

HIRAM CATON

TRUTHFULNESS IN KANT'S METAPHYSICAL MORALITY

Wenn mir einer von jemandem, den ich schon durch eine einzige Probe als scharfsinnig erkannt habe, sehr ungereimte Meinungen sagt, so glaube ich ihm nicht.

—Kant

Truthfulness is a basic and persistent theme of existentialist literature. But whereas truthfulness presents itself as an ethical category, existentialists separate it from its ethical content in order to treat it, as they believe, in a more fundamental way as a mode of human existence. The peculiarity and problem of this manner of treatment can be indicated by reference to Nietzsche's "immoralism."

Unlike existentialists, Nietzsche begins with morality, and, by interrogating its claims and its nature, traces its origin to two different sources. On the one hand, morality is said to be a manifestation of what is truly fundamental: nature as the will to power. Another line of reasoning concludes that, owing to the indifference of nature to good and evil, nature cannot be the source of morality; rather, morality is an invention, or a posit of freedom. The closest approximation to a reconciliation of these claims is the view that nature supplies men a fundamental and unchangeable disposition (will to power), although the opinions—the "world view" or "ideology"—which constitute a given morality go far be-

[19]

*Essays in Metaphysics, Penn State University Press,
1970*

yond nature; morality may or may not be in harmony with nature (according as it affirms or denies the will to power), but to some extent every morality dissembles its own natural root and also its character as a free posit by inventing fictitious authorities for its claims and demands. At the basis of every morality, therefore, is the conscious or unconscious "pious lie," whose function is to conceal the arbitrariness in the origin of morality. Accordingly, the highest philosophic virtue is truthfulness, as the probity to live without illusions and in the knowledge that moral choice has no ground but human freedom.

Seen from this perspective, it can be said that Heidegger replaces nature with Being and morality with human experience, while retaining freedom and taking it to its last extreme. For this reason, truthfulness becomes all the more important; it reappears as authenticity. Authenticity is not a moral obligation, but an ontological possibility of human existence; it is that experience of the truth of human existence from which all knowledge and morality are projected.

Two difficulties press the attempt to grasp truthfulness existentially. It is doubtful that Heidegger succeeds in divorcing authenticity from the moral claims characteristic of truthfulness. There is certainly no doubt that Heidegger believes authenticity to be more choice-worthy than the superficiality of *das Man*; and the basis of the choice is that when men are confronted with the alternatives of knowing the truth or of taking refuge in comfortable illusions, they cannot choose the latter without self-reproach. The second difficulty is that the phenomenological method can only describe what existence is like for those who believe that choice is a free project; it cannot establish that belief as true. For Heidegger, the question has evidently been decided by the successes and failures of others, among them Kant. The decisive importance of authenticity seems to be pre-figured in the prominence Kant gives to truthfulness. An examination of Kant's reflections on truthfulness may therefore help clarify its present status.

Kant makes a deliberate break with the traditional view of truthfulness, which derives from the Platonic teaching about the noble lie.¹ He is the first philosopher to teach that lying is the greatest ethical offense, and the propensity to lie, man's primary fault.² But the innovation has an air of paradox. Kant says that the *Critique of Pure Reason* imitates the Socratic defense of morality: it is strange that the only philosopher to condemn irony as unethical should take the most ironical philosopher as his model.³ As for the noble lie, in Kantian morality it is a square circle.

This sharp divergence arises from the very different perspectives in which these judgments are made. The Platonic noble lie emanates from the lawgiver or founder who promotes amity among citizens by employing myth to conceal certain defects of the origin of society. But Kant, as a moralist, speaks from the perspective of "common human reason," or of the plain citizen. In this office he aspires to no more and claims no more than to have given the rational articulation of the sentiments and convictions native to everyman's breast. His defense of citizen morality against the sophistications of philosophy and politics goes so far as to deny that there is any moral wisdom other than the citizen's.⁴ From this point of departure, Kant reasonably denies that virtue is knowledge, identifying it instead with courage: the fortitude to submit to the commands of the rational moral law. Consistent with the denial of philosophic virtue, he declines to speak of the origins of the state on the grounds that such matters may not justly be communicated to the multitude.⁵

For the citizen, justice is identical with the legal and virtue is piety toward the law. Kant's moral teaching is a "metaphysics" of this perspective; that is, it gives a metaphysical underpinning to the absolute or unconditional claims made by the law on the citizen at the practical level. It might be said that metaphysics raises the general "form" of citizen morality (law-abidingness) to the level of a metaphysical absolute. In any case, the law does present itself as the most grave and irresistible authority. It alone possesses the majesty to command the sacrifice of life and to take life openly. The virtue appropriate to the law wears the mien of solemnity; it responds to the absolute prerogatives of the law by attributing absolute validity to it. Citizen virtue is courage because it must brook no compromise with the blandishments of pleasure and the calculations of utility, knowing full well the weakness of such allurements in the face of the law's awesome demands. The essence of virtue is an unyielding resolve to obey the law because it is the law and without regard to consequences.⁶

Kant's asceticism of truthfulness grows in the soil of virtue as fortitude. Martial virtue is virtue's nature because man's moral nature is freedom from enslavement to the natural appetites, or man's capacity to subjugate his own sensible nature to the commands of the moral law. The honor of this soldier is the only genuine honor, human dignity as such, which is consciousness of oneself as his own lord (self-mastery).⁷ Virtue ceases to be if it is conceived as a means, which is to say that it is essential to the being of virtue that it be willed for its own sake and without

thought of any advantage it may bring. But since all action stemming from natural motives is for the sake of one's advantage, fortitude must consist in a self-examination that scrutinizes conscience for the purity of its motives, lest virtue be debased to a mere mercenary exchange. But the passions can be subtle; they know all too well how to insinuate themselves into actions by masking envy or revenge with honorable motives. Self-mastery thus demands the courage of self-knowledge which defeats the attempts of the passions to corrupt pure motives. No wonder that natural simplicity is for Kant the genuine nobility.⁸

In order to bring out the reason why truthfulness is the first duty to oneself, we must observe the role of conscience in morality. Practical reason, as the free submission to the moral law, is conscience.⁹ The correctness of this identification, which at first is surprising, becomes obvious once the parallel between the structure of conscience and practical reason is noticed. Practical reason divides self-consciousness into two "persons," *homo noumenon* and *homo phenomenon*—legislative reason which gives the law, and the natural or sensible self to whom it is addressed as a command. The moral act as such consists in comparing the phenomenal self with the noumenal standard in order to ascertain whether they correspond. The two persons inherent in the structure of conscience emerge merely by change of terminology. The phenomenal self becomes the accused in the court of conscience. Legislative reason is the infallible judge who calls the accused before the law (and in so doing gives the law for cognizance) and who conducts the examination to determine guilt or innocence by inspecting the maxims and motives of the accused.¹⁰ To lie to oneself is to lie to the judge in the very sanctuary of morality. It is an attempt to hide the phenomenal self from the scrutiny of the judge by creating an apparent self represented as being in tune with the law. The attempt to deceive the judge is an effort to cut off access to oneself in order that he might escape moral responsibility. The lie to oneself thus strikes at the very root of human dignity; it is moral suicide. It is therefore the extreme of moral worthlessness and the greatest violation of one's duty to himself.¹¹

Unlike the lie to others, the internal lie cannot deceive fully, since in a way it is always known—the judge of conscience is an infallible searcher of hearts. Kant gives the impression that the phenomenal self lies to the judge's face only in desperation. For the most part the lie takes the form of evasion, of an attempt to keep out of the judge's sight. When this mode of the perpetration of the lie is stressed, the main function of conscience is altered

from that of a judge to the permanent disposition to insist upon pure motives in the phenomenal self, or more simply, conscientiousness in fulfilling practical reason's law.¹² So understood, conscience is the fortitude to maintain the unremitting demand on the phenomenal self that it relinquish its attempt to evade the law; it is virtue as the will to truthfulness.¹³

By its nature the importance of truthfulness to moral life depends upon the strength of the tendency to deceive. Unfortunately, this tendency belongs to human nature as such; it is the "original sin."¹⁴ The stamp of this view betrays itself to a mere glance at Kant's reflections on metaphysics, religion, and politics; we find him forever engaged in a relentless exposé of deceptions of colossal proportions. Not only is there a sham science that succeeds in passing as exalted and architectonic, even reason itself is by nature infested with illusion. Since these deceptions bear on self-knowledge, and in large measure are errors about the nature and powers of the mind, they have the most important consequences for morality: they thoroughly corrupt it. Genuine morality therefore requires a propaedeutic that clears the ground of the fundamental deceptions and self-deceptions; it requires a critique of pure reason.¹⁵

By far the most important illusions concern theology. The combination of dissimulation and self-deception that pervades theology manifests itself in the refusal of that "science" to submit to the conditions of free inquiry. Public utterance of doubts about the truth of theology, not to mention outright rejection of its claims, is a punishable offense. The external compulsion betrays a dissembled, gnawing inner doubt, which becomes explicit in the pious lie. It may be an inner lie, in which case it is typically the confession of belief, where closer inspection would reveal weak belief or even absence of conviction.¹⁶ As a lie to others, it is a prudential argument. The premise acknowledges doubt, and hence the uncertainty of theology, but maintains nevertheless, that its teachings are salutary. In order that these salutary effects might be preserved, it is better not to disturb the conviction of others by revealing one's own doubts.¹⁷

The first step in purging the mind of illusion is to bring the doubt confessed in the pious lie before the court of conscience (the "tribunal of pure reason"). Under the court's interrogation, conscience is made to confess openly and candidly the doubts long concealed from public view. The confession is extracted from a reluctant witness by the "method of skepticism," which undermines the fortress of theological convictions by setting them in a dialectical combat with materialism and naturalism.¹⁸ The war's

function is to chastise pretentiousness, for it is pride of knowledge that dissembles the inner doubt and thereby conceals from consciousness true awareness of its limitations.¹⁹ At the same time, by staging the combat for all the learned world to see, Kant destroys the credibility of theological pretensions and in that way destroys the conditions for the effective use of the pious lie.

The fundamental illusion that gives rise to the whole system of errors and spurious claims is a subreption of judgment whereby certain subjective conditions of thought are posited as objective, that is, as constituent of reality. The self that thinks, for example, as distinguished from the self that appears to inner and outer sense (*homo phenomenon*), never appears in the flux of change and for that reason is thought as simple and substantial. The subreption occurs when it is inferred that through such predicates the real existence of the self as simple and substantial is known; or, as one may also say, it occurs when the concept "soul" is hypostatized, i.e., posited as a real being and not merely as a concept.²⁰ This illusion is raised to its highest grade when it is believed that the concept is directly apprehended as an object through an intellectual intuition.

Belief in intellectual intuition is the most haunting metaphysical illusion. It is the ultimate support for that distinguishing mark of dogmatic (or rationalist) philosophy, belief in noetic principles as the cause or source of the material world.²¹ The alleged intuition leads to the last consequence of metaphysical illusion. The "object" has the character of being passively apprehended, but it is manifestly not given through the senses. In order to explain these sudden illuminations, one comes to believe in divine knowledge or inspiration (*Eingebung*). Such beliefs, which Kant styles "fanaticism," are the highwater mark of reason's self-deception and the authentic link between metaphysics and religion. The most exalted mode of rationalist knowledge turns out to be indistinguishable from religious inspiration.²²

The ultimate intention of reason's remote speculations is, in Kant's view, actually practical.²³ Theory and practice are related by the conception of morality that presupposes the existence of God and the immortality of the soul as its foundations. The defects of this conception are peculiar to all "theological ethics." Under the auspices of this conception, the voice of conscience is conceived to be divine, since the only infallible, all-seeing judge is God; speculative "fanaticism" is thereby carried into the moral sphere.²⁴ But this leads to that pride of knowledge or intransigent certainty that sanctions persecution of heterodoxy. Furthermore, God and

eternity in their "awful majesty" dominate morality, with the result that most actions conforming to law are performed "from fear, few from hope, and none from duty."²⁵ The ethics itself being almost always some particular revelation and not the rational moral law, the wrong law is obeyed for the wrong reasons. One might think that this morality would at least have the merit of taking morality seriously, but according to Kant it does not realize the full potential of moral seriousness. The responsibility of the believer extends only to the performance of duties that he did not himself impose. Responsibility becomes infinitely weightier if man undertakes to originate the law to which he submits. Only by elimination of all external sources of authority and dependence can man become fully moral and at the same time self-sufficient.

Such considerations lead to recognition of the more profound function of the Dialectic. The "vacant space" cleared by its destructive criticism is the demolition of the theological fortress for the sake of a new structure to be raised upon "humanity."²⁶ Humanity replaces the divine will as the criterion for the moral law by stipulating the perspective of the law as the perspective of mankind. This universality of perspective renders the law rational. So conceived, morality imposes on man the responsibility of acting as if he were a providential God. But since Providence embraces nature as well, the moral law must likewise be conceived as a law for nature: man must conceive his will to be the support not only for humanity but also for the universe.²⁷ By taking upon himself this infinitely weighty responsibility, man acquires "absolute inner worth": "the descent into the hell of self-knowledge prepares the way for deification."²⁸

Since according to the official view²⁹ reason's illusions are natural, the pious external lie in metaphysics does not consist of the invention of sophistries but of the rather less promiscuous indulgence of errors that men have a natural tendency to make: that is, some metaphysicians have presumably discovered the illusory character of reason but neglected to communicate that discovery to others. Their reason for declining to purify metaphysics is that in certain matters practice takes precedence over theory. There are some illusions that ought to be indulged because they are "salutary."³⁰ In the case of the external pious lie, then, moral deficiency is a greater barrier to the exposure of illusion than deficiency of insight.

It must be supposed that those who were aware of metaphysical illusions possessed a non-illusory doctrine that they did not

communicate openly to the public. Although it is not essential to the success of Kant's fight against illusion, one might expect an exposé of this "philosophia arcanae" and the manner of its communication. In fact he says little on the subject, although that little is considerably more than is usually noticed. Perhaps the most enlightening and least ambiguous remark is a statement of the policy that governed the procedure of the moral philosophers of antiquity with respect to paganism. These men renounced a frontal attack upon the gross fantasies of myth, but gave themselves a free hand to interpret the myths in accordance with sound morals and without regard to the sense that the myths were intended to convey.³¹ This procedure, which Kant expressly approves, was, according to him, imitated by Christian and Jewish authors. He also accepts the venerable tradition according to which the Bible speaks "after the manner of men" (*ad captum vulgi*), which he styles "ad hominem" persuasion. This rhetoric ensconces the genuine moral teaching in an exterior (*Hülle*) of popular beliefs, whose purpose is to secure acceptance of the genuine teaching by smearing it with the honey of familiar prejudices.³²

Brief though they are, these indications are very helpful for understanding Kant's own attitude toward the noble lie. Notwithstanding his many direct and indirect condemnations of that practice, Kant has not escaped suspicion of "hypocrisy." Perhaps the most important case is the rational faith or moral theology which, despite the criticism of "all [rational] theology," suddenly appears at the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.³³ It is gratuitous because the new theology does not at all differ in content from the standard rational theology of Kant's day. Moreover, it fills the empty space whose creation is the great labor of the *Critique*, thereby annulling the hard won gains for morality.

It has not been generally noticed, however, that the moral theology as a whole is said to be an *ad hominem* argument for use as a "weapon of war."³⁴ It is addressed to those whose moral "need" or "interest" is left unsatisfied by the negative result of the theological criticism, that is, to those whose morality depends upon belief in the existence of "objects" corresponding to the "concepts" of God and immortality.³⁵ Moral theology gives back to such persons what the theoretical critique took away by allowing them to "postulate" such objects as "actually existing."³⁶ These beliefs are sanctioned in order to supply an object for the will, that is, to rectify a deficiency of motive for obeying the moral law.³⁷ In this way it functions as a weapon to ward off the onslaughts of atheism and agnosticism. Once the farfetched and artificially complicated

terminology in which Kant states this doctrine is penetrated, it seems evident that he imitates the procedure which he attributes to the ancient moral philosophers and Biblical authors. Herder testifies to both the need and success of this admittedly "unusual concept" of moral theology in saying that "precisely this back stairs of pragmatic doctrinal and moral faith ... is largely responsible for the acceptance of critical philosophy."³⁸

Since the *ad hominem* argument is identified for what it is, Kant's imitation of the ancients is qualified. The very illusion the argument feeds tends to be destroyed by the explanation.³⁹ This procedure would be absurd but for Kant's view that mankind has now entered a decisive stage of progress, the stage of popular enlightenment, which will eventually eliminate the need for esotericism by gradually communicating the esoteric teachings to the multitude.⁴⁰ Thus, Kant can reasonably join moral condemnation of esotericism with a provisional esotericism of his own.

But even provisional esotericism requires provisionally withholding some doctrines from some persons, and hence a distinction between initiates and those who are taught edifying things. This distinction, as Kant draws it, is so extraordinarily artificial that it is difficult to apprehend. He ingeniously capitalizes on the necessity that he, as a university professor, observe certain officially prescribed limits in his lectures and writings to invent an a priori "quarrel among the faculties" as the vehicle for his statement of the restraints that critical philosophy observes.⁴¹

The dispute first comes to light in the Preface (2nd ed.) of the *Critique of Pure Reason* when Kant enters the ostensibly purely academic dispute between the skeptics and the dogmatic philosophy of the "schools." Since the *Critique* exposes the spurious claims of the dogmatists, it seems to favor skepticism; and since the dogmatists think skepticism is dangerous to morality, Kant feels obliged to defend criticism. His first retort is an enumeration of the several causes that prevent the dispute from reaching the ears of the multitude.⁴² The second retort takes the offensive with a *tu quoque* argument. The metaphysical theology of the schools is itself harmful to morality; it is "despotic," not because of its exclusion of non-dogmatic philosophies from the schools, but in its relation to the multitude. The remoteness and obscurity of metaphysical theology enables the academicians to get themselves accounted by the multitude as "the sole authors and possessors of [theological] truths ... reserving the key to themselves and communicating to the public their use only."⁴³

The commentary on this somewhat cryptic passage is pre-

sented in the *Quarrel of the Faculties*. The philosophical faculty (which Kant identifies with critical philosophy) and the theological faculty are in contention for the allegiance of the multitude.⁴⁴ According to philosophy, theology holds the multitude in thralldom by means of superstition. For the multitude believe that theologians are adept in knowledge of the fate of the soul in the afterlife, and in their hope for a good result, superstitiously attribute to the theologians powers that they do not possess.⁴⁵ Criticism would emancipate the multitude from their misguided obeisance by proving that the theologians possess no knowledge that is not also available to the common man. However, the dispute with theology is really secondary and derivative, for the theologians are servants of the sovereign, who ultimately prescribes what is to be taught. The interest of the sovereign is not the truth or falsity of some doctrines, but the tranquil guidance of the people.⁴⁶ Criticism thus cannot dispute the teachings of the theologians without setting itself at cross purposes with the will of the sovereign.

To negotiate this impasse, Kant proposes the following arrangement. In return for freedom to criticize theology, philosophy agrees not to address its criticisms to the multitude, confining its speech to the learned public only, the theologians especially. Their office is to judge these criticisms and to incorporate whatever seems fitting into the curriculum for pastors and other public servants, through whom they eventually reach the multitude.⁴⁷ One thus understands how Kant can explain the *ad hominem* character of moral theology without destroying its effectiveness: the theologians presumably will not transmit to the multitude the fact that the new theology is *ad hominem*. Philosophy thus clears its conscience of the burden of the pious lie by shifting it to the pastors.

Yet this arrangement seems to be quite unworkable. As King Fredrick William was curious to know, how can Kant keep his part of the agreement when his criticisms are accessible to all readers? His response to the King, which one may assume is his most serious answer, is that he has taken precautions to ensure that the multitude will take no interest in his books by shrouding his thoughts in the obscurity of academic jargon.⁴⁸ After the death of the King, however, Kant indicated, without saying it in so many words, that the agreement he made under duress is not to be accepted at face value. This he does by publishing his harshest criticism of theology in language that can be understood by everyone, and precisely in the work (*The Quarrel*) which promises that philosophy will not speak to the multitude: the very manner of the statement of the agreement effectively annuls it.⁴⁹

The divergence of Kant's practice from his own moral teaching is best understood from that teaching itself. As a metaphysical doctrine, morality is "completely isolated" from the "phenomenal," i.e., real world of events and sensibility.⁵⁰ This retreat to the noumenal fortress brings two great advantages: morality is able to command absolutely, without reference to the troublesome problem of determinism, and it is freed altogether from any dependence on deliberation and prudence. The latter advantage is indispensable for the realization of moral equality. For if morality essentially requires deliberation, those who are naturally best at deliberating must in justice be set over those whose deliberate powers are naturally weak. But recognition of inequality in the sphere of morality would inevitably lead from approval of difference in orders of rank to approval of the noble lie, which Kant is at pains to eliminate for the sake of egalitarianism. Non-deliberative metaphysical morality is essentially for men of "happy simplicity."⁵¹

Even so, the fact remains that not all men are simple: "innocence is indeed a glorious thing, but ... it is very sad that it cannot well maintain itself."⁵² The price of moral egalitarianism is the incommensurability of theory with practice. The formula expressing this predicament is that the well-ordered state is the condition for good morals, although that state itself is instituted by intelligent devils.⁵³ Morality, in order that it might be realized in the phenomenal world, must be preceded by the torch of prudence, lacking as it does the deliberative virtue which discerns what measures are appropriate to a given moral end at a given moment. Indeed, in the absence of good management by prudence, morality tends to become a fanaticism which insists upon the immediate realization of the moral condition, for example, the replacement of monarchy by a republic, when the circumstances are not auspicious.⁵⁴ In order to protect innocence from itself and the world, Kant is thus compelled to surround it by the mind of prudence, while yet keeping morality itself blissfully unaware of its compromising presence.⁵⁵ This peculiar arrangement is a temporary measure only. As men progress in moral improvement, that is, as morality occupies more and more of the real world, prudence will grow progressively less necessary until at last it becomes superfluous.

If deceit belongs to the original constitution of man, the clash of theory with practice should be nowhere sharper than in the disproportion between the moral demand for truthfulness and actual practice. "Every intelligent man," says Kant, "finds it neces-

sary to conceal a good portion of his thoughts," and not even simple men are entirely candid.⁵⁶ This harsh exigency extracts from Kant the admission that it is morally permissible to conceal one's views by silence when it becomes necessary for preventing the abuse of one's candor by ill-disposed persons.⁵⁷ This dispensation will of course not suffice to protect those like Kant, who claim to speak exhaustively on all matters of importance. Not only are his themes just those to which the state prescribes limits (hence, they are the most dangerous themes), but Kant is in substantial disagreement with the officially prescribed opinions. The condition for the freedom to oppose the received opinions is then accommodation by means of *ad hominem* arguments. Viewed from this perspective, moral theology is the "weapon of war" which establishes the sphere of prudential agreement within which all opposition to received opinion must be oriented.⁵⁸ After all is said and done, it appears that individuals who would mix in affairs of state must imitate the conduct of the state, whose practice "flatly contradicts" what it says.

In order to bring out the reason for the universal dissimulation that permeates all human relations, especially among the most highly civilized, Kant performs a thought experiment. Imagine a species so constituted that its members could entertain no thought to which they did not give immediate utterance. What kind of society would such beings have? Unless they were angels, they would not be able to bear one another nor sustain society.⁵⁹ The natural, non-moral man cannot help harboring unfriendly thoughts about his fellows, because he is exclusively or primarily concerned with his own advantage. Prudence teaches him, however, that he requires the cooperation of others in order to attain his end. In terms of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, men ought to relinquish the "lawless freedom" of the state of nature; but they should also dissemble their true reasons for doing so, although on this point the *Metaphysics of Morals* is discretely silent.⁶⁰ The deceit that belongs to the constitution of human nature turns out to be the essence of man's social nature.

Fortunately for the species, man likes to be deceived as much as he likes to deceive, for he typically prefers fine and pleasant illusions to harsh truths.⁶¹ The transition from deceiving to being deceived, from lie to illusion, is made by the suppression of consciousness of the deceptive intention of the original sociable dissimulation. This would occur in the following way. The natural man's deliberate misrepresentations are taken at face value and

fixed by social sanctions—they become morals or customs (*Sitten*). Those brought up in the customs, however, are of course not told of their original intention. But since customs stipulate what man is and ought to be, to assimilate the customs means to mistake man's dissembled nature for his true nature. Thus, custom succeeds in hiding man's nature *from himself* by weaving a cloak of "beautiful seeming" which conceals its opposite lying more or less dormant in the suppressed natural appetites.⁶² One is brought to the shocking conclusion that morality is the *Lüge an sich*.⁶³ Commensurate with this terrible result, in this context, and only here, Kant openly acknowledges the legitimacy of the noble lie, on the grounds that morality as a semblance is better than none at all.⁶⁴

Only when the relation between morals (*Sitten*) and human nature has been grasped by anthropology can the genuine problematic of a "metaphysics" of morals be stated. We previously observed that metaphysical morality presupposes morals in the sense that it accepts the morality of common human reason at face value, waiving all investigations of its origin. This is so much the case that metaphysics does not consider human *nature* at all, which is exclusively the province of anthropology, but only human reason from a transcendental point of view.⁶⁵ Anthropology, however, reveals a discrepancy between morality as it is in its origins (its "*an sich*") and what it appears to common human reason to be (its "*für sich*"). The discrepancy, as we just noted, is that knowledge of origins destroys full commitment to morality by revealing the radical defect of the origins. Those who possess the intellectual virtues remedy this defect by occupying higher ground, as Plato shows in the *Republic* and as Aristotle shows in the *Ethics*. This route is closed to Kant because he intends his moral doctrine for the multitude. On the other hand, the intention to liberate the multitude from their servility causes him to reject the traditional indulgence of illusion. The *via media* between continued servility and destruction of the moral illusion by genuine enlightenment, which the multitude cannot assimilate, is an apparent enlightenment in the form of a metaphysics whose function is to appear to satisfy all rational objections to the validity and obligation of morality. The metaphysical noumenal world and its revived theology is an artificial barrier which arms the "realm of freedom" (the *für sich*) against destructive incursions from the "realm of nature" (the *an sich*).⁶⁶

The long-range function and ultimate rationale of this seeming is explained when, in his writings on history, Kant views the

genesis and perfection of the moral realm as a whole in its real setting *within* the realm of nature, that is, the relevant nature—anthropology on a grand scale or history.

History for Kant has a direction and therefore a meaning, which is the gradual reconciliation of nature and freedom via the victory of man's moral and rational powers over his unsocial nature.⁸⁷ This process occurs through the self-suppression, or better, through the sublimation of human evil into the good precisely by means of complete development of evil.⁸⁸ The paradigm for this "dialectical" transformation is the passage between opposites that founds human society. As we noted, reason discovers that the most effective pursuit of one's own advantage dictates that one ought to pretend to be good. But the pretense acquires independence in the form of social sanction, and in this capacity turns in earnest against self-aggrandizement and unsociability. This means, however, that what originally was only an appearance (*für sich*) is transformed into a reality (*an sich*)—morality effectively enters the realm of nature by making its claims felt. This is not to say that morality as such overcomes nature; there is nothing in the relationship between good and evil that points to a resolution of the tension. The factor that tips the balance is reason in the forms of the arts and enlightenment. The arts break the hitherto prevailing pattern of the rise, fall, and replenishment of civilizations from barbarian tribes by providing the means whereby civilizations flourish to the point that all peoples are contiguous and thus essentially members of one world; the arts, one may say, create the condition in which "humanity" becomes a practicable concept.⁸⁹ Since the few remaining barbarian nations will easily be subdued by their neighbors, who possess gunpowder, civilization for the first time has the prospect of an indefinitely long existence, uninterrupted by barbarian invasions and the ensuing return to primitive conditions. This of course presupposes that the light of civilization will not be extinguished by war among civilized nations, which is to say that the suppression of war through the establishment of a world-state or league of nations is necessary. Given the proximity of nations, and hence constant irritation, Kant surmises that the world-state might be established by roughly the same causes that moved individuals to enter society originally. The long reign of undisturbed peace makes possible the advance of morality by removing the harsh circumstances that hitherto necessitated struggle and antagonism. Under these auspicious conditions, morality will gradually insinuate itself more and more firmly until at last it becomes "second nature" or expels the origi-

nal human nature.⁷⁰ The noumenal moral world thus *becomes* in reality what it appears to be (*an und für sich*), thereby reconciling nature and freedom.

The march of progress since Kant's time unfortunately gives us no warrant to modify his own profound skepticism about the possibility of mankind's advance to the perfect moral condition. Indeed, the very notion of progress has become doubtful, partly because the dangers of technology are at last manifest, but also because all morality now appears to be baseless. The enthusiasm and supreme confidence of the eighteenth-century enlightenment has been transformed into a self-consuming doubt that wavers between moral relativism and fervent commitment to the inherited enlightenment ideals. Or one could say that the erratic and increasingly irrational behavior of the contemporary heirs of rationalism arises from the combination of an inherited allegiance to the ideals of the enlightenment with lack of conviction that those ideals are inherently superior to any other ideal or non-ideal. Owing to this circumstance, the enlightenment ideals undergo a great variety of transformations. Progress deprived of belief in goals becomes a celebration of "process" or novelty for its own sake. Intellectual and moral self-sufficiency, which in the enlightenment is already a vulgarization of the original notion, is debased to an indiscriminating approval of all ways of life, except those that are undemocratic, or those that are incompatible with the production-consumption machinery, or those that are not chosen in the anguish of the knowledge that one's choice is groundless, depending on one's view of what is fundamental. Reason comes to mean exactness and efficiency, from which results an incapacity to distinguish between wise counsel and the machinations of scoundrels and even the incoherence of fools. The belief that all behavior and conviction is conditioned by stimuli of the environment is accompanied by an extraordinary reverence for the integrity of personality and disapproval of all restraint as suppression of individuality. I spare the reader further enumeration of these sad irrationalities.

The asceticism of truthfulness is both an effect and cause of the moral paralysis. In terms of Kant's projection of progress, the demand for truthfulness has been assimilated far in advance of the assimilation of morality to the human reality, with the result that uncompromising truthfulness leads to the popular exposé of all moral ideals—ultimately, even the will to truthfulness—as so many dissimulations of the will to self-aggrandizement understood as the enhancement of the feeling of power. One could say, as

Nietzsche in fact claimed, that Nietzsche's thought destroys the dialectic of progress by bringing forth from that process the self-suppression of the good in the form of an exhibition of the immorality of morality that destroys the "moral illusion."⁷¹

The perturbation which explodes in Nietzsche is already well established in Kant. It is perceptible in his smoldering anger with the excesses of religion, in his doubts about the soundness of philosophy, in his estimation of the potential of the multitude. Like other modern thinkers, Kant's thought about the multitude is a perpetual struggle between what we in fact see and what might be hoped for under radically new social conditions. This hope explains why Kant dared situate morality between its temporal genesis in human nature and its historical outcome in transmitted institutions; or, it explains why Kant dared join Hobbes' state of nature doctrine with moral idealism and utopianism. The attempt to fuse Hobbes and Rousseau into a new moral-anthropological teaching is the main source of Kant's misinterpretation of the role of dissimulation in morality. The state of nature doctrine requires him to believe that the noble lie is necessary to *establish* morality, whereas the *Second Discourse* furnishes the premise for belief in progress and hence belief in the historical contingency and ultimate dispensability of the noble lie. But an enlightenment which is assimilated, through institutions, only as true opinion remains mere opinion. The noble lie remains necessary because no amount of proxy effort can erase the difference between opinion and knowledge.

NOTES

Roman numerals followed by Arabic numerals indicate, respectively, the volume and page number of citations from *Kants gesammelte Schriften*. "A" or "B" followed by Arabic numerals indicates citations from the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

1. The philosophical, moral, and historical importance of this teaching has been articulated by Leo Strauss throughout his works. The reader will observe that the author has examined Kant's philosophy in the light that Strauss has shed on the interpretation of philosophic texts.

2. VIII, 267, 422.

3. B xxxi; IV, 404; IX, 29.

4. IV, 404-04; VIII, 370ff.

5. VI, 318, 339-40, 371; VII, 23-4, 29, 33; VIII, 304.

6. VI, 380, 383, 405.

7. VI, 408.
8. II, 218; also VIII, 268, IV, 222.
9. VI, 400.
10. VI, 186, 429-30, 438; VIII, 268, n.
11. VI, 429.
12. Apparently this movement is responsible for Kant's both asserting and denying that to have a conscience is duty. When it is denied, he thinks of conscience as practical reason; when it is affirmed, he thinks of it as conscientiousness. Compare VI, 185-6 with VI, 400.
13. The will to truthfulness, or conscientiousness, seizes the foreground because, owing to the fact that we know ourselves only as an appearance, it is impossible to know one's own motives with certainty. IV, 407, 451; VIII, 284-5.
14. VI, 39, 33.
15. A 319; V, 146-7.
16. VI, 186-90; VIII, 268-9.
17. *K. Urteilskraft*, par. 90; IV, 278; A 748-50.
18. A 423-4, 486.
19. A 470, 455-7.
20. A 580, 673, 598.
21. A 466.
22. A 638, 68-9, 277-8, 384-5, 546-7, 566-7. That this connection between metaphysics and religion weighed heavily in Kant's thought is evident both from the pre-critical *Träume* and the post-critical *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie*.
23. A 797ff; *K. Urteilskraft*, end par. 91.
24. VI, 194-5; 439-40.
25. V, 147.
26. A 259, 702; IV, 354; V, 49, 103.
27. V, 69-71, 44; IV, 337ff.
28. VI, 441.
29. A 339, 407, 422, 581, 642. Kant equivocates on the official view in several ways, the most important of which being perhaps that the ideas are inventions or fictions (A 320, 580, 584, 639, 673). These equivocations give force to Schopenhauer's assertion that Kant elevates mere sophisms to the rank of natural corruptions of reason and that he identifies Judaism with reason. Apparently Schopenhauer thinks this connected with restrictions on Kant's freedom of speech. *World as Will and Idea* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), pp. 90, 96, 98-100, 121-2, 129, 132-3.
30. *K. Urteilskraft*, par. 90.
31. VI, 111.

32. *Ibid.* Hypocrisy in religious teachers is allegedly the rule rather than the exception (VIII, 268). See VII, 45-48.

33. In addition to Schopenhauer, cited above, and Herder, cited below, see Schelling, *Werke* (Munich: Beck & Oldenbourg, 1928), V, 132; Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, par. 18 and *Der Antichrist*, pars. 10-12. Cohen's procedure with the postulate of the highest good typifies the manner in which Kant scholars normally deal with this problem. Although he admits, with Schleiermacher, that the postulate is "only political," the admission is diluted by interpreting it as a survival of Leibnizean optimism. Had Cohen faced the problem directly, he would have been compelled to admit that the postulate cannot be separated from the Kantian rational faith, as he attempts to do. [Hermann Cohen, *Kants Begründung der Ethik* (Berlin: Dümmmler, 1877), pp. 326-8.] Even Gerhard Krüger, to my knowledge the only scholar who has recognized that truthfulness is fundamental to Kant's morality, fails to consider whether Kant's practice conforms to his theory. [Krüger, *Critique et morale chez Kant*, tr. M. Régnier (Paris: Beauchesne, 1961), pp. 166-72.] The common fault of such authors is that they do not consider practice in sufficiently practical terms.

34. A 828-9. Also A 739, 742-3, 746, 777. At A 828-9, Kant does not use the term "ad hominen," apparently preferring to allow the reader to infer that the argument has this status from his statement that the argument is valid only when formulated in the first person. However, in the posthumous *Fortschritte* essay, it is expressly said to be *ad hominen* (XX, 305-6). In *Misslingen*, the argument is called a "Machtsspruch" (VIII, 262). See also *K. Urteilskraft*, par. 90 and VII, 52, n.

35. The entire "Canon of Pure Reason," of which the moral theology and postulate of the highest good are parts, is introduced under the rubric of practical concessions to practical "needs" or "interests" (A 795ff.). This point of view is consistently maintained in all later treatments of the subject.

36. V, 134.

37. A 811, 813; V, 126, 142-3. When pressed by Garve (VIII, 278-80), Kant simply denies ever having said, as he plainly does at A 811, that deficiency of motive is the reason for the moral theology. The reason he gives—the need of an "object" to guarantee the coincidence of virtue and happiness—is however merely a round-about way of saying the same thing.

38. *Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1955), p. 296. See V, 144.

39. In his popular survey of Kant, for example, Reininger, defending Kant against the allegation that his famous statement that he does away with knowledge in order to make room for faith is a deliberate misrepresentation designed to enlist the support of the very persons he attacks, says that Kantian faith is a means whereby "von den religiösen Vorstellungen allmählich ganz von selbst wegfallen, was für eine bestimmte Zeit an ihnen überflüssig geworden ist." [*Kant: Seine Anhänger und seine Gegner* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1923), p. 259.] Precisely. Yet Kant admits that his "pure moral religion" is the "euthanasia of Judaism," i.e., Christianity (VII, 53), and that the Bible may be inter-

preted to teach the pure moral religion even though a moral religion may have been the furthest thing from the thoughts of the Biblical authors (VI, 111).

40. Enlightenment is nothing but the revelation of the esoteric teaching: "Aber in den religiösen Darstellungen den zur Moralität, welche das Wesen aller zwar einige Zeit hindurch nützliche and nötige Hülle von der Sache selbst zu unterscheiden ist Aufklärung; weil sonst ein Ideal . . . gegen ein Idol vertauscht und der Endzweck verfehlt wird." VII, 192. On the ripeness of the time for enlightenment, see VI, 84, 132, 165-7.

41. Karl Vorländer, *Immanuel Kant* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1924), II, 40, 56; *Kant: Philosophical Correspondence*. ed. & tr. by Arnulf Zweig (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 186, 213, 249-50; VII, 6-7.

42. B xxxii-xxxiii, xxxiv-xxxv.

43. B xxxiii.

44. VII, 30.

45. *Ibid.*

46. VII, 8, 21-2, 28.

47. VII, 28-9, 34-5.

48. VI, 14, 206; VII, 9; IV, 14.

49. By prefacing the *Quarrel* with the King's reprimand and his reply, Kant plainly indicates how one should interpret the "peace treaty" the *Quarrel* draws up. See also VII, 33, 31, and Herder's comment on the casuistry by which Kant sought to deny that he broke his promise to the monarch (Herder, *op. cit.*, p. 347, n. 1).

50. IV, 410.

51. IV, 404; V, 36; VIII, 286.

52. IV, 405.

53. VI, 366. Although, as mentioned above, Kant does not speak of the origin of the state in any of his ethical treatises, he does reveal its origin in the historical essays.

54. VI, 373, also 372, 377-8; V, 126.

55. To my knowledge no commentator has noticed the crucial role Kant assigns to prudence, even as he condemns it as immoral. In the later writings its function is concealed by the interpretation of the moral theology in terms of the providence of nature, i.e., history. For the relation of the theodicy to prudence, see VIII, 25, 262, 264, 362 n.; VII, 329.

56. VII, 332.

57. Kant sometimes (VI, 190; VIII, 269) distinguishes truthfulness (*Wahrhaftigkeit*) from sincerity (*Aufrichtigkeit*). The relevant difference is that truthfulness is compatible with concealing one's views by maintaining silence, whereas sincerity is a completely open heart, which is found only in children. In the *Metaphysics of Virtue* truthfulness and

sincerity are first identified (VI, 429), and then distinguished (VI, 471-2). In *Ueber ein vermeintes Recht aus Menschenliebe zu Lügen*, Kant purports to prove the *injustice* of the benevolent lie, although the *Metaphysics of Justice* expressly permits lying (VI, 238). Actually, the argument of *Verm. Recht* is drawn entirely from grounds available only to the doctrine of virtue, augmented by illegitimate appeals to positive law.

58. VIII, 146.

59. VII, 332.

60. *Ibid.*

61. VII, 152; VIII, 113, 376, n.

62. VII, 152.

63. Concealment, i.e., insincerity, is "the real basis of all true sociability." VIII, 113.

64. VII, 152-3.

65. IV, 410-12; V, 97.

66. B 310-11; A 643-5, 670-71; V, 174-76; VIII, 332-3.

67. VIII, 17, 362, n.

68. *K. Urteilskraft*, par. 83; VIII, 29-30, 367.

69. VII, 81; VIII, 21, 24.

70. VIII, 117.

71. The connection between the transvaluation of values and its mode as popular enlightenment is precisely intellectual honesty. *Der Antichrist*, pars. 38, 44, 47, 55-6, 62.