

# Translator's Corner

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J. Durban Odhner, Editor

## FOREWORD

This dissertation adds a new dimension to the age-old discussion of Swedenborg's impact on Immanuel Kant, not so much in the sense of bringing to light new evidence, but rather of introducing a new focus upon existing documents, with a chronologically sensitive arrangement and illuminating analysis. Particularly pertinent is the examination of Kant's hitherto little noted late lectures on rational psychology (circa 1790), never published.

Gottlieb Florschütz, born in Passau March 5th 1962, graduated from the Gymnasium at Kiel in May 1981, subsequently taking up the study of Philosophy at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität in that city. He obtained his master's degree in 1988 and went right on to his doctorate in 1992, *magna cum laude*.

Florschütz' aim does not appear to be personally to align himself with either of two philosophical standpoints, but rather to contrast the concepts they harbor, pungently demonstrating the important phases of Kant's development, his vacillations and self-contradictions in cognitive paradigm—and his eventual reconciliation with Swedenborg. The dissertation also touches on the motivational duplicity in Kant's attitude toward Swedenborg as evidenced in communications with some of his contemporaries.

Florschütz outlines the "große Linien" of his presentation at the end of section I.2, "Parallels between Kant and Swedenborg":

Summarizing the foregoing, the following agreements logically emerge between Kant's and Swedenborg's metaphysical convictions, as also advanced by Carl du Prel:

1. *There exists another world than that which is apparent to the senses.*
2. *There exists a transcendental being.*
3. *This being exists simultaneously with the earthly person.*

These points logically entail:

- a) *The inadequacy of self-awareness for the knowledge of our being.*
- b) *The only partial involvement of our being in the material world.*
4. *The pre-existence of the soul.*
5. *The immortality of the soul.*
6. *Birth as the incarnation of a transcendental being.*
7. *Material existence as the exception, transcendental existence as the rule.*
8. *The need for a rational psychology for proving the soul's existence.*
9. *The voice of conscience as the voice of the transcendental being.*
10. *The 'Beyond' as simply what lies on the other side of the threshold of perception.*

It was my pleasure to meet Gottlieb Florschütz at the Wolfenbüttel Swedenborg Symposium in 1988, and to introduce him to the Swedenborg Scientific Association, which has sponsored this translation. It has also been my privilege to share with Rev. Kurt Nemitz the task of translating *Swedenborg's Hidden Influence on Kant (Swedenborgs verborgene Wirkung auf Kant)* into English.

All in all, Dr. Florschütz leaves me impressed with a fine document that does indeed further expose the **hidden, but in the last analysis unquestionable**, influence of Swedenborg on Immanuel Kant, who, as Florschütz emphasizes, had long been preoccupied with the concept and intrigued by the possibility of human glimpses into the world of mind—the *intelligible Welt*.

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## SWEDENBORG'S HIDDEN INFLUENCE ON KANT

Gottlieb Florschütz\*

### *Leading thoughts*

...if one possessed reason, he would reflect that vision can be disturbed in two different ways—by being moved from the light into the darkness, and from the darkness into the light.

Plato, *Politics VII*, ch. 3, 518 A, *Platon, Sämtliche Werke, trans. Friederich Schliermacher* (Reinbeck, 1958) Vol. 3, 226.

Man in his essence is a spirit, and as to his inner part he is together and in association with spirits: wherefore he whose inner part is opened by God, can speak with them as one man with another; and this has been granted me now daily for many years.

Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Earths In The Universe*, in Carl du Prel, *Kant's Mystische Weltanschauung* (Leipzig, 1889).

For, to judge from the foregoing statement, visual knowledge of the other world can be attained here only at the loss of something of that understanding that one needs for the present world.

Immanuel Kant, *Träume eines Geistersehers—erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (Stuttgart, 1976) 57.

He who doubts the facts of animal magnetism and its clairvoyance, is not to be called unbelieving, but ignorant.

Arthur Schopenhauer, "Versuch über Geistersehen und was damit zusammenhängt," in *Parerga und Paralipomena I* (Frankfurt, 1850), reprinted in *der Zürcher Ausgabe* (Wiesbaden, 1972) Vol. VII, 271.

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

### 0.1 PRESENTATION AND DEFINITION OF THE SUBJECT, "OCCULT PHENOMENA."

In classical occult research, by *occult phenomena* is understood what today is called parapsychology—unusual occurrences whose technical resolution is fundamentally inaccessible to scientific research, since the interaction between people or between people and objects necessary to their explanation must take place outside of concepts belonging to space, time and causality, and they thereby appear to be beyond the scope of science.

In developing a definition of the concepts, *occultism—parapsychology*, and *occult phenomena—paranormal appearances*, the Freiburg parapsychologist Hans Bender expresses himself as follows:

The concept *occultism* is used to refer to the secret and hidden manifestations of natural and mental life not generally recognized by established Science, and to involvement with these. The science of occult phenomena is called *parapsychology*. By the prefix 'para' (= 'near') is expressed the fact that in this discipline, a branch of psychology, the mental phenomena investigated are those along side of those known to psychology. The problematic abilities, then, are designated *paranormal* or *parapsychic*. Spiritism is a theory sprung from the soil of occultism; it seeks to trace back occult occurrences to the influence of bodiless souls on living human beings, so-called "mediums."<sup>1</sup>

Such a "medium" the controversial Nordic "seer," Baron Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), understood himself to be—an individual whose reputed gift of seership the Königsberg scholar, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), thoroughly and controversially discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> Bender, *Parapsychologie. Ihre Ergebnisse. Ihre Probleme* (Bremen: 1970), 8.

As regards the place of occult phenomena or paranormal occurrences in modern parapsychology's taxonomy, Bender's following, generally accepted classification may be cited:

Since the beginning of parapsychological research a distinction has been made between two main groups of paranormal abilities, namely:

1. Phenomena in which the living organism apparently comes in contact with previous deceased beings outside itself, in the process of which other factors are involved than those which can be understood using concepts of present-day sensorial physiology.
2. Phenomena in which the living organism apparently affects its physical surroundings without using the organs which usually have a part in influencing the physical world.<sup>2</sup>

Into the structure of this general division of occult phenomena into extra-sensory modes of cognition on the one hand and extra-sensory modes of action on the other, let us now bring in the following fine distinctions between *telepathy*, *clairvoyance*, and *precognition* in the first group:

In the first group, previously designated "intellectual phenomena," differences have been deduced from simple, unplanned observations, which serve well as a working hypothesis: a distinction is made between *telepathy*, *clairvoyance*, and *prophecy*. *Telepathy* is described as the transfer of a mental process (thoughts, images, feelings, sensations—conscious or unconscious) from one psyche to another, without the aid of any known sense organ. By *clairvoyance* is understood an 'extrasensory' perception of a particular object or incident unknown to anyone. By *prophecy* or *precognition*, a foreknowledge of indeterminable future circumstances."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Parapsychologie. Ihre Ergebnisse. Ihre Probleme*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Parapsychologie. Ihre Ergebnisse. Ihre Probleme*, 10.

The second group of phenomena of the so-called 'parapsychological' appearances can, in Bender's schema, be still more precisely differentiated into the categories of, on the one hand, "telekinesis," and on the other, "materialization" of "spirits" at so-called "trance-seances" with mediums; and this can likewise be further differentiated into the sub-category, "ghost appearances":

To the second group, earlier termed "physical phenomena," belong moving things at a distance (telekinesis or psychokinesis), alleged incarnations [of the dead], materializations, and ghost appearances.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, apart from these possible detailed differentiations in occult phenomena, in the following for the sake of simplicity I am going to admit only the two general divisions, "parapsychical" and "paraphysical" appearances.

However, since Swedenborg was also said to have established a direct contact with "spirits" and "angels" by means of his inner sense, beyond his clairvoyance and precognition, it seems advisable to add yet a third class of occult phenomena to the two above-named parapsychological categories, namely that of so-called "spirit contact."

Since Swedenborg's "spirits,"—and to be sure not only those from this earth but also the spirits originating from other planets—were, nevertheless, only subjective, un-materialized" appearances, in the third category of occult phenomena I speak more appropriately of "spirit contact," not of "ghost appearances," let alone of "materialization." Therefore, analogously to these differences between the so-called "parapsychic" and "paraphysical" appearances, the next fundamental, three-part division of occult phenomena (to be abbreviated "OC") to be taken up is the following:

OC 1: Extrasensory perception of subjects of the outside world (telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition).

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<sup>4</sup> *Parapsychologie. Ihre Ergebnisse. Ihre Probleme*, 10; addition in brackets author's.

OC 2: Extrasensory influence by subjects on the outside world (psychokinesis, telekinesis).

OC 3: Spirit contact.

At present in the relevant literature regarding Swedenborg it is primarily occult phenomena of the first and third classes that are known. These will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. As the Kantian Kuno Fischer maintained, the Nordic "Seer" was reputedly capable of action in all three modes of the first category; actions apparently penetrate the classical "space-time-causality continuum" of physics:

There are a number of accounts about him which tell of signs and wonders of an astonishing nature...It appeared as if he had cast aside the customary limitations of the human spirit, as if space and time had become powerless over him. By virtue of an inner and apparently unerring sight he gazed into the spatial as well as temporal distance.<sup>5</sup>

Since sense perception is ruled out as the transfer medium of seemingly clairvoyant and precognitive vision, the "occult," the hidden element in regard to occult or paranormal phenomena is, properly speaking, the lack of a characteristic transfer medium. Here, again thinking fundamentally and *a priori*, three possibilities present themselves:

1. A transfer of extrasensory perception of a somewhat material nature can be thought of, although not such as might affect the physical senses. For instance, an infinitely rapid but material actual velocity.
2. A non-material transfer medium, e.g., an oscillation imperceptible by the normal human senses, might be considered for the transmission and reception of visions and sights.
3. It might also be supposed that occult phenomena require no transfer medium at all, since their effects and causes unfold outside the space-time-causality continuum and therefore would be thus non-temporal, non-spatial, and non-causal.

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<sup>5</sup> Kuno Fischer, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Mannheim: 1860) III, 213ff.

Swedenborg's purported "contact with the spirit-kingdom," about whose "occult influence" the "Seer" is supposed to have obtained information concerning objectively unknown facts, Fischer describes in his Kant dissertation in the following quite graphic words:

Even the world beyond, the realm of departed spirits, is said to have opened to this great visionary. He could summon the dead, associate with the departed as with his equals—they came when he called, answered when questioned, told him things which they alone knew—and the results demonstrated that Swedenborg was in possession of perfect information directly from the other side.<sup>6</sup>

Although the second category of occult phenomena was left unfulfilled by Swedenborg, at least to my knowledge, on systematic grounds it should be included here, so that, as a complete and precisely subdivided schema, the possibility—at the moment purely hypothetical—is always available for the classification of occult phenomena into three basic categories having three modes:

1. OC A:
  1. Extrasensory perceptions without transfer medium.
  2. Extrasensory influence without transfer medium.
  3. Spirit contact without transfer medium.
2. OC B:
  1. Extrasensory perceptions without a physical transfer medium.
  2. Extrasensory influence without a physical transfer medium.
  3. Spirit contact without physical transfer medium.
3. OC C:
  1. Extrasensory perceptions with a physical transfer medium.
  2. Extrasensory influence with a physical transfer medium.
  3. Spirit contact with physical transfer medium.

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<sup>6</sup> *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie Band 3*, (Mannheim, 1860) 214.

## 0.2 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH REPORT

In the first part of the following inquiry it will be shown whether and which of these systematic categories of the possible kinds of occult phenomena are admissible or inadmissible in the Kantian cognitive system. Kant's cognitive theory postulates *a priori* a thesis opposing the possibility of occult phenomena; his moral teaching, however, logically requires a contrary and opposite thesis, in which occult phenomena appear to be an *a priori* possibility. The "theoretical" thesis and the "practical" antithesis find a synthesis in Kant's heretofore unnoticed lectures on rational psychology (ca. 1790). These will be subjected to a critical textual analysis and placed in relation to his chief works.

The layout of the subject in the first part, using the trinal concept of "thesis—antithesis—synthesis," also supplies the structural principle of the whole study: the entire first part is devoted to the "thesis" of Kant's fundamental, cognitive theory against Swedenborg's gift of seership and occult phenomena, and in the second part the Schopenhauerian "antithesis" arguing for the *a priori* possibility of occult phenomena is presented as a counter. For in the realm of possibilities included in Schopenhauer's metaphysical concept of will there is *a priori* a place for Swedenborg's gift of seership in particular and for occult phenomena in general. To this end the consideration of the disagreement between Kant and Swedenborg in the light of Schopenhauer's metaphysical concept of will serves especially well as one of several possible ways of re-thinking and philosophically countering Kant's official rejection of the spirit-seeing of a Swedenborg. In conclusion this "thesis" of the first part and the "antithesis" of the second are brought to a re-iterated synthesis. In this synthesis Kant's "idea of freedom" as well as his moral law, interpreted by Schopenhauer's metaphysical concept of will as "occult phenomena" and used as such in his parapsychological theory, are fitted together. Thus Schopenhauer's assessment of occult phenomena as well as his critical commentary on Kant's reception of Swedenborg strikingly bring to light the hidden influence on Kant of the spirit-seer Swedenborg.

The following schema may serve for illustration

<b>Thesis</b> <i>contra</i> Swedenborg and occult phenomena	<b>Antithesis</b> <i>pro</i> Swedenborg and occult phenomena	<b>Synthesis</b> of the thesis and antithesis
<b>1st Level:</b>		
<b>1st Part:</b> Kant's cognitive theory	<b>1st Part:</b> Kant's moral philosophy	<b>1st Part:</b> Kant's rational psychology
<b>2nd Level:</b>		
<b>1st Part:</b> Kant's cognitive theory	<b>2nd Part:</b> Schopenhauer's metaphysics	<b>3rd Part:</b> Kant's moral philosophy in the context of Schopenhauer's metaphysics

By this two-fold division into thesis and antithesis our subject is given a global schematic structure of “*pro*” and “*con*” Swedenborg and occult phenomena. At the same time, viewed from the pivotal issue of “Swedenborg and occult phenomena,” Kant’s and Schopenhauer’s philosophy is given consideration in an entirely new light, and their common and opposing features are developed with particular clarity.

### The Research Setting

In the Kant-Swedenborg controversy, besides the comprehensive and thorough standard works of Ernst Benz (*Emanuel Swedenborg, Swedenborg in Deutschland*, and *Swedenborg als geistiger Wegbahner des deutschen Idealismus und der deutschen Romantik*) [= *Emanuel Swedenborg, Swedenborg in Germany*, and *Swedenborg as Spiritual Trailblazer of German Idealism and Romanticism*] and the meanwhile nearly forgotten *Kants mystische Weltanschauung* [=

"*Kant's Mystical Philosophy of Life*" by Carl du Prel, in recent times only a few treatises have appeared—such as those by Julius Ebbinghaus, Liliane Weissberg, and Joseph Schmucker.<sup>7</sup>

Since these treatises, however, limit themselves exclusively to Kant's polemical tract *Traüme eines Geistersehers—erläutert durch Traüme der Metaphysik*, and also since they explain this tract in the light of a biased interpretation that takes Kant as a representative of the Enlightenment, they remain far behind the now almost classic, aforementioned work of du Prel, which takes the whole development of Kant into consideration in the matter of his reception of Swedenborg.

Only the treatises of R. A. Hoffman—"Kant und Swedenborg," of E. Meyer—"Kant und Occultism," as well as of Walter Bormann—"Kantsche Ethik und Occultism," and of Rolan Begenat—"Swedenborg und Kant—Ein andaurendes Mißverständnis" [= "Kant and Swedenborg—a persisting misunderstanding."] continue at the high level of du Prel's far and deep-reaching approach.<sup>8</sup>

Now, in the present work, following the example of du Prel, we will attempt a fundamental horizon broadening of the Kant-Swedenborg controversy by bringing in Kant's own "occult" moral doctrine.

Also, to enlighten the Kant-Swedenborg controversy—and in long overdue acknowledgment of their value—the transcripts of Kant's lecture on rational psychology, which up to now have been quite neglected, will again be brought forward, in manifold detail and with all the text-critical attention they deserve.

Schopenhauer's parapsychological theory, as far as I know, has appeared in a treatment in only one essay, and that one written by no one less than the founder of parapsychology, Hans Driesch. He relates the development of modern parapsychology to Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation of occult phenomena.<sup>9</sup>

To date, however, there has been no reception of Schopenhauer's metaphysical explanation of occult phenomena.

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<sup>7</sup> For specifics, see Bibliography.

<sup>8</sup> For specifics, see Bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Hans Driesch's article, "Die wissenschaftliche Parapsychologie der Gegenwart," in H. de Geymüller's, *Swedenborg und die übersinnliche Welt*, 1936, 1951, here in an undated facsimile reproduction from Zürich, Appendix, 351-365.

Finally, nowhere has the attempt been made to apply Schopenhauer's parapsychological theory to the phenomenon of Swedenborg, much less to classify Kant's "idea of freedom" and his moral law as occult phenomena and in this way to explain them as prior to the horizon of Schopenhauer's metaphysics.

This view of Kant's "idea of freedom" and of the consciousness of the moral law as occult phenomena, from the perspective of Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will, ultimately brings the Kant-Swedenborg controversy to view in a new aspect. Thus, in conclusion it will be demonstrated that Kant's *a priori* rejection of Swedenborg's gift of seership now appears as an unfounded contradiction of his own doctrine of moral law.

The "seer" Swedenborg shows himself in the course of the following to be a "border-crosser" in a two-fold sense: he, for one, crosses the border between the tangible and the intangible world; however he also, for the other, crosses the border between Kant's critical cognitive theory and his clearly "occult" moral doctrine.

## **PART 1: SWEDENBORG'S GIFT OF SEERSHIP AND OCCULT PHENOMENA FROM KANT'S VIEWPOINT**

### **I.1 SWEDENBORG'S LIFE, DOCTRINE, AND INFLUENCE**

#### **I.1.1 Swedenborg up to 1744—the Scientist**

Emanuel Swedenborg was born the 29th of January, 1688, in Stockholm, a son of Court Chaplain Jesper Svedberg. In 1719 the family was ennobled under the name Swedenborg.

He died the 29th of March, 1772, in London. His body rests in the Cathedral at Uppsala, next to Swedish kings, bishops, and learned men of science.

Until 1744 Swedenborg was successfully active in many scientific and practical fields. He belonged to the Swedish house of lords and held a leading place in the "*Bergswerkskollegium*," Sweden's highest public authority. He was a member of the "Learned Society" of Uppsala, as well of the Stockholm and the Petersburg Academy of Science. To give a picture

of Swedenborg's towering significance, let merely a few facts about him be listed: he was creatively active as a mathematician, chemist, physicist, astronomer, geologist, biologist, physiologist, and psychologist. The row of his works starts with the first Swedish textbook for algebra. He laid the foundation for geology and crystallography, found a method for determining longitude, researched the origin of the planets, the arrangement of the stars in groups—and thus that our solar system was part of the Milky Way. He anticipated the knowledge of the 19th and 20th Centuries, addressing issues which actually first became research problems only much later—the atomic theory, the nebular hypothesis (twenty-one years before Kant)—in which the beginnings of the Kantian doctrine of categories are to be found, the wave theory of light, the theory of heat as motion, the theory of animal magnetism and its relation to electricity, the explanation of the nature of electricity (which he explained as a form of motion in the ether). He then with like daring, anticipating later theories, directed himself to psychology and physiology. And there he brought forth knowledge about the cortical substance of the cerebrum as the primary seat of sensation and of the localization of the motor functions to specific parts of the cortex, about the circulation of the blood, about the relationship of respiration and the motion of the brain and heart, about the function of the glands, internal secretion and the thyroid gland. In addition he discovered such things as the conjunction between the two halves of the cerebrum, and the foramen of Monro. Beside all this came, among other things, the first sketch of a steam engine and a design for a submarine, the model of an airplane and a canal lock system.<sup>10</sup>

He made valuable proposals for the general welfare and finances. He had plans for a new system of weights and measures (namely the decimal system), for improvements in mining, for the export of iron and pitch, and for a company for the production of salt. The Swedish prime minister, Count Höpken, explained that the “most thorough-going and best written finance memorials presented to the parliament in 1761 were those of Baron Swedenborg.”<sup>11</sup> Lastly, he gave hints toward the signification of Egyptian hieroglyphics, and, almost two hundred years before Freud, the “plan of a

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gollwitzer: *Swedenborg-Brevier*, Pfullingen 1953, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Gollwitzer: *Swedenborg-Brevier*, 12.

method for determining, through analysis, the psyche's desires and propensities."<sup>12</sup>

He developed his intellect on his many trips through the whole of Europe; his works were published in London and Amsterdam. He was conversant with the European, classical, and Hebrew languages. He was a close friend of Charles the 12th. All who knew him spoke of his noble, sincere and unselfish humanity.

Emerson, in his *Representative Men*, said of Swedenborg:

He seemed, by the enormous variety of his powers, to be a composition of several persons. One of the missouriums and mastodons of literature, he is not to be measured by whole colleges of ordinary scholars. His stalwart presence would flutter the gowns of a university. His spiritual superiority would silence all its professors. His eminent spirit towers over all times."<sup>13</sup>

### I.1.2. Swedenborg After 1745—the Seer

In 1745 in London, in a vision that was to be decisive for his later life, Swedenborg was “called by the Lord” to the role of seer. This vision drew to a close a year-long struggle during which he was overwhelmed by doubt concerning his path to “truth” up to this point, all the while turning again and again against this new mission.<sup>14</sup>

Swedenborg has himself described this call-vision which was granted to him in London in 1745, first in his *Diarium Spirituale* and then in his first Bible commentary, *Adversaria*. The crucial text from the *Diarium Spirituale* reads:

At midday about at meal time, an angel who was with me cautioned me not to indulge my stomach too much at table. While he was with me, there clearly appeared to me something like a vapor flowing out from the pores of my body, having a very

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<sup>12</sup> Gollwitzer: *Swedenborg-Brevier*, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Gollwitzer: *Swedenborg-Brevier*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ernst Benz: *Emanuel Swedenborg* (München: 1948) 212.

visible watery quality, which seemed to sink down toward the floor, where there was a carpet on which the vapor, coming together, turned into little worms of different kinds which, gathered under the table, in an instant, with a crackling noise or roar, burned up. Having seen the fiery flash, and having heard the noise, I judged that all the little worms that can be generated by an immoderate appetite had been cast out of my body, and had been burned up, and that I had now been cleansed of them. From this experience, one may infer what sumptuous living and the like harbor within them. 1745, April.<sup>15</sup>

In explaining Swedenborg's call experience Ernst Benz makes the following observation:

In his call experience Swedenborg sensed and saw with his own eyes how his prior intemperance left his bodily parts and manifested itself in horrible creatures, so as to then audibly burn up. At the moment of his vision and call the demonic power which heretofore had possessed him, visibly departed from him. He felt himself free and pure. Only after this visible purification and the departure of all the demonic beings from his members did Swedenborg experience his Divine call and installation into the office he had so long awaited: from God Himself he received the commission to lay open for the world the spiritual, inner meaning of the Sacred Scripture, and was placed in the office of seer, to whom God would dictate the Word of His revelation into his pen. His inner sight was opened, the spirit world was unlocked to him, he was inspired with a view of heaven and hell, spirits began to speak with him and reveal the secrets of the higher world.<sup>16</sup>

So much for the account of Swedenborg's call experience.

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<sup>15</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg: *Diarium Spirituale*, 1745, no. 397, also in Roland Pietsch, "Jakob Böhmes mystisches Durchbruchserlebnis und Emanuel Swedenborgs bildhafte Berufungsvision—eine Gegenüberstellung," in Eberhard Zwink (ed.), *Emanuel Swedenborg—Naturforscher und Kündiger der Überwelt* (Stuttgart: 1988) 108.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Emanuel Swedenborg—Naturforscher und Kündiger der Überwelt*, 213.

### I.1.3. Swedenborg's Influence on Kant

Swedenborg's call has a unique history. Until 1745 he is a well-known philosopher and scientist. This reputation then becomes completely overshadowed by that of the seer. But now opinion divides into acceptance of the seer and rejection of the "spirit-seer." He exercised a strong influence on Oetinger, Lavater, and Oberlin—in whose biographies this decisive influence unfortunately suffers from being for the most part suppressed—on Goethe, Schopenhauer, and on the romantics, particularly Schelling, Novalis, Jean Paul and Heine, on Balzac and Strindberg, on Werner, the founder of the Reutlingen *Bruderhauses*, and on Hofacker, Bismark, Helen Keller, and Rudolf Steiner.<sup>17</sup>

Around 1763 Kant made an inquiry about him and as a result reported in a letter to Frau Knobloch:

Swedenborg is a rational, pleasant, and open-hearted man.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, after showing an initially strong interest, which we attribute to the investigation and accurate account of a few stories about Swedenborg's gift of seership, Kant becomes his bitter opponent.

Later this total rejection changes again to a lofty appreciation—which up to the present time has not been sufficiently noted.

Already in the year 1766 Kant writes to Mendelssohn, who had reproached him for his spirited, scintillating, and for him uncharacteristic polemical tract, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer—Illustrated by the Dreams of Metaphysics*, faulting him for his flippant, pamphlet-style treatment:

It appeared to me therefore most advisable to forestall other things by first ridiculing myself for the way in which I too have quite sincerely dealt with matters, **when in so doing my state of mind is actually contradictory.** And accordingly, I dare say, as

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Emanuel Swedenborg—Naturforscher und Kündiger der Überwelt*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> "Kant über Swedenborg (= Brief an Fräulein Charlotte von Knobloch)," 1763, text according to AA X, in Rudolf Malter (ed.), *Träume eines Geistesehers—erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (Stuttgart: 1976) 99-106, here 102.

concerns the [Swedenborg] narrative I cannot refrain from **cherishing a small attachment to stories of this kind as well as some presumption of their validity as regards their rational basis.** I do this despite the depreciation caused by the absurdities of the stories and idle fancies and nonsensical concepts of the reasonings.<sup>19</sup>

Thus Kant admits to a certain tendency in favor of Swedenborg's alleged seer gift and his visions of the Beyond, emphasizing the contradictory state of mind, thus the indecisiveness in his attitude toward the Swedenborg phenomenon.<sup>20</sup>

The polemic of 1766, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer—Illustrated by the Dreams of Metaphysics* (in the following abbreviated, *Dreams of a S.* or simply to *Dreams*), presents an attack on Swedenborg whose intensity and anger one would scarcely attribute to the later Kant. The significance of this tract for Kant's own spiritual development will be gone into in detail in a later chapter. It is illuminating, as a contrast to the unusual, high esteem which

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<sup>19</sup> "Kant to Mendelssohn," 1766, text according to AA X, also in Malter (ed.) *Träume* 112-117, here 113f.

<sup>20</sup> Kant's tendency toward mysticism is also stressed by Bertrand Russel in his work *Philosophie des Abendlandes* (Frankfurt a. M: 1950) 584: At one point, when skeptical arguments seemed more profitable than ever before or after, he wrote a strange work *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*. The "Spirit-seer" is Swedenborg, who had put his mystical system before the world in a mighty work, four copies of which had been sold, three to unknown buyers and one to Kant. Kant made the half seriously, half jokingly intended remark that Swedenborg's system, which he calls "fantastic," perhaps was not even more fantastic than orthodox metaphysics. For Swedenborg he had not contempt only. His tendency toward mysticism undoubtedly existed even though in his writings it is less evident. Russel is surely referring to Kant's lectures on "rational psychology," where he actually calls Swedenborg's doctrine "sublime," and reveals his inclination to mysticism. Cf. Ch. I. 7: Kant's late reconciliation with Swedenborg, where I thoroughly examine these remarkable lectures.

Oetinger shows for the Nordic seer, to briefly note the previously referred to, very intense invectives that Kant slings at Swedenborg.<sup>21</sup>

Kant reports that he has gotten hold of Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia*, in order to discover something of value in it; however, he says that for his part "he found—as is generally the case where there is nothing to be found—nothing."<sup>22</sup>

At no price would he exchange the visionary findings which Swedenborg reports for his own rational findings:

Yet when one reckons the advantages and disadvantages in each that could accrue to it, advantages inherent before not only the existence of the visible world, but also of the invisible world (in so far as such exists), a gift of this nature seems to be like that with which Juno honored Tiresias—having made him blind, she

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<sup>21</sup> As testimony to the genuine, indeed, nothing short of good-spirited relationship between the Württemberg prelate, Friedrich Christoph Oetinger and Swedenborg, Eberhard Gutekunst cites the following:

In Swedenborg he found, as noted, his own conception of the reality of the spirit kingdoms and his doctrine of the middle state further established and enlarged. These had already been formulated by him in his 1757 dissertation, "Von dem Zusammenhang derer Glaubens-Artikel mit den letzten Dingen [The Connection between the Articles of Faith and the Last Things]." To Swedenborg's work Oetinger always took the scientific attitude of cool distance and unbiased inquiry. Nor did he change this approach when dealing personally with the Swede, with whom in 1765 he had actually entered into a correspondence, as was his custom. He exerted himself "to evaluate what was true, seemingly true, and false in every detail, or in the work itself in which they appear." ... Oetinger was unceasingly on careful guard to preserve a critical distance to Swedenborg the exegete. His visions he accepted as genuine, his results in the explanation of Scripture Oetinger had to reject as achieved by false methods...until his relation to Swedenborg fell into a deep crisis in 1771 on account of Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion*. This personal interpretation on Swedenborg's part occasioned Oetinger to distance himself from him most sharply, since he was incapable of tolerating Swedenborg's blasphemous contention that his own person and work stood in an eschatological connection with the coming of the New Church (Eberhard Gutekunst, "Spötter, die mich um ihrer willen für einen Fanatiker ausrufen, Swedenborg und Fr. Chr. Oetinger" [= "Scoffers, for their own sake they call me a fanatic. Swedenborg und Fr. Chr. Oetinger"], in Zwink (ed.), *Emanuel Swedenborg*, 78, 80.

Regarding Swedenborg's reception cf. also Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, "Swedenborgs und anderer irdische und himmlische Philosophie, zur Prüfung des Besten, ans Licht gestellt" [= "Swedenborg's and Others' Earthly and Heavenly Philosophies — the Examination and Bringing to Light of the Best"], 1765.

<sup>22</sup> Kant, *Träume eines Geistersehers—erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*, 1766, text according to the edition of Rudolf Malter (ed.) (Stuttgart: 1976) 3-85.

was thereafter able to impart to him the gift of foreknowledge. For to judge from the foregoing statement, intuitive knowledge of the other world can only be attained here and now, when one enjoys something of that understanding which one has need of for the present.<sup>23</sup>

Yes, Kant finally expresses himself openly, saying that he himself would be inclined to regard the seeing of spirits and the reception of supernatural divinations as a fundamentally pathological phenomenon, that concerns not a philosopher but a physician:

Therefore I in no way blame the reader, if instead of regarding spirit-seers as a half-way citizens of the other world, he writes them off—to put it bluntly—as candidates for the home for the feeble and infirm, and gives up all further inquiry."<sup>24</sup>

In one place Kant even stoops to an extraordinarily vulgar jest about Swedenborg's gift of seership:

The sharp-eyed Hudibras\* would have been able to solve the riddle for us by himself. As he sees it, if a hypochondriac is troubled by gas on the stomach, it all depends on which direction it takes—if it goes downwards, then it comes out a F—, but if it rises upwards, it's an apparition or a holy inspiration."<sup>25</sup>

The second part of Kant's tract then gives a more specific presentation of particular teachings of Swedenborg, whom he throughout refers to as "Schwedenberg." In this part he is characterized as "the arch-fantast of fantasts":

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<sup>23</sup> *Träume* 56f.

<sup>24</sup> *Träume*, 72.

\* Hero of a satirical poem by the same name by the Englishman Samuel Butler (published 1663-78). Like a Don Quixote with zealous ignorance he ranges the Puritan countryside, endeavoring to correct abuses and suppress superstition. Trans.

<sup>25</sup> *Träume*, 72.

For his bottle in the lunar world is certainly full and ranks second to none of those which Ariosto saw there, brimming with the rationality their owners lost here and must seek anew. So completely empty is that great work of every drop of the same.<sup>26</sup>

In Kant's opinion Swedenborg's great work itself comprises "eight quarto volumes full of nonsense, which, under the title, *Arcana Coelestia* [= *Heavenly Secrets*], he lays before the world as a new revelation."<sup>27</sup>

After presenting a few of these revelations Kant then closes:

I am tired of transcribing the wild fantasies of the worst of all visionary dreamers or of going on to his description of the state after death... Admittedly I have left out the direct accounts of the visions for the most part, but because such wild fantasies would only disturb the reader's sleep at night.<sup>28</sup>

These sharp reproaches make one thing clear: this tract of Kant's is not simply a coolly scientific argument, rather it is at the very least in equally high degree also a discharge of personal emotion. Kant is seeking to free himself of the impression made by Swedenborg's works.<sup>29</sup>

What led to this emotional discharge and what are the consequences of it for the public view of Swedenborg in the scholarly world of Germany?

The first question is not easy to answer. Following Benz one could perhaps point to a two-fold cause.<sup>30</sup> For the first, the basis of Kant's vigorous rejection of Swedenborg is a psychological one, which fits in with his life-history. It is the young Kant who in this early tract turns against the Seer from the North. Kant has just loosed himself from the pietistic and

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<sup>26</sup> *Träume*, 97.

<sup>27</sup> *Träume*, 98.

<sup>28</sup> *Träume*, 112.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Benz: "Swedenborg als geistiger Wegbahner des deutschen Idealismus und der deutschen Romantik," in *Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, Vol. XIX. (Halle/Saale: 1941,10); the essay is also partially contained in Zwink (ed.), *Emanuel Swedenborg* (Stuttgart: 1988) 116-120.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Benz, *Swedenborg als wegbahner*, 10.

supranaturalistic spiritual legacy of his own upbringing. He has consigned to history the whole superstructure of the old metaphysics of Scholasticism, the old "heaven," and has shed the skin of scholastic supranaturalism. Ernst Benz quite graphically sketches this withdrawal of Kant from speculative metaphysics to his own future, transcendental cognitive theory in the following words:

He lives in a honeymoon of his youthful marriage with a *ratio* [= "rationality"] that is quite earthy and practical, and he is proud of his new beloved. Then someone crosses his path who has the brazenness to construct a new supranatural system of thousands of heavens and hells and thousands of ways of purifying the spirit in a higher kingdom—constructing this on the foundation of personal visions, verified as heavenly, eye-witness accounts. In the proud self-consciousness of possessing a certainly more modest, yet tidier basis for knowledge he had worked out himself, and in an attack of youthfully rude self-confidence over the reliability and constancy of his newly beloved, which he calls "common sense," Kant consigned this supranatural apparition, this revenant from the just vanquished Middle Ages, to the trash-heap—in order to later secretly place the shattered pieces of this so maliciously destroyed saintly image again on his altar.<sup>31</sup>

From the viewpoint of the history of philosophy, in Ernst Benz's authoritative opinion, the rejection of Swedenborg by the young Kant expresses the general mood and attitude of the philosophic generation of German rationalism. This generation had been stamped with the impress of the scientific discoveries of the French, the English, the Dutch, and the Germans, and by the school of Christian Wolff.<sup>32</sup> It had tired of supranatural systems and even of heavenly inspiration and revelation itself. Instead of getting a glimpse of the whole of reality and its grand lines with a prophet's eye, it would rather know less, but know it definitely. Nothing is more conclusive in regard to this attitude than the close of Kant's polemic

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Benz, *Swedenborg als wegbahner*, 10.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Benz, *Swedenborg als wegbahner*, 11.

against Swedenborg, in which the preliminary lines of later Kantian philosophy are already sketched out:

To this extent metaphysics is a science on the borders of human reason...I have not here, I admit, precisely determined this border, but I have indicated it to the extent that upon reflection the reader will find that he could toss aside all vain inquiry upon consideration of one question, Why the data are to be found in a different world than the one in which he is conscious?"<sup>33</sup>

However, the metaphysical system in the cadre of Swedenborg, Kant is convinced, is not only impossible but also useless. More important to him than other considerations is the moral purpose of all our actions:

Consequently let us leave all the hullabaloo of doctrinal compositions on such distant objects to the speculation and concern of more idle heads. They are really matters of indifference to us.<sup>34</sup>

This is not only the mood and position of Kant, it is the mood of a whole generation and epoch. Weary of all supranatural speculation, it reacts to the noblest vision with an outburst of anger, and responds to freshly appearing supranatural systems less with a form of cool scientific refutation than with an act of emotion.<sup>35</sup>

What consequences did this rough rejection of Swedenborg by Kant have for the assessment of the Nordic seer in Germany? In this century nothing could do more to shatter the reputation of a scholar than the cursing profanity of ridicule. Kant had uttered this curse at Swedenborg, and it worked. In the German universities and academies and in German academic philosophy Swedenborg remained what Kant had made him—an arch-visionary dreamer and a fool, whom one could not seriously refer to without himself being hit with the curse of ridicule.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Träume*, 115.

<sup>34</sup> *Träume*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ernst Cassirer: *Kants Leben und Lehre*, Berlin 1918, 80-97.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Kants Leben und Lehre*, 80-97.

As a result of his new exegesis of the Scriptures, which were purportedly received from a Divine revelation "*ex auditis et visis*" [= "from things heard and seen"], Swedenborg fell into great danger of being persecuted and declared insane, from 1761 on by the German Lutheran church and from 1768 on also by the Swedish state church. Only the support of friendly bishops and parliament members as well as the intervention of the Swedish king were able to protect him. Nonetheless all those who seriously engaged themselves with his works and his doctrines could thereby easily lose their public reputation. On the one hand a Swedenborg society had taken form—which on the other created a disagreeable stir among "rational people" and the orthodox of the church.<sup>37</sup>

This Swedenborg's courageous protagonist, Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, also immediately experienced, who after the appearance of Kant's tract, became the object of numerous attacks and hostilities from the side of academic philosophers, scientists, and theologians. Oetinger, in a highly significant letter to Swedenborg, had not omitted to share with him his own situation and in retrospect to characterize the persecutions he had suffered as a "witness to the truth."<sup>38</sup>

Equally disastrous is a second consequence of Kant's judgment on Swedenborg: from then on in Germany, one saw Swedenborg, if he was called to mind at all, only in the caricature-like distortion of his image as Kant had drawn it. This caricature had thus completely destroyed his original, historical image. The German Swedenborg-Myth has not been created by the friend of Swedenborg, by Oetinger, but by his enemy, by Kant. So only the one cartoon was retained—the odd "spirit-seer," who is introduced in Kant's writing as "a certain Herr Schwedenberg, a gentleman without a position or service."<sup>39</sup>

Thus, as Benz has shown,<sup>40</sup> in Germany's historical-fact oriented consciousness, the figure of Swedenborg as a universal scholar, philosopher, and visionary is transformed into that of a crazed spiritist. Forgotten is Swedenborg the great scientist, who probed the secrets of electricity and

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ernst Benz, *Swedenborg in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a.M.: 1947) 257-268.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Swedenborg in Deutschland*, 257-268.

<sup>39</sup> *Träume*, 84.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Benz, *Swedenborg als Wegbahner*, 13.

published a path-setting work on magnetism, based on numerous new experiments. Forgotten is Swedenborg the student of medical science and psychology, who took up the riddle of the hidden relationship between spirit, soul, and body. Forgotten is Swedenborg the mathematician, who undertook important astronomical and geographical calculations. Forgotten is Swedenborg the geologist, who threw light on the formation of minerals and metals, and who researched the question of subterranean water, who developed a method of scientific research utilizing fossils in explaining the formation of minerals. Forgotten is the expert mechanic and inventor, who as Assessor of Mines looked into every technical proposal, great and small, who made countless discoveries in the area of mining, who greatly increased the production of the Swedish mining industry and earned his king a great deal of money, who drafted a plan for a submarine, that "can inflict serious damage on an enemy ship."<sup>41</sup> Forgotten is the man from whom came the first sketch of a steam engine, a proposal for an air-operated machine gun, the model of an airplane, a calculator, and a mercury pump; who found a new method for the determination of longitude, and to whom many other technical achievements, including the great canal connecting Gothenburg and the Baltic Sea trace their meaning.<sup>42</sup>

Since Kant's time all these sides of this universal man have remained unnoticed. Furthermore, the high respect that Kant later showed for the Nordic scholar in his lectures on rational psychology is often passed by in secondary literature. Here Kant speaks of Swedenborg—in strong contrast to his polemic tract—in a respectful tone and calls his doctrine of the morally structured spirit-world "sublime."<sup>43</sup>

#### I.1.4. Swedenborg's Further Hidden Influence

Kant's banishment of Swedenborg had devastating effects in Germany. At that time, to be sure, his works were being read in all spiritual circles, but one was careful not to mention him openly. For example,

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Benz, *Swedenborg als Wegbahner*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Benz, *Swedenborg als Wegbahner*, 13.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ch. 7: "Kant's Late Reconciliation With Swedenborg".

Goethe or Schelling—although they take him into their works literally, or almost literally, they will not mention his name. Goethe, who had studied him intensively as a twenty year-old and who remained committed to him to the end of his life, named him only in his letters, but not in “Poetry and Truth.”<sup>44</sup>

Swedenborg's influence, therefore, although scarcely to be overrated, is difficult to demonstrate. This proscription has dogged him in Germany up to our day, in spite of re-establishment of his honor by scholars like Benz and Driesch. The German lexicons, which are so proud of their objectivity and reliability, *Konversationslexika* and *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, do not shy from giving him a poor or even misleading mention—in contrast to the English.

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<sup>44</sup> On the subject of Swedenborg's influence on Goethe Erich Schmidt, in his commentary on the first Faust monologues, cites the following:

In the Swedish spiritist Emanuel von Swedenborg I have in passing recognized the one hailed “the Wise Man” (by Faust). Morris has gone into this thoroughly and shown that almost all the spirit appearances here, from the earth-spirit scene onwards, come from or were inspired by the Swede's *Arcana Coelestia* — the work that Kant in 1766 had so deliciously dismissed as “eight quarto volumes full of nonsense” and a “paradise of a dreamer.” Without being a believing disciple of Swedenborg, in Klettenberg circles, where Swedenborg was being translated, Goethe came to admire the unified structure of this spiritual world and used it amply in Faust. (Erich Schmidt: *Jubileums-Ausgabe der Werke Goethes* XII, 275, in, Heinrich Richard, “Unbeachtete Vorlesungen Kants. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Swedenborg-Forschung,” in *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, Vol. 9, 1957, 280).

And Heinrich Richard, in his commentary on Kant's lectures on rational psychology, adds the following to Goethes appreciation of Swedenborg's doctrine in contrast to Kant's defamation of Swedenborg's persona in “Dreams”:

“These words are Erich Schmidt's commentary on the first Faust monologue...Now since the whole drama is filled with magic and one can discern Swedenborg's influence all the way up to the reception of the blest into the choir of spirits, in the judgment of a high ranking expert it is nothing other than a jumble of nonsense dressed up in ‘poetry.’ Can one give a more skewed judgment of Goethe, who borrowed his poetry only from reality (to Eckerman, 9/18/1825), who did not tire of pillorying ‘visionaries,’ and who celebrated Schopenhauer and Alexander Herzen as ‘realists’? Goethe was as capable of change as anyone. But to his old age he was never uncertain about Swedenborg. This is proven by his remarks on Lavater in the 1883 *Frankfurter gelehrten Anzeigen*; it is shown by his letters to Frau von Stein 11/19/1776, 12/21/1777 and 10/1/1781, to Lavater 11/14/1781, to his mother 10/3/1785, to Schweiger 4/23/1814, besides the ‘annalen’ of 1805. Not least is this confirmed by the mysterious ‘Makarie’ (the blest) in ‘Wilhelm Meister,’ whose flight to the boundaries of the solar system is unimaginable apart from Swedenborg. (Heinrich Richard, “Unbeachtete Vorlesungen Kants. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Swedenborg-forschung,” in *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, Vol. 9, 1957, 280).

Nevertheless, upon this dismissal of the Swedenborgian doctrine in Germany through Kant's agency, came the natural and to a certain degree common human reaction. It consisted in reflection that, "If a person is made out to be so bad, there must be something good in him." Consequently Kant's hard judgment, contrary to its intention, contributed to the fact that Swedenborg became read eagerly—although secretly. One did not write about him, one did not gladly list him in books' index of names, but one did read him and could not read enough. In quiet opposition to the official rejection of Swedenborg began a secret Swedenborg movement. To it belonged precisely the daring spirits, the outsiders, the dreamers, the radicals. In this way, to be sure, Swedenborg did not become a stimulator of German academic philosophy—or at least only negatively, through its putting a limit between itself and his "dreaming"—although he did indeed become the inspirer of those who were to vanquish academic philosophy. In the field of philosophy, he became the inspiration of German idealism with Hegel and Schelling, who carried on Oetinger's tradition and, simultaneously with the rediscovery of German mysticism and of Jacob Böhme, again took up Swedenborg's ideas. In the field of religion he became the inspiration of the Theosophy and mysticism of Franz von Baaden, in Protestant territory the inspiration of the revival movement—especially with Jung-Stilling and Lavater—, all in all, the great reviver of all those spiritual forces which were leading Germany to a victory over scientific, religious, theological and artistic rationalism. Condemned by German academic philosophy, Swedenborg became the teacher of the "outsiders," of those who would be the creators of the poetry and religion of the next century.<sup>45</sup>

Space does not permit the listing of the multiplicity of the ideas and stimuli which went out from Swedenborg to the leaders of German Idealism and German Romanticism. Nor, furthermore, has the research here yet produced even the simplest preliminary studies. This is in part for the reason that it is just in those places where Swedenborg's influence exercised an indirect influence that he is for the most part not mentioned by name and that one can trace his effects only by means of an intuition

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Swedenborg als Wegbahner*, 13ff.

resulting from a diligent acquaintance and—what must accompany it—sound understanding of his thought.<sup>46</sup>

May this work dealing with the Kant-Swedenborg controversy contribute to the long-overdue philosophical reconsideration of Swedenborg's gift of seership and his doctrine, and to the revision of the unjustified prejudice against the Nordic "spirit-seer" into a respectful estimation of the learned seer.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Swedenborg als Wegbahner*, 14. An example of Swedenborg's influence on Lavater has been given by Benz in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 1938; and in addition, on the influence of Swedenborg on Schelling, in his essay, "Swedenborg als geistiger Wegbahner des deutschen Idealismus und der deutschen Romantik," in *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* (Halle: Saale, 1941) 19, 15-30. The Schelling scholar Krause—one of the few academics who has attempted to restore Swedenborg's name—agrees with Benz when in his brief overview of Swedenborg's system he writes, "It was striking to me that in all accounts of the history of philosophy, as well as in all the accounts of the history of Christian doctrine I am familiar with, Swedenborg's doctrine, which one mostly knows only from hearsay as a fantastic vision of spirits, is almost entirely passed over or falsely condemned. An injustice against a most estimable, honorable man, which should be righted... Considered purely academically Swedenborg's system coordinates the spiritualistic and idealistic dogmatic systems, and deserves the same attention as, for example, Malebranche. If one wants to say that he does not deserve to be taken into consideration as a philosopher for the reason that his system has for its basis the religious documents of the Christian Church and his purported, personal, inner revelations, then all the deep thinkers of the Middle Ages and all more recent philosophers who do similarly must be left unnoticed in the same way. (Krause, *Der Geist der Lehre Swedenborgs*, in Benz, *Swedenborg als Wegbahner*, 31ff.)

<sup>47</sup> Further essays on the history of Swedenborg's influence are contained in the reference work *Emanuel Swedenborg — Naturforscher und Kündiger der Überwelt* (Eberhard Zwink: Stuttgart, 1988): Roland Begenat, "Emanuel Swedenborgs Wirkungen in der Literatur"; and "Swedenborg und Kant - Ein dauerndes Mißverständnis"; Horst Bergmann, "Swedenborg und Lavaters 'Physiognomische Fragmente'"; and, "Johann Immanuel Tafel, Initiator einer Bewegung"; and, "Swedenborg und C.G. Jung"; Johann Wolfgang von Goethes Brief an Friedrich August Wolf; Ulrich Gaier, "'Könnt' ich Magie von meinem Pfad entfernen"—Swedenborg im magischen Diskurs von Goethes 'Faust'"; Friedemann Horn, "Schelling und Swedenborg, 'Ein Ringen um die letzten Dinge'"; Ernst Robert Curtius, "Swedenborg bei Honore de Balzac"; Ernst Bloch, "Zur Menschengestalt des Kosmos, aus *Atheismus und Christentum*"; Rudolf Steiner, "Die geistige Eigentümlichkeit und das 'Karma' Swedenborgs," aus Vorträgen; Eberhard Gutekunst "'Spötter, die mich um ihrer willen für einen Fanatiker ausrufen,' Swedenborg und Fr. Chr. Oetinger"; Walter Stäbler, "Hahn und Swedenborg"; Reinhard Breymayer, "Von Swedenborg zu Elias Aritsta"; Friedrich Görwitz, "Johann Gottlieb Mitnacht, zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Neuen Kirche in Deutschland"; Paul Krauß und Eberhard Zwink, "Gustav Werner und Swedenborg, zugleich ein Vergleich lutherischer und swedenborgischer Theologie."

### I.1.5 Swedenborg Stories

Of the unusual stories passed down about Swedenborg we will repeat only the ones Kant himself reported. Swedenborg himself never mentioned them, teaching rather that eternal truth should never be demonstrated or based on such outer signs. He did, however, after several requests, confirmed the accuracy of the story about the Queen of Sweden to the Landgrave of Hessen Darmstadt.

Kant, in his famous letter to Charlotte von Knobloch in 1763 reports the following two occult incidents concerning Swedenborg that were supposed to give proof of his seer's gift. The first story, of *The Lost Receipt*, he introduces with respectful words, in which he particularly stresses the credibility of the still living witness:

Gracious Fraulein, in order to provide you with a few pieces of evidence, where the whole thing was publicly witnessed and the man who reported it to me could investigate it directly at the very place it occurred, please consider simply the following two incidents. Not long after Madame Harteville, the widow of the Dutch ambassador to Stockholm, lost her husband, she was pressed by the goldsmith Croon to pay the bill for a silver service which her husband had asked him to make. The widow was quite convinced that her husband was too careful and proper a man not to have paid this bill, but she could show no receipt of payment. Troubled by this and because the amount was considerable, she asked Herr v. Swedenborg for help. After a few apologies she made the proposal that if he had the extraordinary gift of speaking with the deceased which everyone said he had, would he be so kind as to inquire of her husband about what the case was in regard to the bill for the silver service. Swedenborg was not at all resistant to obliging her in this attempt. Three days later the lady in question held a coffee party. Herr v. Swedenborg came in and, in his calm manner, gave her word that he had spoken with her husband. The bill had been paid seven months before his death, and the receipt would be in a cabinet which was in the upper bedroom. The lady replied that this cabinet had been completely

emptied and no receipt had been found among all the papers. Swedenborg said that her husband had explained to him that if you were to take out a drawer on the left side a panel would be seen. This should be pushed aside, and then a hidden drawer would be found. In this his secret correspondence with Holland was kept, and along with it you would come upon the receipt. Acting on this information the lady, accompanied by all at her party, went up into the room. The cabinet was opened, the directions were followed explicitly and the drawer which she had known nothing about was found, and in it the indicated papers—to the great amazement of everyone there.<sup>48</sup>

The second story, about the Stockholm fire, Kant assesses as even stronger evidence of Swedenborg's obvious paranormal gift:

The following incident, however, seems to me to be the most convincing of all and really dispels all imaginable doubt. In the year 1756 [1759], on a saturday afternoon toward the end of September, about four in the afternoon, Herr v. Swedenborg arrived from England and docked at Gothenburg. Herr William Castel invited him and a group of fifteen other guests to his home. That evening at about six Herr Swedenborg went out and then returned to the drawing-room pale and shaken. He said that there had just been a dangerous fire in Stockholm in the Södermalm (Gothenburg is about 175 miles from Stockholm) and that fire was spreading. He was restless and frequently went out. He said that a house of a friend, whom he named, was already in ashes and that his own house was in danger. At about eight o'clock, after having gone out again, he said happily, "Thank God, the fire is out! Three doors from my house! This report deeply agitated the whole city, particularly the dinner guests, and that same evening a report was given to the governor. On Sunday morning Swedenborg was

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<sup>48</sup> Kant on Swedenborg in letter to Charlotte von Knobloch, 1763, text according to AA X, also in: Rudolf Malter (ed.), *Träume eines Geistesehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*, (Stuttgart, 1976).

called to the governor, who questioned him about the matter. Swed. described the fire in detail, how it began, how it stopped, and how long it lasted. That same day the news spread through the whole city, where now, because the governor had taken notice of it, the agitation was intensified yet more, since many were worried about their friends or property. Monday evening a post-rider arrived from Stockholm. He had been sent by the businessmen there while the fire was still going on. In his letter the fire was described just as had been told. Tuesday morning a royal courier came to the governor with a report of the fire, the loss which it had caused and the houses which it had hit. This report did not differ in the least detail from the one given by Swedenborg at the very time, for the fire had been put out at about eight o'clock.

How can one challenge the credibility of this incident? The friend who wrote to me about this has himself investigated this not only in Stockholm but also in Gothenburg about two months ago. He is very familiar with the most respected families there and was able to become well-acquainted with most of the eye witnesses in the whole city, where in the short time since 1756 [1759] most are still alive.<sup>49</sup>

So much for Kant. If we will now put these two reports of occult phenomena in the categories of parapsychology, the first would concern a spirit contact in Category OC 3, the second a clairvoyant act belonging to Category OC 1. In the latter instance especially, the credibility of the reporter seems to be attested to by Kant's own investigation, and the sequence of the paranormal events to be fully demonstrated. For one, Swedenborg's vision in Gothenburg was said to be held as true by a whole group of spectators—respectable people; for the other, the simultaneous course of the actual flames could thereby be established by a whole number of witnesses:

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. (Bracketed information added by me.) In the recount of the Swedenborg story Kant was clearly in error about the year. The correct year is 1759. Cf. de Geymüller, *Swedenborg und die Übersinnliche Welt* (photo-reproduction, Zürich, 1951) 317.

In his polemic tract Kant is able to report yet a third example of Swedenborg's seer gift:

Toward the end of the year 1761 Herr Swedenborg was summoned to a sovereign lady, whose great understanding and intelligence make it almost impossible in such a case, for her to be deceived. The occasion for this was the general report of this man's alleged visions. After a few questions, whose purpose was more to amuse herself with his delusions than to gain information from the other world, the sovereign lady dismissed him. In so doing she first gave him an assignment which was in the line of his communication with spirits. After a few days Herr Swedenborg appeared with an answer. It was of such a nature that, by her own admission, it astonished her highness in the highest degree. She confirmed it to be true, and of such a nature that it could not have been told to him by any living person.<sup>50</sup>

This account of Kant's is typical of the polemic tone in his tract attacking Swedenborg. Noteworthy is the fact that he knowingly misspells Swedenborg's name (see above p. ?). That he knew Swedenborg's proper name is evident from the letters composed to Charlotte von Knobloch three years earlier.<sup>51</sup>

For comparison's sake at this time let the same Swedenborg story, described without critical comment by G. Gollwitzer in his *Swedenborg-Brevier*, be set alongside.

In 1761 Swedenborg came to the court of the Swedish queen Ludovica Ulrike, the sister of August Wilhelm, the Prussian prince, who had died in 1758. As soon as the queen became aware of him, she asked, "Herr Assessor, have you seen my brother?" He answered in the negative, whereupon she said, "When you meet

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<sup>50</sup> *Träume*, 85f.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the previous quotation from Kant's letter about Swedenborg to Ch.v. Knobloch.

him, give him my greetings." Eight days later Swedenborg returned to the court, however so early that the queen had not yet left her chamber. He did not wait for her to come out, but stepped right into her room and whispered something in her ear. The queen, highly startled, fell into a rather long faint. After regaining herself she said, "Only God and my brother could have known what he told me."<sup>52</sup>

In the vocabulary of parapsychology this story too would fall into Category OC 3, although it does not appear to be so well documented as the other two cases.

Unfortunately here, in contrast to the first instance of the possibility of "spirit contact," one is told nothing of the alleged message from the "other side." One must content oneself with the reaction of the queen in order to judge how unusual Swedenborg's communication from her deceased brother was.

Outside these three Swedenborg-stories which Kant himself has recounted there are further illustrative instances of his alleged seership.<sup>53</sup>

Swedenborg is said to have prevented yet another fire in Gothenburg through timely, clairvoyant advice, to have in spirit seen the death of Czar Peter the Great, and at the time of his passing to have foretold the time of death of an acquaintance as well.<sup>54</sup>

Lastly, the seer is even said to have foreseen the exact day of his own death. The Swedish divine Ferelius, who visited Swedenborg in London during his final sickness, tells about Swedenborg's death:

I asked him if he thought he would die now. He said, Yes,...Sunday, the 29th of March was approaching. His landlady and the housemaid sat that afternoon by his bed, wondering whether his prediction would be fulfilled, for a month earlier he had told them the day of his decease with such a cheerful face that

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<sup>52</sup> Gollwitzer, *Swedenborg-Brevier*, 26.

<sup>53</sup> For further discussion see, H. de Geymüller, *Swedenborg und die Übersinnliche Welt*, (photo-reproduction, Zürich, 1951) 309-359.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. H. de Geymüller: *Swedenborg und die Übersinnliche Welt*, (photo-reproduction, Zürich, 1951) 309-359.

the housemaid said, "He was as happy over it as I would be if a holiday or a party were coming up." His spirits remained fresh up to his end. When he heard the clock strike he asked, "What time is it?" And when he was answered, "Five o'clock," he said, "Good. I thank you, and God bless you." A few minutes later his spirit had passed over.<sup>55</sup>

## I.2. PARALLELS BETWEEN KANT AND SWEDENBORG

In view of the following examination of the parallel in fundamental philosophical doctrine, in astronomy as well as in rational psychology, yes, and what is more, in the beginning in critical cognitive theory, it may seem strange that Kant should have set himself in such strong opposition to Swedenborg as has again and again been one-sidedly maintained.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand, in view of the now evident, striking agreement between some of their central thoughts about the origination of our solar system and about the nature and seat of the human soul, it may really not be so surprising that Kant never completely lost his interest for Swedenborg's person and doctrine, and that at the end of his life he had found his way back to his original respect for the Nordic scholar—as will be thoroughly demonstrated in this dissertation's final chapter.

### I.2.1. Parallels Between Kant and Swedenborg in Cognitive Theory

Up to the present time it has gone unnoticed that in the fields of cognitive theory and astronomy Swedenborg was quite ahead of Kant and had anticipated fundamental thoughts of the Königsberg scholar.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Gollwitzer, *Swedenborg-Brevier*, 26f.

<sup>56</sup> Examples of this one-sided judgment of Kant's relation to Swedenborg are the treatises by J. Ebbinghaus, *Kant und Swedenborg* (Darmstadt, 1968), and by Josef Schmucker, *Kants kritischer Standpunkt zur Zeit der Träume eines Geistersehers* (New York 1981).

<sup>57</sup> Recently attention has also been called to his contributions to the histology of the nervous system. Cf. G. Retzius, "Über Swedenborgs Kosmogonie und Kants Himmelstheorie, *Naturwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, (1909) 11.II.; cf. also H. Schlieper, *E. Swedenborgs System der Naturphilosophie*, Inaugural-Dissertation (Berlin, 1901).

At the beginning of his *Principia Rerum Naturalium*, in which Swedenborg presents his cosmogony, he brings in several basic epistemological discussions which display definite parallels to Kantian cognitive theory.

These epistemological discussions about the nature of knowledge are remarkably in accord with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which came out in the year 1781. Swedenborg here already differentiates the judgments and conclusions gained from sense experience (*a posteriori*), from "*intelligentia a priori*," whose source of knowledge lies outside the realm of experience and geometrical intuition. A characteristic of this Pure Reason ("*ipsissimum rationale*") is the ability to analyze and bring the data gained *a posteriori* into such an organized interrelationship that an analogy arises: "...in tale ordinem et nexum disponere, ut habeatur analogia."<sup>58</sup>

In agreement with this Kant states, in the transcendental analysis in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*) published some fifty years later, that alongside the sensorial, receptive activity of the physical senses there is a spontaneous conceptual activity of the understanding, which differentiates itself from the prior one precisely by virtue of the fact that the acquired impressions "are brought together by means of an idea of the whole into an analogical system."<sup>59</sup>

In Swedenborg's view, accordingly, the philosophical conception of Primal Being arises from pure reason, and in this theory all physical matter and natural objects are but analogs to Pure Reason (one notes here, as with Kant, an opposition to pure empiricism!). In sum, Swedenborg, with his sharp separation of the cognitive faculty into a rational and thus formal part and into an empirical and thus material part, as separate faculties, has already anticipated essentially the fundamental concept of the Kantian cognitive system. Although naturally he does not define the Kantian categories in particular, one can nevertheless speak of an anticipation by Swedenborg of Kant's doctrine of categories, just for the reason that Swedenborg's doctrine analyzes the *a priori* forms (= categories) of the understanding, to which, moreover, he gave the as yet general term, "*analogs*" of reason. How far Kant let himself be inspired by Swedenborg

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<sup>58</sup> Hans Hoppe, "Swedenborgs Kosmogonie und die Kantsche und die Laplacesche Theorie," in Eberhard Zwink, ed, *Emanuel Swedenborg* (Stuttgart 1988) 30; cf. also Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (ed. Kehrbach) 86.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

to develop his cognitive theory, however, cannot be further clarified here, since it cannot be established as historical fact whether Kant actually had read Swedenborg's *Principia*. All that is definite is that Kant did read Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia* and that in *Dreams of the Spirit-seer* showed himself disappointed by his reading of the esoteric material in Swedenborg's chief work. It is certainly probable that Kant was also familiar with yet other of Swedenborg's works. In spite of the parallels between the astronomy of both philosophers, however, a detailed history of the influence of Swedenborg's thinking cannot be further researched with final certainty.

### 1.2.2. Emanuel Swedenborg's Cosmogony and the Kantian Celestial Theory

It is probably a little known fact that in Vol. 1 of Swedenborg's *Principia rerum naturalium sive novorum testaminum phaenomena mundi elementaris philosophice explicandi* (= *Principles of Natural Science or of New Attempts to Philosophically Explain the Phenomena of the Elementary World*—my translation)<sup>60</sup> there is a complete cosmogony presenting his view of the world's origin and order. Hans Hoppe points to a certain similarity of Swedenborg's cosmogony to Kant's celestial theory.<sup>61</sup> In Hoppe's opinion the basic lines of Wright's works that were preparatory to Kant's celestial theory also are to be found in Swedenborg.<sup>62</sup> If one considers how great an influence Kant's celestial theory has on the modern world-view<sup>63</sup> now at the present time, after having been as well as forgotten for a long time, it is in point of fact of no little significance if the elements of that theory could be demonstrated already to have been presented in Swedenborg's work, and thereby if their actual date of origin moved from 1755 to the year 1734.

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<sup>60</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, *Principia rerum naturalium* (3 vols., Dresden & Leipzig, 1734).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Hans Hoppe, "Die Kosmogonie Emanuel Swedenborgs und die Kantsche und die Laplacesche Theorie," reprinted in Zwink, ed., *Emanuel Swedenborg* 30-38.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Tho. Wright, *An original Theory or new Hypothesis of the Universe* (London, 1750) 9-53; cf. also Hoppe, *Emanuel Swedenborg* (Zwink, ed.) 35.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. M.B. Weinstein, who maintains, "since Kants extra-ordinary achievement no new, fundamental ideas concerning the origin of the world have been gotten." (*Entstehung der Welt und der Erde*, Leipzig, 1908, 137, in Hoppe, in *Emanuel Swedenborg*, Zwink, ed., S.38).

However, since astronomy is not the subject of this work, I must limit myself to the following few suggestions. Twenty-one years after the appearance of Swedenborg's work (*Principia*) Kant wrote his "celestial theory," which takes its beginning with Swedenborg's thought, conceiving of the stationary starry universe as different systems which, in analogy to the solar system, circle around a center.<sup>64</sup>

According to Hoppe's exposition, as the world's foundation Kant posits a Divinely created material which, resolved into its elemental substance, has filled the space of the entire universe.<sup>65</sup> In this Kant opposes Swedenborg, who goes back still further and regards the smallest physical bodies as being composed of a vortex of mathematical points.<sup>66</sup> Consequently in Kant's system the dispersed tiny elementary parts of matter correspond to Swedenborg's first finite bodies or physical points. According to Kant these elements immediately set themselves into motion and are themselves a "source of life."<sup>67</sup> Similarly in Swedenborg's system the motion of the smallest bodies is the essential formative principal of the world and the constitutive characteristic of its living quality.<sup>68</sup>

A formation similar to the composition of the solar system takes place, according to Kant, in the whole of space. The fixed stars, like our sun, are centers of countless systems.<sup>69</sup> Hoppe shows that here also Kant concurs with Swedenborg. Kant explains the Milky Way as being a common central system of all the astral vortexes.<sup>70</sup> He holds the Milky Way to be a broad belt of stars that stretch over the entire heaven in the sense of a great circle. As the Milky Way forms its own system in this way, so is it, in regard to the astral systems lying outside it, the central plane to which the stars in their entirety relate.<sup>71</sup> According to Kant, however, this Milky Way

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. also for the following Hans Hoppe, "Swedenborgs Kosmogonie," *Emanuel Swedenborg*, Zwink, ed. 35; cf. also Kant, *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels* (1755, *Oswalds Klassikern*, A.J. Öttingen) 12, 4.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Hoppe, "Swedenborgs Kosmogonie," *Emanuel Swedenborg*, Zwink, ed. 35.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 36; cf. also Kant, *Theorie des Himmels*, 32.

system does not constitute the entire universe. Star formations spread unendingly throughout its entire breadth, and all the great Milky Way systems must again be thought of as a single, particular system.<sup>72</sup> This fundamental view stands at the center of the Kantian cosmogony. Swedenborg has a similar overall conception.<sup>73</sup> In the particular details as well, Hoppe shows, a richness of cosmogonic thought is displayed, in Swedenborg and in Kant alike.

After noting these striking parallels between Kant and Swedenborg, the compelling question arises, Was Kant familiar with Swedenborg's writing in the year 1755? At present there is no definite answer, nor can the matter be more closely investigated. Only this much can be said: the historical data, especially the respected place which, according to all tradition, Swedenborg must have enjoyed in the contemporary German learned-world, up to the experience of his call in 1745, in Hoppe's opinion make it at least probable that Kant had known Swedenborg's *Principia* before 1755—although possibly not to the extent that at the time he composed the *Celestial Theory* Kant was directly conscious of Swedenborg's cosmogonic thoughts (which nearly disappear in that great three-volume work).<sup>74</sup>

Faced with the parallel between Swedenborg's cosmogony and Kant's celestial theory, Hans Hoppe attempts to construct a fairly certain historical connection between the two scholars via the English philosopher of nature, Wright.

In Hoppe's opinion it was possibly Tho. Wright's cosmogony that functioned as the connecting element between Kant's and Swedenborg's celestial theories. By Kant's own admission it was Wright's cosmogony that inspired him to his own "celestial theory."<sup>75</sup> It is certainly clear that Kant had not himself read Wright's paper, for he knew of it only from, to use his own words, "The Hamburg Independent Adjudicator" (*hamburgerischen freyen Urteilen*), in three numbers of which in the year 1751 is found a ca. 14 page comprehensive announcement of Wright's

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Hans Hoppe, "Swedenborgs Kosmogonie," *Emanuel Swedenborg*, Zwink, ed. 37; also cf. Kant, *Theorie des Himmels* 90.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Hans Hoppe, "Swedenborgs Kosmogonie," *Emanuel Swedenborg*, Zwink, ed. 37.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Hoppe, *Emanuel Swedenborg*, 37.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Hoppe, *Emanuel Swedenborg*, 30.

book. Even though Wright does not mention Swedenborg by name, in spite of his listing the “authorities” in question, Hoppe maintains Wright’s approach to Swedenborg to be demonstrable.<sup>76</sup>

Therefore, in the history of the attempts of human minds to acquire a philosophically based view of the genesis of the world, scholarly integrity requires us all the more not to pass by the man who, well before Kant, had deduced some of the later findings of Kantian epistemology and cosmogony—Emanuel Swedenborg!

### I.2.3. Kant’s Rational Psychology and Swedenborg’s Concept of Man’s Double-Nature

Not only in cosmology are the parallels between Kant’s and Swedenborg’s expositions astonishing, but also in rational psychology, i.e., the doctrine of both thinkers concerning the nature, immortality, and development of the human soul.

In the following comparison between Swedenborg’s esoteric doctrine and Kant’s own metaphysical speculation I rely on Carl du Prel’s often overlooked work, *Kant’s Mystische Weltanschauung*.<sup>77</sup>

In what follows I do not aim to defend Swedenborg’s vision, but merely to restate his theory of the makeup of the human soul, which Kant in his polemical tract of 1766 calls Swedenborgian “dreams of sensation” and sets in contrast to his own “dreams of metaphysics,” but which at the end he acknowledged as valid in his late lectures on rational psychology 1790.

Kant:

The human soul, accordingly, would have to be regarded as now in the present life being linked with two worlds. Of these two worlds, so long as it is a personal entity conjoined with a body, the soul is clearly conscious only of the material world. Nevertheless,

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Hoppe, *Emanuel Swedenborg*, 35. Cf. also Tho. Wright, *An original Theory or new Hypothesis of the Universe* (London, 1750).

<sup>77</sup> Carl du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung (Kants Vorlesungen über rationale Psychologie)* (Leipzig 1889).

as a member of the spirit world it receives and communicates the pure inflow of immaterial nature, the consequence of which is that, as soon as the soul's conjunction with the body has ceased, what alone remains is the association in which it ever stands with spiritual nature, and this association must then open itself more clearly to the soul's awareness.<sup>78</sup>

Swedenborg:

Man was so created as to be at the same time in the spiritual world and in the natural world. The spiritual world is where angels are, and the natural where men are; and because man was so created there was given to him an Internal and External—an Internal through which he may be in the spiritual world, and an external through which he may be in the natural world. His Internal is what is called the internal man, and his External what is called the external man.<sup>79</sup>

Kant:

Consequently it has as well as been demonstrated, or, it could be easily proven, if one wanted to go into the details, or still better, it will at some future time be proven, I do not know where or when, that the human soul in this life too stands in an indissoluble association with the whole of invisible nature in the spirit world, that it reciprocally influences this world and receives impressions from them. Man, however, is not conscious of this association as long as all is well.<sup>80</sup>

Swedenborg:

And yet man has been so created that as to his inner nature he cannot die.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Träume*, 36ff.

<sup>79</sup> Swedenborg, *The New Jerusalem*, no. 25, in du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXIV.

<sup>80</sup> *Träume*, 38.

<sup>81</sup> Swedenborg, "Why the Lord Was Born On Earth," in du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXIV.

I am allowed to add the following. Every single person, even while he is living in the body, is in a community with spirits as far as his own spirit is concerned, even though he is unaware of the fact.<sup>82</sup>

Kant:

Consequently, it is indeed one and the same subject which at the same moment belongs as a single member to the invisible world. However, it is not the same person, because the conceptions belonging to the one world, on account of their different nature, are not concomitant to ideas belonging to the other world. And therefore, what I think as a spirit, as a man I do not remember, and vice versa...Moreover, were the conceptions of the spirit world as clear and intuitive as one might want, still this would not be sufficient to make me conscious of them as a man. However much even the conception of oneself (i.e. as a soul) as a spirit may be acquired by deduction, it exists with no one as a vision and experience based concept.<sup>83</sup>

Swedenborg:

For man in his essence is a spirit, and is simultaneously in company with spirits as to his interiors. Therefore he whose interiors are opened by God is able to speak with them as man with man. It has now been granted me to enjoy this privilege daily for twelve years.<sup>84</sup>

From this it is clear that man has been so created that while living here on earth among men he is at the same time living in heaven among the angels. However, because man has become so corporeal, he has closed heaven to himself.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Swedenborg, "Von der Geisterwelt," no. 438, in du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXIV.

<sup>83</sup> *Träume*, 48ff.

<sup>84</sup>Swedenborg, *Von den Erden im Weltall*, in du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXV.

<sup>85</sup>Swedenborg, *Himmlische Geheimnisse*, no. 1885, in du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXV.

Kant:

On the other hand it is also probable that spiritual natures can have no conscious physical sensation of the body's world, because they are not associated with any material part of a person. Lacking this they have no means of becoming conscious of their position in the material universe, or, by means of artificial sense organs, of becoming conscious of the relationship of extended beings in relation to themselves and to one another. However, they could very well inflow into the souls of men, as they are beings of a kindred nature; they could at the same time have a mutual relationship with them. But this relationship would be such that in the process of communicating images, those which the soul, as a being dependent on the body's world, contains within itself could not pass over into other spiritual beings; nor could the concepts of the latter, as graphic images of immaterial things, pass over clearly into the consciousness of men, at least not in their actual nature, because the materials of these two kinds of ideas are of different nature.<sup>86</sup>

Swedenborg:

That man is unconscious of the fact that his mind is in the midst of spirits results from the circumstance that those spirits with whom he is in association in the spiritual world think and speak spiritually, while his own spirit as long as he is in the material body, does this naturally, and spiritual thought and speech can be neither understood nor perceived by the natural man.<sup>87</sup>

The soul is nothing more than the man's life, but the actual man is the spirit; and the earthly body he carries around in the world is simply a serviceable instrument through which the spirit, which is the man himself, exercises its proper influence in the natural world.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Träume*, 38f.

<sup>87</sup> Swedenborgs *Leben und Lehre*, in du Prel: *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXV.

<sup>88</sup> Swedenborg, *Von der Hölle*, no. 602, in du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXV.

Kant:

The life of man is two-fold: animal and spiritual. Animal life is the life of man as man; and for this the body is needed, so that the man may live. The other life is the spiritual life, where the soul, independent from the body, must continue to exercise the same acts of life. For animal life a body is needed. The soul is then joined to the body; it acts in the body and gives it life. Now, if and when the machine of the body is destroyed, so that the soul can no longer work in it, the animal life indeed ceases, but not the spiritual.<sup>89</sup>

Swedenborg:

Man, considered in and for himself, is a spirit, and the bodily element which has been given him for the performance of functions in the natural world is only the tool and agency of the spirit.<sup>90</sup>

Man, considered in himself, is a spirit and is in a comparable form as well. For all in man that lives and is conscious is due to his spirit; and there is nothing in the least in man, from his head to the soles of his feet, that does not have life and sensation. From this it follows that when the body is separated from his spirit, which is called dying, the man nevertheless remains and lives a man.<sup>91</sup>

Kant here presumes, as did Swedenborg, that there is a real world of spirits, that the human soul belongs to that world, that the earthly existence of living creatures is merely temporary, the ruling actuality being the contemporaneous suprasensuous existence, and finally that the soul of earthly man empowers his intellectual nature to concurrently receive influences from the spirit world.

Whence is this striking similarity in the view of the two philosophers concerning the nature, place, and continuance of the human soul?

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<sup>89</sup> Kant, *Kants Vorlesungen über rationale Psychologie*, Pölitz, (Berlin, 1968) AA XXVIII, 5. Band, 1. Hälfte, 236.

<sup>90</sup> Swedenborg, *Von der geistigen Welt*, no. 432, in du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXVf.

<sup>91</sup> Swedenborg, in du Prel: *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXVI.

Swedenborg claimed that he had a social acquaintance with spirits, and Kant himself, long before he had heard of Swedenborg, had occupied himself with the question of under what circumstances it would be possible at all for a person to have a view into the suprasensuous world.<sup>92</sup> He comes to the conclusion that it would be possible only under one condition: namely, if the person were simultaneously a physical being and member of the spirit realm. This was Kant's very opinion not only in respect to humankind, but he felt it was the case also with all living creatures. Therefore he said in his polemical tract:

I admit that I am very inclined to maintain the presence of immaterial beings in the world, and to place my soul itself in the class of these [immaterial] entities.<sup>93</sup>

In *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer—Illustrated by the Dreams of Metaphysics*, consequently, Kant does not, as is generally assumed today, deny the existence of a spirit world. Quite the contrary, he premises it expressly.<sup>94</sup> It is quite clear for him that without a spirit world, no hope of a continuation of life after death would exist, a hope which he tenderly nourishes in his moral doctrine, especially in the postulate of God and Immortality. In fact, it is in these "Dreams" that one finds the following statement, intentionally overlooked and scarcely ever quoted by the present-day worshippers of a misunderstood "crusher of everything":

...no doubt an upright soul has never lived who could bear the thought that everything comes to an end with death, and whose noble sentiment has not been lifted to the hope of a future.<sup>95</sup>

And so it surprises only those who misunderstand Kant in order to better use him for their own purposes, when, in the *Dreams*, we indeed

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. *Kants Vorlesungen über Metaphysik aus den Jahren 1762-64*, Herder, ed. (Berlin, 1968) AA XXVIII, 5. Band, 1. Hälfte. Cf. also following chapter.

<sup>93</sup> *Träume*, 25.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Friedemann Horn, "Schelling und Swedenborg - 'Ein Ringen um die letzten Dinge'", in Zwink (ed.), *Emanuel Swedenborg* 142.

<sup>95</sup> *Träume*, 127.

find a precis of Kant's own images of the spiritual world. That this Kantian sketch of a spirit world resembles Swedenborg's view almost like one egg resembles another, Kant himself acknowledges in one place in *Dreams*:

As regards such offensive comparisons, consequently, I frankly say I am not jesting and, to put it briefly, either one must presume that there is more good sense and truth in Swedenborg's writings than appears on first glance, or that when he coincides with my system, it is only by accident—like the poets sometimes, who when they rage, prophecy, as is popularly believed or at least as they themselves say, when they now and then meet with success.<sup>96</sup>

However, he still resists comparing his own "philosophical brainchild," as he calls it, with Swedenborg's "confusedly misshapen and absurd testimony." One notes here the expressions, "brainchild" and "testimony."<sup>97</sup> Kant *thinks out* his spirit world in the form in which he describes it, Swedenborg *sees* it. Thinker and witness stand opposite to each other.

To emphasize this once more: At this time Kant denied merely the premise of Swedenborg's vision, namely Swedenborg's assertion that he owes the thoughts he has expressed not to himself and his own reason but to what he has seen. For Kant persisted in the standpoint (even in his lectures on "rational psychology") that man could have no glimpses into the other world as long as he was still living in his body.<sup>98</sup>

Kant postulates this limit on man's knowing during his lifetime—which the soul could certainly exceed when freed from the body by death (a point which emerges from his lectures)—with all the passion of a dogmatic, without being able to prove this claim. Against this we set a statement of Swedenborg, found in the beginning of *Heavenly Secrets in the Word of God*, the reading of which had called forth Kant's intense criticism of Swedenborg. This statement anticipates Kant's objection almost literally. Swedenborg writes:

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 96f.

<sup>97</sup> *Träume*, 96.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Träume*, 128; Cf. Kant, *Vorlesungen über rationale Psychologie*, ed. Pölitz 259f.

I am well aware of the fact that many people will object that nobody can possibly speak to spirits or angels so long as he is living in the body, and that many will call it a delusion. Some will say that I have spread these things around to win people's trust, while other will say something different again. But none of this deters me; for I have seen, I have heard, I have felt.<sup>99</sup>

As regards the issue itself, namely, whether already here on earth a person can glimpse behind the curtain which separates the two worlds from each other, for this there is no compelling proof. In spite of extensive parapsychological research in the last hundred years, the question remains still open.

That one should do what is good for the sake of Goodness and should believe the truth for the sake of Truth is Kant's maxim. One who is familiar with Swedenborg's works even only partially, namely, those *Heavenly Secrets of the Word of God* treated so contemptuously by Kant in *Träume*, knows that this maxim is to be found in them in ever new variations, partially and word for word.<sup>100</sup>

As one sees from Kant's own speculations, which are found in isolated places in the second section of the dogmatic part of his polemic tract, *Dreams of a S.*, in spite of the rational challenge he serves to Swedenborg with his lampoon, at the time he is composing *Dreams* there also exists in his mind a definite inclination to metaphysical speculation about a "suprasensuous world" or "transcendental spirit realm," with which Swedenborg alleges to have contact—and to which Kant has already forbidden himself entry.

Now since in his pre-critical period up to the composition of his destructive Swedenborg critique in his polemic tract of 1766 Kant granted at least the possibility of the of passage of transcendental images into physical consciousness,<sup>101</sup> he had never been ashamed to investigate the case of Swedenborg. The specific capabilities that reports ascribed to

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<sup>99</sup> Swedenborg, *Arcana Coelestia*, (1749-56) no. 68.

<sup>100</sup> Friedemann Horn, "Schelling und Swedenborg," in Zwink (ed.) *Emanuel Swedenborg* 142.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. in this matter the metaphysical lectures of Kant in the following chapter.

Swedenborg corresponded exactly to those which Kant associated with his concept of a being formed simultaneously of spirit and body. He says that we would “be looking at astonishing consequences,” if only **one** fact as reported by Swedenborg, could be regarded as proven.<sup>102</sup>

He had already drawn out these astonishing conclusions before he had heard of Swedenborg. However, he wanted to have them regarded as “dreams of metaphysics,” as long as the experiential proof was lacking.

Thus far had Kant come independently with his own thoughts, when the seer Swedenborg let himself be heard from, which turned his thoughts once again to this subject. The abilities ascribed to Swedenborg corresponded fully to Kant’s concept of a being who belonged to two worlds simultaneously.

A consequence of Kant’s reading of Swedenborg’s writings was of course that he called him a fantast. However, although the content of Swedenborg’s visions occasioned and justified his so doing, he nonetheless thought otherwise about the premise on which these visions were based, namely, man’s double nature. Kant could not include this in his unfavorable judgment of Swedenborg, because otherwise he could not have linked his own moral doctrine with his theory of knowledge,<sup>103</sup> for his own moral philosophy presupposes precisely the double nature of our being (intelligible and physical) postulated by Swedenborg. Furthermore, Kant’s own speculations about man’s nature—which he presents polemically only when treating of Swedenborg’s “dreams,” but at the end earnestly teaches himself in his “psychology”—agree exactly with Swedenborg’s theories. Nevertheless, the case with Kant’s exposition about the possibility of a mental, moral spirit world in the *Dreams* is not merely one of an imitation of Swedenborg’s visions, as one might perhaps think. Kant’s own “visions,” in spite of their striking similarity to Swedenborg’s doctrine, still quite unmistakably bear Kant’s own style, as is evident from the comparison made above. One must therefore presume that after giving up Swedenborg, Kant still clung to his cherished idea and, although giving up all claim to empirical knowledge, depicted the “astonishing consequences” resulting from man’s double nature. The evidence for this

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. *Träume* 5.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Chapter 6.

assertion I will present here now, when, in anticipation, I take a few excerpts from Kant's lectures on rational psychology from the years 1783-1790, which will be dealt with more fully in Chapter Eight.

What are these "astonishing consequences"? First it is clear that in the Kant-Swedenborg view, man, birth and death have taken on a quite different meaning than that usually given to them. If we are immersed in the earthly order of things only to part of our beings, but as mental beings belong also to a mental world, then neither is birth our beginning nor death our end. Immediately, therefore, two problems are presented, pre-existence and personal immortality. The pre-existence of the human soul as well as its immortality must be affirmed if there is to be a contemporaneous existence of earthly man with the transcendent subject. Kant here regards the soul as simple, temporal substance and not merely as a Paralogism, as in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but as a real, existing substance, to which he—just as Swedenborg—ascribes personal immortality.

For many Kantians it will certainly sound strange to read that Kant taught *pre-existence*. Such a passage is found, however, in his "Psychology" and, according to Mrongovius, in another lecture separate from it.<sup>104</sup> There is admittedly a certain, not wholly unjustified doubt<sup>105</sup> about the authenticity of these lectures. Nevertheless these lectures of Kant deserve a philosophic appreciation, which they have been denied up to this point.<sup>106</sup> For this reason I have devoted an entire chapter to an assessment of them, from which in advance I here draw the essential points.<sup>107</sup>

In a noteworthy passage in "Psychology" he defines life as the conjunction of the soul with a body. Birth is the beginning, death the end of this conjunction. Birth and death being only conditions of the soul, they presuppose therefore the previous and subsequent existence of the soul. Before birth the soul is in the same spiritual state into which it returns again by death. By its being conjoined to a body it falls as it were into a cavern, a dungeon, and thereby its proper spiritual life is inhibited.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Cf. *Kant's Vorlesungen über die rationale Psychologie*, Pölitz (ed.), 232, and *Kants Vorlesungen über Metaphysik, 1783*, Mrongovius (ed.), (Berlin 1983) AA XXIX, 6 vols, 1. Hälfte, 2. Teil, 218.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. the literary history critique in Chapter 7.1.

<sup>106</sup> Except in du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Chapter 7.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *Kants Vorlesungen über rationale Psychologie*, Pölitz (ed.), 232f., Cf. also Chapter 7.2.

According to Kant, therefore, material birth is a diminution of our being only insofar as during our life we fail to make use of the transcendental capability. For the on-going active transcendental creature, however, life is a gain, since previously he had no consciousness of the tangible world nor of himself as a human being, but now he soaks up life's experiences.

Now as to death. In *Dreams* Kant has already drawn his conclusion from the contemporaneity of our double being:

If, then, the soul's association with the body's world were ultimately loosed at death, life in the other world would merely be a natural continuation of that connection which it already had with it in this life, and the net results of the morality practiced here would fit themselves to the actions there which a being standing in indissoluble association with the whole spirit world has already previously performed there according to spiritual laws. The Present and the Future would therefore be as it were all of a piece and would constitute a perpetual whole, in accord with the very order of Nature.<sup>109</sup>

Death for Kant, therefore, is an enhancement of individuality in the same sense as in Plato's cave metaphor: for man it is such in that as his soul departs the earthly "prison," the "cave"; for the transcendental subject itself, however, it is such by virtue of the renunciation of earthly acquisitions. This view, which he wants to be known in his polemic tract only as a caricature of Swedenborg's "dreaming," finds a serious parallel in his *Psychology*:

Since the body is a lifeless material entity, it is an impediment to life. As long as the soul is joined to the body, it must bear these impediments and in all ways seeks to lighten them. However, when the life of the body now completely ceases, the soul is freed from her impediments and now for the first time properly begins

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<sup>109</sup> *Träume* 45f.

to live. Death therefore is not the absolute cessation of life, but a release from the impediments to a completely full life.<sup>110</sup>

Experience teaches only about the death of the bodily man. Kant wants to set limits on knowledge in order to give room for belief, as he says again and again in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Here, in his later *Lectures on Rational Psychology*, he goes a daring step further. He presents his own belief as objective knowledge:

No opponent can find an argument in experience that would demonstrate that the soul is mortal. The immortality of the soul is accordingly at least secure against any objections derived from experience.<sup>111</sup>

Positive proof for him follows from the nature of the transcendental subject, which, being joined to the material body only transitorily, is not at all disturbed by its dissolution.

In the “mystical” *Weltanschauung*—as Carl du Prel, the researcher in occultism, terms Kant’s position in his 1790 lectures on rational psychology—the transcendental condition appears to be the rule and human life only a transitory exception. Life is thus a greater riddle than death. Kant inclines to this view already in *Dreams*, where life, as “a partnership between a spirit and a body,” he terms a mysterious something, and says:

This immaterial world, therefore, can be regarded as an independent whole, whose parts are subordinated to each other in a reciprocal connection and association, even without the mediation of physical things, so that this latter, physical relationship is an accidental one, and can only fall to the lot of a few. Indeed, even where it is met, this does not prevent that just those immaterial beings that affect each other through the agency of matter do not, apart from this, also stand in a special and complete connection; they continually exercise reciprocal influences on each other as

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<sup>110</sup> Kant, *Vorlesungen über rationale Psychologie*, Pölitz (ed.) 237.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

immaterial beings, so that their relationship by way of matter is only contingent and rests on a special Divine provision, while the other relationship is natural and indissoluble.<sup>112</sup>

Now, as regards the nature of the future life: Kant compares it with the state before birth. But because we do not cease being transcendent during earthly life, this life is in no way an interruption of the transcendent existence, but is merely a doubling of our existence. Just as with a meteorite, whose shining path should not be considered as an isolated phenomenon for the reason that the meteorite chances to pass through our atmosphere, so also is our proper existence not interrupted by its entrance into the earthly order. And the course of life enlightened by earthly consciousness is also at the same time a part of a greater path.<sup>113</sup>

Admittedly the comparison does not apply further, since with death there is question of a transfer into a spatial hereafter or beyond. Kant, in agreement with Swedenborg, characterizes the "other side" as merely what lies beyond the threshold of perception, as a change of our mode of seeing things:

The separation of the soul from the body is not a matter of being changed to a different location...When the soul separates from the body, it will not have the same sensorial view of this world; **it will not see the world as it appears, but as it is.** So it is that the separation of the soul from the body consists in the change of a sensorial view into a spiritual one; and this is the other world. The other world is consequently not another place, but only another way of seeing things. As to objects the other world remains the same as this; as to substance it is no different; it is only viewed spiritually.<sup>114</sup>

Thus, then, Kant's definition of heaven too agrees with Swedenborg's. The latter says:

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<sup>112</sup> *Träume* 31.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Kant's *Vorlesungen über rationale Psychologie*, Pölitz (ed.) 254.

<sup>114</sup> Kant's *Vorlesungen über rationale Psychologie*, 254.

From this it is now evident that states and qualities of the inward parts make heaven, and that heaven is within a person, not outside of him...The opening of heaven means the opening of the inner sight, which is the sight of the spirit in man.<sup>115</sup>

Striking to the student of Kant is his explicit presupposition that after a man's physical death, or in more precise Kantian terminology, after the separation of the (immortal) soul from the (mortal) body, man could come into a kind of mental view by means of which the freed soul could perceive the world *as it is in itself*. This contention of Kant, insofar as one accepts the lectures as genuine, stands in flagrant contradiction to his strict limitation in *Critique of Pure Reason* on what is humanly knowable from purely physical perceptions.

It is to be presumed that Kant's *Lectures on Metaphysics* originated some ten to twenty years later than the *Dreams*.<sup>116</sup> In these lectures, however, which he probably gave over a period of two or perhaps three semesters, he called Swedenborg's doctrines "noble" and gave a short presentation of them.<sup>117</sup> He therefore separates Swedenborg's visions from the metaphysical premise which Swedenborg gives for such visions being possible. Kant's conceptions of the nature of man in his *Lectures* are still the same as in *Dreams*. The sole difference is that here they are no longer expounded with the same speculative, lightly ironic tone as in the *Dreams*, but in an almost dogmatic style. He still—or again—teaches the contemporaneity of the transcendental being with the earthly person.

The question raised by du Prel in view of this metaphysical conviction of Kant, Was Kant secretly a spiritist? must certainly be unequivocally answered in the negative. Kant had associated no sort of "spirit-contact" with the double nature of our beings, but had only wanted to establish man's ability to act morally. Also, for Kant the last step of the theoretical

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<sup>115</sup> Swedenborg, *Vom Himmel*, nos. 33, 171, in du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung*, S.XXXVI.

<sup>116</sup> According to Erdman some ten, according to Pölitz some twenty years later than *Dreams of a Spirit-seer*. Cf. Benno Erdmann, "Mitteilungen über Kants metaphysischen Standpunkt in der Zeit um 1777," in *Phil. Monatshefte* 19, 1883, S.144, in Vladimir Satura, *Kant-Studien—Ergänzungsheft 101* (Bonn, 1971) 14; cf. von Pölitz, *Vorrede zu Kants Vorlesungen über Metaphysik* (Erfurt, 1821); cf. zur ausführlichen *Literaturkritik* Kapitel 7.1.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Kant's *Vorlesungen über die rationale Psychologie*, Pölitz (ed.) 257f.

explanation of occult phenomena was missing, since in spite of his far-reaching concessions to Swedenborg he never entirely departed from his critical path. In the illuminating lectures on “rational psychology” he does not also want to grant the simultaneous occurrence of sensorial and mental sight—although this contemporaneity of sensorial and mental sight logically derives from Kant’s dogma of the contemporaneity of a transcendental and sensory being.<sup>118</sup>

To du Prel’s question of whether Kant could today conceive of such a contemporaneity of spiritual and sensorial vision, naturally only a hypothetical answer can be given. In any case, today much more material for his empirical research on occult phenomena would be available to Kant than at that time. In the first place Swedenborg’s case would present itself to him today more favorably than then. Today the instances of Swedenborg’s gift of seership are much better documented than at that time. Tafel, the university librarian in Tübingen supplied evidence, in two publications, that in addition to the witnesses to Swedenborg’s gift of seership listed by Kant and Wieland still twenty more could be named, and that in addition to the instances mentioned by Kant, nine further cases of a similar kind could be added.<sup>119</sup>

Kant, who turned to Sweden to have Swedenborg’s case investigated, would today probably investigate other occult phenomena. He would scarcely pass by the empirical data of modern parapsychology, but rather study it—just as his successor and critical colleague Arthur Schopenhauer did. In so doing he would possibly have found the experiential evidence he lacked for the validity of the intuitions he had at that time. And he would then have put in place the capstone of his theory of occult phenomena, which is the logical consequence of the double nature of our beings.

Kant, of course, still denied the possibility of contemporaneous experience of both worlds in spite of his far-reaching concessions even in his later lectures on “rational psychology”:

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. Kant’s *Vorlesungen über die rationale Psychologie*, Pölitz (ed.) 259f.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. du Prel, *Kants mystische Weltanschauung* S.LIII; cf. also, Immanuel Tafel, *Supplement zu Kants Biographie* (Stuttgart, 1845); and Tafel, *Zwölf unumstößliche Erfahrungsbeweise für die Unsterblichkeit der menschlichen Seele* (Stuttgart, 1845).

I cannot be in this world and in that world at the same time. For if I have a sensorial view, I am in this world, and if I have a spiritual view, I am in the other world. These cannot take place at the same time.<sup>120</sup>

However, as the researcher in occultism, Carl de Prel, further points out, today on the basis of occult phenomena of somnambulism Kant would probably acknowledge that even if both forms of sight, the sensorial and the mental, do not occur simultaneously, they still do occur alternately during earthly life and can come into physical consciousness. So there are states of ostensibly deep sleep, into which spiritual sight is said to enter. Spiritual sight becomes a possibility only when the sensorial aspect of life is suppressed. Schopenhauer therefore posits a so-called “dream organ” as the mediating agency between the sensorial and the extrasensory, spiritual mode of sight.<sup>121</sup>

To this extent one can really compare Swedenborg's gift of seership as conceived of by Kant to Juno's gift to Teiresias—who in making Teiresias blind could thereby him with the gift of prophecy—; and one can say, “the sight and knowledge of the other world can only be attained if one forfeits some of that understanding that one has need of for the present world.”<sup>122</sup>

Indisputably the real and essential role of Kant's life was as a critical thinker. He investigated the range, boundaries, and capabilities of human reason; he had made this reason dependent on experience and forbidden it speculative pleasure excursions. However as mighty a spirit as Kant cannot condemn himself once and for all to metaphysical meaninglessness. It is extremely unlikely that the great philosopher should have been lacking in that drive which is the psychological basis of all philosophy, man's metaphysical need. If the critic Kant had further taught, that before we approach the objects of knowledge, the organ of knowing must first be tested, that consequently we must inquire into the nature of man before

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. Kant's *Vorlesungen über rationale Psychologie*, Pölit (ed.) 259f.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. du Prel, *Kant's Mystische Weltanschauung*, S.LIII; cf. also, Immanuel Tafel, *Supplement zu Kants Biographie*; and, *Zwölf unumstößliche Erfahrungsbeweise für die Unsterblichkeit der menschlichen Seele* (Stuttgart, 1845).

<sup>122</sup> *Träume* 56f.

we explain the world, then Kant the metaphysician would have followed the same course too and would have acknowledged the dictum *know thy self* as the actual entranceway to metaphysics, while he was trying to show that the awareness of the moral law arises from pure reason. For him as critic equally as metaphysician, the primary issue is the human mystery. In this realm, however, he did not deny himself speculation, at least in the form of hypotheses.<sup>123</sup> This he did in the hope that precisely in Nature's most highly complex and cryptic structure, man, by further penetrating man's nature, he would surely further be able to empirically establish his own metaphysical hypotheses about the location, nature and capabilities of the human soul after its physical death.

On one point in his chief work, just as in *Practical Reason*, Kant nevertheless returns to his metaphysical view of man. As far back as in *Dreams* Kant sees a sign of man's intelligible nature in the moral impulse. For Kant the standards of ethics are rooted in man's intelligible character, and he protects himself against the superficial explanation of these based on a moral feeling (developed in a somewhat Darwinian fashion), whereby ethics would be transformed into merely empirical psychology. The moral impulse, which is like "a foreign will operative in us"<sup>124</sup> and like a "hidden power that drives us to focus our attention on the welfare of others or on the desires of strangers,"<sup>125</sup> appears to him here as an outflow from another world, whose beings are bound to a "moral unity."<sup>126</sup>

Because the moral character of the deed has to do with the inner state of the spirit, naturally it is also only in the immediate company of spirits that it can produce the adequate influence of morality in its totality. In this way it would happen that man's soul must already in this life take its place among the spiritual substances of the universe according to its moral state...<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. the extensive quotations from Kant's *Vorlesungen über die rationale Psychologie* in Chapter 7.2.

<sup>124</sup> *Träume*, 41.

<sup>125</sup> *Träume*, 42.

<sup>126</sup> *Träume*, 43.

<sup>127</sup> *Träume*.

If we now apply this to the spirit appearances which are regarded by Swedenborg and the spiritists as a kind of empirical proof for the existence of a moral spirit world, Kant does not *a priori* deny the possibility of it. For him it is “just as stupid a prejudice to believe without any reason none of the many things told having some semblance of truth, as it is to believe unquestionably all of what is generally reported.”<sup>128</sup> And in his polemical tract he even admits to the two minds he has regarding such “spirit stories”:

What philosopher, standing between the solemn assertions of a rational and powerfully convinced eyewitness and the inner resistance of unconquerable doubt, has not once made himself look as ridiculous as one can imagine? Should he deny the validity of all such spirit appearances? What grounds can he adduce for their rejection?<sup>129</sup>

And at the conclusion of the theoretical part of *Dreams*, from this, in his opinion, inescapable ignorance about occult phenomena of this kind, he draws the philosophical conclusion that he should refrain from making a final judgment about them, since one can know basically nothing of this transcendental realm.

The very same ignorance also restrains me from venturing to deny too entirely that there is any truth in these many kinds of spirit stories—but rather, with the usual albeit curious reservation, to draw each single instance of the same into doubt, whilst giving some credence to them as a whole.<sup>130</sup>

For all that, the skeptic Kant in his polemical tract knows that all spirit stories are greatly suffused with illusion, and this consideration has the inconvenient consequence of making his own assumptions about man's

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<sup>128</sup> *Träume*, 5.

<sup>129</sup> *Träume*, 4f.

<sup>130</sup> *Träume*, 78f.

double nature again appear questionable.<sup>131</sup> He admits further that the mind's scale for judgment of appearances in the case of departed souls is not entirely impartial, and that all these accounts "weigh noticeably only in the scale of hope, but on inspection actually appear to consist of nothing but air."<sup>132</sup>

Because philosophical systems contradict each other, the critic Kant even goes so far as to call them dreams. He says that "we must be patient with the contradictions in their visions until the gentlemen who have had them finish dreaming."<sup>133</sup> And because he has still ahead of him the primary task of his life, the replacement of dogmatic philosophy with critical philosophy, he speaks of his own metaphysical assumptions as "fables from the fool's paradise of metaphysics."<sup>134</sup>

However, one must take such statements rather as symptoms of the critical rejection of all metaphysical speculation at the time *Dreams* was being composed. These were the times in which his critical spirit grew and he more and more devoted himself to his actual life's task, reason's critical analysis of itself. It however would be one-sided to pick out and lay stress on the polemical statements in his tract without attending to the opposing position he takes to Swedenborg in his letter of 1763,<sup>135</sup> in his early lectures on metaphysics,<sup>136</sup> and in his lectures on rational psychology.<sup>137</sup>

Quite generally Kant's ambivalent judgment of Swedenborg's gift of seership finds a credible systematic explanation in his inner division between on the one side his own critical reason (which categorically prohibits him from any slip across the border into the "fools paradise" of metaphysics) and on the other his moral hope, which again and again threatens to cross this border which the use of reason has so clearly drawn.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *Träume*, 70f.

<sup>132</sup> *Träume*, 76.

<sup>133</sup> *Träume*, 58.

<sup>134</sup> *Träume*, 89.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Chapter 2.1.2.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Chapter 2.1.3.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Chapter 7.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Chapter 6.

In contrast to this ambivalent view which manifests itself in Kant's pre-critical period, however, it must be noted that in Kant's "Psychology" nothing more of that rational challenge to Swedenborg's metaphysical teachings shows itself. On the contrary, here he himself lectures on them and calls them "noble." Therefore I am certainly right in regarding what Kant has held as true throughout and beyond his critical period as **his real belief**. This, however, is his view of the contemporaneity of the transcendental being with the earthly person, and on this point he is doubtless sure about this, because without it his ethical system would not be plausible. In this respect *Dreams* and *Psychology* are in agreement with *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and with *The Metaphysics of Ethics*. Through all of his periods Kant has preserved the view that "our fate in the future world may very much depend on how well we will have fulfilled our duties in the present one."<sup>139</sup>

Summarizing the foregoing in a systematically thought-out manner, the following agreements between Kant's and Swedenborg's metaphysical convictions logically result, as Carl du Prel has also advanced:—

1. There exists another world than that which is apparent to the senses.
2. There exists a transcendental being
3. This being exists simultaneously with the earthly person.  
These points logically entail:
  - a.) The inadequacy of self-awareness for the knowledge of our being.
  - b.) The only partial involvement of our being in the material world.
4. The pre-existence of the soul.
5. The immortality of the soul.
6. Birth as the incarnation of a transcendental being.
7. Material existence as the exception, transcendental existence as the rule.
8. The need for a rational psychology for proving the soul's existence.
9. The voice of conscience is a voice of the transcendental being.
10. The "Beyond" as simply what lies on the other side of the threshold of perception.

(To be continued)

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<sup>139</sup> *Träume* 28.

