

# THE REALM OF ENDS AS A COMMUNITY OF SPIRITS: KANT AND SWEDENBORG ON THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE CLEANSING OF THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION

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In this paper I examine the genesis of Kant's conception of a realm of ends, arguing that Kant first started to think of morality in terms of striving to be a member of a realm of ends, understood as an ideal community, in the early 1760s, and that he was influenced in this by his encounter with the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. In 1766 Kant published *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, a commentary on Swedenborg's magnum opus, *Heavenly Secrets*. Most commentators take Kant's attitude towards Swedenborg to have been entirely negative, and argue that, at the most, Kant's encounter with him had a purely negative impact on Kant's development, inducing him to reject certain of his early metaphysical positions. I argue, in contrast, that Swedenborg had a positive influence on Kant's development, particularly on his ethics, for Kant's conception of a realm of ends is modeled on Swedenborg's conception of heaven as a community of spirits governed by moral laws.

For the mature Kant, the idea of a realm of ends is an idea of pure reason, being the idea of an intelligible world, or community of autonomous beings. Central to this idea is the thought that there is some sort of real interaction between members of such a community. Until his engagement with Swedenborg, however, Kant had believed that interaction was only possible between embodied beings. I argue that Kant's engagement with Swedenborg in the early 1760s convinced him that it is possible for us to conceive of interaction between spirits. Swedenborg's descriptions of heaven as a community of spirits governed by moral laws, standing in non-spatial relationships to one another, provided Kant with a way of conceiving of a community of intelligible individuals. That Kant's idea of a realm of ends is modeled on a particular conception of heaven should not be surprising if we remember that Kant often refers to the idea of a realm of ends as 'the kingdom of Heaven'.<sup>1</sup>

Although we can trace the genesis of Kant's idea of a realm of ends to Swedenborg's account of heaven, by the 1780s Kant's idea of such a realm had departed from Swedenborg's conception in two major respects. Firstly although Swedenborg conceives of heaven as a kingdom governed by divine laws, he does not suggest that the members of the kingdom must be the 'givers' of these laws. The mature Kant, in contrast, will argue that the idea of a realm of ends is the idea of a community in which the members of the community are the givers of the laws that provide the community with its unity. In other words, the mature Kant believes that our idea of a realm of ends is the idea of a community of autonomous individuals. Secondly, Swedenborg conceives of heaven as a community of spirits governed by laws of love, or what Kant will call laws of benevolence. The mature Kant, however, will maintain that we must conceive of the realm of ends as a political

community, or ideal state, governed by juridical laws. Laws of benevolence, he will argue, are only possible in such a political community, and so we cannot conceive of a community governed solely by laws of love or benevolence.

I argue, then, that Swedenborg had a *positive* influence on Kant's development. This is not to say that Kant was in any sense a follower or secret disciple of Swedenborg. Indeed he almost certainly believed that Swedenborg was deranged, and that his visions were almost certainly due to some physiologically induced mental illness. This does not imply, however, that he did not find his visions morally inspiring. My claim is that what Kant took from Swedenborg was the idea that morality demands that we develop a character that makes us a potential member of a realm of ends, or heaven considered as a community of spirits. Although Kant would later develop a more sophisticated account of the nature of such a community, Kant's idea that morality involves striving to be a member of such an ideal community, and that the criterion for citizenship in such a community is the state of one's character, dates back to the mid-1760s and his engagement with Swedenborg.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the positive influence on Kant's ethical development, Swedenborg also had a positive influence on the development of Kant's theoretical philosophy, in particular upon his belief in the ideality of space and time. For Swedenborg himself believed that the spatiality and temporality of objects of experience were due to our mode of perception and not due to the nature of the objects themselves; Swedenborg believed that after death our 'doors of perception' will be opened and we will experience things as they are in themselves. As we shall see, at least up until the early 1790s, Kant himself was committed to the position that after our bodily death we can hope for such a change in our form of intuition.

The claim that Swedenborg had a *positive* influence on Kant's development is a controversial position, for the majority of Kant scholars who attribute any influence to Swedenborg attribute a merely *negative* influence. The general structure of this *negative influence thesis* is that, prior to reading Swedenborg Kant held a position that was similar to Swedenborg's. Upon reading Swedenborg, however, Kant realized the absurdity of his own earlier position; according to the *negative influence thesis*, then, Kant regarded Swedenborg's writing as a *reductio ad absurdum* of his earlier metaphysics. The two most significant recent proponents of the negative influence thesis are Laywine and Schönfeld.<sup>3</sup>

This paper has seven sections. I will (a) sketch the key features of Swedenborg's life and work, (b) briefly outline the details of Kant's encounter with Swedenborg and argue (c) that the period of this encounter with Swedenborg probably coincided with some sort of moral rebirth or conversion in Kant's life. I then (d) compare the mature Kant's conception of an ideal moral community with Swedenborg's conception of heaven and (e) show that Kant's conception of death was strongly and explicitly influenced by Swedenborg's conception of death as a cleansing of the doors of perception. In the final two sections I (f) explain my alternative to Laywine and Schönfeld's account of Kant's development and then (g) discuss in more detail my account of Kant's change of position in the 1760s.

### (a) Swedenborg

Swedenborg was born in 1688, and was an important figure in enlightened Swedish intellectual life in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. He died in 1772. Amongst other things he was a respected engineer, mathematician and scientist. He wrote important works on metallurgy, chemistry, mineralogy and astronomy, and published the first work in Swedish on algebra, as well as co-founding Sweden's first scientific journal, *Dea dalus Hyperboreans*.<sup>4</sup> He also

wrote a four-volume scientific treatise on the brain based upon his own anatomical studies, in which he discovered the functions of the cerebellum, the pituitary gland and spinal fluid. In 1716 he was offered, but turned down, the professorship in mathematics at the University of Uppsala, accepting instead the position of Assessor Extraordinary to the Swedish Board of Mines, an important position he held for almost 30 years. All in all, Swedenborg could be regarded as a typical man of the enlightenment. In 1736, however, he started to have mystical visions, and eight years later, on the night after Easter, April 6–7, 1744, he had a major mystical experience, believing he had personally encountered God, face to face, who had opened up his soul, revealed the world of spirits to him and commissioned him to spread the word about the true nature of the spirit world. Concerning this experience, he writes that, ‘from that day I gave up the study of worldly science, and I labored in spiritual things . . . The Lord opened my eyes . . . so that in the middle of the day I could see into the other world, and in a state of perfect wakefulness converse with angels and spirits’.<sup>5</sup> After this he gave up his official position and concentrated on his spiritual writings. From this period onwards he had frequent visions of both heaven and hell, and wrote many books about his experiences.

After his death in 1772 his followers founded a Swedenborgian church, the Church of the New Jerusalem, which exists to this day. Perhaps the most famous immediate follower of Swedenborg was the English poet William Blake who, for a short time, was an active member of this church. Many Swedenborgian elements and references can be found in his poetry and his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is a (critical) response to Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell*. Many early abolitionists were followers of Swedenborg.<sup>6</sup> He had an influence on the German Romantics, especially upon Goethe, Schelling and Novalis, and had a strong influence on both American popular and high culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. His views were popularized through popular works, such as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps huge bestseller *The Gates Ajar*, and Helen Keller’s *Autobiography*, and parodied by writers such as Mark Twain in his *Extract from Captain Stormfield’s Visit to Heaven*; he had a strong influence on Emerson and the Transcendentalists. Even the sober William James is known to have carefully read many of his books. At the very least, then, Swedenborg should be regarded as an interesting, if marginal, figure in our cultural history.

In addition to recounting his experiences with spirits, Swedenborg wrote volumes of inspired biblical interpretation. He believed that the bible has both an external and an internal sense, that he had been granted insight into this internal sense of the divine word, and believed that his vocation was to spread this inner word. To understand Swedenborg’s practice of biblical exegesis, and the importance he placed on it, we must understand something about his doctrine of ‘correspondences’ and his account of the ages of mankind. According to this doctrine everything we experience (spatio-temporally) in this life ‘corresponds’ to something in heaven, which for Swedenborg is understood to be an organic community of angels. The most frequent metaphor Swedenborg offers to explain this doctrine is the human face. When we look at someone’s face we can see their joy or sadness. Their outer appearance reveals their inner emotional state. The phenomenal world has the same relationship to the spiritual world as the expression on a person’s face has to their inner emotional state. Swedenborg believes that the phenomenal world is, in effect, the face of heaven. Unfortunately, in our current fallen state we are not able to see it in these terms. Swedenborg explains that, ‘[w]e can see in the human face what correspondence is like. In a face that has not been taught to dissimulate, all the affections of the mind manifest themselves visibly in a natural form, as though in their very imprint,

which is why we refer to the face as “the index of the mind.” This is our spiritual world within our natural world.’ (Heaven & Hell, #91)

Although we are unable to experience the natural world immediately as the face of the spiritual world, there was a time when human beings could. To understand the importance Swedenborg places on his inspired biblical interpretation, it is necessary to understand his account of the gradual fall of mankind. His simplest account of this falling away of mankind from heaven is to be found in *Heaven & Hell*; this account of the stages of the fall is based on Ovid’s account in the *Metamorphoses* of the three ages of mankind. Swedenborg maintains that the earliest human beings were ‘heavenly people’ who could read the heavenly significance of phenomenal events and objects in the same way that we can read a face. The first age of mankind was a ‘Golden Age’; at this time humans ‘(t)hought on the basis of actual correspondences, and . . . the natural phenomena of the world that greeted their eyes served them as means for thinking in this way. Because they were of this character, they were in the company of angels and talked with them.’ (Heaven & Hell, #115) In the Golden Age, which for Swedenborg was the age of Adam, humankind was face to face with heaven, or the community of angels.<sup>7</sup> After the fall, however, humankind became separated from heaven and gradually lost this ‘face to face’ connection with the heavenly angels. In the following age, which Swedenborg calls the Silver Age, mankind had not lost all connection to heaven. In this age, ‘People did not think from actual correspondences but from a knowledge about correspondences. There was still a union of heaven with humanity, but not such an intimate one.’ After the fall, then, humans lost the ability to intuit heaven, but they retained an ability to understand the relationship between the phenomenal and the heavenly. In the age of the Old Testament prophets, mankind had lost the ability to intuit the phenomenal world as the face of heaven, but they still had knowledge of these correspondences, and this knowledge was collected in the Old Testament. The bible, then, explains these correspondences. In the following age, the Bronze Age, this knowledge was replaced with a mere *familiarity*. In this age came people who ‘were indeed familiar with correspondences but [who] did not do their thinking on the basis of their knowledge of correspondences’ (*ibid.*). This familiarity consisted in the ability to understand the true spiritual meaning of the bible.

In our age, however, even this familiarity has been lost, for ‘Humanity became more and more externally minded and at last physically minded. Then the knowledge of correspondences was completely lost, and with it any awareness of heaven and of its riches.’ (*ibid.*) Swedenborg’s mission in life is, at the very least, to restore our familiarity with heaven and its riches, for he was granted an intuition of the heavenly in order to be able to interpret the true spiritual meaning of the bible, and his magnum opus, *Heavenly Secrets*, the eight volumes of which Kant read and responded to, is an attempt to do just this.

For Swedenborg, then, the bible is like a textbook on physiognomy, but a textbook we do not know how to read. In the Bronze Age people could understand it and use it as such. They were in a position similar to that of an alien visitor to this planet who understands and feels human emotions, but is unable to see from looking at peoples faces how they are feeling. The bible is like a manual that can be referred to to make judgments about what emotional states certain facial expressions signify. An alien visitor who met someone who was smiling could, having checked the manual, correctly make the judgment that the person was happy. He would not see the person’s happiness, but could make a judgment about it. The ancient readers of the bible were in a similar position. Unlike Adam, they could not see the heavenly in the phenomenal, but they could, by using the bible, obtain

knowledge of, or at least familiarity with, the heavenly. Gradually, however, humankind became even more separated from heaven, and in the modern world we cannot even understand the true inner meaning of the bible. Swedenborg believes, however, that his eyes were opened to the true inner, spiritual meaning of the bible by God and that he was assigned the task of acquainting the rest of humanity with this meaning. As a result, much of his writing consists of bizarre symbolic biblical interpretation. An example, will give the reader some idea of his principles of interpretation. I quote at length to give the reader some idea of Swedenborg's prose style.<sup>8</sup> Genesis 2:19–20 reads as follows: '*And Jehovah God formed out of the ground every beast of the field, and every fowl of the heavens, and brought it to the man to see what he would call it; and whatsoever the man called every living soul, that was the name thereof. And the man gave names to every beast, and to the fowl of the heavens, and to every wild animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a help as with him.*' Swedenborg begins his commentary on this passage in the following terms,

By 'beasts' are signified celestial affections, and by 'fowls of the heavens' spiritual affections; that is to say, by 'beasts' are signified things of the will, and by 'fowls' things of the understanding. To 'bring them to the man to see what he would call them' is to enable him to know their quality, and his 'giving them names' signifies that he knew it. But notwithstanding that he knew the quality of the affections of good of the knowledge of truth that were given to him by the Lord, still he inclined to his own, which is expressed in the same terms as before – that "there was not found a help as with him.

That by 'beasts' and 'animals' were anciently signified affections and the like things in man, may appear strange at the present day; but as the men of those times were in a celestial idea, and as such things are represented in the world of spirits by animals, and in fact by such animals as they are like, therefore when they spoke in that way they meant nothing else. Nor is anything else meant in the Word in those places where beasts are mentioned either generally or specifically. The whole prophetic Word is full of such things, and therefore one who does not know what each beast specifically signifies, cannot possibly understand that the Word contains in an internal sense. But, as before observed, beasts are of two kinds – evil or noxious beast, and good or harmless ones – and by the good beasts are signifies good affections, as for instance by sheep, lambs, and doves. (p. 76–7)<sup>9</sup>

Each beast mentioned in the bible, then, signifies something specific; so does every plant, element, name and number. Stone refers to faith or solid truths; water also refers to truth but 'not in respect to its solidity, but in respect to its originality . . . and also to its reviving and cleansing properties. . . Birds refer to thoughts, and waterfowl to thoughts flowing like pure scientific truth' etc.<sup>10</sup> Swedenborg is particularly concerned with the importance of the inner meaning of numbers, arguing that, 'it is clearly evident that whatever numbers are used in the Word never mean numbers' (p. 370). And, of course, Swedenborg has been granted special insight into these hidden meanings.<sup>11</sup>

Kant clearly thought Swedenborg was mad, and in *Dreams*, he declares that he would not blame the reader for regarding spirit-seers such as Swedenborg as 'candidates for the asylum' (2:348).<sup>12</sup> Many readers, taking their cue from such statements, have taken Kant's attitude towards Swedenborg in *Dreams* to be entirely negative. Although he was a sworn enemy of inspired interpretation, however, and was skeptical of any appeal to revelation and special insight, his attitude towards Swedenborg's visions is ambivalent, for his general attitude towards stories of the supernatural is not one of dogmatic rejection, but a skeptical agnosticism.<sup>13</sup> Thus he concludes the first part of *Dreams* with an assertion of his ignorance, which, he claims, '[P]revents my venturing wholly to deny all truth to the many different ghost-stories which are recounted, albeit with a reservation which is at once commonplace but also strange: I am skeptical about each one of them individually, but I ascribe some credence to all of them taken together.' (2:351)<sup>14</sup>

I suggest that although Kant had no time for Swedenborg's inspired interpretation, and was deeply unsympathetic to his doctrine of correspondences, he was profoundly affected by the content of Swedenborg's visions, and that regardless of Kant's appraisal of Swedenborg's mental state, Kant's engagement with him had a profound effect upon his own development. Following Schneewind and Kuehn, I believe that Kant developed the essentials of his mature ethics around 1764–5, while he was engaged with Swedenborg; the fact that he arrived at this position at precisely the time he was engaging with Swedenborg is not coincidental, for he was drawn to Swedenborg's 'modern' conception of heaven as a society or community of spirits. Specifically, in Swedenborg's vision of heaven as a community of angels we find the genesis of Kant's idea of a realm of ends as an ideal community that we should strive to be members of.

*(b) Kant's Encounter with Swedenborg: The Facts*

What do we know of Kant's engagement with Swedenborg? At the very least we know that Kant was seriously interested in Swedenborg between 1763 and 1766.<sup>15</sup> Establishing these dates is important, for they coincide with what one commentator has described as Kant's moral conversion of 1764.<sup>16</sup> Kant, then, read Swedenborg in the early 1760s, and in 1766 published *Dreams of a Spirit-seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, a book dealing with Swedenborg's eight-volume *Arcana Coelestia*. In his *Arcana Coelestia* Swedenborg amongst other things recounts his visions of heaven and his experiences with the world of spirits. In particular Kant was congenial towards Swedenborg's 'modern' conception of heaven as a spiritual community and the idea that the spiritual [or intelligible] world is not somewhere to which we are transported after death but an intelligible community of which we are already members, although without being able to intuit it. In addition Kant was also struck by Swedenborg's suggestion that it is up to us to determine which type of spiritual community we belong to; in choosing a particular (moral) character we are choosing to be members of a community of similar characters. This is reflected in Kant's account of how we go about making moral judgments, for according to Kant, when we are thinking morally about what sort of character (maxims) we should adopt, we think about whether it would be possible to be a member of a community of individuals with such characters.

Kant's first known reference to Swedenborg is found in a letter to Charlotte von Knobloch written probably in 1763. Kant begins the letter by explaining his attitude towards the paranormal, claiming that no one is in a position to accuse him of having a 'mystical bent' or a 'weakness for giving in easily to credulity' (10:43).<sup>17</sup> Although he does not 'see such things as impossible', he used to be inclined to regard ghost stories and tales about spirits with skepticism; he continues, however, with the claim that: 'That was my position for a long time, until I became acquainted with the stories about Herr Swedenborg' (10:44). Kant's skepticism about the paranormal, then, has been shaken by the stories about Swedenborg that have been relayed to him. Intrigued by these stories he attempted to start a correspondence with Swedenborg and induced a number of his merchant friends to speak with him.<sup>18</sup> After explaining this (mediated) interaction, Kant continues his letter by recounting a number of the stories he has heard about Swedenborg. The incident that seemed to Kant 'to have the greatest weight of any of these stories and really removes any conceivable doubts' (10:46) concerns a fire in Stockholm.<sup>19</sup> This fire occurred in 1756, while Swedenborg was in Gothenburg, about fifty miles from Stockholm. Swedenborg was at a party with about 15 other people. At about 6 pm he started to look worried and explained to the other guests that he had had a vision that a fire

had just started in Stockholm and was spreading fast, and he was worried that it would burn down his own house. Two hours later, however, he announced with relief that the fire had been put out, but had reached within three doors of his house. The story of Swedenborg's vision spread through Gothenburg's polite society that evening and even reached the Governor, who called him to his mansion and questioned him about the details of his vision. Swedenborg's vision occurred on Saturday night. On Monday evening a letter arrived from the merchants' guild in Stockholm describing the fire in the exact same terms as Swedenborg had. Kant concludes his account of this story by asking, 'What objections can one raise against the authenticity of such a story?'. For,

The friend who wrote me this investigated the whole matter personally, not only in Stockholm but as recently as two months ago in Gothenburg. He is very well acquainted with the most distinguished families in Gothenburg where everyone concerned told him the same story about this incident and most of the eyewitnesses of 1756, which is not so long ago, are still alive today. (10:47)

Here then was a supernatural story attested to by reliable sources. Intrigued by this, Kant finishes his letter by informing von Knobloch that he, 'eagerly awaits the book Swedenborg intends to publish in London. All arrangements have been made so that I will receive it as soon as it leaves the press' (10:48).

On November 6, 1764, (probably about a year after Kant's letter to von Knobloch), Kant's friend Hamann wrote to Mendelssohn that Kant, 'was planning to review the *Opera Omnia* of a certain Schwedenberg [*sic*]'.<sup>20</sup> The work Kant had been reading was Swedenborg's eight-volume *Heavenly Secrets*, and his response, *Dreams of a Spirit Seer*, was published in 1766. Kant's remarks on Swedenborg in this book are less flattering than in the letter to von Knobloch. He describes *Heavenly Secrets* as 'eight quarto volumes stuffed full of nonsense' (2:360), and in his preface explains that *Dreams* was written because 'the author went to the expense of purchasing a lengthy work, and what was worse, he put himself to the trouble of reading it, as well!' (2:318). What Kant found most tiresome in Swedenborg's opus was his interminable biblical exegesis; he writes in *Dreams* that, 'none of these visionary interpretations are of any concern to me here' (2:360). The interspersed accounts of Swedenborg's spiritual visions, however, were quite stimulating. Thus in *Dreams* he focuses exclusively on Swedenborg's visions of the spirit world, explaining that, '[i]t is only in the *audita et visa*, in other words, only what his own eyes are supposed to have seen and his own ears to have heard, which we are chiefly concerned to extract from the appendices attached to the chapters of his book.' (2:360) Although Kant's comments on Swedenborg in *Dreams* are often negative, we shall see that he does have positive things to say about Swedenborg in his later metaphysics lectures.

(c) *Kant's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and his Moral 'rebirth'*

A number of important Kant scholars now believe that Kant had worked out the basis of his mature ethical position by the mid-1760s, and that this coincided with some sort of personal 'moral conversion'. I believe that this story is basically correct. Following Lehman's suggestion that Kant underwent a 'life crisis' in 1764,<sup>21</sup> Kuehn (2001), in his excellent recent biography of Kant, argues that in 1764 Kant underwent a 'moral conversion'. He writes that 'profound changes that took place in 1764. The elegant *Magister* with a somewhat irregular and unpredictable lifestyle changed into a man of principle with an exceedingly predictable way of life. He became like [his friend] Green.' (p. 156) Schneewind also places emphasis on this period. Examining the development of Kant's ethics, Schneewind provides a 'story that now seems to make the best sense of the

available evidence', arguing that 'the central point' of this story 'is of course the claim that Kant had arrived at the essentials of his distinctive view of morality by 1765'.<sup>22</sup> I agree with both Schneewind and Kuehn that 1764–5 marks an important turning point in the development of Kant's ethics.

Kuehn suggests that Kant's 'moral conversion' coincided with three important events in his life: (1) His 40<sup>th</sup> birthday on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1764,<sup>23</sup> (2) the death of his best friend Johann Daniel Funk in April 1764, and (3) the development of his friendship with the English merchant, Green.<sup>24</sup> What is missing from Kuehn's list is the fact that it was at this time that Kant's interest in Swedenborg was at its peak.

Kuehn convincingly argues that at this time Kant was thinking deeply about the state of his character, and that his moral conversion involved a deep change in this character; to use Kant's own terminology, the conversion involved the *establishment* of a character. This focus on character (or what Kant calls in his mature writings one's 'disposition' or 'intelligible character') lies at the heart of Kant's ethics, for he believes that the choice of maxims is, in effect, a choice of character.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in his *Anthropology*, Kant explains that,

sometimes people say that a person has simply character (a moral character) which defines him as an individual and no one else. . . . [such a moral character] is the distinguishing mark of a reasonable being endowed with freedom. The man of principles has character. Of him we know definitely what to expect. He does not act on the basis of his instinct, but on the basis of his will. (*Anthropology*, 7:285)<sup>26</sup>

To have character, then, is to be a man of principles, and this is the distinguishing mark of a reasonable being who has a will, rather than merely acting upon instinct. A little later Kant explains that his conception of character is to be distinguished from the usual understanding of the term, which 'understands by character those qualities which accurately describe a person, be they good or bad' (7:292). For Kant in contrast, moral character is not the sort of thing that can be good or bad; it is the sort of thing that one possesses or does not possess. Simply to have a character is 'rare' and 'admirable', and he writes about the idea of character in the same terms he uses to describe the idea of a good will in the *Groundwork*, writing, for example, that 'character has an inner value and is above all price' (7:282) and that 'having a character is the minimum requirement that can be expected of a rational person, and at the same time also the maximum of his inner value (of human dignity)' (7:295). One is not born with character, but must, Kant believes, acquire it; he writes that one can 'take it for granted' that,

the establishment of character is, similar to a kind of rebirth, a certain solemn resolution which the person himself makes. This resolution and the moment at which the transformation took place remain unforgettable for him, like the beginning of a new epoch. This stability and persistence in principles can generally not be effected by education, examples, and instruction by degrees, but it can only be done by an explosion which suddenly occurs as a consequence of our disgust at the unsteady condition of instinct. . . . Wishing to become a better person in a fragmentary manner is a vain endeavor because one impression fades away while we labor on another. The establishment of a character, however, is absolute unity of the inner principle of conduct as such. (7:284–5)

Kant here writes as if he is speaking from experience. We know that in the early 1760s he transformed radically his own lifestyle. He went from being an unpredictable young man to being a 'man of principle', the Kant of legend whose regularity was so famous it was said that you could check the accuracy of your timepiece when you saw him start his afternoon walk. It is not unreasonable, then, to assume that Kant is basing these words on his own experience, and that his 'new epoch' began around the time of his fortieth birthday, in the early 1760s while he was reading Swedenborg. Further evidence for such a dating is

provided by Kant's remark that, 'perhaps there will be only a few who have attempted this revolution before their thirtieth year, and fewer still who have firmly established it before their fortieth year' (*ibid.*).<sup>27</sup> Following Kuehn I suggest that this stress on the importance of one's fortieth year is probably based upon Kant's personal history.

This importance of a sudden moment of rebirth played a central role in the theory and practice of 18<sup>th</sup> century Prussian Pietism.<sup>28</sup> Kant received a pietist education at the *Collegium Fridericianum*, so it is not surprising that he was open to the idea of a sudden moment of moral conversion, for 'the teaching staff in [pietist] institutions placed a higher priority on a reform of the will than on scholastic attainment' and 'regarded a conversion as the foundation of study. Students who had not yet experienced a "breakthrough" were expected to exhibit a repentant attitude and demonstrate that they were preparing to be "born again"' (Gawthrop 1993, p.164). Francke, perhaps the most influential Prussian pietist in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, revolutionized Prussian education, and the schools influenced by his teaching (including Kant's) placed a strong emphasis on 'breaking the child's natural will' (*ibid.*, p.156) in the hope of provoking such a re-birth experience.

Kant's attitude towards pietism is complicated. By the time of his education, pietism had been institutionalized in Prussia and was, in effect, the state religion; Kant did not enjoy his early education. To get ahead in the Prussian state bureaucracy (which included educational institutions), it helped if you professed the faith, which involved being able to appeal to some personal moment of conversion or 'breakthrough' (*Durchbruch*). This of course resulted in much hypocrisy with students, and, for that matter, with anyone in an official state position, being rewarded if they could offer a story of personal conversion.<sup>29</sup> It is clear that Kant was disgusted with this hypocrisy; in his account of the establishment of character offered in the *Anthropology* he makes it clear he does not believe that such a breakthrough can be achieved as a result of education. In arguing this he is strongly disagreeing with pietist practice.

In addition, Kant also found morally objectionable the pietist practice of treating the rebirth experience of others as a model to follow. One of the dominant forms of pietist literature was the conversion narrative, and these narratives were used as models to be emulated. Semler, a contemporary of Kant's, explains that, for the pietist, 'the story of one's own experience and edification became the rule to follow exactly'.<sup>30</sup> Kant objected to the practice of taking a phenomenal model as an ideal to emulate. He argues in his ethics lectures that,

An example is when a general proposition of reason is exhibited *in concreto* in the given case . . . All cognitions of morality and religion [however] can be set forth apodictically, *a priori*, through reason. We perceive *a priori* the necessity of behaving so and not otherwise, so no examples are needed in matters of religion and morality . . . The examples must be judged by moral rules, not morality or religion by the examples. The archetype lies in the understanding . . . The reason why man would gladly imitate in matters of religion is that they fancy that if they behave as does the great majority among them, they will thereby constrain God, in that He cannot, after all, punish everybody. (27:333)

Imitating the behavior of others, then, is to undermine the purity of ethics. Rather than taking as our moral ideal the *a priori* ideal of being a citizen of a realm of ends, we take as our ideal the empirical example of others. Given human weakness, taking the experience of another human being as our ideal, however virtuous she may be, is to take something less than perfect as our model, and this makes it much easier for us to give excuses to ourselves. This is Kant's principal objection to the pietist practice of imitating the conversion experiences of others. Conversion, Kant believes, is something that we can experience

personally, but it is not something to be imitated, for it is not something that we can choose. It is logically impossible to choose to be morally reborn, for we are morally reborn, Kant believes, when we choose to have a pure disposition. What it is to be reborn is to have chosen to have a pure disposition, and in so far as we are attempting to choose to be reborn we are not choosing to have such a disposition. What, ultimately, has value is not the act of conversion, but the person one becomes. The conversion itself is not ultimately a proper object of rational desire because it presupposes that one has a bad character. What is ultimately desirable is having a good character, not the movement from having a bad character to having a good one. And one can only achieve the movement, Kant believes, by choosing to have a good character, not by choosing to have the movement.

Despite his reservations about pietist practice, it is clear that the pietist idea of a moral rebirth or ‘breakthrough’ plays an important role in his ethics.<sup>31</sup> This is evident from the passage from the *Anthropology* already cited. The notion of a moral conversion is also a major theme in part 2 of Kant’s *Religion*; here Kant writes:

That a human being should become not merely *legally* good, but *morally* good (pleasing to God) i.e. virtuous according to the intelligible character (*virtus noumenon*) and thus in need of no other incentive to recognize a duty except the representation of duty itself, that, so long as the foundation of the maxims of the human being remains impure, cannot be effected through gradual *reform* but must rather be effected through a *revolution* in the disposition of the human being (a transformation to the maxim of holiness of disposition). And so a ‘*new man*’ can come about only through a kind of *rebirth*, as it were a new creation and a change of heart. (6:47 – my emphasis)

Kant makes it clear that we cannot become moral gradually, but that to become moral involves a sudden revolution and moment of rebirth. Kant himself hoped he was moral, and so must have believed that he himself had gone through such a revolution of character; all the evidence points to the fact that this probably happened around 1764, at the time he was engaging with Swedenborg. Although the pietist notion of a ‘breakthrough’ plays an important role in Kant’s ethics, he secularizes this ideal. For the pietists this ‘breakthrough’ involved subordinating one’s natural inclinations to the divine will, whereas, for Kant, it involves subordinating them to an idea, the idea of being a member of a realm of ends. In addition, repelled by the hypocrisy and ‘false pride’ he saw around him, Kant believes that such a rebirth is a private matter, revealed to the world not through one’s words but through one’s actions. This disgust with the hypocrisy around him is, I suggest, one reason why the mature Kant, even though he believed himself to be morally reborn, felt disinclined to advertise the fact.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps a deeper reason is that he believed that even if one has been morally reborn one cannot, or at least should not, present one’s own rebirth experience as a model to be emulated. Advertising his own moral rebirth might encourage others to attempt to emulate his rebirth experience, distracting them from the purity of the moral ideal within.

The death of his friend and his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1764 left Kant thinking of death (and the possibility of an afterlife), the importance of friendship, and the state of his own character. These events in his personal life left him receptive to the ‘modern’ conception of heaven propounded by Swedenborg, with his conception of the afterlife as a community, one’s place in which is determined by the state of one’s character.

*(d) Swedenborg’s Heaven and Kant’s Ideal of a Moral Community*

If we believe that one’s conception of the ideal state after death (if one has such a conception) reflects something deep about one’s moral convictions, the fact that Kant

found Swedenborg's conception of heaven appealing should, at the very least, tell us something about his ethical theory. In the case of Kant, I believe that the relationship between his 'image of heaven' and his ethics is particularly strong, for Kant believes that to be moral is to choose to be a member of an intelligible world, and he is not adverse to identifying the idea of an intelligible world with the idea of 'the kingdom of God', or the 'kingdom of heaven'.<sup>33</sup> One of the reasons for this is that Kant was drawn to the 'Swedenborgian' conception of heaven as a community and believes, with Swedenborg, that morally we should think of ourselves as already in heaven (or hell) but without realizing it, and we should believe that our spiritual location depends on our choice of character.

In *Heaven a History*, McDannell & Lang present Swedenborg as a major manifestation of what they call the 'modern perspective on heaven'.<sup>34</sup> Traditionally the joy of blessed soul in heaven consisted in the relationship of that soul towards God. According to the 'modern' conception, however, a major, if not the primary joy in heaven consists in the interaction of the blessed:

The concept of a saintly community in heaven has a long tradition in Christian history, originating in the book of revelation. Christians acknowledged their belief in the 'communion of Saints' each time they recited the Apostles' creed. However, what began during the Renaissance and more clearly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the recognition that heavenly happiness did not hinge on the vision of God but on the social interaction of the saints. No longer did the saints merely dance with the angels outside the celestial gates; they now enjoyed each other's company in the full sight of the divine. (p. 211)<sup>35</sup>

McDannell & Lang base their analysis on both textual and iconographic sources. In the final sentence of this passage they are referring to the fact that in most medieval depictions (paintings and woodcuts, for example) of the last judgment, the blessed may be depicted as paying an interest in, and interacting with, one another outside the gates of heaven. Once beyond the gates, however, they are nearly always depicted as focusing all of their attention on the presence of the divine and not on one another. Beginning with the renaissance, it is more common to see the blessed depicted as interacting with one another, even in the presence of God. This trend towards depicting the state of the blessed as an idealized human community reached a peak, they argue, in the works of Swedenborg. Another commentator explains Swedenborg's conception of the spiritual world as follows:

The spiritual world consists of three realms: heaven, hell, and an intermediate realm that he calls the world of spirits. Heaven is populated by angels and hell by demons, all of whom are the departed spirits of rational beings who formerly inhabited earth and other planets. The intermediate world of spirits is populated by both departed spirits and by the spirits of living, embodied beings. Every rational being holds a dual citizenship in both the material and the spiritual worlds. Each of us exists always-already in a relationship with a spiritual self, what we might call the 'better angels' of our nature. This spiritual self is the soul, understood both as the animating principle of the body and as our moral personality. Since each of us already exists in the spiritual world, the departure of the soul to the spiritual world is not to be understood as a journey from one place to another. Rather, it is to be understood as a transformation of our mode of cognition from sensuous intuition, which shows us only the material world, to a spiritual form of cognition, which reveals to us the place we already occupy in the spiritual world . . . There are three main spiritual laws governing the spiritual world: divine love, divine wisdom, and 'use' . . . Divine love is the most primordial pneumatic law . . . Each community in the spirit world consists of spirits who have developed similar 'loves', similar hierarchies of value, [and] similar moral characters or temperaments during their embodied existence.<sup>36</sup> (p. 4)

This depiction of heaven as an ideal human community struck a chord with Kant; as we shall see, he advocates a similar position in his metaphysics lectures. In addition, he was sympathetic to Swedenborg's belief that it is up to us, and not God, to choose which spiritual community (either heaven or hell) we belong to through the choice of our character.<sup>37</sup> Thus, Swedenborg (1995) writes that, 'Heaven is in a man, and people who have heaven in themselves come into heaven' (p. 319). Similarly, 'the evil within a person is hell within him and after death, his greatest desire is to be where his own evil is . . . Consequently the person himself, not the Lord, casts himself into hell' (1997, p. 547).<sup>38</sup> Although it is tempting to dismiss Swedenborg as a lunatic from a bygone era, there is something decidedly 'modern' in his madness: *firstly*, in his conception of heaven as a community and, *secondly*, in his rejection of the idea of the last judgment as an external judgment, made by God, at or after our death. Kant was drawn to both these views, both of which are incorporated into his mature ethics. In addition, from the theoretical perspective, his reflections on Swedenborg pushed him towards his critical distinction between the phenomenal and intelligible world.<sup>39</sup>

Although aspects of Kant's conception of the intelligible world can be traced back to Swedenborg, there are some significant differences. Most importantly, Kant objects to Swedenborg's claim that objects in the phenomenal world can be symbols of the intelligible world of spirits. Thus he claims in his *Anthropology* that,

To claim that the actual phenomena of the world, which present themselves to the senses, are merely a symbol of an intelligible world hidden in the background (as Swedenborg does), is fanaticism. However, in the exhibition of concepts (called ideas) which belong to that morality which is the essence of all religion and which consequently come from pure reason, we must distinguish the outer shell, useful and necessary for a time, from the thing itself, the symbolic from the intellectual (public worship from religion) – this is enlightenment. If this is not done an ideal (of pure practical reason) would be replaced by an idol and the final purpose would be unsuccessful. (7:191–2)

Kant here objects to regarding the phenomenal world as a symbol of the spiritual world. What he is objecting to is Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences, for this would suggest that the phenomenal world was in need of (inspired) interpretation, which Kant finds morally problematic. Instead, Kant thinks that we have the pure idea of a spiritual world, and that we can, and should, *think* of the phenomenal world as a world of spirits (or autonomous individuals). This is not a matter of interpretation but a matter of application (of an idea to an object of experience); further, this application is a matter of choice and does not require any interpretation.

In addition to criticizing symbolic (spiritual) interpretations of the phenomenal world, in this passage Kant also comments on the usefulness of symbolic representations of the intelligible. He suggests that such representations may be necessary for a time, but ultimately we must replace our symbolic representation of the intelligible world with an intellectual one. I suggest that here Kant is talking from personal experience, because, influenced by Swedenborg's writings, he first started to think of the intelligible world in symbolic terms; as we shall see, however, he gradually came to intellectualize his conception of this world, thinking of it more and more as an idea of pure reason.

(e) *The post-mortem condition – a 'cleansing of the doors of perception'?*<sup>40</sup>

Swedenborg believes that, 'Every man while living in the body is in some society of spirits and of angels, though entirely unaware of it.' (p. 352). Kant holds a similar view, believing

that although we can only intuit ourselves as members of the phenomenal world, we should think of ourselves as members of a spiritual or intelligible world. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant argues the antinomies of pure reason (from the *Critique of Pure Reason*) are a labyrinth, to which transcendental idealism provides the key. In discovering this key, however, reason ‘further discovers what we did not seek and yet need, namely a view into a higher, immutable order of things *in which we already are*’ (5:107 – my emphasis).

Further evidence that Kant conceived of the afterlife in these terms is to be found in his lectures on metaphysics. In these passages Kant not only claims that we should regard ourselves as already members of a spiritual (or intelligible) community, although without being able to intuit it, but also that we should hope that on our death our form of intuition will change and we will be able to intuit this membership. This view is clearly derived from Swedenborg, and Kant himself acknowledges this debt. Kant’s metaphysics lectures followed the structure of Baumgarten’s metaphysics textbook, and Kant customarily discussed the question of death and the post-mortem condition at the end of his discussion of rational psychology. In the mid-1770s, before the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, he could claim that,

We have a cognition of the bodily world through sensible intuition insofar as it appears to us; our consciousness is bound to animal intuition; the present world is the interaction (*commercium*) of all objects, insofar as they are intuited through present sensible intuition. But *when the soul separates itself from the body, then it will not intuit the world as it appears, but rather as it is. Accordingly the separation of the soul from the body consists in the alteration of sensible intuition into spiritual intuition*, and that is the other world. The other world is accordingly not another location, but rather only another intuition. (*Metaphysik L1*, 28:296 – my emphasis)

Some commentators may think such views are pre-critical and are incompatible with his critical project. Kant, however, repeats this claim in his lectures throughout the 1780s and into the 1790s. Thus in 1782–3, in a lecture course he gave between the publication of the first and second editions of the first *Critique*, Kant argues that:

Now we find ourselves already in the intelligible world, and each human being can count himself as belonging, according to the constitution of his manner of thinking, either to the society of the blessed or of the damned. He is now only not conscious of it, and after death he will become conscious of this society . . . We are now already conscious through reason of finding ourselves in an intelligible realm; after death we will intuit and cognize it and then we are in an entirely different world that, however, is altered only in form, namely, where we cognize things as they are in themselves. (*Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:919–20)

Here Kant once again suggests that we can hope for some form of intellectual intuition after death. The claim that we are ‘now already conscious *through reason* of finding ourselves in an intelligible world’ should be understood as meaning that even though we are at present unable to *intuit* ourselves as members of an intelligible world we are able to *think* of ourselves as members of such a world, for the idea of an intelligible world is an idea of pure reason. And Kant makes it clear, once again, that he believes that it is not irrational to hope that at some point we will have an intuition of our membership.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the 1780s, the decade in which Kant wrote the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant was committed to the claim that we can (and should) hope for intellectual intuition after death. Some commentators may argue that we should not place too much emphasis on unpublished lecture notes jotted down by his students. However, there is much consistency in the notes and the doctrine

Kant presents here is clearly not just Kant's summary of Baumgarten's position. And, in addition, there is also evidence in his published writings that Kant is committed to such a position. For example, in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant talks of, 'that remarkable predisposition of our nature, noticeable to every human being, never to be capable of being satisfied by what is temporal (since the temporal is always insufficient for the predispositions of our whole vocation) leading to the hope of a future life.' (Bxxxiii) Here Kant makes it clear that the future life we must hope for is atemporal, which, given Kant's account of time as a form of intuition, can only mean that he believes that we must hope for some change in our form of intuition (into a non-temporal form of intuition) after death. This position is clearly analogous to Swedenborg's claim in *Heavenly Secrets*, that,

Every man while living in the body is in some society of spirits and of angels, though entirely unaware of it. And if he were not conjoined with heaven and with the world of spirits through the society in which he is, he could not live a moment . . . The very societies in and with which men have been during the life of the body, are shown them when they come into the other life. And when, after the life of the body, they come into their society, they come into their veriest life which they had in the body, and from this life begin a new life; and so according to their life which they have lived in the body they either go down to hell, or are raised up into heaven. (p. 352)

Kant was drawn to a similar position because he believed that if we are to attempt to be moral we must have some hope that we can eventually have some awareness of our true moral disposition (or, what he calls in the *Critique of Pure Reason* our 'intelligible character'). For example, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant can argue that, 'an upright man cannot be happy if he is not first conscious of his uprightness' (5:116). However to be upright is to have a moral disposition or intelligible character, and this is not the sort of thing that can be an object of our form of intuition. As a result we can have no knowledge of our uprightness. Thus Kant can write in the *Religion* that,

According to the law, each and every human being should furnish in his own self an example of [the] idea [of a human being morally pleasing to God]. And the required prototype always resides only in reason, since outer experience yields no example adequate to the idea; as outer, it does not disclose the inwardness of the disposition but only allows inference to it, though not with strict certainty. (Indeed, even a human being's inner experience of himself does not allow him so to fathom the depth of his heart as to be able to attain, through self-observation, an entirely reliable cognition of the basis of the maxims which he professes, and of their purity and stability). (6:63)

Kant believes, then, that the virtuous man, if he is to be happy must have assurance of his uprightness. This, however, is impossible, given our form of intuition, because to be upright is to have a good intelligible character, and our intelligible character is not a possible object of (our form of) intuition. Kant also believes that we can hope to be happy. Therefore he concludes that we must hope that our form of intuition will change.

Interestingly, however, Kant does not continue to maintain that we must hope for a change in our form of intuition in his metaphysics lectures from the 1790s, and I suspect that he changed his position while writing the *Critique of Judgment*. A full examination of this issue would have to involve a careful interpretation of the *Critique of Judgment* and his short essay *The End of All Things*, published in 1794. My hypothesis is that in the 1790s he decided that in order to be assured of his uprightness, the virtuous man does not need to *intuit* his membership in the intelligible world, but could *feel* it. Such a *feeling*, as opposed to an intuition, of one's own uprightness (that is, a felt assurance of one's membership in a realm of ends) would be enough to make the virtuous man happy. We can be assured of our

membership in such a world by experiencing the beauty of other (autonomous) individuals around us.<sup>42</sup> We cannot hope to intuit their individuality and autonomy, but we can hope to feel it. For (a) the ideal of beauty is the (moral) human being<sup>43</sup> and (b) the ideal aesthetic judge is the disinterested moral agent. I believe that in his account of the feeling of beauty in the *Critique of Judgment* Kant came to see a way of satisfying his hope for some awareness of our membership in the kingdom of heaven without having to appeal to the possibility of intellectual intuition after death. For, if we were perfectly moral (and hence perfectly disinterested) we would *feel* the beauty of those autonomous agents around us.<sup>44</sup> A more detailed discussion of this interesting issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

(f) *My Objection to Laywine and Schönfeld*

My thesis is that reading Swedenborg influenced the development of Kant's distinction between the phenomenal and intelligible world. Although the mature Kant famously argues that we can have no knowledge of the intelligible world. He does believe that we have an idea of such a world. And he frequently identifies the realm of ends with the intelligible world. My claim is that the mature Kant conceives of the intelligible world/realm of ends as a community of spirits in real interaction, and that this notion is influenced by Swedenborg. The identification of the 'intelligible' with the 'spiritual' is quite common in Kant's later work, for example in his metaphysics lectures from the early 1790s (over 10 years after the *Critique of Pure Reason*), he explicitly identifies the intelligible world (*mundus intelligibilis*) with the spiritual world (*mundus pneumaticus*) (*Metaphysik K2*, 28:775).

Laywine also suggests that Kant's reading of Swedenborg deeply affected him, and that this engagement led him to develop the phenomenal-intelligible distinction. However, the reasons she gives for this are very different from mine. Laywine (1993) maintains that Swedenborg, like the young Kant, also regarded spirits as necessarily embodied and spatio-temporal. According to Laywine, Swedenborg, in effect, functioned as a mirror to the young Kant. The young Kant was committed to the view that spirits interact, and as a result believed that they must resist one another and be impenetrable. As a result of this the young Kant concluded that spirits must necessarily be embodied. In reading Swedenborg, Laywine suggests, Kant recognized his own outlandish position reflected warts and all. And he recognized that unless he clearly distinguished between the phenomenal and the noumenal his position was equally outlandish. In the course of engaging with Swedenborg, then, Kant realized that he must clearly distinguish between the intelligible and the phenomenal world, and allow for real interaction only in the phenomenal world.

Laywine, then, attributes a very different conception of the intelligible world to the mature Kant than I do, for she believes that the mature Kant was committed to the position that there could be no real interaction in the intelligible world, for the idea of interaction between disembodied spirits is unintelligible. Laywine's reading has been influential on others working on Kant's development. For example, Schönfeld (2000) in his book *The Philosophy of the Young Kant*, accepts Laywine's interpretation without revision.<sup>45</sup> Thus, he writes that,

The inevitable consequence of the pre-critical project was that bodies and souls, or material and immaterial substances, are subject to the same laws. At the same time, the pre-critical project must not rule out the possibility of an afterlife – that is the possibility that material substances remove themselves from their physical embodiment and interact purely among themselves . . . What would such an immaterial community of souls look like? Because souls are substances that obey the same fundamental laws as bodies, the immaterial community of the souls must contain the same

structure as the physical world. The *reductio ad absurdum* of the pre-critical project is Swedenborg's spirit-world – a world whose ghostly inhabitants are not even aware of their postmortal state because it looks and feels just like their old home<sup>46</sup>. . . . It is therefore correct to say (Laywine, 1993) that Kant found in the *Arcana Coelestia* a caricature of his own metaphysics. (p. 244)

Schönfeld, following Laywine, believes that Kant regarded Swedenborg's work as the *reductio ad absurdum* of his own earlier position. According to Laywine and Schönfeld, then, Kant found Swedenborg's writings to be ridiculous but also saw them as a mirror in which he could see reflected the absurdity of his own earlier position. This recognition provoked Kant to reflect upon his own earlier metaphysical commitments and to reject his earlier account of the spatiality of spirits and to carefully distinguish between the sensible and the intelligible in his next work – the *Inaugural Dissertation* of 1770. As Laywine explains it:

On Kant's own view, it would seem that the soul is an object of sensation in as much as we could collide with one. Now Swedenborg also represents immaterial things – angels and departed spirits – as objects of sensation . . . [On reading Swedenborg, Kant] was impressed by the general fact that he could not reasonably dismiss Swedenborg's reported conversations with angels and departed spirits so long as it was possible on his own view to collide with Spirits who had passed on to the hereafter . . . Kant did not find Swedenborg's work problematic just because it is all about angels and spirits. Kant himself was not troubled by admitting that it might be possible for such things to exist. Even in *Dreams*, he refuses to say [sic] that the existence of angels and spirits is impossible . . . The problem with Swedenborg was rather that the spirit-seer of Stockholm represents immaterial things as though they could be subject to the conditions of sensibility. (p. 57)

Kant's response to this problem was, according to Laywine, to conclude that (a) spirits (or souls) cannot be subject to the conditions of sensibility, and as a consequence that (b) they cannot collide with one another and (c) that they cannot really interact. On my interpretation, in contrast, Kant drew almost the opposite conclusions, namely that, (a) the objects that we experience around us as subject to the conditions of sensibility can be thought of (although not intuited as) intelligible individuals (or spirits), (b) intelligible individuals can be thought of as centers of intelligible (moral) forces and as resisting one another, and, as a consequence of this, (c) intelligible individuals can be thought of as really interacting.

Contra Laywine and Schönfeld, then, I am suggesting that in the course of his engagement he found a way out of his dilemma, for Swedenborg's visions suggested to him that real interaction, although it involves resistance and forces, does not necessarily have to involve physical forces, which can only be applied to spatio-temporal bodies. Indeed ten years after reading Swedenborg, Kant could still talk of Swedenborg's visions as 'sublime', and explain that what he found so sublime about Swedenborg was that he clearly distinguished between the sensible world and the spiritual (intelligible) world. Thus, in his metaphysics lectures from the mid 1770s, ten years after his initial engagement with Swedenborg, Kant could argue that,

The thought of Swedenborg is in this quite sublime. He says the spiritual world constitutes a special real universe; this is the intelligible world (mundus intelligibilis) which must be distinguished from the sensible world (mundo sensibilis). He says all spiritual natures stand in connection with one another, only the community and connection of the spirits is not bound to the condition of bodies; there one spirit will not be far or near to the other, but rather there is a spiritual connection. Now as spirits our souls stand in this connection and community with one another, and indeed already here in this world, only we do not see ourselves in this community because we still have a sensible intuition; but although we do not see ourselves in it, we still stand within it. Now when the

hindrance of sensible intuition is once removed, then we see ourselves in this spiritual community, and this is the other world; now these are not other things, but rather the same ones, but which we intuit differently. (28:289–9. *Metaphysik L1* – my emphasis)<sup>47</sup>

Here, roughly ten years after writing *Dreams* Kant makes it quite clear that he does not regard Swedenborg as having subjected immaterial substances to the conditions of sensibility as Laywine and Schönfeld argue.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Kant actually credits Swedenborg himself with having postulated the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible world.<sup>49</sup> Now, Laywine might argue that the Kant of the mid-1770s is misremembering the attitude of the Kant of the mid-1760s towards Swedenborg. However, even in *Dreams*, Kant makes it clear that he regards Swedenborg as having distinguished between spiritual ‘space’ and physical space. Spirits do have something analogous to positions, but these are not spatial positions. Thus Kant summarizes Swedenborg’s position in *Dreams*:

[T]he positions of the spirits, relative to each other, have nothing in common with the space of the corporeal world. Hence in what concerns their spirit-positions, the soul of someone in India may often be the closest neighbor of someone in Europe. (2:363)

Instead the relations and ‘distances’ between spirits are moral.

Their connections with each other are represented under the concomitant conditions of nearness, while their differences are represented as distances, just as the spirits themselves are not really extended, though they do present the appearance of human forms to each other . . . Everything depends on the relation of their inner state and on the connection which they have with each other, according to their agreement in the *true* and the *good*. (2:363)

This is an accurate characterization of Swedenborg’s position. For example, Swedenborg (1995) argues that, ‘there are no spaces in heaven except states that correspond to inner ones . . . Nearnesses are similarities, and distances dissimilarities . . . consequently, people who are in dissimilar [moral] states are far apart’ (p. 192–3). This is why he believes that heavenly things ‘cannot be comprehended by a natural idea because there is space in that idea; for it is formed out of such things as are in the world; and in each and all things which strike the eye there is space’.<sup>50</sup> Similar passages are extremely easy to find, and Kant obviously found them. It is difficult to understand how Laywine and Schönfeld could reach the conclusion that Swedenborg believed that immaterial things were subject to the spatio-temporal conditions of sensibility, or that that this is how Kant read him.

Swedenborg is insistent that angels neither exist in space nor experience heaven in spatio-temporal terms. He does believe, however, that *immediately* after death existence often continues as it did on earth, and he tells a number of stories about dead spirits he met who did not realize that they were dead. The best explanation for Laywine’s misreading is that she takes Swedenborg’s claim that some spirits after death do not recognize they are dead and experience the spirit world as if it is spatio-temporal as proof that he believes the world of spirits is spatio-temporal. She fails to recognize, however, that Swedenborg distinguishes between the life of the spirit immediately after death and the heavenly spirits in general and heaven as a particular community of spirits. Swedenborg makes this distinction because he believes that (some?) individuals need to make moral progress even after death, however he believes that at some point virtuous spirits will become angels and their inner eyes will be opened, and they will no longer experience the community they become part of as subject to the conditions of outer sense.<sup>51</sup>

*(g) Kant's Change of Position*

Having explained my objection to what is becoming the standard account of Kant's relationship to Swedenborg, let me explain my positive account of this relationship in some more detail.

In the 1750s the young Kant believed that interaction was only possible between spatio-temporally embodied individuals. The reason for this commitment was his belief that interaction is only possible between impenetrable things (conceived of as centers of force), and he believed that only spatio-temporally embodied beings can be impenetrable. As a consequence the young Kant was implicitly committed to the position that real interaction between disembodied spirits is impossible. By the 1780s, however, Kant has radically changed his position. For the mature, critical Kant maintains that real interaction is intelligible rather than phenomenal. He believes that we can only conceive of real interaction between intelligible beings, that is, between individuals conceived of as not subject to the spatio-temporal conditions of experience. In the language of the young Kant, then, the critical Kant maintains that real interaction is only possible between (disembodied) spirits.<sup>52</sup>

Kant changed his position in the early to mid 1760s, and what provoked him to change his position was his engagement with the Swedish spiritualist Emanuel Swedenborg. Kant came across Swedenborg in the early 1760s and in 1766 published a book on his work, *Dreams of a Spirit-seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*.<sup>53</sup> Swedenborg was a mystic who wrote voluminously about his visions of the spiritual world. Kant clearly thought that Swedenborg was deranged. There was, however, something valuable about his descriptions of his experience of the spiritual realm, for it suggested to Kant a way of conceptualizing intelligible interaction. For Swedenborg describes the spirit world as governed by spiritual laws with spirits as the locus of spiritual (or moral) forces, excluding or attracting one another on the basis of the state of their moral characters. Although spirits do not exist in space/time, they do stand in relations to one another, and there is something analogous to space in the spirit world, for there is a 'moral distance' between spirits, which depends on the respective states of their characters. In reflecting on Swedenborg's account of the spirit world, Kant discovered a means of conceiving of spirits (or intelligible individuals) as impenetrable and standing in relations to one another, without having to think of them as embodied or necessarily spatio-temporal. This was an essential step in Kant's development, for it provided him with a way of conceptualizing his moral ideal: a realm of ends as an intelligible world of individuals in interaction. Further reflection also led him to the conclusion that the only way of conceiving of such an intelligible world is as a community of autonomous agents. Before discussing Kant's engagement with Swedenborg, I will begin by justifying my claim that Kant changed his position between the 1750s and the 1780s.

Before his encounter with Swedenborg the young Kant conceived of individuals as centers of forces, and as a result believed that individuals must be impenetrable. In addition he concluded that this meant that all individuals, if they are to interact, must be spatio-temporally embodied. In this I agree with Laywine (1993), who argues that as early as the *True Estimation of Living Forces* (of 1747), 'Kant claims, in effect, that the soul occupies a place not primarily because it is embodied, but because it can produce change of state in things other than itself. In short, the soul has a place by reason of its outwardly directed activity . . . This is his view not only in the *True Estimation*, but also in the *Nova Dilucidatio* [*New Elucidation*]' (p. 45).<sup>54</sup>

The strongest textual evidence for the claim that the young Kant believed that only embodied individuals can really interact is to be found in the *New Elucidation*. In this work Kant attacks the doctrine of pre-established harmony, arguing that that if individual substances really were isolated worlds unto themselves, it would be impossible for them to undergo any alterations of state. Given the fact that individuals do undergo alterations, then, they must really interact. He continues by noting that, '[o]ur demonstrations [that change is impossible if we accept pre-established harmony] furnishes the opinion that some kind of organic body, must be attributed to all spirits whatever with powerful evidence of its certainty' (1:412).<sup>55</sup>

This suggests that at this point Kant believed that embodiment was necessary for interaction, for the argument Kant is alluding to seems to be something like the following: (1) An individual substance can only undergo a change of states if it really interacts with other substances. (2) Spirits change their states. (3) Only embodied substances (that is, substances 'to which some organic body can be attributed') can really interact. Therefore, (4) spirits must be embodied. The conclusion Kant draws makes no sense unless he is implicitly assuming something like premise three.

The young Kant, then, seems to have believed that real interaction is impossible between disembodied spirits. By the time of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, however, he has changed his mind. In his metaphysics lectures from 1782–3, given between the publication of the first and second editions of the *Critique*, Kant can claim that,

The world must also have only one cause. The connection (<nexus>) of substances is on that account to be thought possible only as derivative, but with that not as ideal, but rather concurrently as real. This proof holds, however, only for the noumenal world (<mundus noumenon>). In the phenomenal world (<mundus phaenomenon>) we do not need it, for it is nothing in itself. Here everything is interaction (<commercio>) in virtue of space. The systems of occasional and predetermined harmony take place only in the sensible world. (29:868 *Metaphysik Mrongovius*)

Here Kant argues that real interaction occurs only in the intelligible world, and that there is no real interaction in the phenomenal world. In the language of the young Kant, this would be to claim that real interaction is only possible between disembodied spirits. The position that there is real interaction in the intelligible world is a consequence of Kant's claim that our idea of the intelligible world is the idea a community of individuals.

The young Kant conceived of 'force', 'resistance' and 'impenetrability' as sensible concepts, applicable only to spatio-temporal beings. He believed that for two beings to resist one another implies that they must be in a spatial relationship to one another. Kant did not remain committed to this view throughout his career, however. If he had remained committed to this position, he would have had to maintain that spirits, or intelligible individuals could not really interact, for the mature Kant remains committed to the view that real interaction is only possible between beings that resist one another. The mature Kant, however, believes that resistance is a pure concept, being what he calls a predicable of the category of community.<sup>56</sup> As such it can be thought independently of the spatio-temporal conditions of experience. The same can be said of the concept of force which, Kant argues, is a predicable of the category of causality. Resistance and force, then, are pure concepts which can, of course, be applied to objects of experience, but which can also be thought without reference to the (spatio-temporal) conditions of experience. The fact that resistance and force are pure (unschematized) concepts implies that we can *think* of individuals resisting each other without having to think of them as spatially embodied. The germs of this view can be traced back to Kant's reading of Swedenborg in the early 1760s.

This is not to say that the view was worked out in any detail at this time, for Kant would only develop the table of categories in the late 1770s. Kant's reading of Swedenborg, however, stimulated him to think about the possibility of 'moral' or 'intelligible' forces and relations.

To Conclude: Kant realized that the fact that space is necessarily subject to the category of community, this does not mean that every community is spatial. Indeed, our pure idea of a community (the realm of ends, or an intelligible world) is the sort of thing that could never appear in space. To put it crudely, what Kant took from Swedenborg was the idea that relations do not have to be spatial. In addition to believing that the spiritual community is not spatial, although it contains qualitative moral relations analogous to quantitative spatial relations, Swedenborg conceives of the spirit world as governed by non-physical pneumatic laws. It is no coincidence, then, that at the time of reading Swedenborg Kant began to conceptualize the intelligible world as a community governed by non-physical moral laws.

I agree with Schönfeld (2001) that the pre-critical Kant believed that, 'bodies and souls, or material and immaterial substances, are subject to the same laws' (p. 244), and that this made it impossible for him to conceptualize a disembodied post-mortem condition. However, on reading Swedenborg he did not encounter a parody of his own earlier position, but rather an alternative to it, for Swedenborg clearly distinguishes between physical laws and spiritual (or what he calls pneumatic) laws. Kant clearly found the idea of a spiritual community governed by spiritual laws morally appealing, and the genesis of his moral ideal of a realm of ends can be traced back to this idea. However, by the 1780's Kant had come to see that in conceiving of a community of spirits, it is not enough to conceive of it as governed by pneumatic laws, but he came to see that these laws must be given by the members of the community itself. In other words, he reached the conclusion that we can only conceive of a community of spirits if we think of each individual spirit as autonomous. This is a notion that is not to be found in Swedenborg.

## Notes

1 Swedenborg himself uses the expression 'kingdom of ends' on a number of occasions. For example, he claims that 'The universal kingdom of the Lord is a kingdom of ends and uses. It has been given me manifestly to perceive this Divine sphere of ends and uses, and certain things at the same time which are inexpressible. Each and all things flow forth from this sphere, and are directed by it. Insofar as the affections, thoughts, and actions have within them the end to do good from the heart, so far the man, spirit, or angel is in the Grand Man, that is, in heaven; but insofar as a man or spirit has the end to do evil from the heart, so far he is out of the Grand Man, that is, in hell.' *Arcana Coelestia* (1748), Passage 3645. Similar references to Heaven as 'A kingdom of ends and uses' are to be found in *Arcana Coelestia* passage 696

2 Kant was not the only person to be impressed with Swedenborg as a moralist. Coleridge, for example, writes that, 'I can venture to assert that as a moralist, Swedenborg is above all praise' (quoted from Harvey f. Bellin & Darrell Ruhl (eds.). *Blake and Swedenborg*. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1985., p.ix).

3 Alison Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of Critical Philosophy*. Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1993. Martin Schönfeld, *The Philosophy of the Young Kant*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. In future I shall refer to these text as Laywine (1993) and Schönfeld (2000) Schönfeld himself acknowledges that he is following Laywine in attributing a merely negative influence to Swedenborg I will concentrate primarily upon refuting her presentation of the position. See Schonfeld (2000), p.244.

4 This, and the following, information about Swedenborg's life is taken primarily from Ernst Benz, *Emanuel Swedenborg: Visionary Savant in the Age of Reason*. West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002. Alison Laywine, *Kant's Early Metaphysics and the Origins of Critical Philosophy*. Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1993. Colleen McDannell & Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History*. New Haven: Yale U.P., 1988. Harvey f. Bellin & Darrell Ruhl (eds.). *Blake and Swedenborg*. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1985. Friedemann Horn, *Schelling and Swedenborg: Mysticism and German Idealism*, trans. by George F. Dole. West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 1997.

5 Quoted from Harvey f. Bellin & Darrell Ruhl (eds.). *Blake and Swedenborg*. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1985, p.43.

6 One reason for this was Swedenborg's belief that Africans led a purer more spiritual life than Europeans, and that in the afterlife they were to be found in the highest heavens.

7 Swedenborg reads the bible symbolically, and believes that 'Adam' does not refer to a particular individual, but to an age of mankind.

8 Which even Kant found to be 'dull': 'The style of the author is dull' (2:360).

9 Kant jokingly compares Swedenborg's inspired method of interpretation to the play of the imagination which is at work in those who 'discover the Holy Family in the irregular patterns of marble, or monks, baptismal fonts and organs in stalactites and stalagmites, or even the discovery by the mocking Liscow on a frozen window-plane of the triple crown and the number of the beast – none of them things which anyone else would see unless their heads were already filled with them beforehand' (2:360).

10 These examples are from Vladimir Solovyov, 'Article on Swedenborg in Brockhaus-Ephron Encyclopedia' Translated by George Dole. *Studia Swedenborgiana*, Vol. 12, No. 2., p. 4.

11 To us such views may seem ridiculous, and may be the source of an amused chuckle. In Kant's day, however, such views were far more mainstream. For the idea that biblical interpretation required special insight, provided by divine grace, was a standard feature of 18<sup>th</sup> century pietist doctrine. In understanding Kant's attitude to Swedenborg we should keep this fact in mind. Kant, of course, was a champion of the enlightenment, and so was a sworn enemy of such enthusiastic doctrines. But they would have appeared to him as far less abnormal than they do to an educated 21<sup>st</sup> century reader.

12 And he jokingly suggests that Swedenborg's visions may have been the result of misdirected wind, quoting Hudibras' opinion that: 'if a hypochondriacal wind should rage in the guts, what matters is the direction it takes: if downwards, then the result is a f—; if upwards, an apparition or an heavenly inspiration' (2:348).

13 Contemporary readers of Kant were not so quick to judge Kant's attitude as entirely negative. Thus Mendelssohn, in his review of *Dreams*, writes that Kant's book, 'occasionally leaves the reader in doubt about whether Mr. Kant wished to ridicule metaphysics or whether he intended to praise clairvoyance' (quoted from, Schönfeld 2000, p.181). And Oetinger, the founder of Swabian theosophy, wrote to Swedenborg on December 4, 1766, that, 'we have a book, "Dreams of a Spirit-Seer," that is full of lofty praise, but at the same time, in order not to seem fanatical [*schwärmerisch*] is equally full of derogatory remarks against you' (quoted from, George Dole, *A Scientist Explores Spirit: A Biography of Emmanuel Swedenborg*. West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 1997, p.3).

14 It appears that Kant is speaking *in propria persona* here, for in a letter to Moses Mendelssohn, written in 1766, after the publication of *Dreams*, he claims that, 'It was in fact difficult for me to devise the right style with which to clothe my thoughts, so as not to expose myself to derision. It seemed to me wisest to forestall other people's mockery by first of all mocking myself; and this procedure was actually quite honest, since my mind is really in a state of conflict on this matter. As regards the spirit reports, I cannot help but be charmed by stories of this kind, and *I cannot rid myself of the suspicion that there is some truth to their validity . . .*' (10:70 – my emphasis).

15 In addition Kant had positive things to say about Swedenborg during his metaphysics lectures ten years later in the mid 1770s. See 28:288–9. He also refers positively to Swedenborg in his lectures of 1792–3, see 28:690.

16 See Manfred Kuehn, *Kant, a Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.171. I will refer to this text in future as Kuehn (2001). I will return to the question of Kant's moral conversion in the following section.

17 All references to Kant's writings, lectures and correspondence, except references to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, are given by volume and page number of the Akademie edition of *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1900-); the *Critique of Pure Reason* is cited by the standard A and B pagination of the first (1781) and second (1787) editions respectively. Unless otherwise stated, translations are from the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant.

18 And reports that, 'He [Swedenborg] told my friend without any reservation that God had given him a wonderful power enabling him to communicate with souls of the dead whenever he pleased' (10:45).

19 This story is also recounted in *Dreams* (2:355–6). Although, in this published work Kant is more skeptical about the veracity of the story.

20 Quoted from Kuehn (2001), p. 171.

21 Lehman (1969), p. 412.

22 J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 486.

23 Kuehn writes that, 'On April 22, 1764, Kant turned forty. This was a significant event, at least in Kant's own view of life. According to his psychological or anthropological theory, the fortieth year is of the greatest importance . . . [For] Kant believed that it is in our fortieth year that we finally acquire a character' (p. 144).

24 Although Kuehn never explicitly makes the argument, the impression one gets upon reading Chapter four of Kuehn's illuminating biography of Kant is that Kant's moral conversion of 1764 was somehow influenced by his friendship with Green. Thus, for example, Kuehn remarks that in 1764, Kant 'became more like Green' (p. 156). However, as Kuehn himself points out elsewhere (p. 154) Kant did not meet Green until 1766, or perhaps 1765, a year or two *after* his 'moral conversion'! This suggests that Kant's change in character was not somehow a result of this friendship, but, instead, that the change in character is what made his 'deep moral friendship' with Green possible.

25 Kuehn (2001), quite nicely emphasizes the importance of the idea of character in Kant's ethics by suggesting that maxims should be defined as 'character-constituting principles' (p. 147).

26 A few pages later he writes, in similar vein, that, ‘to have a character relates to that property of the will by which the subject has tied himself to certain practical principles which he has unalterably prescribed for himself by his own reason’ (7:292).

27 See Kuehn (2001), pp. 145–8, for further evidence that Kant thought that one’s 40<sup>th</sup> year was a significant moment in life.

28 18<sup>th</sup> century pietism had a strong influence on the development of what has become American-style ‘born-again’ Christianity.

29 Fulbrook explains that in early eighteenth century Prussia, at the time Kant received his education, ‘the need for pietist testimonials to obtain positions in church and state led to superficial conversion and regeneration according to the routinised general stages of pietist experience. Pietism, conceived as a spontaneous religion of the heart had become rationalized and mechanical as the orthodoxy of the state’ (Mary Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Württemberg and Prussia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.170) The hypocrisy of many so-called pietists was a common criticism at the time. Thus Fulbrook quotes Semler (1781), a contemporary of Kant’s: ‘Now suddenly people were all supposed to become pious, or re-born; this alleged aim is impossible if one doesn’t count in all the hypocrisy and fanaticism. The true purpose was, to give oneself airs, without work or scholarship, and to get in with the Duke and Court.’ (*ibid.* p. 171) For further discussion of Kant’s attitude towards moral examples and conversion narratives, see, Lucas Thorpe, ‘The Point of Studying Ethics According to Kant’, *The Journal of Value Inquiry* (2006) 40: 461–474.

30 Quoted from Mary Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Württemberg and Prussia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983., p. 169.

31 In claiming this I am rejecting Kuehn’s (2001) claim that, ‘It is absurd to claim that Pietism was a major influence on [Kant’s] moral philosophy’ (p.54). Of course, Kant was not a pietist. He found much of the actual, so called, pietist practice he saw around him distasteful and he strongly objects to the idea that our will must be broken so that we can subordinate ourselves to the will of God. However, Kant’s belief that morality consists in the purity of our disposition is clearly influenced by the pietist ideal of purity of heart, as is his emphasis on the importance of moral conversion or rebirth.

32 For further information on the role of pietism in 18<sup>th</sup> century Prussia, see Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth Century Prussia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993, Mary Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Württemberg and Prussia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. and F.E. Stoeffler *German Pietism during the Eighteenth Century*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973.

33 See, in particular, Part 3 of *Religion*. Also see the *Critique of Practical Reason* (5:137), where he explicitly makes such an identification, writing: ‘intelligible world (the kingdom of God)’.

34 Colleen McDannell & Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History*. New Haven: Yale U.P., 1988.

35 McDannell & Lang identify four characteristics of the ‘modern’ conception of heaven, all of which they find in Swedenborg: ‘First, only a thin veil divides heaven from earth. For the righteous, heavenly life begins immediately after death. Concepts of purgatory or sleeping in the grave until the general resurrection are either denied or minimized. Secondly, rather than viewing heaven as the structural opposite of life on earth, it is seen as a continuation and fulfillment of material existence. . . . Thirdly, although heaven continues to be described as a place of “external rest”, the saints are increasingly shown engaged in activities, experiencing spiritual progress, and joyfully occupying themselves in a dynamic, motion filled environment. The journey to God does not end with an admittance to heaven but continues eternally. Spiritual development is therefore endless. Finally, a focus on human love expresses in communal and familial concerns slowly replaces the primacy of divine love experienced in the beatific vision. Social relationships, including the love between man and woman, are seen as fundamental to heavenly life and not in conflict with divine purpose’ (p183).

36 Gregory Johnson, ‘Kant on Swedenborg in the Lectures on Metaphysics’. *Studia Swedenborgiana*, Vol. 10, No. 1.

37 As McDannell & Lang (1988) point out, ‘Swedenborg radically departed from the orthodox Christian belief in an individual and final judgment. The spirit, not God, ultimately decided where to spend eternity’ (p. 189).

38 The famous Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov, in his encyclopedia article on Swedenborg, recounts one of Swedenborg’s visions, that illustrates this position: ‘At this time my inner person was in the middle heaven . . . which consists of a community of spirits who love truth because it is good. In their presence I felt their strong influence on my heart and proceeding to it to my brain, and the thought occurred to me, Is there any way in which the Lord’s mercy could let devils remain in hell to eternity? Even while I was thinking about this, one of the angels of a just temperament flew down with uncommon speed to the throne region of the great Satan and at the Lord’s suggestion brought out one of the evil devils in order to grant him heavenly bliss. I was allowed to see, however, that as the angel rose into a heavenly sphere, the proud expression on his prisoner’s face changed into one of suffering and his body turned black . . . dreadful convulsions came over him . . . and he showed that he was suffering immense and unbearable pain . . . His misery touched me, and I begged the Lord to command the angel to let him go. When, with the Lord’s consent, he was released, he hurled himself down headfirst so impetuously that all I could see was how his extraordinary black heels flashed by . . . Then I was given the insight that anyone’s stay in heaven or hell depends not on the arbitrary will of God but on the inner state of one’s essential nature . . . In this way, I understood that the eternity of hell for people who arrive there for their own gratification is in complete accord with both the wisdom and the goodness of God’ (1997, p. 5).

39 Thus he concludes section one of *Dreams* with the observation that ‘from now on it will perhaps be possible, perhaps, to have all sorts of opinions about but no longer knowledge of such beings’ (2:351). This claim is in line with his critical position that we can think of the intelligible world, but have no cognition/knowledge of it.

40 'If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is' – William Blake, from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Blake was, for a time, a member of the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem church, and this poem was written as a response, and commentary on, Swedenborg's *Heaven And Hell*.

41 Similarly in his lectures in 1784 he repeats the claim that 'the virtuous is already in heaven only he is not conscious of it' (28:445), and adds that, 'Cutting off all further pondering on this is the best remedy, that we can say: another world means only another intuition of the same things, the sensible world thus entirely ceases for us . . . Now it is asked: will the soul exist as pure intelligence? But it is indeed that when it is not sensible. But one also cannot think how a being that is created should cognize things in themselves. We will thus presumably come only by degrees to a greater perfection of cognitions and have another kind of intuition in the same or in another world. Here no philosophy goes any further.' (*Metaphysik Volkmann*, 28:446) And in his lecture course from 1790–1 he once again repeats the claim that 'the human being who is virtuous is in heaven, only he does not intuit it, but he can infer it through reason.' (28:593) He continues by adding that, 'the transition from the sensible world into the other is merely the intuition of oneself. According to content it is always the same, but according to form it is different . . . One sees at once how limited is our knowledge of the state of the soul after death. This life shows nothing but appearances, another world means nothing other than another intuition, things in themselves are unknown to us here, but whether we will become acquainted with them in another world? We do not know. A pure spirit cannot exist merely as soul in the sensible world. As intelligence it does not appear in space, also not in time.' (*Metaphysik L2* 28:593)

42 Thus I believe that one of the major aims of the *Critique of Judgment* is to explain how there can be a visible expression of moral ideas. Thus, in his discussion of the ideal of beauty in section 17 of the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* Kant explains that 'the visible expression of moral ideas, which inwardly govern human beings, can of course be drawn only from experience, but as it were to make visible in bodily manifestation . . . their combination with everything that our understanding connects with the morally good in the idea of the highest purposiveness – goodness of soul, or purity, or strength, or repose, etc. – this requires pure ideas of reason and great imagination . . .' (5:235 – my emphasis). The aim of the *Critique of Judgment* is to explain how moral ideas (such as the idea of an autonomous individual) can have a visible expression. That is, how it is possible to experience a visible body as an autonomous individual. In claiming this I agree with Guyer that 'Kant did not look to moral theory to solve a problem in aesthetic theory; instead, he looked to aesthetics to solve what he had come to recognize as crucial problems for morality' (Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.19). Although we disagree about exactly what moral problem Kant is attempting to solve.

43 'There is still a distinction between the normal idea of the beautiful and its ideal, which on the grounds already introduced can be expected only in the human figure. In the latter the ideal consists in the expression of the moral, without which the object would not please universally and moreover positively' (5:235).

44 Our experience of beauty, then, could, as Schiller suggests, 'serve as a pledge in the sensible world of a morality as yet unseen' (Fredrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. and trans. by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 15).

45 And it should be noted that there are very few books on the development of Kant's views in the 1760s.

46 This claim is also to be found in Laywine. What both Laywine and Schönfeld fail to recognize is that Swedenborg distinguishes between spirits and angels (and demons). He believes that even though immediately after death our form of intuition remains the same, and hence many spirits after death are not aware that they have died, over time ones form of intuition changes and one comes to recognize oneself as a member of either heaven or hell. Although neither Laywine nor Schönfeld notice this aspect of Swedenborg's theology, Kant himself, as we shall see, does. This makes it clear that Kant actually read Swedenborg's work quite carefully.

47 See also Kant's metaphysics lectures from 1792–3. Here Kant argues that 'the concept of the spiritual life of the soul is wholly idea. It may be supposed; and if [after death] we pass over from the animal life into a purely spiritual life, then this is not to be sought in space. (Swedenborg assumed the ideal whole (*totum*) as real, invisible church.)' (*Metaphysik Dohma*, 28:690). This also suggests that Kant did not regard Swedenborg as having offered an account of the spiritual life that is to be sought in space.

48 Swedenborg himself argues that although angels are not 'clothed with a material body' (*Heaven & Hell*, #77), they were once living human beings and are not 'formless minds, nor ethereal gases, but people to a T' (*Heaven & Hell*, #75). In particular he will stress in Heavenly Secrets that spirits are not merely 'abstract' Cartesian disembodied thinking subjects, but are essentially 'organic' (*Heavenly Secrets*, p. 219).

49 As we have seen in chapter one, Kant reaffirms this position in the corresponding sections of his metaphysics lectures throughout the 1780s. Although in these later lectures he does not mention Swedenborg by name the reference seems clear.

50 Quoted from Kathleen Raine, 'The Human Face of God'. In Harvey F. Bellin & Darrell Ruhl (eds.), *Blake and Swedenborg*. New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1985, p. 92.

51 Swedenborg distinguishes between his visions of spirits and normal sensory vision. Sensory vision occurs by means of the sense organs, we experience things that strike our eyes. Swedenborg claims that his spiritual visions do not occur through his physical eyes, but through an inner eye.

52 The mature Kant himself explicitly identifies the intelligible world with the 'spiritual world' in his metaphysics lectures from the early 1790s (over 10 years after having written the *Critique of Pure Reason*. See, *Metaphysik K2* where he identifies the intelligible world (*mundus intelligibilis*) with a spiritual world (*mundus pneumaticus*) (28:775). The idea

of a 'spirit' is the idea of a disembodied (i.e. non spatio-temporal) individual, so it is the idea of an intelligible, rather than a phenomenal, being.

53 Which I shall refer to henceforth as *Dreams*.

54 Similarly, discussing the *Physical Monadology* (of 1756), a work which Laywine believes expresses the same basic position of the *New Elucidation* of the previous year, Laywine explains that in this work Kant's position is that, 'An element fills space by resisting every effort of every other element to penetrate the sphere of its activity. Thus elements fill space by making themselves impenetrable to one another. Unless we can show that the force whereby a soul is present in space is different from an element's force of repulsion, Kant is faced with the odd conclusion that the soul [or spirit] is impenetrable.' (p. 49 – my addition in square brackets)

55 In this passage Kant seems to be advocating a position he imputes to Leibniz, namely that every soul (monad) must have a material vehicle. This is a position the mature Kant clearly rejects. Thus in the early 1780s he will claim that, 'the opinion of Leibniz, that the soul has here already and also will in the future a vehicle (*vehiculum*) of matter which is indestructible, is sensible and explains nothing' (*Metaphysik Mrongovius*, 29:920).

56 Under the category of community Kant lists two 'derivative concepts' or predicaments: presence and resistance (A82/B108). The reason why resistance is a predicable of the category of community is because our (pure, unschematized) concept of resistance is to be understood in terms of exclusion, and we understand the notion of exclusion a priori through our grasp of the disjunctive form of judgment. What we mean if we claim that one thing resists another is that if (or, insofar as) the thing is posited all the rest are excluded. The fact that resistance is a predicable of the category of community has important implications for Kant's account of interaction, for he conceives of interaction in terms of the withdrawal of resistance, which, given his analysis of community, implies that only members of a community can interact. For a fuller discussion of this see my paper Thorpe, Lucas. 'Is Kant's Realm of Ends a *Unum per Se*? Aquinas, Suárez, Leibniz and Kant on Composition.' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 18:3, 461–485 (2010).