

Kant's Rejection of the Substantiality of Human Soul¹

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In one important sense, Kant's all the three *Critiques* are philosophical enterprise in measuring the rational capacity of human beings in their vivid confrontations with the world in which we live because Kant believed that human beings are essentially rational beings and that they differ in kind from other animals significantly in this respect. Thus Kant is a rationalist. His rationalism is not however wedded, unlike the ancient and classical rationalists, to any set of doctrines or dogmas which could be designated as *his* philosophy of mind. In fact Kant did not write any separate chapter, nor even a section or a short footnote to convey precisely what his view of human mind was. In the Dialectic part of his first *Critique*, as all of us know, he was mainly concerned with showing how the arguments used by earlier thinkers in founding the *a priori* science of rational psychology are paralogisms of pure reason, i.e. they are arguments logically invalid and hence the conclusions of those arguments are not binding on us even if we accept their premises for arguments sake. Whether or not to accept their premises would be still another issue depending on their probative value. Kant's contribution to the area of philosophy of mind seems to be negative, speaking generally. Kant's section on the paralogisms of pure reason has however evoked great admiration from contemporary Kantian scholars and the insights shown by Kant in evaluating the arguments of the earlier rational psychologists as invalid, have gone a long way in setting the pace of analytic trends in the present day philosophy of mind. Surprisingly enough, one notices that Kant's reflections on those arguments received very scant attention until very recent times. When in 1982, Karl Ameriks published his very scholarly treatise: *Kant's Theory of Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason*² – perhaps the very first in English on the topic- a number of studies has appeared with a view to eliciting a positive and meaningful doctrine of mind and its status from Kant's own writings. Ameriks, in his book mentioned just now, made an interesting and bold claim that

although interpreters of Kant who have been often taken in by the superficial structure of the chapter on paralogisms dismiss him as only a caustic critic rejecting a string of 'outdated Cartesian views', some way should be found out for maintaining a focus on Kant's arguments about the nature of mind without treating the pages of the paralogisms on the level of a recent journal article.³ In order to understand fully Kant's doctrines, such as transcendental ideality of self, transcendental idealism, transcendental deduction, etc one will have to delve deep into the pre-critical stages of his intellectual development on the theme of mind revealed in the early literature, especially Kant's recently edited lectures.⁴ Ameriks claims that "all of Kant's positions in the paralogisms become more comprehensible when one is familiar with the extensive and surprisingly neglected discussions outside the *Critique*."⁵ In fact, he says that he would go so far as to argue that only in the light of such discussions are Kant's positions likely to become comprehensible. Referring to the four periods through which Kant developed his views on mind : empirical (roughly to 1755), rationalist (to 1763), skeptical (to 1768) and critical (from 1768 onwards to be divided into a number of important sub-periods)-what Ameriks wants to argue is that "the theory of mind in the *Critique* is much more traditional and rationalistic than it appears at first but that it is also more defensible than is generally recognized."⁶ I agree with Ameriks on the points of its rationality and defensibility but to count it as traditional is to miss the relevance and importance of Kant's contribution. In order to get to a complete picture of the 'being' of a human being, it would be necessary to comprehend thoroughly well the doctrines of all the three *Critiques*. But to build up Kant's theory of human mind only then and thereafter, would be certainly an ambitious and enormous job. In spite of the great job which Karl Ameriks and other present-day scholars⁷ have done to expound Kant's view of human mind or soul, a larger task of developing a full length theory of mind or rather a theory of what a human being is *a la* Kant, lies ahead of us. For the purpose of this paper, like all other Kantian scholars, I shall mostly depend upon Kant's first *Critique*.

I

We shall begin with Descartes and, strangely enough, particularly

with his interest in the study of human body. Although William Harvey is celebrated in the field of modern medicine as the founder of modern physiology, Descartes could also be seen as a pioneer of modern medicine and a singularly significant and revolutionary researcher in the field of biology and physiology. Until Descartes, physiology of human body was studied within the traditional approach which is usually described as Aristotelian and Galenic—a framework which was inalienably associated with their tenets of vitalistic philosophy. Even Harvey, inspite of his discovery of blood circulation, in the explanation of its various details falls back on Aristotle's vitalism and rejects Galenic doctrines as also mechanistic explanations offered by Descartes of that phenomenon.⁸ In this context, Thomas Fuchs in his study ⁹says that

"Descartes....Not only sketched the first post-Galenic physiology in his *Traite de l'Homme* (Treatise of Man, 1632) but through his philosophical and scientific writings..influenced the medical view of man in far reaching ways that are still being felt today. Only Cartesian basis makes possible a physiology that is, in principle, independent of inner experience and is thus in the modern sense scientific."¹⁰

Fuchs also notes that Descartes' modern physiological tradition begins at the precise point at which Harvey's vitalistic views arrived with the newly discovered circulation of the blood, in which Descartes was the first to recognize a decisively effective lever for carrying out a mechanical interpretation of the organism. Fuchs formulates even a further thesis that "Harvey's discovery, as well as Harvey himself, was and is seen chiefly from a perspective that was determined to a large extent not by him, but by Descartes."¹¹ Surely in the matters of details in the study of human body, the modern physiology has not remained the same as the one which Descartes conceived of it in his *Treatise*. But Descartes' significance, says Fuchs,

"lies not in particular advances but in the conception of a point of view which henceforth defined what it was that was thought to count as an advance in the first place and which still frequently, if unconsciously, underlies the correspondingly selective view of medical historians."¹²

It is now a well known historical fact that though not trained as an anatomist or as a man of medicine, Descartes did number of dissections and possibly a few vivisections and that his overall aim was to lead the

mind away from the senses, to separate anything ensouled or soul-like neatly from the physical or physiological, and to establish a mathematical physics that would explain in terms of clear and distinct ideas all the operations of the world bodies spread out in space, or better perhaps, constituting space, since, "existence, spreadoutness" is just what Cartesian bodies are, which include living things, which bereft of any special "vitality" are just so many spatial units intelligible solely—and wholly—through the laws of nature God has established and Descartes has discovered."²³ Thus, even a physiological study of my own body forms part of the wider mechanistic design of the physical universe. If all such study is to get the status of objectively valid knowledge as distinguished from a set of dogmatically received beliefs or opinions, then we must seek justification for the propositions we claim to know by organizing them into a deductive system whose axioms must be a set of self evident propositions satisfying the logical requirements of consistency, independence and deductive completeness. Thus for Descartes, principle of mechanism that all operations in nature or world are causally governed, is known *a priori* to be necessarily true and that it cannot be an empirical generalisation.

But to vindicate this development of science of material nature one must build up a metaphysical system in which, so Descartes thinks, one has to develop a rational psychology and a rational theology and provide firm foundations for the indubitable objectively valid knowledge of the entire universe as such. The entire project was aimed at showing that the attacks against the capacity of Reason to grasp ultimate truths concerning the nature of reality are in vain and that the skepticism of ancient Greeks and of pre-modern thinkers like Montaigne and Charron, as a philosophical doctrine, was self-abortive since skeptics use reason to deny reason. After resorting to methodological skepticism, Descartes established the very first proposition of his rational psychology viz. 'cogito ergo sum—I think, therefore I am' and claimed that this assertion itself entails substantiality of spiritual soul. From 'I think' it follows, he maintained, that there is a spiritual substance in me that does thinking because thinking constitutes its essence. To say that soul is substance is to claim its independence from matter and also to claim further that it exists in itself. This is not the place to rehearse Descartes' arguments for metaphysical dualism. They are all known well. Within the dualistic framework he coined the substantiality of human soul and developed other theorems of rational psychology such as, soul is simple, it's

indivisible, incorruptible, hence immortal, free, and that it is in relation to possible objects in space. This rational psychology was also regarded some times as the science of spirituality in contrast to science of materiality.¹⁴ Within the framework of Rationalism substantiality of soul was never questioned though it came to be embroiled in metaphysically enigmatic riddles: riddles like psycho-physical parallelism (Spinoza), or Pre-established divine harmony (Leibnitz), or Occasionalism (Guelinx and Malebranche). The last amongst the classical Rationalists and possibly the first objective idealist-Christian Wolff came to crystallize the doctrine of rational psychology in his work, which may be summarized as follows and, may it be noted, it was this doctrine that was present before Kant when he wrote his chapter on Paralogisms in the first edition of his first *Critique* (1781):

"What in us is conscious of its own self that is soul. The soul is conscious of other things also, consciousness is distinct or indistinct. Distinct consciousness is thought. The soul is a simple incorporeal substance. It possesses the power of perceiving the world. In this sense a soul may be conceded to the lower animals; but a soul possessed of understanding and will is spirit and spirit is the possession of man alone. A spirit in union with a body is properly a soul and this is the distinction between man and the superior beings. The movements of the soul and those of the body mutually agree by reason of the pre-established harmony. The freedom of the human will consists in the power to choose which of two possible things appear the better. But the will does not decide without motives; it always chooses that only which it esteems preferable. The will would appear thus to be compelled to act by its ideas; but the understanding is not compelled to accept something as good or as bad; and neither is the will. Therefore, under compulsion, but free. Our souls as simple are indivisible, and, therefore, imperishable; the lower animals, however, being devoid of understanding, are incapable after death of reflecting on their by past life. Only the human soul is capable of this and only the human soul therefore, is immortal."¹⁵

One can very easily see that Wolff was reiterating several propositions held by different Rationalists under the rubric of rational psychology, each one of those propositions being expression of non-naturalism, or to be precise, an expression of super-naturalism. These expressions resulted into cob-webbing of metaphysically divergent frameworks with the consequence that they could not explain human

knowledge without reference to a benevolent, omniscient and omnipotent God. Spinoza had to make God as immanent to the world in which we live, while Descartes and Leibnitz had to keep God as transcendent to it. Though as an essential feature of his dualistic framework, mind and matter are declared by Descartes as independent substances after somewhat treacherous argumentation, Descartes and his followers make them subject to God's control over them insofar as their operations are concerned. From the various propositions that constitute Rationalistic psychology from Wolff's work given above, Kant however seems to have confined his attention to only four in his earlier reflections on the nature of human-soul and surprisingly enough one finds Kant defending these propositions during the pre-critical period of his intellectual career. On the basis of very recently published two sets of Kant's lectures on Metaphysics, it is now claimed that Kant was under the dogmatic spell of Rationalism upto 1763 or so, and, more importantly, that Metaphysics of mind was his prime concern during those years. In the Rational Psychology Section of those Notes,¹⁶ one finds Kant putting forth the following four propositions and advancing arguments to prove them:

1. The soul is a substance
2. It is a simple.
3. It is a single substance.
4. It is a spontaneous agent, simply speaking.

Ameriks draws our attention to the point that soul's substantiality, its simplicity, its singularity and its unconditional spontaneity as agent, are introduced by Kant as transcendental concepts according to which we consider soul as such. They don't remain mere concepts but become parts of metaphysical assertions that are backed by unquestioned arguments. After mentioning the above four propositions, Kant's notes contain the following defense:

We will thus cognize *a priori* no more of the soul than the 'I' allows me to cognize. But I cognize of the soul:

1. that it is a substance, or I am a substance. The I means the subject, so far as it is no predicate of another thing. Consequently the I or the soul through which the *I* is expressed, is a substance.

2. The soul is simple, i.e. the *I* means a simple concept. Many beings together cannot constitute an I. If I say, I think, then I do not

express representations which are divided among many beings, rather I express representation that takes place in one subject...Accordingly soul must be a simple substance.

3. The soul is a single soul (the oneness, the unity of the soul), i.e. my consciousness is the consciousness of a single substance. I am not conscious of myself as several substances....I am conscious of myself as one subject.

4. The soul is a being which acts spontaneously, simply speaking. i.e. the human soul is free in the transcendental sense. This means absolute spontaneity and self-activity from an inner principle according to the power of free choice. The I proves that I myself act; I am principle, and no thing which has a principle. I am conscious of determinations and actions. And such a subject that is conscious of its determinations and actions has absolute freedom. When I say I think, I set. etc., then either the word is applied falsely, or I am free. Were I not free, then I could not say I do it, but rather I would have to say; I feel in me a desire to do, which someone has aroused in me. I do, as action cannot be used otherwise than as absolutely free. All practical objective propositions would make no sense if human beings were not free.¹⁷

All this is followed by an argument in which Kant tries to show that soul is not material but rather immaterial. On having demonstrated that soul is a substance and that it is simple, Wolff came to believe that he had established immateriality of soul. Kant pertinently points out that Wolff was mistaken in entertaining such a belief on the basis of substantiality and simplicity of soul. Immateriality does not follow from simplicity. Kant however says that one has still a ground for immateriality, since if the soul were material, then it would at least have to be a simple part of matter and since no part of matter is simple as it's contradiction, it follows that soul is not material but rather immaterial.

Later, Kant introduces a distinction between immaterial beings and spiritual beings and says that "of spirits only, we can think only problematically." Here in Kant, we have a first divergence from Descartes. Descartes would say: I think, therefore I am spiritual substance. Kant would say: I think, therefore I am an immaterial being but agree with Descartes that it is a simple substance, in the context of above defense. Immateriality, for Kant, is again distinct from spirituality.

How the immateriality of soul is to be understood in respect of mind is still a complex issue on which Ameriks has to say quite a lot by way of his post-script to the second edition of his book mentioned above. As he himself observes all this defense of Rational Psychology by Kant should be problematic to those who know only two versions of the paralogisms of pure reason given by Kant in the two editions of his first *Critique*. (1781 and 1787) The problem we would have to face is: What made Kant to critical reversal of the first three propositions he defended during the phase of Rationalism to which he subscribed as mentioned above. To see this, one has to look again for what was happening within Cartesian circles before Kant came to the scene.

II

Descartes' metaphysical dualistic system, it is now acknowledged in academic circles, leads to several philosophical difficulties. 20th century Cartesian studies have realized this fully.¹⁸ When Cartesians came to register their intellectual advent against the old Aristotelian and scholastic way of philosophizing by unleashing the new era of science and modern philosophy, on philosophical plane it invited against itself some very sharp criticisms out of its own spirit of inquiry (methodological skepticism). Nature and existence of innate ideas, existence of external material world, criterion of truth, nature of scientific methodology—so on and so forth, became problems with Gordian knots and ultimately ended up with a few absurd consequences. They shook foundations of human knowledge which Descartes was looking for. So far as his Rational Psychology was concerned, and that is our present pertinent interest, we must note two important consequences. One was strongly emphasised by Simone Foucher that if there are representations or ideas caused by the external objects and if they mediate between mind and the objects claimed to be known by the mind then there is no possibility of ever knowing what the external objects are in themselves. This as one can see easily, was a great jolt to Descartes' argument for realism and obviously a subtle opening for the ideality of the external world-inception of modern idealism. Long before Bishop Berkely announced his thesis '*esse est percipi*', Claude Brunet, in his *Journal de medicine* (1686) presented a scientific study of the

human sense organs and argued for the thesis that "nothing exists except consciousness (i.e. my consciousness)" and that therefore, "it is very probable that I should be the only created being who existed and that not only there are no bodies at all but also there are no created spirits other than my own."¹⁹ In Brunet we have not only the skepticism of the external material world but a strong metaphysical solipsism—an argument denying the reality of other minds that he developed from the thesis of mechanism, for the revolutionary introduction of which, Brunet praised Descartes very highly. The thesis was applied by Descartes in his study of human body in his *Traite de l'homme* and Claude Brunet, being a scientist and physician, was quick enough to see the logically inevitable consequence that once you accept mechanism as the sole principle of scientific and philosophical explanation road to solipsism is straight and unimpeded. And this was the second consequence which led to the downfall of Cartesianism. It proved to be Achilles' heel in the whole controversy between the supporters and the opponents of the mechanistic philosophy. The theme of beast-machine—Descartes' view that animals are nature's wonderfully produced automata—became highly controversial. Descartes' mechanistic interpretation of animals had tremendous potential for extension of the same interpretation to human beings. Descartes used introspective data in his *Meditations* to prove the self-certainty of his own spiritual soul but nowhere in that work one finds Descartes arguing for other minds. There are suggestions implying however that other men are likely to be machines. In fact Descartes' *Meditations* are incomplete for want of any argument for other minds. In the Fifth part of his *Discourse* however, Descartes did present 'parole' argument in which he used 'speech' or 'language' as what he considered to be a clinching evidence for the presence of souls in other persons. The argument was used by him mainly to mark distinction between human beings and animals; the former are free in choosing a course of action while the latter are machines. The doctrine of beast machines espoused by Descartes and his followers paved the way for man-machine hypothesis in the medical circles formulated vociferously by La Mettrie in the early decades of the 18th century but even long before that it was strongly indicated in the works of Claude Brunet as mentioned above, and led not only to man-machine hypothesis but also to the consequence of solipsism that was, in a way *reductio ad absurdum* of Descartes' 'cogito' which was the initial point of Descartes' Rational Psychology. Assuming for the sake of argument that the introspective datum of

'cogito' convinces me of the self certitude of a substantial thinking ego in me, it is difficult to see how 'parole' argument given by Descartes and relied upon by a few others would solve the problem of other minds. Thus in his *Discourse physique de la parole* (1668) Geraud de Cordemoy argued at length that words and language involve existence of both body and soul and that we must not attribute to other bodies possession of soul unless we find acts of those bodies that cannot be explained by the body alone as cause. According to him the cries and vocalizations of beasts can be explained mechanistically without an appeal to soul. The extreme unlikeness of the character that distinguishes symbols and thoughts shows the difference between body and soul. I shall not comment upon the question begging weakness of Cordemoy's argument but simply mention how great was the influence of Descartes on Cordemoy that led the latter to work on a problem which figured in Descartes only marginally but which is of seminal significance for his philosophy. Again we find Abbe' de Lanion arguing for the independent reality of other souls in human beings using Descartes' 'parole' argument in his *Meditations sur la metaphysique* (1686)²⁰ Malebranche, a very influential thinker of the post Descartes times, however warned that the knowledge we have of other men is very obnoxious to Error, if we judge them only from the sentiment we have of ourselves.²¹ According to Malebranche, we know the souls of other men only by conjecture and that we know them not... either in themselves; or by their Ideas and whereas they are different from us, it is not possible to know them through consciousness. Arnold, on the other hand, argued in his *Des vraies et des fausses idees* (1683) that as a step towards proving the existence of material objects, it was necessary to prove at first that there exist other souls. Of the eight arguments he proffered to prove the existence of material objects by refuting Malebranche's opinion that "one could not be entirely assured of the existence of outside bodies except through faith", the first six arguments were aimed at proving the existence of other minds or souls. Arnold had thus tied down the existence of material objects to the priority both logical and ontological to the problem of proving the existence of other souls.²² Thus rational psychology of Descartes had rather mesmerizing effect on some thinkers to acquiesce into his dualism and take language as a strong evidence for the reality of souls in others. The only way to get over the highly skeptical and solipsistic consequences was either (i) to depend thoroughly upon reasonable common sense, or (ii) to develop

metaphysical systems as alternatives to Descartes', within the fold of the Rational Psychology itself, by according to God an all-en-compassing new role as *dues ex machina* or as an harmonizer or miracle maker or (iii) to denounce the Rational Psychology with its prime thesis that soul is a substance and to develop empirical Psychology. Scholars of 17th and 18th Century thought in Europe know it very well that the first alternative of defending common sense view was resorted to by the Jesuit thinker, Claude Buffier,²³ whose unmistakable influence is to be found on Thomas Reid and the second one is resorted to by well-known philosophers like Spinoza, Leibnitz, Malebranche, Berkeley and Christian Wolff. Both these alternatives were dogmatic enough and would not lend any justification to the beliefs entertained since common sense is very often too naive and metaphysical beliefs are too robust to be falsifiable. Third alternative was Hume's, as is well-known. If the first two alternatives were dogmatic, Hume's was loaded with skeptical consequences, though naturalistic. Kant could not have favored any one of these. They were all uncritical. La Mettrie's interpretation of man a materialistic machine or again Malebranches' program of physiological psychology would not have had any appeal to Kant since Kant was not a reductionist. He would not have approved of La Mettrie's reaction to Descartes' Rational Psychology that "it was merely a trick and a writer's ruse, intended to make theologians swallow a poison concealed behind an analogy (between man and animal) that strikes everyone and which they alone fail to see."²⁴

Replete with logical weaknesses in its claims for substantiality, simplicity, identity and immortality of soul, the Rationalistic psychology which was in vogue for almost a century and half before Kant, paved the way for mechanistic materialism and also for the inescapable consequence of solipsism. The 'cogito' argument had become sufficiently notorious by the time Kant thought of examining it, "Solipsism or what Christain Wolff called 'egoismum'²⁵ was indeed *Reductio ad absurdum* of the 'cogito' argument Christian Wolff certainly knew all this development and as a result developed his brand of idealism under the influence of Leibnitz.²⁶ Materialism as also idealism in any form—solipsistic or objectivistic was anathema for Church authorities.²⁷ If Wolff was Kant's influential teacher and a reputed scholar of his times, it is reasonable to suppose that Kant knew the most uncongenial and unsavory intellectual climate for the assertion of Rational psychology. He must have been also struck by the dogmatic tone with which Wolff

himself had reasserted the same psychology though in the idealistic garb. He must have alarmed by his own earlier defense of that psychology referred to in the section I of this paper, Hume's alternative to think of human nature along the lines of empirical psychology, though rejected by Kant in the end, had provoked him to move beyond in a new direction. The stimulus, according to his own confession, came from David Hume. Looking at the intellectual journey that he had made upto the state of first *Critique*, he remarked in 1783:

"I openly confess that recollection of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction."²⁸

III

Before we explicate what this 'quite new direction' was, it would be certainly appropriate to acquaint ourselves with Hume's radical reaction to the dogmatic developments in the field of rational psychology. Kant is not the first one to reject substantiality of human soul or mind. As a consistent Empiricist and ardent Naturalist, Hume rejected the genuineness of the idea of mental substance. One of the most celebrated passages that comes from Hume's pen and which is oft-quoted by scholars in support of Hume's rejection of the substantiality of human soul, runs as follows:

"For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch my self at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception".²⁹

Hume did not however stop short at merely rejecting the rationalistic interpretation of human soul or mind. He developed what may be termed as impressionistic and naturalistic account of mind and helped Kant in a way to give a critical turn to his investigations in the field of speculative philosophy. Hume's was certainly a rival theory of mind which asks us to go against the supernaturalistic consensus of all rationalists and the two empiricists viz. Locke and Berkeley, who, contrary to their empiricist commitment, believed that the cognitive

faculties of man were of divine origin.³⁰ It asks us to do it boldly. For Hume, it did not matter even if we are required to pay the price of metaphysics and natural science. Locke's empirical thesis led inevitably to the rejection of matter by Berkeley with whom Hume concurred and of Locke's unknowable mental substance by David Hume himself. Hume replaced the rationalistic arrogation of some miraculous faculties to mind by a phenomenalistic and down-to-earth account of human experience. He preferred to be skeptic academically than indulge in any metaphysical and non-naturalistic pretensions of highly dubious character. The consequences of such a radical approach was disastrous enough not only to dogmatic metaphysics of the past but also to the physical science which had fully established itself by the time Hume and Kant came to the scene as philosophers of science. Science, because of the technological advantages it afforded, was gaining great appeal to the ordinary people but its theoretical grounds were rather jeopardized by philosophers of different persuasions on the nature of human knowledge and reality. Important thing to note is that the skeptical conclusions of Hume were embedded in the philosophy of mind which he had espoused with its roots in the 'tabula rasa' conception of human mind, obviously an analogy given by Locke. With perceptions³¹ that relate us with the external objects in the world in an inevitably basic or primary way, impressions serve as the initial atomic elements from which we receive ideas to construct the notion of physical world. Ideas are thus copies of impressions or perceptions. Modeling his discussion on the Newtonian theory of gravitation Hume attempted to explain the phenomenon of human cognition without referring to secret causes and without framing hypothesis concerning ultimates. His basic thesis that runs through the structural framework of empirical knowledge—and all knowledge with the exception of mathematics, for Hume, is empirical—is that there is a uniting principle among ideas which can be regarded as a gentle force influencing the imagination in its arrangement and rearrangement of perceptions or impressions. Using this uniting principle, Hume developed his theory of association of ideas. Imagination, when repeatedly subjected to the gentle force, association develops certain habits or customs. It comes to anticipate conjunction of perceptions which past experience has exhibited. This gentle force, says Hume, is the adhesive for all experience. Hume is thus a proponent of a mechanistic view of mind insofar as its operations are concerned. I have already mentioned that La Mettrie had published his *L'Homme machine* and that publication

preceded Hume's publication of *Treatise* only by a few years. This shows how thinkers were busy working out the implications of Descartes' principle of mechanism as applied to human beings and to denounce the rational psychology of Descartes and his dogmatic followers. One wonders whether the soul substance which was the king-pin of Descartes' rational psychology was truly free. Substance it is, for Descartes but only in its relationships with physiological body. In its relationship with God, it is solely dependent on God's will. For Descartes then, soul turns out to be a spiritual machine,³² in which case whether the world of material objects exists on its own independent of such a spiritual machine is immaterial. Give God's place to the 'gentle force' which Hume postulates and then Hume's human mind also turns out to be spiritual machine. There are no empirical grounds to treat it as substantial, simple, self-identical and least of all, immortal. Hume's philosophy of mind is usually referred to as 'stream of consciousness' theory of mind. But naming it this way has its own problem which I shall not go into. What is important to note in the context of Hume is that all operations of mind take place in virtue of the properties of ideas and therefore there is nothing like *a priori* necessity, universality and objectivity that can be claimed in respect of matters-of-fact judgements as the ideas are linked with impressions, and impressions can only be subjective. Descartes drops subjectivity altogether through appeal to Divine Reason which will not allow even demons to deceive human beings. Hume, being empiricist, finds it difficult to move from subjective experience to objective judgements and takes on that experience squarely enough and faces the consequences. He treated mental operations of his own just as a modern psychologist would treat behaviour of others. Descartes thought that human experience was dispensable for the acquisition of knowledge of reality; Hume wondered if that was possible at all.

IV

Kant was thus faced with two utterly different theories of human mind—one, metaphysical theory of the Rationalists claiming substantiality, simplicity and immortality for the soul substance, each one of these characteristics making understanding of human beings more and more intriguing; the other one, psychological and naturalistic theory of

Hume denying substantiality of mind and asking us to treat all other characteristics attributed by the rationalists as spurious. The former, according to Kant, is dogmatic with no justificatory, nor even reasonable, account of any of the claims made in behalf of soul, but nevertheless assigned to it in superiority to the world of sense and in sufficiency for its own self, a role of activity. The latter assigned the role of pure passivity in subordination to the world of sense and led itself to skeptical consequences. The first one rendered philosophy into un-philosophy and the second one rendered philosophy into custmography. Kant questioned the common presupposition of both these theories of mind—the presupposition that there really is such an entity as mind or soul, either substantival or psychological. Both the theories were ontologically committed to the reality of mind. In order to question and reject this common presupposition and to present his own view, Kant decided to cast his net on a wider scale. To do this he had to write his three *Critiques*. It was almost a life-long mission for him.³³ He retained the epistemic centrality of his enterprise and gave philosophy a completely new role of a critique, which reveals, I maintain, his philosophy of mind. Kant is very often claimed by Historians of Philosophy, to have reconciled the claims of Rationalism and Empiricism in the context of their discussion of Kant's theory of knowledge and L.W.Beck has, in one of his brilliant essays,³⁴ spoken of Kant's strategy as consisting in using what has been called in modern times, 'Ramsey's Maxim'. Wittgenstein is also claimed to have used this maxim in solving once for all the problem of Universals.³⁵ Using that maxim requires that the inquirer locates an assumption shared by two opposed positions on a certain issue and if he shows that assumption is simply false or unjustified or such that it leads to some obvious absurdity—hence worth rejection, then he need not accept any of the rival positions and may develop a third position if possible. In modern times this maxim is surely cited as a formal principle of investigation into any philosophical issue. Kant did however express something of this sort while discussing Antinomies when he said;

"If two opposed judgments presuppose an inadmissible condition, then in spite of their opposition, which does not amount to a contradiction strictly so called, both fall to the ground inasmuch as the condition under which alone either of them can be maintained fails."³⁶

This reflects Kant's general attitude to all previous metaphysics in which a futile and endless oscillation between apparently opposed positions has led to only mock disputes.

"There can be no way of settling such disputes once for all and to the satisfaction of both sides, save by their becoming convinced that the very fact of their being able so admirably to refute one another is evidence that they are really quarreling about nothing, and that a certain transcendental illusion has mocked them with a reality where none is to be found."³⁷

Thus, there really is such an entity as mind, substantial or process like, is itself a deeper transcendental illusion that has mocked Rationalists and Empiricists alike. To be able to see this clearly one has to bear in mind Kant's theory of knowledge which itself is an example of the application of Ramsey's Maxim to the famous mocked battle between the Rationalists and the Empiricists.³⁸

So far as the substantiality of soul is concerned, Kant diagnoses the trouble in the following way. Substantial view of mind results from application of the categories of understanding by pure speculative reason to the unconditioned with a view to acquiring its knowledge. This effort on the part of reason is illegitimate and it results into what Kant called a transcendental show. It amuses us with the illusion of an enlargement of understanding beyond the bounds of sense. According to Kant, in order to have genuine knowledge one cannot dispense with the roles which sensibility and understanding play. Though opposed in nature, together they generate all the knowledge that is there maximally possible for human beings. In rejecting substantiality of soul, Kant has not only subverted the traditional Rational Psychology but has seen the possibility of interpreting human knowledge in a way Hume could not see. Hume had also rejected the substantiality of soul but took the path which made knowledge impossible on empirical grounds which he had traversed. Kant's belief that human beings are essentially rational was not shaken at all by Hume's lowering down of reason as slave of passion. Mathematics and Logic are the efflorescence of human reason and their pivotal role should not be ignored by us in accounting for the knowledge of the world we live in. At the same time the empirical constraints are equally important in this epistemic enterprise. Knowledge originates in experience but not validated by it. Contrast between Hume and Kant could be better drawn by saying that that while Hume deconstructs, Kant

reconstructs, and reconstructs in a positively new direction. Kant compares his project with that of Copernicus in Astronomy to suggest that it is a revolt against the whole tradition -Rationalism, Empiricism and Skepticism in Epistemology and all the previous metaphysical positions together with the views on mind they held. Kant certainly thought that everything had gone wrong with the past and critique alone can set things right.

Kant's *Critique* sweeps aside all the psychologism, rational as well as empirical, and develops a philosophical perspective that gives a truly human face to logic, mathematics and natural science. Science and Mathematics were conceived by Descartes and other Rationalists to be divine prerogatives. They were claimed by Kant to be human prerogatives. Same is the case with arts and morality. Instead of indulging in the traditional questions regarding mind or soul, Kant rather spoke of human abilities and capacities, of what human beings can possibly but legitimately do in the different spheres of human life such as knowledge, morality, arts and religion, etc. In each one of these fields he tried to seek human definitions*and sought their limits as well. In addition to the Copernican and Rousseauistic revolution which Kant certainly sought in his works, L.W.Beck has come to see Promethean Revolution at work.³⁹ Kant never forgot, says Beck

"that man is a finite-all-too-finite being and that the world created by man is a human-all-too-human world—indeed a world of appearance, the basic conditions and materials of which lie beyond the limits of human knowledge and power."⁴⁰

Ability to reason or to think is spontaneous and autonomous. It is essentially human and has several tracks. Autonomy of reason, and hence of human life, is one of the cardinal principles of Kant's philosophy and it is central to his way of thinking. Two things were quite indubitable to him. First, the human consciousness and two, the autonomy of reason. By keeping autonomy of reason at the centre of the human world, Kant has found in it the key cognitive characterization of the modern times. Autonomy of reason has found, I shall say, a very succinct and measured expression in his works. Man is no doubt a rational animal but he is also an animal with free will and creative impulse. Kant himself put it thus;

"Although human race stands alone and independent, nature has willed that man, by himself, should produce everything

that goes beyond the mechanical ordering of his animal existence, and that he should partake of no other happiness or perfection than that which he himself, independently of instinct, has created by his own reason."⁴¹

Kant thus placed man's destiny in man's hands and rejected one more assumption that was common to both Rational Psychology and Empirical Psychology. That assumption is that human being is either a spiritual machine or a material machine. Kant was seized of human autonomy because he found that "Eternity" had shaken and the creation was in the process of being fast licked. Temporalization of the great chain of being had taken place and there was vast amount of time available for the explanation of present situation and the pursuit of human goals.⁴² Kant seriously suspected the possibility for any human being of ever knowing "Eternal truth of the Reality beyond Space and Time" and made us aware of the limited powers and the role they play, or can play, in the acquisition of different goals of human life. We must view all the three *Critiques* of Kant in this light. The old philosophies of mind or soul advocated by earlier thinkers would have been simply incapable of meeting the down-to-earth requirements of the times in which Kant lived. Analysis of reason in terms of abilities and capacities was the need of his times, which job Kant did admirably well. What is human mind, according to Kant? is therefore a misleading question. We cannot answer it in a straightforward manner by thinking that it refers to some entity to be located in man's body. If we did it, it would be a category mistake. Mind for Kant is a functional expression; it is what it does. Human beings have minds only in this sense.

Surely, the substantiality of soul – especially the spiritual soul – was attacked by materialists and mechanists alike before Kant and therefore one might think that Kant in his chapter on 'Paralogisms of Pure Reason' in the first *Critique*, is flogging a dead horse. If however, he flogged a dead horse, it was only in order to keep the living horses in philosophy on right track. After Kant, philosophy never took the form of what it was before. Kant's utterance that "if materialism is disqualified from explaining my existence, spiritualism is equally incapable of doing so"⁴³ is not merely a negative claim but a prelude to a positive approach in exploring human world of actions and values through the propensities of man and the limits of his capacities.

Notes

¹ A preliminary version of this paper was presented in a National Seminar held in CASS, University of Pune, May, 2001

² Oxford University Press, Oxford in 1982. A new edition of this book has been published in 2000.

³ *ibid.* p.3

⁴ Kant, Immanuel: *Lectures on Metaphysics*, ed. & tr. By Karl Ameriks and Steven Naragon, C U P, 1997

⁵ Ameriks, Karl: *Kant's Theory of Mind*, O U P, 2000, p.3

⁶ *ibid.* p.4

⁷ The details are given by Karl Ameriks right at the beginning of his Preface to the Second Edition: page v.*op.cit.*

⁸ Refer to the Foreword by Marjorie Grene who has rendered invaluable service to Cartesian scholarship by translating in English, Thomas Fuchs' German work: *Mechanisation of The Heart, Harvey and Descartes*, Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2001, pp. ix-xv.

⁹ The German work of Thomas Fuchs: *Die Mechanisierung des Herzens*, was first published in Germany in 1992

¹⁰ Fuchs, Thomas: *op.cit.* p.2

¹¹ *ibid.* p.2

¹² *ibid.* p.3

¹³ Grene, Marjorie: *op.cit.* p.xii

¹⁴ The science of spirituality or what is very often referred to as spiritualism was developed it is said in ancient India and Europe. It is mainly associated with mysticism and meditation is said to be its main method. It is obvious that the status of such a science is unproven. Yoga system of philosophy in India of ancient times laid down eightfold path of moral discipline and meditation for the soul to attain liberation from this transmigratory existence.

¹⁵ The original work of Christian Wolff (1679-1754) viz., *Psychologia Rationalis* was first published in 1734. Neither that work nor its English translation was available to me. The passage reproduced here is from the English translation of Schwegler's *History of Philosophy*, 1868, by J.H.Stirling. The passage is given there as the summary contents of Wolff's work mentioned here.

¹⁶ see Note 4, above.

¹⁷ Refer to Karl Ameriks: *op.cit.* pp.xiv-xv

¹⁸ E.g. Gibson, A. Boyce: *The Philosophy of Descartes*, London, 1932 Keeling S.V.: *Descartes* (2nd Edn.) London, 1968, and Gaukroger, Stephen: *Descartes—An Intellectual Biography*, New York, 1995

¹⁹ For information on Claude Brunet, the solipsist of 17-18th Century, refer to my 'Development of Solipsism after Rene Descartes, *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XXIII, nos.1-2 (Jan-April 1996), Spl. No. on Rene Descartes, pp. 37-70

²⁰ *Meditations sur la metaphysique* was included by Pierre Bayle in his *Recueil de quelques pieces curieuses concernant la philosophie de Des Cartes*. Amsterdam, H. Desbordes, 1684 in Paris, under the pseudo-authorship of Guillaume Wander and circulated secretly amongst the scholars of those times. The true authorship of this book was disclosed by Malebranche to Leibnitz in July 1679. See interesting correspondence between Malebranche and Leibnitz about this in A. Robinet, *Malebranche et Leibnitz*, Paris, paris, J.Vrin., 1955. pp.121-130

²¹ Malebranche, Nicholas: *Recherche de la verite*, Eng. Tr. By T. Taylor, Oxford, 1694, Bk. III, pt.2.ch.vii, p.126

²² Although thus Arnold had drawn attention of Malebranche to an important sphere of philosophical problem, it seems that Malebranche did not take serious note of it and he responded to Arnold very coldly. Refer to 'Reponse du Pere Malebranche au livre Des vraies et des fausses idees, 'Chap. XXVI, in *Ouvres Philosophique de Antoine Arnold*, ed. Jules Simon, Paris, 1843

²³ Claude Buffier (1660-1737) was a Jesuit Father who worked in Paris as a Teacher in the College of the Jesuits. Though known for his work in the field of French Grammar, he was editor of the leading Jesuit Journal, *Journal de Trevoux*, (also known as *Memoires de Trevoux*, for over thirty years (1701-1731). The Journal was designed to meet the threats of Cartesianism. Father Buffier wrote two philosophical works in which he defended common sense.

²⁴ La Mettrie, *Oeuvres philosophiques*, vol. III., p. 81. His *L'Homme Machine* has been translated in English by G.C.Bussey, Chicago, the Open Court Publishing Co. 1927. It has been also translated by Vartanian, A. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960

²⁵ Wolff did this in his *Vernuenftige Gedanken von Gott* (1719)

²⁶ It is said that while Berkeley's idealism remained without any further development, the idealistic philosophy of Leibnitz found continuation in Christian Wolff. Though Wolff adhered to the main ideas of Leibnitz, he certainly resisted the identification of his philosophy with that of Leibnitz, and rejected the name *Philosophia Leibnitio Wolfiana*. Wolff's idealism is not to be identified with that of Claude Brunet or Bishop Berkeley.

²⁷ Materialism and Idealism of any sort were treated as heresies by the Church

authorities. In 1722, Christopher Pfaff, Chancellor of Tubingen, delivered an Oration and did this. I suspect that it was mainly because of Wolff's preaching of Idealism that he was removed by a cabinet order of Nov.8, 1723, from his Chair of Philosophy at Halle since most of his ideas were found opposed to the revealed word of God. Wolff was required, under the penalty of halter, to quit the Prussian territory within 48 hrs.

²⁸ Kant, Immanuel: *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics*, (Tr.) L.W.Beck, New York, the Liberal Arts Press, INC. 1950, p.8. (L.W.Beck has footnoted this quote as follows: Kant had probably read Hume before 1760 but only much later (1772?) did he begin to follow "a new direction" under Hume's influence.

²⁹ Hume, David: *A Treatise of Human Nature* ed. L.A.Selby -Bigge and P.H.Niddith, 2nd Edn. Oxford, O U P, 1978.p.252

³⁰ About Berkeley's non-naturalistic inclinations there need not be any doubt. Locke's is however a debatable case. Despite his advocacy of empiricist epistemology, he has been interpreted by some as a Cartesian with Baconian tendencies. See; Falkenberg, Richard: *History of Modern Philosophy*. (Eng.Tr. by Armstrong, New York,) 1893.p.175

³¹ Let it be noted that even David Hume talks of perceptions as if they are reified entities. With perceptions in this sense we start the 'myth of the given.'

³² The late L.W.Beck once mentioned to me that Descartes may have been influenced by the notion of soul as a spiritual machine through the influence of some Spanish philosophers of his times. To know more about this, he had also suggested to me name of book published around 1970s. I am sorry I have lost that reference.

³³ It is interesting to note that all of Kant's important works were published during the last two decades of his life.

³⁴ Beck.L.W: "Kant's Strategy", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol.28.1967. pp. 224-236

³⁵ Bambrough, J.R.: "Universals and Family Resemblances", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. LXI, 1960-61

³⁶ Kant, Immanuel: *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1787, B/531

³⁷ *ibid.* B/530

³⁸ Frank Ramsey was a brilliant young philosopher in Cambridge having very brief career as a philosopher. For his maxim, refer to his *The Foundations of Mathematics and Other Logical Essays*, Kegan Paul, London, 1931, pp. 115-16 where the maxim has been stated as follows:

".... It is a heuristic maxim that the truth lies not in either of the two disputed views but in some third possibility which has not yet been thought of, which

we can only discover by rejecting something assumed as obvious by both the disputants."

³⁹ Beck, L.W.: "What Have We Learnt from Kant?" *Self and Nature in Kant's Philosophy*, ed. Allen Wood, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1984, pp. 17-30

⁴⁰ *ibid* p. 29

⁴¹ *ibid* p.29 (Beck quotes this.)

⁴² Refer to Beck, L.W.: "World Enough and Time", in *Essays by Lewis White Beck: Five Decades as a Philosopher*. (ed. Predrag Cickovacki). University of Rochester Press, Rochester, 1998, pp. 121-144

⁴³ Kant, Immanuel: *Critique of Pure Reason*, B/420