, 2000, p. 83).

We thus have a relation between *Gesinnung* and morality which can even be schematically illustrated:

Gesinnung → action (in normal morality)
Gesinnung ← deed (extra-moral actions)

The moral character of a person is the total background of his or her moral action in everyday morality. This background is formed in the individual's coming to maturity in a society of language users that teach and inspire moral sense, awareness of 'morally salient features' and know-how to act in meaningful and responsible ways. The moral character of a person thus shaped, however, lacks *Selbstbestimmung*, or autonomy, in the Kantian sense. The duty of a human being is to exit from its self-inflicted immaturity through a revolution of the *Gesinnung* – and this revolution is brought about (only) through the accomplishment of a deed in which the sole motivator of an action is the supersensible dimension of reason – the ability to transcend the pathological realm of normality and aspire for something more. The interest of reason is to be able to perform deeds. When an action is carried out in pure aspiration of universal responsibility, as a direct response to the 'Fix it!' of the categorical imperative, regardless of what is possible in the surrounding environment, *Gesinnung* is changed – and a new person born.

The general problematic can be compared once again to the situation in psychoanalytic treatment, because the explicit aim of analysis is to 'transform the agent' and end up by being able to say 'I am not the same as before.' To at all make sense, as we saw, analysis must be conducted on the assumption of the 'first choice' – the postulate of freedom, which resembles what I called the 'logical' or 'symbolic' feature of freedom. Becoming aware that you are a free being is the second step – the 'imaginary' relation

to freedom: I see that I am free, that the order is lacking, that there is no Other of the Other, and that I can therefore change things. The awareness of one's freedom, however, is no *guarantee* of change. Psychoanalysis provides a concrete case for this observation: Patients who have understood their symptom do not necessarily change behaviour. Far from it: The symptom, you could say, was all they had, and taking the step from realizing that the symptom was your own creation to actively dismantling it, can be a horrific task. To make a simple case: Say a person understands that his feelings of inferiority are grounded in an early emotional acceptance or internalization of a bullying father that made him believe that nothing he did was ever good enough. If he really understands the role such a father has played in his life; that he needs to 'let go' of the father's expected judgement and believe in what he is actually able to achieve, then the excuse for *not* achieving suddenly disappears, and it becomes his own responsibility to, say, perform a task to the best of his ability. If, therefore, you 'choose' to change your behaviour, like you choose to leave the clinic on foot instead of by bus, the choice is not likely to be very sustainable. To really be free, understanding and choosing is not enough: you have to perform a deed. Analysis too begins at the 'end of history' and works its way towards a new beginning. Initially, the very problem is that the subject's world, its entire *in-der-Welt-sein*, seems to be locked in on a mode of being that cannot possibly be changed. It is 'naturally so'. Work has to be done in order to reach the point, where such a choice may be possible. You could say, I think, that a successful analysis, as a whole, is a deed, since the aim of analysis must be to change the *being* of the analysand, in order for it to be possible to say: 'I was like that.'

Kant's concept of the revolution of the character is therefore described as a 'kind of rebirth' and the subject that has undergone the change of *Gesinnung* as 'a new person'. The crucial point is that the change of *Gesinnung* follows from a deed – not from a decision. The change occurs when 'everything falls into place', when you 'gleichsam' rise above the sensual realm, i.e. the incoherent totality of the normal-pathological, and act differently.

We are thus in a position to summarize the relation between freedom and *Gesinnung*. We are free, first of all, whether we know it or not, as soon as we are able to do things with words ('symbolic freedom'). The *Gesinnung*, we have, is already there from the beginning – it doesn't 'appear' on a point in time, where we 'take over' or indeed on our awareness of it. That is why we can be evil without even knowing it. The awareness of the lack in the prevailing order, secondly, is the awareness of our 'supersensible

side' – freedom, the Mehrere, which is the ability to 'rise' above one's con-cretion ('imaginary freedom'). We are 'more than ourselves' or 'separate from ourselves' in as far as we are confronted with the moral law and the demand that reason puts to us (ourselves). But the realization of freedom, finally, only happens in the deed, when the *Willkür* is directly determined by 'absolute spontaneity' ('real freedom'). The deed marks the point where 'everything fits', where one's *Gesinnung* is 'morally good' and in accord-ance with the universal moral law. In that case, the subject doesn't lack. It is not divided between itself and something more than itself. But only in the deed. After the deed, things go back to normal – they are changed, the subject is changed, but a new form of normal morality sets in.

Chapter 7

Traces of the Unconditional

Actions of others that are done with great sacrifice and for the sake of duty alone may indeed be praised by calling them noble and sublime deeds, but only insofar as there are traces suggesting that they were done wholly from respect for duty and not from ebullitions of feeling.

(CPrR 5:85)

Kant does not allow for any 'empirical evidence' to be conclusive for an action's compliance with the categorical imperative. However *pflichtmässig* an action appears to be, we can never be certain that it was 'done for the right reasons', as we like to call it, or in Kantian terms: that it was not a pathological action after all, caused by 'ebullitions' (*Herzensaufwallungen*). It is relatively obvious that one can never be entirely sure about the real motivation for an action performed by another, but as it has been claimed, the problem also stretches to one's *own* actions: Ultimately, there is no guarantee that even the action I perform with the brightest and most conscious of intentions does not, behind my back, rely on circumstances, inclinations or momentary insanity (love, for instance), which has partly impaired my vision.

Nonetheless, Kant does, in the quote above, acknowledge that it is possible to praise actions performed by another on the basis of the indications or, precisely, the *traces* that allow us to assume that they were performed 'wholly from respect for duty'. I think this expression deserves to be read literally and with full weight. It is no coincidence, first of all (although maybe not a systematic and conscious choice), that Kant is here using the word 'Tat' again to describe the 'noble' and 'sublime' actions that one might defer from their visible traces. And secondly, the expression is more telling than one might immediately notice. Isn't the *trace* of an unconditional action done entirely out of reverence for the moral law the nearest we come to an indication of a worthy, human existence? A trace is something left

behind, a by-product if you will, of an action. When you trace someone through a jungle you look for broken twigs, footprints on the forest floor, etc. Someone was here, they went this way. Like tracing a track through a forest, tracing a deed is something that requires a sense of the signs to look for, and you only partially and gradually obtain a picture of what you are looking at. More precisely: The deed does not give us signs that we recognize, but 'invents' new signs that we didn't know we were looking for. The deed is an imprint, like a 'Kilroy was here', but one that doesn't immediately show itself, one which must be interpreted and recollected to leave the interpreter with a feeling of esteem of what transpired.

It must be remembered here that a deed is not a deed because of its change of something 'in the world', but because of the change of the *Gesinnung* of the agent. It seems obvious therefore that if anything would be visible as the 'external' effects of a deed, it would only be indirectly discernible – it would be something that one would have to take as traces of the deed. The deed is thus not necessarily something that 'blows us away' or fills us with joy and excitement, and it is not something that is likely to be met with praise from the peers or scorekeepers that keep track of what is counted as good and virtuous in the community. On the contrary: With the emphasis on refusal and 'elevation' from what is normal(-pathological), a deed is likely to offend and thereby share some important characteristics with actions that are not deeds – but just more or less aggressive opposition and dissatisfaction. An action may obviously be overwhelming, revolutionary even, in its impact without being moral in the strictly Kantian sense (or in any sense). But is there *anything* we can say about a deed that will characterize it other than merely as something that transcends normal morality out of reverence for a principle of universality? Even if there is, it seems that the first thing to acknowledge is that a deed might very well be met with reproach. Indeed, as Alenka Zupančič has pointed out,

> . . . any act worthy of the name is by definition 'evil' or 'bad' (or will be seen as such), for it always represents a certain 'overstepping of boundaries', a change in 'what is', a 'transgression' of the limits of the given symbolic order (or community). (Zupančič, 2000, p. 94)[23]

From the point of view of normal morality, a deed does have the character of refusal and revolution – it is a type of action that refrains from relying on the received norms of the community; the institutions that have been established and are functioning more or less efficiently and counted as more or less uncontroversially 'good'. Therefore it seems that in so far as

anything can be said about the consequences of a deed, it is most likely to be that it looks suspiciously unethical and maybe even dangerous. What is 'good' and 'virtuous', namely, is decided by the scorekeepers of normal morality, and an action out of pure reverence to a principle of unrestricted universality therefore inevitably carries an air of arrogance and danger with it. The widespread awareness today of the ethical discussion of 'evil' is interesting in this light. If the emphasis is on moderation, 'ethics' (as in 'ethical life' or *Sittlichkeit*), etc. and 'evil' is discussed and defined in terms of that which destroys and disturbs, one could even seem to have to become a *defender* of evil, for if evil means disturbance of normal morality, then it in fact includes 'real acts' or deeds. Zupančič continues: 'We could even say that the ethical ideology struggles against "evil" because this ideology is hostile to the "good", to the logic of the act as such,' and concludes that what is intended as a protection against evil turns out to be an actual *repression of ethics*, because it makes us incapable of thinking ethics in its dimension of the (Lacanian) Real (Zupančič, 2000, pp. 95–96).

Zupančič sees, what I think would be fair to call, a precursor for this problem in Kant himself, in his stubborn denial of even discussing the concept of what he calls 'diabolical evil'. If diabolical evil were possible, Kant simply says, 'the subject would be made a diabolical being' (Religion 6:35), but he gives very little argumentation for this claim. What seems to be implied for something to be diabolically evil would be that it is done with the wilful intention of *doing evil for evil's sake alone*, but such a will is literally inhuman to Kant. Now, Zupančič' claim is that for this to be a conclusive argument against the possibility of something being 'diabolically evil', the exact same would have to be true for what Kant himself calls the 'highest good': 'In excluding the possibility of "diabolical evil" we also exclude the possibility of the good' (Zupančič, 2000, p. 97).

I am not sure that Zupančič is right about this. Denying the possibility of diabolical evil does not, in my view, necessarily imply denying the possibility of the 'good', or the deed, as I call it. However, I think Zupančič gives a very convincing argument for why Kant's *reasons* for denying the possibility of diabolical evil are wrong, as well as for why the reasons he gives *do in fact* imply that *both* 'evil' and 'good' acts would be impossible. The problem lies in the relation between the (human) will and the objects of practical reason (good and evil). In order to argue for the possibility of the 'highest good', Kant maintains (in the *Critique of Practical Reason*), it is necessary to also argue for the immortality of the soul, since the highest good demands 'complete conformity of dispositions [*Gesinnungen*] with the moral law' and this can only be achieved in 'an endless progress toward that complete

conformity', which no rational being of the sensible world is capable of (CPrR 5:122).

It is difficult, first of all, to even make sense of Kant's contention that an 'infinite progress' is needed to reach a 'complete convergence' of one's motivations to the moral law (a point which has been made in the literature before[24]). If this is supposed to be an argument for the immortality of the soul, namely, there seems to be an immediate contradiction: The 'infinite progress' is attributed to an 'immortal soul', i.e. an eternal substance, existing *outside* of time. What Kant seems to install is therefore a 'bad infinity' – an endless process of negation, which will never reach its aim, and which is attributed to something that doesn't move at all in the first place. In other words, he is committed to a type of will, which is not only not human, but non-sensical. Secondly, therefore, the argument which Kant uses against the possibility of 'diabolical evil' – that it would be 'devilish' and therefore inhuman or superhuman ('belonging to another type of being'), because it would imply an absolute purification of the will in the pursuit of evil for evil's sake alone – applies equally well to the 'highest good'. The infinite progress in willing the highest good makes no more sense than an infinite progress in willing evil for evil's sake alone. Finally, I think it is worth noticing that Kant here talks about *Gesinnung*en (dispositions) – in the plural – which is very unusual. It is almost as if Kant knows that he is cheating here. Instead of the *Gesinnung* of a person that must be in accordance with the moral law, he talks about the *Gesinnungen* – thereby hinting at the possibility that it could be difficult, to say the least, to get *all* of them under control. I shall get back to this point in a moment.

Zupančič identifies the origin of Kant's refusal of diabolical evil (and his non-sensical reference to a 'holy will') in a too literal understanding of the relation between the will of an agent and the objects of practical reason (good and evil). The accomplishment of something good or evil must be a result of the subject's will to accomplish it, Kant maintains. Therefore, the 'highest good' – an accomplished deed – seems to be possible only through a 'holy will', which is the absolute master or the 'hero' of its own accomplishments. The model here is the 'ordinary will', one could say, infinitely improved and clenched of ulterior motives. The 'holy will' is one that knows exactly what it does and legislates on the background of a perfectly clear picture – it could be characterized as an absolute version of the Kaulbachian will (or even of the 'virtuous person') that determines the course of right action on the basis of everything we know at the moment – with the best possible overview of the situation. It is, in other words, a will which is legislating on the background of a complete transparency of its

material. The diabolical will, similarly, would be one that is endowed with the same powers as the holy will, but wills the opposite. Both the holy and the diabolical will therefore end up functioning like versions of 'bad infinities' – versions of an infinite or absolute awareness of what would be good or evil to do and a pure legislation on the background of this awareness.

Zupančič maintains, against Kant, that ethical acts cannot be construed as something that can only be performed on the background of such total-control wills (my expression). On the contrary: The ethical act can happen to the subject, whether he wants it or not (Zupančič, 2000, p. 100). The objects of pure practical reason, therefore, good and evil, rely on an instance of something happening, rather than on an infinite process of determination.

Without going into further detail of Zupančič' argument, I will agree with her that it is certainly a misrepresentation of that 'in human which is more than the human' to conceive it is a total mastery or a total-control-will. As we have repeatedly seen, from different angles, the 'surplus' coincides with the lack: It is because there *is* no absolute and coherent orchestration of the world that the human being can aspire for something more than the order achieved so far (the 'end of history' that faces every human being in the beginning). The moral law takes the empty place left by speculative reason, but this place exactly has to remain empty (from speculation). What Kant's 'holy will' could be said to do is to fill out the lack in speculative reason with a metaphysical fantasy of a noumenal will that forever postpones 'real' moral action. Indeed, Kant himself in the *Critique of Practical Reason* imagines a will that is entirely and uninterruptedly in direct accordance with the moral law (and its actions therefore 'things in themselves', as he calls them) as the extermination of freedom altogether: The human being would be reduced to a puppet, a thinking automat, ultimately controlled by 'an alien hand' – namely God – pulling the strings (CPrR 5:101).

Nonetheless, I think there is some truth precisely in Kant's rather horrific vision of the unfree holiness of the human will. Doesn't it exactly indicate what Zupančič is aiming at: that in the deed (or in the 'act' as she calls it) there is a kind of short circuit of the will? The deed is not something that happens as the result of a total overview that we have acquired and then a decision of the right path. Something happens, the crack in the edifice of the normal (morality) ordering of things opens up and gives space for the unconditional, or the higher necessity that demands or forces the subject to act. The deed is not a result of a careful deliberation, but of an 'absolute spontaneity', which determines the will directly and acts out of nothing but respect for the law. In the deed, therefore, we almost become strangers to

ourselves. It is as if there has been a conspiracy between the 'lack' of the situation and that which is 'in us more than us'. We are changed by the deed, our *Gesinnung* is revolutionized, exactly because we didn't know that we wanted to perform it. The mistake is therefore to conceive the deed as the result of a deliberation on the background of an extrapolation of the legislative function of the will in normal morality – a mistake Kant might be guilty of when characterizing the 'holy will'. However, with the differentiation between *Gesinnung* and will in mind, the problem looks a bit different – and this is where the point about the singular character of the *Gesinnung* is important. The *Gesinnung* is the inscrutable subjective (back) ground of the actions, a person performs, and as such not open to examination and deliberation in the same way that the will is. The *Gesinnung*, therefore, is not a 'total will' or a will at all, but the 'and so on' that characterizes a person's moral character in total. While the 'holy will' is indeed a case of bad infinity, the *Gesinnung* is always already there. We *have* a moral character, whether we know it or not, and the character is not a sum of individual *Gesinnungen*; it is a unity which can be changed *as* a unity, revolutionized. Maybe we could even say that freedom as the absolute spontaneity of the *Willkür* is a circumvention of the *Wille* (in the narrow sense): the *Willkür* (the executive branch of the will) is directly determined by the moral law itself, and therefore we act 'whether we want to or not,' i.e. without regard to the 'legislative' function of the will, which can be explicated. As it was formulated in the conclusion of Chapter 6: The deed marks the point where 'everything fits', and where one's *Gesinnung* changes to being 'morally good' and in accordance with the universal moral law.

What I am aiming at with these descriptions is a take on the *communication*, if you will, between the lack of the situation and the surplus of freedom in the agent. What is it that happens, when a deed is suddenly accomplished? The *Triebfeder* of such an action is nothing but the *Achtung* for the moral law, and in an important sense the deed just 'happens' – it goes behind the back of the willing subject. But the question remains of the relation that thus unifies and acts; ties things together. Remember that the 'higher necessity' at work in the deed is defined exactly as *Verbindlichkeit*:

> For human beings and all created rational beings moral necessity is necessation, that is, obligation, and every action based on it is to be represented as duty, not as a kind of conduct which we already favour of our own accord or could come to favour. (CPrR 5:81)

In the deed, the subject is obligated – i.e. *verbunden*; it is 'tied up' in a moral necessity that forces it to act, whether it wants to or not. *Verbindlichkeit* means

obligation, but it simultaneously means 'connectedness' and thereby represents a sense of being-*verbunden*, I would claim, a sense of being responsible of making things work – acting in such a way that the baseness or depravity of the current situation is overcome in favour of a more ('rational' or 'sustainable') universal order. Being-*verbunden* is a condition that can step forward, if you will, in a situation that suddenly prompts a deed. A situation can 'trigger' our (mostly unconscious or repressed) sense of being-*verbunden* and change our *Gesinnung* through a deed, but in order to do this, there must already be a certain potential in the *Gesinnung*, it must be *gestimmt* in such a way that it is susceptible to a revolution. The approach I thereby take to *Verbindlichkeit* resembles the one I took to the problem of the sublime. It is the area of what Zupančič calls the 'warm-hearted Kant', i.e. someone who adds a lot of different qualifications and explanations of what is really going on in a moral act, to make it seem nicer, you could almost say. While the 'cold-hearted Kant' sees the moral law as nothing but unconditional, foreign to any human impulses, and standing alone in a void, the 'warm-hearted Kant' sees the many good things that transpire from morality, as he is 'standing in the dark night, admiring the starry heavens above him and the moral law within him' (Zupančič, 2000 pp. 159–160).[25]

What makes my approach here 'warm-hearted' is that the version of the 'circumvention of the will' that I offer, relies on what one could call a 'thick' notion of *Verbindlichkeit* (while Zupančič instead relies on the Lacanian concepts of *jouissance* and drive, which I have not unfolded here). Inherent in this approach is a stronger emphasis on the deed as 'good' – a kind of fulfilment of a *cosa nostra*; not in the sense of a 'project' or an 'Idea' which someone articulates (and which Zupančič rightly mocks as 'good causes' (ibid., pp. 80–81)), but in the sense of the abstract connectedness to something 'more' than any concrete instance of normal morality. The *cosa nostra* is the common, but entirely unarticulated, project of all rational beings. The possibility of the traces of the deed is therefore an indication that even though an action might not be approved as good by normal morality, it might possibly be approved later on; it *will have been good* – when the traces of the deed have been identified. My emphasis on the good is thus one that claims that a deed will have been good, or put in another way: it will (possibly) be understood that an action was in fact a deed – and that it was therefore 'good' – the *right* way of administering our being-*verbunden*. I have agreed so far only that 'any act worthy of the name is by definition "evil" or "bad" (or will be seen as such)', and I will insist on the importance of what is here placed in brackets. A deed might very well be *seen* as evil by all the peers and scorekeepers of the institutions at place in the situation,

without it 'being' evil – such that there is ultimately no difference between a deed and (anything that is condemned as) a diabolically evil act. I think that it makes sense to distinguish *conceptually* between an action that is performed out of respect for the moral law, and one that is, as Kant defines it in *Religion*, on the contrary making the 'resistance to the law' itself to an incentive (Religion 6:35), but I would be inclined to interpret this *resistance* as simply a pathological condition. In so far as it would really be the incentive of an action it would most likely be an emotional reaction, out of, say, frustration or minority complexes.

The possibility of the diabolically evil, if it were to be imagined, would depend, not on a 'diabolical will' in the sense of an infinitely purified non-pathological superhuman will, but nonetheless on an ability in humans that resembles the one identified as the 'Fix it!' of the categorical imperative – a 'Destroy it!' of some sort. Again: Deeds *are* 'bad' in the sense that they do contain a 'Destroy it!' or at least a 'Disregard it!', but I would claim that they simultaneously contain a 'Fix it!' or a 'Make it work!' or a 'Begin again!'[26] The point to make about diabolical evil would therefore have to be something that could be a 'diabolical' version of *Achtung* and *Verbindlichkeit*, since these terms are not neutral or formal descriptions alone – their 'non-neutrality' is the very reason why I think there can be 'traces' of the deed. In other words, if the resistance should be made a real incentive of a 'diabolical act', it would have to rely on a 'thick' notion that matches *Verbindlichkeit*. We would have to reinvent the Kantian employment of the 'diabolical' to be something not directly equal to a biblical sense of some substantial will beyond the realm of the human, but applicable to a real incentive in human beings, something that bursts out, maybe, in the evil act, out of, say a 'pure detachment' from the world.[27] So, my relatively modest disagreement with Zupančič amounts to this: I am not *entirely* convinced that it wouldn't be possible to describe a meaningful conception of evil on the basis of a 'thick' notion of resistance (which does not implode into a mere formal convergence with the moral law), although I am sceptical with regard to the project. The reason for this hesitance (to reject the 'thick' notion of resistance) is my emphasis on the parallel 'thick' notion of *Verbindlichkeit*. I think it is *enough* to argue for deeds that are not 'evil', although they *immediately appear so* to normal morality.

Since I am sceptical about the idea of a 'thick' notion of resistance to the moral law, I think we can still do with Kant's conception of 'radical evil' to explain wherein doing evil consists. We are always already responsible for our actions and *Gesinnung*, and in as far as we are acting evil, we can be said to have perverted the relation between the moral law and our

inclinations (because of our natural inclination to 'radical evil'). The per-version, however, is not an incentive to doing evil; only to promote self-love. If we act evil, it is out of weakness (*fragilitas*), impurity (*impuritas, improbitas*) or depravity (*vitiositas, pravitas*), all of which are specifically human capabilities (Religion 6:29–30), which could be said to 'mess up' or destroy the 'highest order maxim'. In so far as we are acting evil, it is because of an inability to comply with the moral law; an inability which must be considered to be freely chosen, but which cannot be considered to be a direct choice of evil itself. It is a, deliberate, departure from morality out of self-interest. Being evil means not having 'exited' the self-inflicted immaturity of self-serving behaviour that humans learn when they grow up – through deeds. We can therefore also say that deeds are required to prevent *falling back* into evil indifference (remember that indifference is already evil in Kant). Indeed, because of the constant impressions around us, we are quickly tempted to settle down and agree with the conditions of normal morality conformability. It is characteristic of human virtue, as Kant says in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, that 'if it is not rising, [it] is unavoidably sinking' (MM 6:409).

If we remember the definition of the revolution of the *Gesinnung* from the preceding chapter (that the will is guided directly and only by respect for the moral law and everything thus suddenly 'fits' in a way that transcends any convention or standard expressible in the language of normal morality) then one could say that the fall back into radical evil resembles something like a fading out. It was all right in the moment of the deed; the *Gesinnung* was in tune with the universal demand of morality, but once everyday problems set in again, and one returns to the business of living a normal morality life, the moral character tends to degrade or faint, so that the 'highest order maxim' of one's behaviour is soon not *exactly* one that can be upheld as a universal principle. You give in a bit – indeed, you have to, in order to at all function as a normal human being with a number of different responsibilities and things that have to be done. Therefore, a new deed will be needed to regain moral dignity. In the discussion of the concept of the sublime, we saw that Kant even prefers a little bit of war to shake up the inhabitants of a community when they get too accustomed to the 'commercial spirit' of the normal running of things.

Since I maintain that deeds are deeds and cannot be evil (although they can be seen as such), I will say a few words in the rest of this chapter on what I think distinguishes them and how they can be 'recognized' – or what they *mean* apart from the purely formal characteristics of being a transcendence of normal morality. Some of it will be repetition of things

earlier mentioned, but I think it serves the issue well to repeat them here in the context of 'diabolical evil'. Overall, one way to handle the problematic would simply be to see 'evil deeds' as *fake* deeds – acts that pretend to be universal acts that transcend the 'pathology of everyday life', but really don't. They are parasitic on deeds, because they lend the glamour of actions that honestly seek to accomplish the impossible – while they are really just pathological acts that result from lust, complexes, depravity, etc.[28] This, I think, would be a line of thought that stays true to Kant's intuition of the impossibility of diabolically evil deeds, while maintaining nonetheless Zupančič' observation of the mistake in attributing 'good' or 'evil' acts to a 'holy' or 'diabolical' will, respectively. The interpretation of an action that is 'evil' would thereby simply be (i.e. remain) one that describes it as a deliberate failure to answer to the demand of the categorical imperative. Thus interpreted, actions that spring from a codex of the habitual or prudent thing to do might very well be considered evil, but actions that would seem to be candidates for the diabolically evil would also remain within the realm of the 'pathological' – as semblance or simulacrum they would ultimately *not* live up to formal requirements of a deed, and they would be treated as normal-pathological actions motivated by inclinations and *Herzensaufwallungen* like any other normal action (good or bad – according to what 'we', the language users, think of them). I shall count three characteristics of the deed, which I think indicate where the more substantial difference to an imagined diabolically evil act could be situated: *Verbindlichkeit*, hope, and the possibility of detecting traces of the unconditional.

7.1. *Verbindlichkeit*: Obligation and connectedness

The intuition behind Arendt-like Soft Kantianism that 'the beautiful indicates that the human being fits into the world' has something sympathetic and right about it. As described in Chapter 5, I believe it to be a suitable approach to handling the insecurity that necessarily issues from the subject's relation to the world of normal moral behaviour: what we are doing (now) is somehow right, and there is good reason to believe that I will be able to 'fit' into the way things should be done. Kantian morality does rely on an important sense of *connectedness*, which I think would in many ways be a better translation of *Verbindlichkeit* than the traditional English rendering – 'obligation', although both interpretations apply in their own right and together give a more full picture of what *Verbindlichkeit* is.

Morality is possible because of a fundamental relation of connectedness to the world – a sense of responsibility and reverence, which ties us to the world around us. However, the Soft Kantian understanding of this, I claim, underestimates the dimensions of Kant's conception of connectedness. The *Verbindlichkeit* that Kant is addressing is a connection or relation to something 'higher' than the flowers and paintings and suffering human beings of the world. As it was formulated slightly provocatively in Chapter 5, Kant does not relate his moral philosophy to cornfields or virtuous examples in his famous slogan from the *Critique of Practical Reason*, but to the starry heavens above. The slogan, I think, specifically and meaningfully thereby relates not to the facts of the world, in the Wittgensteinian sense, but to the limits of the world. The starry heavens exactly point beyond the horizon of what can be comprehended by the understanding – they pose the question of the world as a whole: does it have limits (in space and time) or not? It is this ability to think the limits of the world as a philosophical problem that elevates human above and beyond the immediacy of its surroundings. *Verbindlichkeit* could therefore be paraphrased as a connectedness to the world, not as a totally of beings (however beautiful and good they might be), but as something that is 'more than itself'. The world cannot contain itself, you could almost say. It is bigger than itself. We cannot make sense of it, seen as a whole, but we can marvel at and revere this inscrutable core of our relation to it. This is the fact of reason: As a matter of fact we are able to think the thought that something transcends the understanding, and we are connected, *verbunden*, to this 'something' through our ability to think it. *Verbindlichkeit* is thus an exclusive relation of reason, not of understanding. The translation of '*Verstand*' to 'understanding' is here appropriate: We do not understand, in the most literal sense, what it is we are *verbunden* to (it is not an object or a being that can be attributed any predicates, let alone perceived), but we are nonetheless *verbunden*. The 'proof' that we are connected and obliged (to use both senses of being *verbunden*) is that we as a matter of fact experience ourselves as being connected and obliged – an experience that logically stems from the most fundamental characteristics of being a creature endowed with reason/language as described earlier. We can desire, respect, revere the moral law, because it addresses that in us which is 'more'. It fills out the empty place and thus occupies the heart of reason, if you will, transforming reason from theoretical to practical. However, hereby we also find a way to pinpoint more exactly wherein the more 'substantial' character of *Verbindlichkeit* consists, which speaks for the 'warm-hearted Kant' that I endorsed a moment ago. The possibility of respecting the moral law comes only to such creatures that have language.

Only if you have been initiated into a community of language users can you come to sense or directly think the limits and the lack of this community and aspire for something 'more'. There is something 'awesome' about being a creature that can perform deeds, but this greatness only presents itself to someone already predisposed of it. 'Someone must be at least half way toward being an honest man', as Kant says (CPrR 5:38), before one can really be said to be responsive to the demand of reason. In a certain way, this is simply the reason why we had to be dragged through the long procedures of initiation (in 'real life' as well as in this book) into a community of committed and entitled language users: To prepare ourselves for the surplus to this community itself. The 'in us more than ourselves' is thus a 'more' which has the pure character of the demand of reason, but it is nonetheless an *in us* more than ourselves – it is something we identify in *ourselves* and thereby something that becomes our innermost interest. In this sense, we are *verbunden*.

Kant interprets the presence of something 'great' or sublime in us to the limit of what can be maintained 'within the limits of reason alone'. He often borders on the pathetic and religious, without embracing outright religious dogma. He praises 'true religion' as a *Vernunftsreligion* and finds potential for such a true religion in religious convictions and writings, especially in Christianity. Kant himself quotes Luke (17.21–22) to describe the 'what is that in us': 'The Kingdom of God cometh not in visible form. Neither they shall say: Lo here; or lo there! *For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you!*' (Religion 6:136).

The connection, the tie, is in the human being itself in as far as it is a reasonable creature. The reverence that accompanies Kant's description of this feeling is pathetic (pathos-laden) and sincere from the very beginning of the critical enterprise. It borders, some think, on outright Christian orthodoxy, but it does so in a strictly philosophical manner. The full title of *Religion*, of course, very precisely describes the Kantian stance as a 'religion within the boundaries of mere reason', and already in the first critique he presents the matter thus:

> So far as practical reason has the right to lead us, we will not hold actions to be obligatory [*für verbindlich halten*] because they are God's commands, but will rather regard them as divine commands because we are internally obligated to them [*innerlich verbindlich*]. (CPR: B 847)

Although Kant refers to the *verbindliche Handlungen*, i.e. the actions that we are committed/obliged to perform as 'divine commands', he does so from

'bottom-up', you could say, instead of from 'top-down'. Compared to 'really existing religions',[29] Kant's line of argumentation is inversed: It is because 'something' in us demands us to act morally that we consider this demand a divine, 'higher', demand – not the other way around. We do not consider any demands to be divine demands to act thus and so, because someone (a highest being) told us to act thus and so.

Kant's view of religion could thus be described in terms of the etymology of the word, or rather of the two different etymologies that are used. Religion is most commonly taken to originate from latin *religare*; tie together, and if one reads the connection thus expressed as a pure relation of the subject to reason, Kant would agree. *Religare* as *verbinden*: The human being is 'tied' to the world or to that in the world, which is more than the world – the surplus of meaning in the world, which cannot be grasped by a finite understanding – through the ability to think and the accompanying transformation of reason from theoretical to practical. What Kant does not accept is the idea of religion as something that separates the human being from some 'higher' form of existence or being, which is only indirectly or mysteriously available to us through signs or revelations. In *Religion*, Kant spends some time to denounce and indeed mock religious rituals supposed to perform some inscrutable function of submission or prayer to please the extra terrestrial being supposed to supervise them. He talks of the 'nonsense of superstition', the 'madness of enthusiasm [*Schwärmerei*]' (Religion 6:101), and 'pious play-acting and nothing-doing' (ibid., p. 173), whenever the theme is religious rituals that install a gap between our finite, imperfect and limited existence, and an all powerful and mighty God, whom we can only hope to please with our humble sacrifices and gestures. In this sense, Kant would endorse Giorgio Agamben's harsh criticism of what I have called 'really existing religions', i.e. the way religious communities tend to perform their rituals, as repressive tools to keep the constituency from attempting anything out of the ordinary on their own. Agamben claims that the real etymology of the word 'religion' is latin *re-legere*, meaning to re-*read*, because the function of religions has always been to make humans 're-read' the scriptures and the signs of some inscrutable meaning beyond our limited, finite viewpoint (Agamben, 2005, pp. 71–72). We will never understand the divine point of view, but we can humbly re-read the signs, again and again (which naturally gives the priests a crucial role as go-betweeners and interpreters of the divine foresight). Kant, in a slightly uncharacteristically sharp remark, directly indicates a similar view of the repressive, political function of reli-

gious ideology through history (still prevailing one might assume from the paragraph):

> For this reason wise governments have always granted that miracles do occur in *ancient times*, and have even received this opinion among the doctrines of official religion, but have not tolerated *new* miracles. (Religion 6:85)

Against (most of) the really existing religions, Kant insists on the imperative of creating new wonders. Something new can still happen; indeed, as I have described it, it is the task of a human being to work its way from the end of history forward to a new beginning. The demand of the true religion, however, is one that we cannot find a manual for fulfilling. The 'moral law within' tells us only that we must act, not how. But it ties us to the world in a way which makes the relation to the moral law one of connectedness. What we do, when we perform a deed, is to confirm our tie to something higher than the normal pathology of everyday life. This is the interest of reason.

Verbindlichkeit, therefore, must be interpreted both as obligation and connectedness. Zupančič and other Lacanians (including Lacan) are right that the obligation is one of unconditional demand without instruction. A prank call, as I have called it. But the Soft Kantians are generally or intuitively right (although they rarely express it exactly that way) that there is a connectedness to the world, a *cosa nostra*, a way in which we are tied to the world and aspire to fit into it or step up to it, although they usually fail to see this aspiration as an aspiration for a higher existence or a transformation of oneself.

7.2. Hope

Another of Kant's ways of indicating the trace of the unconditional depends rather explicitly on the religious idea of an omniscient being that rewards the subject according to the 'real' intentions of his or her actions and moral *Gesinnung*, which is open for no one to inspect (not even the subject itself), but Him. Morality is not about making ourselves happy, but of 'how we are to become *worthy* of happiness' (CPrR 5:130). The humble hope of being *worthy* of happiness is the only reward a human being can allow itself. Obviously, such a description is very much in tune with very

traditional religious images of God as the all powerful being that will pay everyone according to his merits in the afterlife. We can only hope to be worthy – and we will not know if we are until His verdict falls upon us. (Not for no reason is the quote from the section about the 'postulate of God's existence'). However, the hope of being worthy to happiness is, I think you could call it, a secularized hope of reward. Kant's Christian inheritance does not prevent him from understanding the hope of happiness within the limits of pure reason alone. The employment of hope is therefore central, not because of its religious background and possible interpretation, but because of its fundamentally *indirect* approach to the question of human happiness. The effects of good deeds cannot be detected directly in the empirical environment around us, we can never say for certain that we have truly accomplished something good, but we can hope that we are worthy of a happy life because we have tried. The reward for a deed is not some immediate effect of happiness or praise, but only a hope of being worthy. Hope itself is the reward, and Kant's indirect approach to the consequences of our actions is therefore timely here.

Typically, Kant will demonstrate the reality of the moral impulse in us by giving examples where everything in us would seem to contradict any inclination towards doing what is 'right', if it wasn't because of the pure demand of the moral law: 'You must – regardless of your inclinations.' The question of the reward for moral behaviour can be treated along the same lines. Since there is no direct, verifiable measure of something being a truly moral act, the appraisal and recognition from others can bear no direct moral significance to the moral agent. One could even say that the indirectness of the relation between morality and its traces highlights a fundamental difference between the Soft Kantian/semi-Aristotelian view of morality as a process of learning and mastering moral behaviour and the Hard Kantian insistence on unconditional duty. How is one initiated into a moral culture? By doing what is considered right. A child that behaves well at the table is rewarded through kindness and food. A schoolboy who writes his papers in time and behaves properly is rewarded by a place in high school. A 'moral person' in a community is praised for his virtuous conduct and rewarded by esteem and respect. Kant would probably be inclined to take any sign of gratitude or recognition as a warning signal that one has probably just done something for the sake of being praised/recognized/desired, etc. Direct indications of something being moral are typically warnings to Kant that it is not!

A deed is not being rewarded, you could say, by a one-to-one measure. There *is* no way of responding to a deed, because it is not articulated in the

language of giving and asking for reasons. If someone helps me or does something for me, I can thank him or 'pay him back', as we suitably call it. I 'owe him one'. Such an exchange economy is vital to normal morality – which has been studied by anthropologists and moral psychologists for many years. A deed is not identifiable in the same way – which is why when we notice, or maybe one should even say *suspect*, that someone has done a deed, we are more likely to be overwhelmed by gratitude, and far from thinking in retribution of any kind – a deed cannot be outweighed by another deed, as a move in the game of giving and asking for reasons can be appropriately answered by another move, because a deed is not part of a game at all. Someone who finds out or suspects that another has done a deed for him or her is likely to lack words, as we call it, and sometimes the only relevant feeling seems to be the one of 'owing *everything*' to the person who performed the deed.

Early Wittgenstein, once again, agrees with Kant when he discusses the reward for fulfilling the commandment 'You must!' There can be no question of the consequences of an action, he says, in this respect, but *something* must be right about our intuition that there is a sort of reward for an action that is living up to the moral imperative. The reward cannot, however, be something that lies 'out there' as physical or emotional consequences in the empirical world: 'There must be some kind of ethical reward and ethical punishment, but they must lie in the action itself' (Wittgenstein, 1993b, § 6.422, my translation). The reward lies in the feeling of being such a creature that can perform deeds.

To Kant, in the tripartition of freedom as I have described it, the reward for a deed lies somewhere in between the 'imaginary' and the 'real' dimension of freedom: In the deed I sense the effect of 'this might be it' or 'now I am acting solely out of respect to the moral law'; in other words: I imagine myself as a free agent, who can act out of 'higher necessity', while at the same time sensing that I am on the right track in *this* action and what it will accomplish; that things are falling into place by acting in *this* way, *now*. The trace of the deed, which we can find in ourselves, is thus the feeling that we are doing something right – the elevation of rising to the occasion, or indeed above the occasion, and doing what must be done. This feeling, however, must have the structure of a hope, since there can be no immediate evidence of its appropriateness. The confirmation of my action must lie in the future at best, and never in the shape of signposts that read: 'The act that was performed on 11 July 2009 was a deed.' If the action is right, it will show itself to have been right; maybe it will at some point be considered to have been the right thing to do, but there can be no direct evidence of it.

The *reality* of this hope, however, confirms the very possibility of performing deeds.

In his famous piece on 'perpetual peace', Kant expresses hope as an indirect measure of moral conduct in another way. The first supplement of the essay is called 'On the guarantee of perpetual peace', which might seem an odd title for a transcendental philosopher (how can there be anything like a guarantee of peace and prosperity for a species with a natural propensity to evil and a history that is fundamentally open-ended?), and Kant does not of course provide a direct proof of a guarantee of peace and prosperity issued by some divine lawmaker or the 'objective laws of history', but he nonetheless insists that we must look at history with a teleological perspective as if there *were* a providence that made things turn out right at the end of the day. The *concept* of the divine *concursus* is 'quite appropriate and even necessary', for instance, 'in the belief that God, by means incomprehensible to us, will make up for the lack of our own righteousness if only our disposition is genuine, so that we should never slacken in our striving toward the good' (TPP 8:362).

The belief in a divine foresight that makes things right, 'if only our *Gesinnung* was real', is another way of describing the hope that what we are doing, when we are directly motivated by the moral law itself, will somehow turn out for the best, even if we cannot comprehend how at the moment of the action. Nature has equipped us in such a way that we are as a matter of fact (the fact of reason) motivated to want what is good in the long run, or 'what we could want to be a universal law of Nature', although our cognition of the direct results of this equipment is highly doubtful, if not outright impossible. The quotation above continues:

> [B]ut it is self-evident that no one must attempt to *explain* a good action (as an event in the world) by this *concursus*, which is a futile theoretical cognition of the supersensible and is therefore absurd. (ibid.)

Here you have it – spelled out: Wanting to explain a deed as an event in the world would be the same as pretending to cognize the supersensible (the 'what is that in us', the 'more', the 'surplus'), which is both impossible and inappropriate. Nonetheless, it is perfectly meaningful to believe in an overall course of the world in which deeds do make a difference and contribute to the world growing into a better place. If we perform deeds, or even more precisely: if we *attempt* to perform deeds, everything speaks for us being able to maintain and improve a dignified society, simply because the 'right *Gesinnung*' means the *Gesinnung* that aims at the universaliability of

an action. Kant's position could be paraphrased, I think, as the conviction that actions that are not in accordance with morality are ultimately self-defeating.[30] We see how corruption, lying, beastly behaviour and suppression undermine the condition of maintaining and developing a society, and therefore we are encouraged to act in accordance with universal principles – to create sustainability before the unsustainable will eradicate itself. It is important to maintain, of course, that these considerations are not proofs of anything concerning the reality of deeds, nor do they play a systematic role in the exposition of the deed, but they indicate how a Kantian way of looking at history might contain an element of hopeful optimism. Hope itself (not necessarily the actual events of history) is an indication that we can meaningfully expect there to be traces of deeds to be discerned. Kant's own position in any case *is* optimism: History *will* move towards a universal community of citizens of the world who live in mutual respect and with universal rights as citizen of the world, although we might have to pay some dues along the way, when we fail to live up to our obligation. And when we see history in this way, as leaving traces of deeds, it makes sense to assume that things will turn out for the best as long as we try to perform them.

7.3. The *post festum* sage

In virtue ethics, the ideal of an agent who knows how to behave morally is sometimes incarnated in the 'virtuous sage' or just '*the* virtuous person', i.e. the person who is extraordinarily aware of the 'morally salient features' of the world and able to separate the morally relevant from the irrelevant and choose the right path of action. The prudence of when and how to act in which ways is build up throughout life and some people develop better or more keen abilities to understand and judge how to act in different situations. '[E]thical reality is immensely difficult to see clearly,' as John McDowell says (McDowell, 1998, p. 72), and therefore the right thing to do is not something that can be explicated from an external standpoint: 'Occasion by occasion, one knows what to do, if one does, not by applying universal principles but by being a certain kind of person: one who sees situations in a certain distinctive way' (ibid., p. 73).

To McDowell, the virtuous thing to do cannot be decided beforehand, and discerning in the situation what it is requires a practical sense, which is not syllogistic of nature, i.e. it cannot necessarily be outlined in arguments that fully explain the situation in such a way that someone from 'outside' would see the rationale of acting the way, the virtuous person

acts. Aristotelian *phronesis* is therefore a suitable concept to capture what a virtuous person has: practical wisdom. The virtuous person is someone who is well equipped to see situations clearly – to discern the morally salient features – and act in accordance with prudence. You might therefore seek the advice of the virtuous person to contemplate how you should react to a given problem, or even what you should 'look for' before venturing into new territory. The proverbial sage of the indigenous tribe could be paradigmatic for such an institution – someone you confer with on problems that the younger generations face with some hesitation, because they haven't seen similar cases before. (The tribe elders also represent another important feature of virtue ethics, I think: it always works better when nothing really changes.)

Soft Kantianism does have different strands in this regard. While the more *linguistically* orientated philosophy of Robert Brandom maintains the imperative of 'making it explicit' as a fundamental task of pragmatic philosophy, virtue ethics and its advocates in John McDowell, Sabina Lovibond and others tend to emphasize practical wisdom as a problem concerning *perception* as a more crucial theme for the investigation of moral competence. Be that as it may, the common denominator is the exclusive focus on second nature normal morality as the (only) relevant field of research for moral philosophy and the course of right action as something understandable to those who are initiated. Morality is a sort of know-how that can be cultivated to a higher or lesser degree, and when you are 'one of us' in the highest degree, you are a reliable, responsible, virtuous etc. person. Talking of 'extra-moral' actions, on the contrary, would to both be something that misconstrues the nature of morality.[31]

One should of course be careful not to overdo the incompatibility of the Soft and Hard Kantian approaches to morality, and indeed I think that from a Hard Kantian point of view most, if not all, of what is developed in Soft Kantianism of the types that have been included in this book is both pertinent and instructive. *But only to understanding normal morality as it normally functions, i.e. without its lack.* The figure of the sage, however, might have another kind of use than the one it has in Aristotle-inspired Soft Kantian virtue ethics. The sage, namely, could be a way of approaching what I have called the traces of the unconditional. Maybe there is a meaningful way of employing this morally perceptive person as a witness of deeds that *have been* performed. I would call him the '*post festum* sage' and understand by this someone with a keen eye for the traces of deeds that have been performed a short or a long while ago. Since the signs are never direct or obvious one-to-one responses to the action, it takes a trained eye

to recognize them. The *post festum* sage, an idealized perceptive interpreter of the past, recognizes the traces of a deed, when he sees them. 'Something noble and sublime has been done here,' the *post festum* sage might establish, when the signs indicate that a deed has been performed. The sage might be imagined as a philosopher, of course, who is 'always too late', as Hegel says (Hegel, 1999a, p. 17), someone who describes what has transpired and thus names the event/deed, articulating his own time in concepts, in order for everyone else to see what it means that it happened. But the sage could also be a historian that recollects material of the past to study the background of the changes in the mindsets of people or a poet who puts together a puzzle to reconstruct the *Gesinnung* from which actions emanate. Kant himself in *Religion* describes how it would be possible to 'infer' from a person's acts to the maxims (i.e. of 'the highest order') that guide them, but emphasizes (once again) that such an inference is not straightforward and that the maxims can neither be perceived nor in general grounded on experience with any certainty. (Tellingly, the paragraph that talks about the inference from actions to the background *Gesinnung* quickly changes mode to the conjunctive: *if* it were possible to infer from actions to the maxims that are grounded in the subject, it *would* be done in such and such a way . . . (Religion 6:20)). The poet as a *post festum* sage would therefore be one that envisages, calls forward, 'infers', the picture of who and how a person is, as a whole, in terms of his or her character, on the basis of everything relevant that can be discerned and described in the actions and events around us. A great poetic work is often such a staging of an exit from one state of mind to another or a recollection of a deed that was performed in opposition to everything that was (considered) possible.

And sometimes, the traces of the deed can be discerned by anyone of us. We become aware that things have happened which we didn't immediately notice or understand; which we only partially and/or gradually comprehend, but which we can still sense the greatness of as it dawns on us that they were done out of nothing but respect of duty, (not out of *Herzensaufwallungen*). We can even sometimes sense in a moment that the person in front of us is right now present as more than just a polite second nature word-monger, behaving as one *should* behave – although we only sense it; it is somehow indicated by a smile or a gesture. Sometimes you feel that someone is acting, not out of empathy, pity or even love (which would 'just' require normal morality perceptiveness), but 'something more' – an enthusiasm that springs from a broader perspective (of reason). In this sense, you could say, I can as a matter of fact encounter Bob Brandom's *Gesinnung*, but only through the traces that it leaves.

Chapter 8

On the Prohibition of Contemporary Wonders

Respect is properly the representation of a worth that infringes upon my self-love. [. . .] Any respect for a person is properly only respect for the law.

(Groundwork 4:401–402)

The theoretical ambition of this book has been to investigate a Kantian understanding of morality through an 'Auf-das-Ganze-gehen' in the sense of an investigation of the logical and metaphysical preconditions of the ability to act in a way that transcends the cultural or linguistic norms of normal morality. 'Morality' has been understood in the broadest sense – i.e. roughly as everything that is investigated in Kant's 'practical philosophy'. Morality is the ability to act in ways, which first nature creatures cannot, and morality itself can be divided into 'normal morality' and 'extra-morality', the latter of which is the capacity to perform deeds. However, the employment of the term 'morality' has also got another point. I understand by morality a broad capacity in the human being, which can be divided into three different regions, namely the existential, the ethical and the political. The word 'morality' has therefore been systematically employed, rather than 'ethics', because the two are supposed to play very different roles. Morality describes the broad practical capacity, the genus, while ethics is taken to mean something more specific, as a species of morality, although, or maybe rather precisely because, the two in many cases are treated as synonymous. (In public discourse in Denmark it has been commonplace for many years to say 'ethicsandmorality' almost as if the two formed one word that means something like 'what is important enough to take seriously, but harmless enough not to take politically'.)

Since morality is taken to be the practical ability in the broadest sense, it applies to human life in different ways, depending on the circumstances. I take it therefore to be an uncontroversial claim that Kantian practical

philosophy could be applied to any moral problem and is not restricted to a strictly 'individual' question,[32] or to an 'ethical' question of right conduct according to common rational standards. The subjective focus of Kantian morality is unavoidable; the question of morality is the question concerning what *my* duty is, but in as far as others are in the same situation as me, ethical and political problems can rather straight forwardly be seen as *our* problems. The practical, concrete question to a Kantian is: What is my duty in *this* case? And living up to one's duty can be an existential, ethical or political task depending on the nature of the question, which, I think, is why the categorical imperative (CI) is formulated in a number of different ways, especially in the *Grundlegung*. The 'most abstract' definition (Allen Wood's description (Wood, 1999, p. 78)) is the following:

> [A]ct only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law. (Groundwork 4:421)

The imperative of reason thus defined is the 'pure' demand of universalization, which does not offer any instructions or even hints of what could be meant thereby. Most of the other formulations provided throughout the works on practical philosophy, I would claim, are partly Kant's paraphrasing of the CI, because the pure demand of reason cannot be expressed purely in any language and must therefore be approached 'from different angles', if you will, and partly his transformation of it to 'real' human considerations and concerns. To guide my division of morality into the three subgroups of the existential, the ethical and the political, I will therefore take three of Kant's formulation of the CI which indicate a possible interpretation or application of the CI in the three different circumstances. I will label them the Formula of the Own Person (FOP), the Formula of Humanity (FH) and the Formula of Universal Law of Nature (FLN), respectively (hereby using Wood's names for the two latter). The FOP says: Act so that you treat humanity (conceived in terms of its rational capacity) in yourself as an end in itself, and concerns what I call 'existential problems'. The FH says the same about other persons, and concerns 'ethical problems'. And the FLN says that the maxim of one's actions should be possible as a universal law of nature, which includes *any* other person (however distant in space and time), as well as a general principle of sustainability, and concerns 'political problems'.

The division into the existential, the ethical and the political follows the category of quantity, which divides everything into 'One', 'More' and 'All' ('Unity', 'Plurality', 'Totality' (CPR: B 106)), on the basis of the number of

persons, the agent is relating to in its action. This is not a division, which Kant himself explicitly makes in the same way, but it is intended as an attempt at clarifying how such a distribution *could* be made, and thereby how Kantian considerations could be distributed over the domain of human responsibilities and get a step closer to real-life consequences. (In any case, it satisfies the natural urge of a good Kantian to divide everything into threes or fours).[33]

It would be a mistake, of course, to conclude from the previous chapters that Kantian deeds do not have any consequences in 'real life', but only concern some fussy, metaphysical changes of something called a '*Gesinnung*'. An action that is also a deed does certainly have consequences in the 'real world', but the consequences are not what make it a deed. The deed is defined by the whole metaphysical background that relates to it, and the purpose of investigating this background in such detail is to make the case for the claim that deeds do occur – and thereby that there is something 'more' to human life than playing games of giving and asking for reasons. To Soft Kantians, the idea of a 'deed' would usually be outright meaningless or impossible, and therefore there is a significant task in even beginning to make sense of what a deed might be. The 'miraculous' air around the deed could thus be paraphrased as the reality of something more than reality or something *in* reality more than reality. The problem is not how to make sense of something mysterious *beyond* reality (a kingdom of ends, perhaps, where noumenal souls exchange deeds in respect of each other and the moral law), but to show that *reality itself is deeply mysterious.* Deeds are real – but their impact on reality is not what defines them. Often, however, and as a matter of course, deeds have consequences that mark significant changes of reality, or even redefine reality as such. The point is that even such dramatic changes of reality must be seen as traces of the deed, rather than as what defines the deed as a sum. It takes *post festum* wisdom to establish something as a deed. When, in the following, I use examples to illustrate what I understand by deeds, these caveats should be kept in mind, i.e. I am trying to indicate what a deed *could* be, not to prescribe what precisely it *should* be.

8.1. One: Eat your *Dasein*

Kant's descriptions of a person's duty towards itself tend to circulate around the idea of a perfection of the human being one is. (In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, e.g., he literally calls 'one's own perfection' a purpose (*Zweck*) which

is simultaneously a duty (MM 6:385)) To some degree, this duty can be met by the same kinds of action which many virtue ethicists would emphasize: to educate oneself, to realize one's potential ('don't waste your talent'), etc. (See Groundwork 4:422–423). However, first of all, Kant's encouragement of the promotion of one's personal qualities and competences should certainly not be seen as something done in order to, say, live a prosperous and interesting life. The heavy, contemporary emphasis on pseudo-philosophical ideas of creativity, adventure, personal development, etc. is massively un-Kantian. Although such a focus could be, and certainly is, termed as a 'duty towards oneself' – don't live a boring life, where you end up regretting that you didn't kiss the girl you loved or see the Coba Cabana, take care of your body, don't smoke or overeat etc. – it is close to the opposite of what a Kantian perspective offers. The kinds of duties (and rewards: remember L'Oreal's legendary 'You are worth it!') that relate to the emotional and physical well-being of a subject, are not duties at all in any Kantian sense. The duty, one has towards oneself, is a duty towards that in one's person which is bigger than the experiencing, working, drinking and copulating second nature creature that enjoys a more or less exciting life span. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant distinguishes between the *homo phenomenon*, the human being as a natural being that has reason, where 'obligation does not come into consideration', and the *homo noumenon* that can be put under obligation and, 'indeed, under obligation to himself (to the humanity in his own person)' (MM 6:418).

When you see the human being as a reasonable second nature creature that performs certain different actions in the sensual world, the question of a duty towards oneself does not come into consideration. Seen as a 'homo phenomenon', the human being experiences, cries, cheers, enjoys, and so on, and seeks to live a 'rich' life, as we call it. Seen as a 'homo noumenon', however, the human being can meaningfully recognize a duty towards itself. It is now important that this 'homo noumenon', or 'the human kind in one's person', is not some spiritual core trapped 'inside' the fragile biological corpus that indulges in all the pleasures and dangers of life. This is the second type of humbug that is dominating contemporary philosophies of life (style), notably represented by various forms of New Age religiousness and therapy. New Age religiousness is typically a way of *escaping* one's 'physical' life, be it only for an hour in the evening, by retiring to a quiet, candle lit room with comforting music and achieving some sort of mental peace with oneself. (Thereby 'taking care' of one's 'real self', the 'core of one's personality' or other imagined substances.) Such practices fall under the 'pious nothing-doing', which Kant mocks,

whenever he gets the chance. Kant does, curiously enough, say that one could say that 'to have religion is a duty of the human being to himself' (MM 6:444), but this should be strictly understood as the *Vernunftreligion*, which was described in the previous chapter. The duty towards oneself is the duty to recognize and live by the command of the moral law, as if it were a divine command.

Now, these two fake forms of fulfilling the duty towards oneself (the ideologies of *carpe diem* and the secret spiritual kernel inside, respectively) would of course be denounced by any decent moral philosophy. It would therefore be more interesting to identify, if possible, where a Soft and a Hard Kantian approach would differ. An indication of the answer has already been given. Soft Kantians (especially of the Aristotelian breed) would typically emphasize some version of *eudaimonia* as what a person owes itself, based on some version of 'fitting into' the world by and with a normal morality space of reasons, while Hard Kantians would emphasize the ability to break with oneself, liberate oneself and make the impossible possible, if you will. The difference, I think, could be made clearer by looking at how the two approaches would handle the problem of being bound by pathologies that do not allow the person to act 'reasonably'.

Psychology as it is conducted in most Western universities today seems to be mainly focused around a struggle between medical psychiatry and cognitive therapy of different forms. The two rather precisely embody what one could call a 'first nature' and a 'second nature' model of the human mind: Should we treat mental problems as chemical problems to be treated with psychoactive drugs or as normative problems to be dealt with by making the patient able to *see* the problem differently (again)? The first approach treats psychological problems as pre-moral problems in the sense I have described: Problems that do not have any linguistic or normative background, but are purely 'mechanical' and should be resolved by treating the human organism as any other first nature organism (with fertilizers and pesticides, to simplify matters a bit). The second approach is more refined and emphasizes that mental problems are necessarily linguistic problems and must therefore be treated linguistically. The patient must come to 'see the world right' and acknowledge that what it counted as a problem was really not a problem at all. (In different variations this insight can be gained through conversation with the therapist, through exposure training (where the patient is directly confronted with, for instance, his or her fear and 'must admit' that the fear was groundless), etc.). The philosophical orientation of such an approach to psychological practice is Soft Kantian of nature, and arguably Wittgensteinian in some

way. A genuine explication of exactly such an approach has been made by Svend Brinkmann, who has made a very McDowellian point of treating emotions and feelings as second nature phenomena, i.e. as permeated with language: 'Emotions and feelings are not just brute, instinctual, or causally determined reactions, but should be seen as public manifestations of what is important to persons. And it is possible for people to be misguided about what is important.' Death is something that rightly causes fear, while a fear of pigeons would be irrational, and in general it is claimed that '[a]ll emotions exist in this way within a moral order; they are normative responses (that can be cultivated and educated) rather than causal reactions' (Brinkmann, 2006a, p. 12).

Brinkmann introduces Wittgenstein into the clinic on the basis of the insight that 'there are objective moral values that determine what counts as good reasons for action and emotion' (Brinkmann, 2006b, p. 167). This should not be understood as a codified set of rules, which can be directly applied, but rather as the general background of concrete cases, where the psychologist makes clear some confusion by undoing conceptual confusion. Any human being is always already inscribed into a whole system of values and norms, and the psychologist can assist in disentangling the patient from contradictions and meaninglessness in his or her beliefs. The role of the psychologist who receives a patient that fears pigeons is to make him or her 'see' (in the best Wittgensteinian sense) that pigeons are not dangerous. A pathology that blocks a person's access to a full life is therefore to be conceived as a misunderstanding or a mistake (one can 'be misguided about what is important'), which can be put right by the therapist. The therapist must assist the patient in 'letting the fly out of the bottle'. The mistake in the realm of law-naturalism which doesn't see the pervasiveness of language to mental phenomena is therefore that it divides mental life and language into two and thereby sees problems articulated in language as mere symptoms or expressions of a 'mechanical' malfunction in mental life. The symptoms are thus treated as 'purely' somatic illnesses, while they should have been treated as problems in their own right, i.e. as a failure to make sense of relations between words or an extrapolation of words outside their meaningful use. 'Mental life is normative,' as Brinkmann says, 'because it is lived in social practices' (Brinkmann, 2006a, p. 13), and therefore mental problems should be seen as normative breakdowns or inconsistencies that can be treated with cognitive therapy. The role of the psychologist thereby resembles very closely the role of the philosopher in the branch of neo-Wittgensteinian philosophy that calls itself 'therapeutic': Problems arise

when we distort or extrapolate words out of proportion and the job of the therapist (psychologist or philosopher) is to reduce unneeded complexity, undo improper (for instance superstitious or outright meaningless) usage, and generally to condense clouds of philosophy into a drop of linguistics, in short: to explain problems away by showing how they rely on a misunderstanding of language.

Let me be clear: I am not denying the relevance of therapeutic Wittgensteinianism, just as I am not 'opposed' to normal morality in general, which would be absurd. Nonetheless, such therapy has clear theoretical limitations. To most psychoanalysts, Brinkmann's approach would probably be considered insufficient, to say the least. True, the analyst does play the role of the 'subject supposed to know' in psychoanalysis as well, but only out of pure necessity – for analysis to start. The aim of analysis is to make the analysand (the patient) speak and explain his problems to himself. In the process, the analyst must go from holding the position of the subject supposed to know (which he holds because of the transference of the patient – the emotional investment or hope that the analyst knows and can explain the problem) to being exposed as not knowing the answer either. The analysand does the talking, and the analyst is only supposed to intervene, when the talk needs to be pushed forward, or when the analysand is unaware of a repetition or a reaction that sheds light on something else, he has said. The analyst represents the 'big Other', or the 'moral order', one could almost say to follow Brinkmann's wording, but his function is almost exactly the opposite of the one a cognitive therapist performs: Not to explain away, but to be explained away. Analysis is over, when the subject realizes, that there 'is no Other of the Other' or when the 'big Other falls', i.e. when the subject realizes that the symbolic order (represented by the analyst), the world it inhabits is not self-contained and coherent, and there is no ultimate explanation to be given for his symptoms. They are his own 'invention' and responsibility (cf. the 'two choices' in Chapter 6), which is why yet another version of the end of analysis is to identify with your symptom.

The two different approaches thus agree in treating the subject of the analysis as 'second nature', i.e. to identify the problem at the level of speech. They differ, however, in their methods and ideals of the treatment. Cognitive therapy aims at making the subject 'see the world right' (again), i.e. to restore any breaches in the logic of the subject's view of the world. Pigeons are just not dangerous, and it is crazy to think that they are. The therapist will explain this to the patient. Psychoanalysis treats fear of pigeons not as a malfunction of language, a breach in the normative

relation of the subject to its surroundings, but as a symptom that something else is wrong, and the aim is to make the subject explain (to itself) what this is. A pigeon performs a specific role – it is part of a whole *Gesinnung*, which is structured in such a way that the pigeon plays *this* role. As Jacques Lacan writes: 'If the truth that we are seeking is a truth that frees, it is a truth that we will look for in a hiding place in our subject. It is a particular truth' (Lacan, 1997, p. 24).

The 'truth that frees' is the aim of psychoanalysis and the ideal therefore not to 'see the world right' but to take charge of one's own life, to change oneself – to eat one's *Dasein*, as Lacan puts it.[34] If cognitive therapy is a normative practice on behalf of the 'moral order', then psychoanalysis is 'only a preliminary to moral action as such' (Lacan, 1997, p. 22). Psychoanalysis maintains that '[t]he Other of the Other only exists as a place' (ibid., p. 66); the function of the analyst is the one of a place-holder, a representative of the order, which is ultimately to be overcome. The purpose of analysis is therefore to reach the empty place and realize that there is no necessity in things appearing the way they do. In cognitive therapy, on the contrary, the purpose is to reconfirm the Other of the Other – that language is in order as it is. Such therapy might be very useful in some cases, but it does not promote existential deeds.

The duty of a person towards him- or herself is not to settle for how things appear to be – not in the pathologies of neurosis or obsession, nor in the normal morality pathology of everyday life. A person with a fear of pigeons, who is convinced by a therapist that such a fear doesn't make sense, is likely to one day wanting to ask his wife to pass the salt and instead say: 'You stupid bitch, you ruined my life!' Existential deeds are thus such that aim at changing what it means to be that person. An element of 'Eat your Dasein' must necessarily be involved: An existential deed involves giving up on what one counted as indispensable. Wittgenstein, curiously enough, performed exactly such a deed, when he gave up his enormous inheritance. (Would it be at all conceivable that any of the Wittgensteinians of our time would do anything resembling such an action?) Nora performed such a deed (in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*), when she left her husband and her home. Does an alcoholic who stops drinking perform a deed? I am not sure – but think that he might: If the stop is the result of a social pressure from friends, family, therapist and/or society, then the act to stop should probably be considered a 'normal morality' action (which can be a good thing!) If, however, the decision is derived out of pure acknowledgement of duty towards oneself, I think it might be called a deed.

8.2. More: Hate your neighbour as you hate yourself

So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same as an end, never merely as a means.

<div align="right">(Groundwork: 4:429)</div>

One of the main reasons for the crisis in the existential as well as the political (to which we shall return in the following section) must be found in what I would call the hegemony of the ethical. Existential and political deeds have been toned down as almost impossible or forbidden, respectively, because they cannot be articulated in the language of the culturalist ethics that has dominated philosophy for half a century. Historically, I think an explanation of the shift of focus away from existential deeds can be explained through the linguistic turn in philosophy and the accompanying exorcism of the subject, following from the post-Heideggerian and post-Wittgensteinian philosophies, while the reluctance of dealing with political deeds has grown as a natural consequence of the great political mistakes and tragedies of the twentieth century. To put it bluntly: since Wittgenstein († 1951) and Stalin († 1953) private language and existential deeds are impossible and political deeds are forbidden. Insistence on the unconditional, on a duty that transcends the commitments and entitlements of the space of reasons, on a 'higher necessity' that gives dignity to human existence is largely considered as non-sensical and the result of a systematic or momentary lapse of insanity, and political ambitions of radical changes in society have all but vanished because they are considered fundamentally unethical. Kierkegaard's 'Knight of Faith' (Abraham who was ready to sacrifice his only son on God's meaningless and strictly unethical command) is the exact expression of this double prohibition, which is probably the reason why Kierkegaard is rarely taken seriously today.

Normal morality ethics dominates public and philosophical discourse in two senses: It domesticates more radical existential and political interests out of 'ethical' concerns, and it domesticates the ethical domain itself – emphasizing the importance of moderate, pragmatic, respectful ways of acting towards others.

The reason for the domination of ethics over the existential and the political domains, is that normal morality is fundamentally 'ethical' – it concerns the intersubjective relations between real, breathing human beings, and it tends to tame the radical tendencies of morality through a moderate, middle of the road normal morality reminder that one cannot think or live

without others, and that one shouldn't disregard the interests of others out of some fanatic political ambition. This systematic tendency towards normal morality seems to have been reinforced by the philosophical and political lessons of the twentieth century. Important though they are, however, these lessons have also had unfortunate consequences for moral imagination and courage, because they have created a general, almost instinctive resistance against 'acts as real'/deeds, in all three regions of the moral. In the words of Alain Badiou, we are living in a time of 'extraordinary impoverishment of the active, militant value of principles', where 'the very idea of a consensual "ethics" [. . .] is a powerful contributor to subjective resignation and acceptance of the status quo' (Badiou, 2002, p. 32).

Considered in terms of 'internally ethical concerns', i.e. in terms of the relation between 'normal morality ethics' and 'extra-moral ethics', normal morality ethics obviously, also in this respect, contains an important emphasis of status quo. The very idea of an 'ethical upbringing' which virtue ethicists and Soft Kantians promote has obvious conservative and preserving traits. In as far as language learning is a *sine qua non* of moral action, this is of course to some extent unavoidable and necessary, but if ethics comes to mean *only* normal morality ethics, then it will start playing the role which Badiou identifies, i.e. without an eye for the extra-moral. So if, then, a subject, ethically speaking, always already arrives at the end of history in the beginning, then the question here would be: How do we work our way towards a new ethical beginning? In other words: What would constitute an ethical deed in Kantian terms, i.e. what would be a new beginning of the relation between two or more people?

If we look at the FH – always treat humanity in another person as an end in itself and not merely as a means – then the question naturally arises what it would mean to treat the *humanity in* someone else as an end in itself. The obvious and often repeated point that treating someone not *only* as a means in itself does not imply that one cannot treat another like a means *at all*, does not answer the question. The question remains: What does it mean to *also* treat humanity in another person as an end in itself?[35] To Kant, the question is one of respect, and he uses the word *Anerkennung* (recognition) as well to describe what everyone owes his neighbour. It must first of all be noted that respecting humanity in another person means respecting something 'more than' the individual itself. Being a person at all means being something more than a clever animal with certain physical and intellectual talents – it means being a free, rational creature capable of performing deeds. Just as the 'starry heavens above and the moral law within' oneself fills the soul with awe, so does the recognition of another

person as a rational being (a being that has surplus experiences and knows of the moral law) foster respect. Kant says, in the MM:

> The respect that I have for others or that another can require from me [. . .] is therefore recognition of a dignity [. . .] in other human beings, that is, of a worth that has no price, no equivalent for which the object evaluated [. . .] could be exchanged. (MM 6:462)

There is no exchange economy between rational agents seen 'also' as ends in themselves. A moral person *just* requires respect, regardless of the reciprocity of this feeling. Allen Wood has argued, convincingly I think, that this implies, for instance, that one must respect an Aryan racist, regardless of whether or not the respect is mutual (Wood, 1999, p. 145). From this follows that the respect one is showing a person, or which one owes a person, is not depending on this person's convictions, identity or behaviour. It depends solely on that in the person which is more than all of this – more than all of the empirical characteristics of the person: *humanity* in the person. (In Kant's own terms: one must respect the *homo noumenon*, not the *homo phenenomenon*.)

Recognition as an ethical concept would therefore be a somewhat different project to a Kantian than it is to most contemporary Hegelians that invest a great deal into this concept.[36] The common ground of much philosophy of recognition is that it does not concern the '*je ne sais quois*' in the human being, the 'more' or the 'surplus' as playing any role. In the most bluntly empirical theories, recognition is a matter of 'identity politics', in which everyone is entitled to be recognized for the identity he or she has, whether it is African-American, Native American, elderly, Muslim, gay, single, Danish, truck driver, etc., and in which political rights are based on group identities (See e.g. Young, 1989). Identity politics is a generalized ethical understanding of the particular human being as identifiable and respectable in terms of his or her unique background, inclinations, culture, convictions, etc., i.e. it is a generalized acknowledgement of the 'everyday pathological' identity of people in normal morality. A Kantian approach would instead insist on the respect and equal worth of any human being (even the Aryan racist), including elderly, Muslim, gay, etc. people, but never *because* they are elderly, Muslim or gay (or all of these). A cultural trait is not valuable 'in itself', but a person is infinitely valuable, in its very being a person.

Apart from being a political question of rights and representation, the question of recognition is an ethical question of how to treat and respect

other people. The careful recognition of a person's value as belonging to this or that group has the consequence of a heightened awareness of avoiding offence and insult, but when offence is the constant concern, genuine respect becomes rare. If politeness and fear of offence becomes prevailing, the relation between people becomes a simulacrum of a relation, and an insipid atmosphere of indifference and disconnectedness. The risk of the so-called multicultural society – seen from a Kantian point of view – could be said to be a disintegration of genuine acts of respect and recognition into simulacra of polite gestures and fake honours based on the empirical identity of individuals. The lack which the philosophies of multiculturalism and recognition suffer from, it seems to me, is exactly the lack of a spiritual or supersensible thinking about subjectivity.

Even a refined scholar such as Axel Honneth makes a case of the fact that his theory is based on empirical psychology and that the Frankfurt School (not the least by and with Axel Honneth) has gained enormously from systematically subjecting 'the investigation of system transcendent conflict potential to empirical social research' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003. p. 138). In the post-metaphysical age, Honneth maintains, it is simply not possible to uphold the old fashioned ideas of subjectivity as *Vernunft* or Spirit, let alone to build a social and ethical program on it. When employing Hegel, therefore, he reads the young Hegel's writings on recognition and explicitly rejects the concepts of reason and spirit that Hegel developed already from the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (which otherwise contains the most famous section on recognition in the history of philosophy). Honneth instead describes the formation of an individual self-consciousness as the result of intersubjective recognition. 'I' appears as the 'me' which is the object of ascriptions of identity and place by others (Honneth, 1992, p. 120). The 'I', in other words, which becomes the agent in Honneth's ethical theory, is the result of the initiation of a 'me' into 'one of us': a second nature creature endowed with language, moving around in the space of giving and asking for reasons. Honneth goes through the sensitive conditions of a successful coming to maturity of such an individual, and he carefully describes the kinds of modes of violation which are to be avoided in order to create a condition of subjects and groups mutually recognizing each other in a society in balance. This implies physical abuse (on the level of 'love'), exclusion and lack of rights (on the level of 'rights'), and offence and insult (on the level of 'solidarity') (ibid., p. 211). What it does not imply is a way to encounter the other 'beyond the wall of language', as Žižek has put it (Žižek, 1997, p. 25), and this is where I think recognition theory usually falls short. One is almost tempted to say with Kant that a

little bit of conflict or offence could shake up things a bit, when we get too lazy and polite.

What identity politics, multiculturalism and Honneth all share is their insistence on the recognition of what the subject at a given time *has become* – the position it has assumed in the 'symbolic order', to use the Lacanian term. But the initiation of a human being into normal morality is a 'forced choice', as I have called it – no one is asked if he would like to be this particular individual, before it is too late. What someone has become is therefore simultaneously a *traumatic* fact: I am me – but I am in a radical and crucial sense also *not* me; this context and this language were imposed on me, and insofar as I am a subject, I am always more than what I have become. The discontent with normal morality is the beginning of the realization of the crack in the order and an opening towards something more than the identity one has grown into having. Recognizing someone as a person would therefore imply recognizing their potential to relate freely to and change their identity.

My point is that the 'real' encounter, *beyond the wall of language*, implies what you might call trespassing: a passing from the appearance of the individual embodied in, for instance, her social, cultural, personal context to her subjectivity as such, or *humanity in her person*. If recognition is to be an ethical concept, it should therefore have something to say about ways in which I might recognize the other as someone who is not *only* a bearer of a culture and an identity, but is also *not* all of this. In this sense, I think the violation of the expectation of recognition from the other might actually play an important and constructive role. By trespassing the boundaries of the identification of the other as the one who has become *that*, I might open up the possibility of recognizing her simply *as a person* (who happens to have become that). The polite distance has to be overcome in order for an encounter to take place.

Consider the following example: Two Danish fishermen, Jensen and Andersen, are invited to a traditional dinner party in a fishing community near the Aral Sea in Central Asia. The Danes and their Kazakh colleagues are working together on an international project to revive sea fishery. Jensen is polite, careful and obviously eager to show his appreciation of the local traditions, which include sitting on the floor, eating a boiled sheep with their 'five fingers' (which is the name of the dish), distributing the various parts of the head of the sheep among the guests, and finally saying a few prayers in gratitude to the animal as well as to the women who prepared it. He doesn't say much, but asks his interpreter about the

symbolic value of the hierarchical placement of the guests, the meaning of some of the words spoken and especially the little things he himself is expected to perform at each step. He performs well and shows his recognition. Andersen, on the other hand, is playful and happy to be with his colleagues. He makes jokes and on a couple of occasions delays minor rituals because of a lack of attention to the procedures performed. He also makes two blatant mistakes. When he needs to go outside at one point, he crosses the table (which is a table cloth on the floor). This is an outrageous insult according to the local tradition, and Jensen vehemently insists that Andersen apologize. When the meal is over and the prayers have been said, a young boy brings in a kettle of water to assist the guests in washing off the grease from their fingers, and a small bowl to collect the dirty water. When the bowl reaches Andersen, he joyfully reaches down into it and washes his fingers in the dirty water before the boy gets a chance to pour clean water from the kettle.

Which one of the two is most likely to build a lasting connection with the local fishermen – the one who shows his respect and appreciation or the one who carelessly violates a number of traditional values? The latter, in fact (the story is based on real events). Why is this so? It seems that the mere violation of the expectation of recognition is not in itself a hindrance to the encounter or to building a feeling of solidarity, as long as the violation is not committed with an openly malicious intent. On the contrary, it seems that the possibility of *detecting the intent* behind behaviour is much more real when the expectation is violated. Or to put it in another way: Which kind of behaviour gave the hosts a chance to step out from the role (which had been attributed to them on a number of similar earlier occasions) of the fascinating other who performs a series of mysterious rituals which might be difficult to understand and appreciate but nevertheless require respect and recognition? The behaviour, of course, which exposed the guest as a ridiculous common fisherman like everyone else. Isn't it exactly when the expectation of recognition of a particular cultural identity is *let down* that the real encounter between people takes place – as an encounter between *persons*, rather than between cultural representatives? The friendly offence gives a possibility of relief: Okay, I know that you are different from me, but we share the ability to set aside our differences, be it in short moments of comic misinterpretations or in common work for common goals. In fact, comic misinterpretations or cultural offences of the sort described, I think, tend to further the possibilities of constructive, common work and establish new connections and friendships. Does

a friendship really exist before two people have offended each other and survived?

Kantian disregard of everyday pathologies and obsession with identities could maybe be best compared with the moment in (Luke, 14.26) where Jesus says that anyone who comes to him and doesn't hate his parents and his relatives and even his own soul cannot be his disciple. Jesus is not here, of course, preaching hatred as some sort of perverted ethics of evil (diabolical or otherwise). Rather, he means that no one should give preference to her own inclinations, to the needs of her family, or to the ambitions of her community when considering an ethical problem or dilemma which involves outsiders. To be a (Christian) subject means to be able to distance yourself from your tribe and your culture and even to be ready to sacrifice it for a higher purpose. Applied to the problematic of the inter-human encounter as described here, we should not identify the other as someone who is limited from what she has become either. Just as I am not only 'one of us', so is she not only 'one of them'. If I am a true believer, I am also ready to sacrifice the concrete existence of the other – i.e., to want something for her and from her – which goes beyond her own horizon even if it might immediately 'offend her'. Just as I draw a direct line from my subjectivity to the universal in 'hating myself', I should also draw a direct line from the other to the universal, which implies her direct relevance and importance to me, regardless of cultural differences. The FH could therefore be paraphrased as the imperative to 'Hate one's neighbour as oneself'.

An ethical deed would be one that makes the ends of another person one's own ends. This is not to say that it would be a deed to give someone else what she wants, i.e. what she has 'made an end for herself', like a TV-set or a holiday trip to Cancun. On the contrary, and herein lies the 'hating': it means performing the type of actions that she owes herself as a duty towards humanity in herself, whether she wants to or not. Preventing someone from suicide could be a deed, or convincing her that she should leave her husband. A deed could be to educate someone to become a responsible and mature person in difficult circumstances or to listen to a friend all night telling about a great pain or an intense fear. Ethical deeds sometimes offend others, if they don't see the meaning of them immediately, but exactly the willingness to risk a negative emotional reaction or the 'innocent' unawareness of the sensitivity of another could be traces of a deed, whereas the oversensitive politeness with regard to the expected reaction of the other is literally a mark of disrespect: I do not expect you to be able to understand that I am not trying to belittle you or mock you, i.e. I do not expect you to be able to 'separate yourself from yourself', and

therefore I treat you like a child or a sociopath. (I acknowledge that we do treat each other like this most of the time, but without at least the *possibility* of transcending this condition, life would probably be unbearable).

A nice example of an ethical deed has been given by Slavoj Žižek[37]: Serving as a solider in the Yugoslavian army, Žižek, the Slovene, was patrolling an area next to an ethnic Albanian soldier with similar duties. The two had some mutual feeling of sympathy, but never really got down to talking. The situation was a bit awkward, since their contact was purely formal, and it would be meaningless to just sit down and start talking about one's family or political views. The limited, polite exchanges therefore remained all they shared, until one day the Albanian suddenly, during one of their formal meetings, said: 'I fuck your mother!' The surprised Slovene's backbone reaction would have been to smack the man. No one talks dirty about a Slovene man's mother. But the moment seemed to carry something else, and before he could really think, Žižek instead replied: 'OK, but let me do your sister first!' – a no less obscene offence to a Muslim Albanian, where of course, according to common cultural prejudice, the brother is supposed to look out for his sisters and protect them against the perversity of the outside world. The two were best friends since then – why? Because they disregarded any cultural prejudices (true as they may be) and treated the other as someone able to rise above them. As Kant himself said: 'This (merely moral friendship) is not just an ideal but (like black swans) actually exists here and there in its perfection' (MM 6:472).

8.3. All: Overturn the government

[A]ct as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature.

<div align="right">*(Groundwork 4:421)*</div>

In recent years, philosophers like Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek and Kojin Karatani have argued for what you could call a rehabilitation of the political deed. Defending the likes of Robespierre, Lenin and Mao Tse-Tung, they seek a reinvigoration of the intellectual left and the public awareness that political change is an imperative that cannot be innocently overheard. Their common diagnosis of contemporary political thinking, or maybe rather the absence of true contemporary political thinking, is that a certain veil has lowered on our imagination. One could almost talk of an

inverted Rawlsian 'veil of ignorance': If Rawls' veil was intended to impair the sight of our actual roles in the societal order and thereby make us willing to agree on our 'abstract' rights as any person anywhere in the system, then the new veil is intended to impair the sight of anything *outside* the actual, current societal order and *accept our actual roles in the societal order* (without indignation or guilt): Whatever awaits there on the other side of the veil, it can only be worse than the relatively stable order, we have now obtained. The position outside the pathology of everyday life, the point from which the workings of end-of-history-global-capitalism can be genuinely criticized, has therefore been rendered impossible/forbidden. Real, open-ended criticism of the most fundamental questions of our society has, according to Slavoj Žižek, been struck by 'a kind of unwritten *Denkverbot*', which prohibits us from engaging in radical projects or thoughts, since, so the criticism of (radical) criticism goes, benevolent as it may be, it 'will inevitably end in a new Gulag!' (Žižek, 2002, pp. 167–168).

What would a Hard Kantian response be to such a condition? Of course, one should be careful to claim that Kant himself was a radical political thinker who endorsed anything like a revolution of anything but the *Gesinnung*. Indeed, the *Metaphysics of Morals* has generally been taken as an expression of a reformist approach to political development at best, while explicitly banning revolutionary tendencies. The origins of the authorities in power, Kant says somewhat enigmatically, are inscrutable, and therefore people should not speculate about them (MM 6:318). In the essay on enlightenment, he did directly oppose an actual *Denkverbot*, but maintained all the more rigorously that subjects of a state must obey their government: '*Argue* as much as you will and about whatever you will, *but obey!*' (WE 8:37). The explanation of these views can meaningfully, I think, be given in Soft Kantian terms. Bernd Ludwig, for instance, has explained Kant's somewhat rigid position in the *Metaphysical first principles of the doctrine of right* (Part 1 of the MM) as an analytical investigation of right that defines the conditions of what Ludwig calls the '*Rechtslehre* game'.[38] A community based on the rule of law is one where the subjects play the *Rechtslehre* game, which means that they act and decide on the basis of an established set of norms, which has a certain necessary logical structure. In the most general sense, being the subject of a legitimate state 'means to be subject to those norms that are essential for playing the *Rechtslehre* game' (Ludwig, 2002, p. 164). Justice, a core concept in the *Rechtslehre* game, is only established by playing the *Rechtslehre* game, and if you refuse to play, you lose the right to the concept of justice altogether; indeed the concept looses all sense. When you are inside this game, there

is therefore no meaningful way of claiming it to be unjust – there is no external standpoint from which this could be claimed. Like most good Soft Kantian interpretations, I think this makes a lot of sense, and it does so in a way directly in line with what we could have expected for a normal morality conceptualization of the political. Nonetheless, for a Hard Kantian, there must be more to work with in Kant. In the case of the political, this might have to be done by using Kant against himself, but I think there are reasonable ways to do this.[39]

In the additional remarks to the second edition of his *Rechtslehre*, Kant (in a response to a review of the book) indirectly indicates the conditions of the possibility of a conflict between what he has been saying about the unconditional necessity of obeying the ruling power on the one side, and the moral law on the other: 'Obey the authority who has power over you (in whatever does not conflict with inner morality)' (MM 6:371). The careless bracket seems to indicate a kind of 'well, by the way, only in so far as this does not contradict the moral law, of course', but already this admonition is all a Hard Kantian needs. The obvious question to ask is: 'And what *if* inner morality comes in conflict with obeying the authority?' If the rule of the authorities is immoral and obeying them would be perverting one's relation to the moral law (effectively putting one's own comfort and well-being over the duty to act in accordance with the moral law), then it seems relatively obvious that the command of obedience becomes invalid. Or even that one could talk of a duty to overturn the authority. Sarah Holtman has argued that the historical example of the failed attempt at Hitler's life in 1944 exactly represents a case where Kant on the strict basis of his own understanding of citizenship would have to admit not only the right to, but the imperative of revolution. If the system is corrupt and the rulers ruthlessly evil, Holtman argues, the duty to obey them disintegrates (Holtman, 2002, pp. 229–231).

I think Holtman's argument is precise and that it has a much wider application than the question of a legitimate revolt or *coup d'etat* against a deeply immoral political leader. On a strictly Kantian view of morality (morality in my sense, i.e. in the broad sense that covers the existential, the ethical and the political) it is inevitable that political deeds are sometimes just as obligatory as existential and ethical deeds. The only difference, in my division of the three regions here, is that political deeds relate not only to myself, nor only to my 'neighbour', family or community, but to *all*. A political deed is one that is performed out of duty to humanity, not only in me or in you, but in everyone. Thereby, it moves beyond the scope of the ethical and out into a total domain that transcends space and time. Space, because

the political as the moral category of 'all' includes every human being endowed with reason, from Norway to South Africa and from California to Kamchatka; time, because it relates to past and future generations as well. More precisely: The political sphere as the sphere of all is the relation of the individual to the universal. Not to concrete human beings, but to the human being as such, or to 'humanity in *any* (possible) person', if you will. Kojin Karatani has interpreted this relation along similar lines:

> Kant never thought of the 'world-civil-society' as substance. He never denied that everyone always belongs to a certain community. He simply urged that individuals behave as cosmopolitans in thinking and action. (Karatani, 2003, p. 104)

Because Kantian morality relates to the 'in humans more than humans', it becomes possible to act out of reverence to this abstract humanity as such, rather than out of respect or recognition of concrete human beings and their identities and *Herzensaufwallungen*. As the quotation from *Groundwork* at the opening of this chapter says, respect for another person is really only respect for the moral law, and much more than a 'cold' relation to concrete other persons around me (as virtue ethicists typically complain), this character of respect as a moral incentive *opens* the domain of what Karatani calls 'Future Others' – the ones that are not present, but must be considered – in a way which no other moral philosophy is able to (ibid., p. 125). This is why I think the FLN is the appropriate version of the categorical imperative for a Kantian political philosophy: Act so that you can want that the maxim of your action could be a universal law of nature. One's actions in the widest sense should be sustainable, i.e. it should be possible to adhere to the maxim of one's action as a universal law of nature. In as far as this cannot be claimed of the way we are living we must change the maxims of our actions; politically speaking: if the political order, one is living in, violates the principle of sustainability (if it cannot be willed as a universal law, because it destroys the conditions of life for human beings across space or time), one must act to change it.

If the categorical imperative is the demand to 'Fix it', then the 'realistic' attitude that 'we cannot save the entire world' and 'that is how the world goes; that is not my fault', precisely fits Kant's definition of radical evil, as Alenka Zupančič has showed (Zupančič, 2001, p. 126): The willed perversion of the relation between one's own pathological inclinations and the moral law. Not wanting to act politically because of personal inconvenience or because it seems like a futile effort, is no excuse to a Hard

Kantian. The categorical imperative posits itself in the political realm as much as in any other, and possibly more so exactly in these years, where the political seems to have been partly colonized by the ethical, partly transformed itself into a pure 'neutral' professionalized regime of administration of local, national and regional budgets, where radical changes exist only as fantasies in young, undisciplined minds. What is required is first of all a reinvention of the political as a genuine universal ambition-– and as a 'demand for the impossible'. The true political tragedy of contemporary societies is that political imagination has shrunk into a very limited realm of ritual popularity contests in the election campaigns. The iron curtain has been replaced by the inverted Rawlsian veil of ignorance. The reinvention of radical politics is a task that is haunting the left in most of the world. The point to be made here is not for a new international socialism – this would be outside the scope of the book. Nor is it a plea for violent revolution anywhere specific. On the contrary, the most intelligent, and arguably the most successful, deeds are those that overturn the situation in exactly the right moment and exactly the right way such that the transformation of the possible happens peacefully and dignified, when the lack of the prevailing order is revealed and filled out by the surplus of the moral law. Intelligent civil disobedience, for instance, can suddenly display the absurdity of a system and start a series of events that lead to its change. Deeds are still possible, but we seem to have a hard time believing in them. Wasn't the transformation of Eastern Europe a whole series of non-violent deeds (if you exclude the Yugoslavian wars[40])? Will Barack Obama's presidency have been a deed – maybe; we still have to see its traces. Isn't one of the most pertinent challenges of actually existing governments all over the world right now nothing less than the accomplishment of a deed, or a series of deeds, to prevent the most dramatic effects of the impending climate changes? Wouldn't the apparently never ending conflict between Israel and Palestine exactly require that they both 'eat their own *Dasein*', i.e. that they make sacrifices which neither of them would have imagined even in their wildest dreams? Political creativity is certainly still required.

One could paraphrase Kant's dictum from *Religion* on the prohibition of new wonders which was quoted earlier: Wise governments have always granted that wonders have occurred in ancient times, but have not tolerated new wonders. Any society has a sort of necessary 'spontaneous ideology' of itself as the end of history – the culmination of a marvellous history of conquests and heroic deeds, of philosophical creativity and moral bravery. Often, such tales have even been inscribed into the law and scrutiny of

their nature and legitimacy forbidden, either explicitly or through a tacit codex. Wonders of the past are canonized and made compulsory reading to pupils in the schools. But new wonders are not allowed. It is the natural tendency of any normal moral order.

The duty of Hard Kantian philosophy is to lift the ban of new wonders from thinking. The duty of any person is to perform deeds; existential, ethical and political.

Notes

Introduction

1 Brandom writes: 'Concepts are rules, and concepts express natural necessity as well as moral necessity. So according to him [Kant] there is strictly no nonnormative realm – no realm where concepts do not apply. Kant's fundamental innovation is best understood to consist in his employment of a normative metalanguage in specifying both what merely happens and what is done' (Brandom, 1998, p. 624).

Chapter 1

2 As it has been done by Erik Stenius (Stenius, 1964, p. 220).
3 Allen Wood, for instance, translates *Moralität* as 'morality' and *Sittlichkeit* as 'ethical life' (Wood, 1993).
4 During her lecture in Copenhagen at the Centre for Subjectivity Research in February 2005, the neo-Aristotelian Soft Kantian Christine Korsgaard spoke of her Aristotelian interpretation of Kant with such emphasis that some of us in the audience got the impression that she spoke of *one* person (of whom we had never heard before): '*Kantandaristotle.*'

Chapter 3

5 Brandom writes, e.g.: 'The distinction between normative and nonnormative vocabulary, claims, and facts is itself drawn in normative terms. In this sense, the story is one in which it is norms all the way down – a Kantian story (on the pragmatic, rather than the semantic side). Far from opposing one another, the realms of fact and norm mutually include one another: fact-stating talk is explained in normative terms, and normative facts emerge as one kind of fact among others' (Brandom, 1998, pp. 625–626).
6 The example from the restaurant is a paraphrase of a story in Paul Auster's *The Brooklyn Follies* (Auster, 2005, p. 120).
7 In a private conversation with Slavoj Žižek (see Žižek, 1989, p. 174).
8 Following the description of Kant's 'identification of the crack in the ontological edifice', Žižek says about ethics (which is here close to a description of what I mean by extra morality): 'There is ethics – that is to say, an injunction which cannot be grounded in ontology – is so far as there is a crack in the ontological edifice of the universe: at its most elementary, ethics designates fidelity to this crack' (Žižek, 1997, p. 214).

Chapter 4

9 Contemporary postmodernism is not, for instance, usually understood as a 'scientism'. Almost on the contrary: natural science can be conceived as 'old-fashioned', white, male, Western, etc. dominated ideology. Postmodernism in this sense is even more radical today, but the principle is in a way the same: there is only an infinite flux, a constant delay of meaning, a never ending system of differences.

10 The high-school boy and computer 'cracker' David (Matthew Broderick) unknowingly initiates a computer program set to launch a nuclear attack on the USSR, which will inevitably lead to a World War III. All attempts to intercept the program from David and US military experts are futile until David challenges the computer for a game of tic-tac-toe. He states 'zero players' and thereby makes the computer play against itself – resulting in a loop that ends by a realization that the game can have no winner. This logic is then applied to the global nuclear war, which is ultimately declared by the computer to be a 'strange game' with only one winning move: 'not to play.' Isn't this how Soft Kantians approach the question of being: the only way to solve that question is not to ask it?

11 For a collection of excellent essays on the therapeutic impetus of Wittgenstein's work, see Alice Crary and Rupert Read: *The New Wittgenstein* (Crary/Read, 2000).

12 The 'stepping forward' of insanity could here of course be compared to the tic-tac-toe of the antinomies always luring at the bounds of reason.

13 I always ask relaxed naturalists what kind of cosmology they have. Is space infinite or finite? They usually come up with strikingly *ad hoc* answers.

Chapter 5

14 I owe this illustration to Alenka Zupančič, who was also kind enough to show me both caves.

15 This is why Kant already in the first critique says: 'Now if it wanted to show generally how one ought to subsume under these rules, i.e., distinguish whether something stands under them or not, this could not happen except once again through a rule. But just because this is a rule, it would demand another instruction for the power of judgment, and so it becomes clear that although the understanding is certainly capable of being instructed and equipped through rules, the power of judgment is a special talent that cannot be taught but only practiced' (CPR: B 172).

Chapter 6

16 See also (CPrR 5:85, 5:86, 5:117, 5:162).

17 Kant explicitly defines 'moral necessity' as *Verbindlichkeit* (in CPrR 5:81) and something that counts for all 'reasonable creatures,' i.e. creatures endowed with reason ('Menschen und alle erschaffenen vernünftigen Wesen').

[18] Alenka Zupančič has warned against the cases, where Kant identifies the moral law as *speaking* (the voice of consciousness) and as something to be feared, something sublime, etc., because Kant in these passages treats the law in such a way that it resembles the Freudian superego much more than a Kantian ethics deserves (Zupančič, 2000, pp. 146–147). I acknowledge this danger, but maintain that the 'starry heavens above and the moral law within' represent a systematic relation to a 'supersensible' dimension, which is *sine qua non* for what Zupančič herself calls an 'ethics of the real'. The 'Fix it!' which I have attributed to the moral law should thus be counted as a minimal enunciation, almost a ventriloquist gesture, if you will, a mere demand.

[19] Kant identifies the problem in the Cartesian conception of subjectivity exactly in this point: the subject is not some kernel of existence, a 'true self' at rock bottom, but the form of experience. Descartes' mistake was to posit the *res cogitans*, the thinking thing, *in* the world – as one *thing* among others. To Descartes' 'I think therefore I am,' Kant replies: 'I think therefore there is experience.'

[20] Allison distinguishes between *Wille* in a broad and a narrow sense: the broad sense covers will in general, i.e. both *Wille* in the narrow sense (as legislative) and *Willkür* (as executive) (Allison, 1990, p. 129).

[21] Yes, I count John Rawls as a Soft Kantian.

[22] In this case paraphrasing Slavoj Žižek.

Chapter 7

[23] An 'act worthy of the name' would resemble quite closely what I call a deed.

[24] Allison makes a point similar to Zupančič' in this precise regard (Allison, 1990, p. 172).

[25] I am on the verge of admitting to want a 'Hard Kantianism with a human face'.

[26] The claim that Lacan makes about the Freudian death drive is very similar to this (Lacan, 1997, p. 212).

[27] Morten Ziethen, in a private conversation, has suggested that such an investigation could be conducted along the lines of a more phenomenological-existentialist line. 'Evil' should thus be understood as a kind of violent reaction to the emptiness of being, or the lack of any external meaning to the world; an 'ontological hatred'.

[28] A 'fake deed' could thus be compared to Alain Badious concept of a *simulacrum* of an event. Badiou writes, for instance: 'When a radical break in a situation, under names borrowed from real truth-processes, convokes not the void but the "full" particularity or presumed substance of that situation, we are dealing with a simulacrum of truth' (Badiou, 2002, p. 73).

[29] In *Religion*, more precisely, Kant says that there can be only one 'true' religion, although there are many forms of belief, i.e. various forms of 'really existing' religious practices (Religion 6:107–108).

[30] I owe this point to Bernd Ludwig, who has developed it more systematically (in a lecture at the Carlsberg Academy in Copenhagen, 16 August 2006).

[31] Curiously enough, McDowell actually employs exactly the term 'extra-moral' to show how someone could go wrong: 'The question "Why should I conform to

the dictates of morality?" is most naturally understood as asking for an extra-moral motivation that will be gratified by virtuous behaviour. So understood, the question has no answer. What may happen is that someone is brought to see things as a virtuous person does, and so stops feeling the need to ask it' (McDowell, 1998, p. 86).

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[32] Or even 'selfish' as some of the so called consequentialists would have it, because of the focus on the *Gesinnung* of the agent, rather than on the consequences of an action.

[33] In 'On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is not of use in practice', Kant himself does distinguish between a person as 'a private man', 'a man of the state' and 'a man of the world', which comes relatively close to my division (CS 8:277), and in *Groundwork* he employs the unity/plurality/totality distinction (Groundwork 4:436), but in both cases the use is not exactly the same as I am making here.

[34] An expression, Lacan uses in his seminar on Edgar Allen Poe's 'The Purloined Letter', recalling a quip among the participants at a previous congress (Lacan, 2006, p. 29).

[35] Allen Wood has shown how the addition of 'and not only as a means' is really superfluous, since the 'not only' implies that there is just no difference between treating someone as a means *and* an end or only as an end. It is the 'end' part that makes all the difference (Wood, 1999, p. 143).

[36] Although, in fact, I think it would be possible to make more or less the same division of all Hegelians into Soft Hegelians and Hard Hegelians, as I have done with Kantians here. Soft Hegelians would be philosophers like Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth and Terry Pinkard, while the Hard Hegelians would be people like Alexandre Kojéve, Jean-Paul Sartre and Slavoj Žižek. An indication of how I think such a division could be made (although I do not employ the terms 'Soft' and 'Hard') can be found in my article: 'Recognition of an Independent Self-Consciousness' (Bjerre, 2009).

[37] In a lecture in Lund, Sweden, (at the conference ThirdSpaceSeminar), 30 November 2002.

[38] An expression which he borrows from Thomas Pogge.

[39] Immanuel Kant himself certainly seems to have been a Soft Kantian in political matters, but his ambiguous reaction to the French revolution does betray an eerie sense of the possible greatness of a revolution.

[40] And one should note in this context that Rado Riha and Slavoj Žižek have both argued that the events in former Yugoslavia were initially perceived in much of the population as a continuation of the process that had taken place in Eastern Europe and that a significant contribution in turning them into ethnic wars was the perception of them by the European and American governments as ethnic conflicts, and thereby a complete failure to see the potential for (relatively) peaceful transformations (See Riha, 1993, p. 94, and Žižek, 1993).

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CPR	*Critique of Pure Reason*, 1998, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [1781].
Prolegomena	Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können.[1783].
WE	'An answer to the question: What is enlightenment?', 1996, *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 11–22. [1784].
Groundwork	'Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals', 1996, *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 37–108. [1785]
CBH	'Conjectures on the beginning of human history', 1991, *Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 221–234. [1786].
WO	'What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?', 1996, *Religion and Rational Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–18. [1786].
CPrR	*Critique of Practical Reason*, 1996, *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 133–272. [1788].
CJ	*Critique of Judgment*, 1987, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. [1790].
THEO	'On the miscarriage of all philosophical trials in theodicy', 1996, *Religion and Rational Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19–38. [1791].
CS	'On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice', 1996, *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 273–310. [1793].

Religion	*Religion within the boundaries of mere reason*, 1996, *Religion and Rational Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 39–216. [1793]
TPP	*Toward perpetual peace*, 1996, *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 311–352. [1795].
MM	*The metaphysics of morals*, 1996, *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 353–604. [1797].
APP	*Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*, 2006, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [1798].
ÜP	*Über Pädagogik* [1803].
Nachlass	*Handchriftlicher Nachlass* [1914].

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