IMMANUEL KANT

Religion and Rational Theology

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

ALLEN W. WOOD
Yale University

GEORGE DI GIOVANNI
McGill University

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

On the miscarriage of all philosophical trials in theodicy

Translator's introduction

This essay, "Über das Mißlingen aller philosophischen Versuche in der Theodicee," was first published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift,* September 1791, 194–225. In a letter dated December 29, 1789, to its editor Johann Erich Biester, Kant had expressed his intention to contribute to the journal. In the letter, Kant had added: "I now have, however, a work of just about a month to complete. . . ."[a] Once that work, (undoubtedly the *Critique of Judgment*) had been completed, he planned to fill the time with some compositions perhaps suitable to Biester's journal. The present essay apparently represents the fulfillment of that plan.

It is difficult to state with certainty, for lack of any explicit statement on the part of Kant, what motivated him to write the essay. We know that it was the first of a series of writings on theological and religious matters (all published in this volume) that occupied Kant after the accession to the throne in Prussia of the reactionary Frederick William II.[b] That in writing the essay Kant was preoccupied by the repressive policies pursued by the new regime is clear from at least two places. The first is a passage (AK, 266) where Kant claims that Job would have stood little chance if judged before a synod or any other public body, "one alone excepted." The exception is obviously the Berlin High Consistory, a church tribunal still staffed by enlightened clerics who had been appointed to their posts prior to the new administration and were now obstructing the actions of the new minister of education and religious affairs, J. C. Wöllner. Kant's otherwise unintelligible qualification to his general statement is his vote of support for their resistance to the new oppressive regime.

The second place is the concluding remark appended to the essay, where Kant offers a series of reflections on the subject of "sincerity" and "professions of faith." The obvious background for these reflections is the 1790 edict requiring that candidates in theology be tested by means of a formal profession of faith – not only for their knowledge of Christian doctrine but also for their adherence. Kant's stated position in his reflections is that enlightened education and the self-discipline that freedom from external constraints alone can nurture will hopefully raise, in some

[a] AK 11:117

[b] For the historical details, and new constraints imposed on free thought, see the introduction to this volume and to *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason.*

distant future, society's general level of sincerity. Obligatory professions of faith are counterproductive because they feed on the all-too-human propensity to self-deception and hence foster "a certain falsehood in a community's very way of thinking," especially when personal gain is at issue. Yet Kant concedes that, in the present spiritual state of society, the demand for such professions can be justified. In a long footnote (AK 8:268), he explains that, because of the real possibility of deception, it is fair under certain circumstances to submit citizens to the trial of "oath taking." In such trials, the sincerity of a profession of faith is tested by forcing the declarer to make the profession on the explicit admission that there *might* be a future judge of the world to whom the declarer will eventually have to answer. But, Kant adds, trials of this kind cannot be used when the professions extorted would entail a speculative commitment (such as that God exists) that in fact transcends theoretical insight and that therefore nobody could declare with a clear conscience. Such trials are permissible only when the source of the professions is "historical," i.e. (as Kant presumably means) only when a profession is directed to beliefs based on tradition and authority. The professions mandated by Wöllner with the 1790 edict clearly fell within this category. Kant's footnote can be read, therefore, as an attempt on his part to rationalize and excuse the edict. But it can equally be taken as an exercise in damage control. For Wöllner's intention was to reassert and protect from attacks the truth of ecclesiastical dogma, whereas Kant, by allowing that such dogma could indeed be the legitimate object of public professions of belief, was thereby implying that it had no theoretical content – that it was not "true" in any relevant sense, even though it could well have consequences so far as social discipline is concerned. While condoning the 1790 edict, Kant was in fact blunting its intended effect.

Against this politico-religious background, Kant's essay appears as an object lesson on the hypocrisy of those who, while pretending to uphold the cause of God, in fact use God to promote their own natural interests. But the essay can also be seen in another, more academic context. The essay was composed immediately after the *Critique of Judgment*, a work in part motivated by Kant's desire to meet the widely accepted criticisms moved from various quarters against his moral doctrine. It had been objected that, its unfortunate formalism apart, there was nothing new in this doctrine, since it made rationality of intention the fundamental criterion of conduct – a position to which no refined eudaemonist would want to object.[c] Even more effective had been Rehberg's denial that the idea of

[c] Examples of this eudaemonist reaction are J. G. H. Feder's review of Kant's *Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, 3.172(1785), pp. 1739–44, and H. A. Pistorius' review of the same work in *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, 66.2 (1786), pp. 447–63.

the law, though constituting the formal principle of morality as Kant had claimed, could by itself be an effective rule of conduct unless accompanied by other, more natural incentives.[d] In the context of these criticisms, the essay can be read as a figurative vindication of the effectiveness of Kant's moral principle despite its avowed formalism. Job can offer no reasons that would explain his unhappy situation. Yet, righteous man that he is, he stands by his undemonstrable inner conviction that in the eyes of God everything is as it ought to be. And at the end God justifies him. Just so with the idea of the law: Though empty of content so far as nature is concerned, it alone can generate a faith that promotes effective action in the world.

Whatever the motivation behind it, the essay is one of the more artistically successful pieces Kant ever produced. It was first translated into English by John Richardson, a student of Jakob Sigismund Beck. It was published in *Essays and Treatises on Moral, Political, and Various Philosophical Subjects, by Emanuel Kant,* 2 vols (London:[e] Printed for the Translator and Sold by William Richardson, 1798–99), Vol. 2, pp. 189–215, under the title, "On the Failure of All the Philosophical Essays in the Theodicée." I have checked the present translation against Richardson's and have adopted the occasional word and expression from it that I found especially apt. A more recent translation is included in Michel Despland's *Kant on History and Religion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1973), pp. 283–97, under the title "On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies."

[d] The most importrant document in this respect is August Wilhelm Rehberg's review of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason,* in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung,* Nr 188.a.b (August 6 1788), pp. 345–60. But Rehberg had already stated his position in *Über das Verhältniß der Metaphysik zur Religion* (Berlin: Mylius, 1787).

[e] Actually "printed in a remote part of Germany, where no better paper could possibly be got." Cf. Vol. 1, Preface, p. v, footnote. The place must have been Altenburg, where Richardson was employed in the household of the Count von Mühlen. Before leaving for Altenburg, Richardson had worked at his translations in Halle, as a guest of Professor Ludwig Heinrich Jacob from whom he received encouragement and clarification on difficult points. Jacob also acted as intermediary between Richardson and Kant. For the relevant documentation, see the following letters: May 10, 1797, AK 12:160; Sept. 8, 1797, AK 12:195–8; June 21, 1798, AK 12:242–3; and June 21, 1798, p. 244. Also AK 13:482. Of the title of his work, Richardson says: "Under the general title of *Essays* I have hidden much metaphysical material. Through this means I hope to stir my compatriots – as always still complacent in their empiricism – to study a better grounded and, in my humble opinion, the *one and only* well grounded philosophy." AK 12:242.

8:253

On the miscarriage of all philosophical trials[a] *in theodicy*

8:255 By "theodicy" we understand the defense of the highest wisdom of the creator against the charge which reason brings against it for whatever is counterpurposive[b] in the world. – We call this "the defending of God's cause," even though the cause might be at bottom no more than that of our presumptuous reason failing to recognize its limitations. This is indeed not the best of causes, yet one that can be condoned insofar as (aside from that self-conceit) the human being is justified, as rational, in testing all claims, all doctrines which impose respect upon him, before he submits himself to them, so that this respect may be sincere and not feigned.

Now for this vindication it is required that the would-be advocate of God prove *either* that whatever in the world we judge counterpurposive[c] is not so; *or,* if there is any such thing, that it must be judged not at all as an intended effect[d] but as the unavoidable consequence of the nature of things; *or,* finally, that it must at least be considered not as an intended effect[e] of the creator of all things but, rather, merely of those beings in the world to whom something can be imputed, i.e. of human beings (higher spiritual beings as well, good or evil, as the case may be).

The author of a theodicy agrees, therefore, that this juridical process be instituted before the tribunal of reason; he further consents to represent the accused side as advocate through the formal refutation of all the plaintiff's complaints; he is not therefore allowed to dismiss the latter in the course of the process of law through a decree of incompetency of the tribunal of human reason (*exceptio fori*),[f] i.e. he cannot dismiss the complaints with a concession of the supreme wisdom of the author of the world, imposed
8:256 upon the plaintiff, which would immediately explain away as groundless, even without examination, all doubts that might be raised against it; he must

[a] *Versuch:* a trial both in the sense of a scientific experiment and in the sense of putting somebody to the test.
[b] *das Zwechwidrige*
[c] *zweckwidrig*
[d] *Faktum.* The Latin *factum* literally means "something made or done."
[e] *Faktum*
[f] "An exception to the court," i.e., a challenge to the court's competence.

rather attend to the objections, and make comprehensible how they in no way derogate from the concept of the highest wisdom by clarifying and removing them.* – Yet there is one thing he need not attend to, namely a proof of God's wisdom from what the experience of this world teaches; for in this he would simply not succeed, since omniscience would be required to recognize in a given world (as gives itself to cognition in experience) that perfection of which we could say with certainty that absolutely none other is possible in creation and its government.

Now whatever is counterpurposive in the world, and may be opposed to the wisdom of its creator, is of a threefold kind:

I. The absolutely counterpurposive, or what cannot be condoned or desired either as end or means;

II. The conditionally counterpurposive, or what can indeed never co-exist with the wisdom of a will as end, yet can do so as means.

The *first* is the morally counterpurposive, evil proper[g] (sin); the *second,* the physically counterpurposive, ill[h] (pain). – But now, there still is a purposiveness[i] in the proportion of ill to moral evil, if the latter is once there, and neither can nor should be prevented – namely in the conjunction of ills and pains, as penalties, with evil, as crime. It is of this purposiveness in the world that one asks whether, in this respect, everyone in the world gets his due. Consequently, yet a 8:257

IIIrd kind of counterpurposiveness must be thinkable in the world, namely the disproportion between crimes and penalties in the world.

* Although the proper concept of *wisdom* represents only a will's property of being in agreement with the highest good as the *final end* of all things, whereas [the concept of] *art* represents only competence in the use of the suitable means toward *optional ends,* yet, when art proves itself adequate to ideas the possibility of which surpasses every insight of human reason (e.g. when means and ends reciprocally produce one another, as in organic bodies), as a *divine art,* it can also, not incorrectly, be given the name of wisdom – or rather, not to mix up concepts, the name of an *artistic wisdom* of the author of the world, in distinction from his *moral wisdom.* Teleology (and, through it, physicotheology) gives abundant proof in experience of this artistic wisdom. But from it no inference is allowed to the moral wisdom of the author of the world, for the natural law and the moral law require principles of entirely different kinds, and the demonstration of the latter wisdom must be carried out totally *a priori,* hence in no way be founded on the experience of what goes on in the world. Now since the concept of God suited to religion must be a concept of him as a moral being (for we have no need of him for natural explanation, hence for speculative purposes); and since this concept can just as little be derived from the mere transcendental concept of an absolutely necessary being – a concept that totally escapes us – as be founded on experience; so it is clear enough that the proof of the existence of such a being can be none other than a moral proof.

[g] *das eigentliche Böse*

[h] *Übel*

[i] *Zweckmäßigkeit*

The attributes of the world-author's supreme wisdom against which these [three kinds of] counterpurposiveness stand out as objections are, therefore, likewise three:

First, the *holiness* of the author of the world, as *law-giver* (creator), in opposition to the moral evil in the world.

Second, his *goodness,* as *ruler* (preserver), in contrast[j] with the countless ills and pains of the rational beings of the world.

Third, his *justice,* as *judge,* in comparison to the bad state which the disproportion between the impunity of the depraved and their crimes seems to indicate in the world.*

8:258 The case against those three charges must be presented, therefore, along the three above mentioned kinds [of counterpurposiveness], and must be tested against their validity.

I. Against the complaint over the holiness of the divine will for the moral evil which disfigures the world, God's work, the first vindication consists in this:

a) There is no such thing as an absolute counterpurposiveness which we take the trespassing of the pure laws of our reason to be, but there are violations only against human wisdom; divine wisdom judges these accord-

* These three attributes, none of which can in any way be reduced to the others – as, for instance, justice to goodness, and so the whole to a smaller number – together constitute the moral concept of God. Nor can their order be altered (as by making benevolence, for instance, the supreme condition of world creation to which the holiness of legislation is subordinated) without doing violence to religion, which has this very concept for foundation. Our own pure (hence practical) reason determines this order of rank, for if legislation accommodated itself to benevolence, its dignity would no longer be there, nor a firm concept of duties. Indeed the human being wishes to be happy first; but then he sees, and (though reluctantly) accepts, that the worthiness to be happy, i.e. the conformity of the employment of his freedom with the holy law, must in God's decision be the condition of his benevolence, and must, therefore, necessarily precede it. For the wish that has the subjective end (self-love) for foundation cannot determine the objective end (of wisdom) prescribed by the law that unconditionally gives the will its rule. Moreover, punishment in the exercise of justice is founded in the legislating wisdom not at all as mere means but as an end: trespass is associated with ills not that some other good may result from it, but because this connection is good in itself, i.e. morally and necessarily good. Justice indeed presupposes the benevo-
8:258 lence of the legislator (for if his will were not directed to the well-being of his subjects, neither could he bind them under duty to obey him); yet justice is not goodness but rather essentially different from it, even though included in the general concept of wisdom. Hence also the lament over the lack of justice shown in the wrongs which are the lot of human beings here on earth is directed not at the *well-being* which does not befall the good, but at the *ill* which does not befall the evil (although, if well-being occurs to the evil, then the contrast makes the offence all the greater). For under divine rule even the best of human beings cannot found his wish to fare well on divine justice but must found it on God's beneficence, for one who only does what he owes[k] can have no rightful claim on God's benevolence.

[j] *Kontraste*

[k] *seine Schuldigkeit*

ing to totally different rules, incomprehensible to us, where, what we with right find reprehensible with reference to our practical reason and its determination might yet perhaps be in relation to the divine ends and the highest wisdom precisely the most fitting means to our particular welfare and the greatest good of the world as well; the ways of the most high are not our ways[l] (*sunt supris sua iura*),[l] and we err whenever we judge what is law only relatively to human beings in this life to be so absolutely, and thus hold what appears counterpurposive to our view of things from so lowly a standpoint to be such also when considered from the highest. – This apology, in which the vindication is worse than the complaint, needs no refutation; surely it can be freely given over to the detestation of every human being who has the least feeling for morality.

b) The second alleged vindication would indeed allow for the actuality of moral evil in the world, but it would excuse the author of the world on the ground that it could not be prevented, because founded upon the 8:259
limitations of the nature of human beings, as finite. – However, the evil would thereby be justified, and, since it could not be attributed to human beings as something for which they are to be blamed, we would have to cease calling it "a moral evil."

c) The third rejoinder, that even conceding that it is really a matter of what we call moral evil, a guilt resting on the human being, yet no guilt may be ascribed to God, for God has merely tolerated it for just causes as a deed of human beings: in no way has he condoned it, willed or promoted it – this rejoinder incurs one and the same consequence as the previous apology (b) (even if we take no offense at the concept of a mere *tolerating* on the part of a being who is the one and sole creator of the world): namely, since even for God it was impossible to prevent this evil without doing violence to higher and even moral ends elsewhere, the ground of this ill (for so we must now truly call it) must inevitably be sought in the essence of things, specifically in the necessary limitations of humanity as a finite nature; hence the latter can also not be held responsible for it.

II. With respect to the complaint brought against divine goodness for the ills, namely the pains, in this world, its vindication equally consists

a) in this: It is false to assume in human fates a preponderance of ill over the pleasant enjoyment of life, for however bad someone's lot, yet everyone would rather live than be dead, and those few who opt for the latter, so long as they themeslves postpone it, thereby still confess to that preference; and if they are insane enough for it,[m] even then they simply pass over into the state of insensibility where pain as well cannot be felt. – But surely the reply to this sophistry may be left to the sentence of every human being of sound mind who has lived and pondered over the value of

[l] Those on high have their own laws.
[m] *zum letztern* (i.e., the "be dead" option)

life long enough to pass judgment, when asked, on whether he had any inclination to play the game of life once more, I do not say in the same circumstances but in any other he pleases (provided they are not of a fairy world but of this earthly world of ours).

b) To the second vindication – namely, the preponderance of painful
8:260 feelings over pleasant ones cannot be separated from the nature of an animal creature such as the human being (in the vein of what Count Veri claims in his book on the nature of pleasure) – [2] the retort to this is that, if that is the way it is, then another question arises, namely why the creator of our existence called us into life when the latter, in our correct estimate, is not desirable to us. Ill humor would reply here as that Indian woman did to Genghis Khan, who could neither give her satisfaction for violence suffered nor afford security for the future: "If you will not protect us, why do you then conquer us?"

c) The third way of untying the knot is supposed to be this: God has put us here on earth for the sake of a future happiness, hence out of his goodness; yet an arduous and sorrowful state in the present life must without exception precede that hoped-for superabundant blessedness – a state in which we are to become worthy of that future glory precisely through our struggle with adversities. – But, that before the highest wisdom this time of trial (to which most succumb, and in which even the best is not happy about his life) must without exception be the condition of the joy eventually to be savored by us, and that it was not possible to let the creature be satisfied with every stage of his life – this can indeed be pretended but in no way can there be insight into it; in this way one can indeed cut the knot loose through an appeal to the highest wisdom which willed it, but one cannot untie the knot, which is what theodicy claims to be capable of accomplishing.

III. To the last charge, namely against the justice of the world's judge,* is replied:

8:261 a) The pretension that the depraved go unpunished in the world is ungrounded, for by its nature every crime already carries with it its due punishment, inasmuch as the inner reproach of conscience torments the depraved even more harshly than the Furies. – But in this judgment there obviously lies a misunderstanding. For here the virtuous man lends to the depraved the characteristic of his own constitution, namely, a conscientiousness in all its severity which, the more virtuous a human being is, all

* It is remarkable that of all the difficulties in reconciling the course of world events with the divinity of their creator, none imposes itself on the mind as starkly as that of the semblance in them of a lack of *justice*. If it comes about (although it seldom happens) that an unjust, especially violent, villain does not escape unpunished from the world, then the impartial spectator rejoices, now reconciled with heaven. No purposiveness of nature will so excite him in admiration of it and, as it were, make him detect God's hand in it. Why? Because nature is here moral, solely of the kind we seldom can hope to perceive in the world.

the more harshly punishes him because of the slightest indiscretion frowned upon by the moral law in him. But where this attitude of mind and the accompanying conscientiousness are totally absent, so too is the tormentor of crimes committed; and the depraved, if only he can escape the external floggings for his heinous deeds, laughs at the scrupulousness of the honest who inwardly plague themselves with self-inflicted rebukes; the small reproaches which from time to time he might make to himself are, however, either made not through conscience at all or, if he still has some of this conscience within him, are abundantly upset and made good by the pleasure of the senses for which alone he has a taste. – If that charge shall be further

b) refuted by this: It is indeed not to be denied that there is absolutely no relation according to justice between guilt and punishment in this world, and in the ways of this world one must often witness" with indignation a life led with crying injustice and yet happy to the end; this is not, however, something inherent in nature and deliberately promoted, hence not a moral dissonance, for it is a property of virtue that it should wrestle with adversities (among which is the pain that the virtuous must suffer through comparison of his own unhappiness with the happiness of the depraved), and sufferings only serve to enhance the value of virtue; thus this dissonance of undeserved ills resolves itself before reason into a glorious moral melody – the objection to this solution is that, although these ills, when they *precede* virtue or accompany it as its whetting stone, can indeed be represented as in moral harmony with it if at least the end of life crowns virtue and punishes the depraved; yet, if even such an end (as experience thereof gives many examples) fails against sense to materialize, then the suffering seems to have occurred to the virtuous, not *so that* his virtue should be pure, but *because* it was pure (and accordingly contrary to the rules of prudent self-love); and this is the very opposite of the justice of which the human being can form a concept for himself. For as regards the possibility that the end of this terrestrial life might not perhaps be the end of all life, such a possibility cannot count as *vindication* of providence; rather, it is merely a decree of morally believing reason which directs the doubter to patience but does not satisfy him. 8:262

c) If, finally, an attempt is made at the third resolution to this disharmonious relation between the moral worth of human beings and the lot that befalls them, by saying: In this world we must judge all well-being and ill merely as the consequence of the use of the human faculties according to the laws of nature, in proprotion to the skill and the prudence of their application, and also in proportion to the circumstances they accidentally come by, but not according to their agreement with supersensible ends; in a future world a different order of things will obtain instead, and each will

" *wahrnehmen*

receive that which his deeds here below are worthy of according to moral judgment – [if this is said,] then this assumption too is arbitrary.[o] Rather, unless reason, as a faculty of moral legislation, is pronouncing a decree in accordance with this legislative interest, it must find it probable, according to the mere laws of theoretical cognition, that the way of the world determines our fates in the future just as it does here, according to the order of nature. For what else does reason have as a guide for its theoretical conjecture except natural law? And though it allowed itself, as asked for above (item b), an appeal to patience, and the hope of a future improvement, how can it expect – since even for it the way of things according to the order of nature is a wise one here – that in a future world this way would be unwise according to the same laws? Since according to the same reason there is absolutely no comprehensible relation between the inner grounds of determination of the will (namely of the moral way of thinking) according to the laws of freedom, and the (for the most part external) causes of our welfare independent of our will according to the laws of nature, so the presumption remains that the agreement of human fate with a divine justice, according to the concepts that we construe of the latter, is just as little to be expected there as here.

. . .

8:263 Now the outcome of this juridical process before the forum of philosophy is this: Every previous theodicy has not performed what it promised, namely the vindication of the moral wisdom of the world-government against the doubts raised against it on the basis of what the experience of this world teaches – although, to be sure, as objections, so far as our reason's inherent insight regarding them goes, neither can these doubts prove the contrary. But again, whether in time yet more solid grounds of vindication will perhaps be found for the indicted reason – for absolving it not (as hitherto) merely *ab instantia*[p] – this still remains undecided; if we do not succeed in establishing with certainty that our reason is absolutely incapable of insight into *the relationship in which any world as we may ever become acquainted with through experience stands with respect to the highest wisdom,* then all further attempts by a putative human wisdom to gain insight into the ways of the divine wisdom are fully dismissed. Hence, in order to bring this trial to an end *once and for all,* it must yet be proven that at least a negative wisdom is within our reach – namely, insight into the necessary limitation of what we may presume with respect to that which is too high for us – and this may very well be done.

For in the arrangement of this world we have the concept of an *artistic wisdom* – a concept which, in order to attain to a physico-theology, is not

[o] *willkürlich*

[p] i.e., right there and then, without explanatory grounds

wanting in objective reality for our speculative faculty of reason. And we also have in the moral idea of our own practical reason a concept of a *moral wisdom* which could have been implanted in a world in general by a most perfect creator. – But of the *unity in the agreement* in a sensible world between that artistic and moral wisdom we have no concept; nor can we ever hope to attain one. For to be a creature and, as a natural being, merely the result of the will of the creator; yet to be capable of responsibility as a freely acting being (one which has a will independent of external influence and possibly opposed to the latter in a variety of ways); but again, to consider one's own deed at the same time also as the effect of a higher being – this is a combination of concepts which we must indeed 8:264
think together in the idea of a world and of a highest good, but which can be intuited only by one who penetrates to the cognition of the supersensible (intelligible) world and sees the manner in which this grounds the sensible world. The proof of the world-author's moral wisdom in the sensible world can be founded only on this insight – for the sensible world presents but the appearance of that other [intelligible] world – and that is an insight to which no mortal can attain.

* * *

All theodicy should truly be an *interpretation* of nature insofar as God announces his will through it. Now every interpretation of the declared will of a legislator is either *doctrinal*[q] or *authentic.* The first is a rational inference of that will from the utterances of which the law-giver has made use, in conjunction with his otherwise recognized purposes; the second is made by the law-giver himself.

As a work of God, the world can also be considered by us as a divine publication of his will's *purposes.* However, in this respect the world is *often* a closed book for us, and it is so *every time* we look at it to extract from it God's *final aim* (which is always moral) even though it is an object of experience. Philosophical trials in this kind of interpretation are doctrinal; they constitute theodicy proper – which we can therefore call "doctrinal." – Yet we cannot deny the name of "theodicy" also to the mere dismissal of all objections against divine wisdom, if this dismissal is a *divine decree,* or (for in this case it amounts to the same thing) if it is a pronouncement of the same reason through which we form our concept of God – necessarily and prior to all experience – as a moral and wise being. For through our reason God then becomes himself the interpreter of his will as announced through creation; and we can call this interpretation an *authentic* theodicy. But that is not the interpretation of a *ratiocinating* (speculative) reason, but of an *efficacious*[r] practical reason which, just as in legislating it commands absolutely

[q] *doktrinal*
[r] *machthabend*

without further grounds, so it can be considered as the unmediated definition and voice of God through which he gives meaning to the letter of his creation. Now I find such an authentic interpretation expressed allegorically in an ancient holy book.

8:265 Job is portrayed as a man whose enjoyment of life included everything which anyone might possibly imagine it as making it complete. He was healthy, well-to-do, free, master over others whom he can make happy, surrounded by a happy family, among beloved friends – and on top of all of this (what is most important) at peace with himself in a good conscience. A harsh fate imposed in order to test him suddenly snatched from him all these blessings, except the last. Stunned by this unexpected reversal, as he gradually regains his senses, he breaks out in lamentation over his unlucky star; whereupon a dispute soon develops between him and his friends – supposedly gathered to console him – in which the two sides expound their particular theodicy to give a moral explanation for that deplorable fate, each side according to its particular way of thinking (above all, however, according to its station). Job's friends declare themselves for that system which explains all ills in the world from God's *justice,* as so many punishments for crimes committed; and, although they could name none *for* which the unhappy man is guilty, yet they believed they could judge *a priori* that he must have some weighing upon him, for his misfortune would otherwise be impossible according to divine justice. Job – who idignantly protests that his conscience has nothing to reproach him for in his whole life; and, so far as human unavoidable mistakes are concerned, God himself knows that he has made him a fragile creature – Job declares himself for the system of *unconditional divine decision.* "He has decided," Job says, "He does as he wills."*

There is little worthy of note in the subtle or hypersubtle reasonings[s] of the two sides; but the spirit[t] in which they carry them out merits all the more attention. Job speaks as he thinks, and with the courage with which he, as well as every human being in his position, can well afford; his friends, on the contrary, speak as if they were being secretly listened to by the mighty one, over whose cause they are passing judgment, and as if gaining his favor through their judgment were closer to their heart than the truth. Their malice in pretending to assert things into which they yet must admit they have no insight, and in simulating a conviction which they in fact do not

8:266 have, contrasts with Job's frankness – so far removed from false flattery as to border almost on impudence – much to his advantage. "Will you defend God unjustly?" he asks;† "Will you give his person [special] consideration?

* Job 23:13.[3]

† Job 13:7–11, 16.[4]

[s] *was beide Theile vernünfteln oder übervernunfteln*

[t] *der Character*

Will you plead for God? He shall punish you, if you secretly have consideration for persons! – There will be no hypocrite before him!"

The outcome of the story actually confirms this. For God deigned to lay before Job's eyes the wisdom of his creation, especially its inscrutability. He allowed him glimpses into the beautiful side of creation, where ends comprehensible to the human being bring the wisdom and the benevolent providence of the author of the world unambiguously to light; but also, by contrast, into the horrible side, by calling out to him the products of his might, among which also harmful and fearsome things, each of which appears indeed to be purposively arranged for its own sake and that of its species, yet, with respect to other things and to human beings themselves, as destructive, counterpurposive, and incompatible with a universal plan established with goodness and wisdom. And yet God thereby demonstrates an order and a maintenance of the whole which proclaim a wise creator, even though his ways, inscrutable to us, must at the same time remain hidden – indeed already in the physical order of things, and how much more in the connection of the latter with the moral order (which is all the more impenetrable to our reason). – The conclusion is this: Since Job admits having hastily spoken about things which are too high for him and which he does not understand – not *as if wantonly,* for he is conscious of his honesty, but only unwisely – God finds against his friends, for (as conscientiousness goes) they have not spoken as well of God as God's servant Job. If we now consider the theoretical position[a] maintained by each side, that of Job's friends might convey more of an appearance of greater speculative reason and pious humility; before any court of dogmatic theologians, before a synod, an inquisition, a venerable congregation, or any higher consistory in our times (one alone excepted),[5] Job would have likely suffered a sad fate. Hence only sincerity of heart and not distinction of insight; honesty in openly admitting one's doubts; repugnance to pretending conviction where one feels none, especially before 8:267
God (where this trick is pointless enough) – these are the attributes which, in the person of Job, have decided the preeminence of the honest man over the religious flatterer in the divine verdict.

The faith, however, which sprang in him for such a vexing resolution of his doubts – namely merely from being convicted of ignorance – could only arise in the soul of a man who, in the midst of his strongest doubts, could yet say (Job 27:5–6): "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me, etc."[6] For with this disposition he proved that he did not found his morality on faith, but his faith on morality: in such a case, however weak this faith might be, yet it alone is of a pure and true kind, i.e. the kind of faith that founds not a religion of supplication, but a religion of good life conduct.

[a] *die Theorie*

CONCLUDING REMARK

Theodicy, as has been shown here, does not have as much to do with a task in the interest of science as, rather, with a matter of faith. From the authentic theodicy we saw that in these matters, less depends on subtle reasoning than on sincerity in taking notice of the impotence of our reason, and on honesty in not distorting our thoughts in what we say, however pious our intention. – This leads to yet the following brief reflection on a big subject, namely sincerity, which is the principal requirement in matters of faith, as contrasted with the propensity to falsehood and impurity which is the principal affliction of human nature.

One cannot always stand by the *truth* of what one says to oneself or to another (for one can be mistaken); however, one can and must stand by the *truthfulness* of one's declaration or confession, because one has immediate consciousness of this. For in the first instance we compare what we say with the object in a logical judgment (through the understanding), whereas in the second instance, where we declare what we hold as true, we compare what we say with the subject (before conscience). Were we to make our declaration with respect to the former without being conscious of the latter, then we lie, since we pretend something else than what we
8:268 are conscious of. – The observation that there is such an impurity in the human heart is not new (for Job already made it); yet one is tempted to believe that attention to it is new to the teachers of morality and religion, one so seldom finds them making a sufficient use of it despite the difficulty associated with a purification of the dispositions in human beings even when they *want* to act according to duty. We can call this truthfulness "formal conscientiousness"; "material conscientiousness" consists in the caution of not venturing anything on the danger that it might be wrong, whereas "formal" conscientiousness consists in the consciousness of having applied this caution in a given case. – Moralists speak of an "erring conscience." But an erring conscience is an absurdity;[v] and, if there were such a thing, then we could never be certain we have acted rightly, since even the judge in the last instance can still be in error. I can indeed err in the judgment *in which I believe* to be right, for this belongs to the understanding which alone judges objectively (rightly or wrongly); but in the judgment *whether I in fact believe* to be right (or merely pretend it) I absolutely cannot be mistaken, for this judgment – or rather this proposition – merely says that I judge the object in such-and-such a way.

Now the formal conscientiousness which is the ground of truthfulness consists precisely in the care in becoming conscious of this belief (or unbelief) and not pretending to hold anything as true we are not conscious of holding as true. Hence, if someone says to himself (or – what is one and the

[v] *Unding*

same in religious professions – before God) that *he believes,* without perhaps casting even a single glimpse into himself – whether he is in fact conscious of thus holding a truth or at least of holding it to some degree – * then such a person *lies.* And not only is his lie the most absurd (before a reader of hearts): it is also the most sinful, for it undermines the ground of 8:269
every virtuous intention. It is not difficult to see how quickly these blind and external *professions* (which can very easily be reconciled with an internal profession just as false) can, if they yield *means of gain,* bring about a certain falsehood in a community's very way of thinking. – Since a purification of this public way of thinking must in all likelihood be deferred to a distant future – until some day, perhaps under the protection of freedom of thought, it will become a general principle of upbringing and education – we may in the meantime dedicate yet a few lines to the consideration of that vice apparently so deeply rooted in human nature.

There is something moving and edifying in the depiction of a character which is sincere, and distant from all falsehood and deliberate[x] dissemblance. But, since honesty (mere simplicity and straightforward- 8:270

* The means for extorting truthfulness in external declarations, *the oath* (*tortura spiritualis*),[w] is held by any human court as not only permissible but as indispensable – a sad proof of the little respect of human beings for the truth even in the temple of public justice, where the mere idea of it should by itself instill the greatest respect. Human beings, however, also feign conviction – which is at least not of the kind, or in the degree, as they pretend – even in their inner profession; and since this dishonesty can also have external harmful consequences (for it gradually forges actual persuasion), this means for extorting truthfulness – the oath (which is, to be sure, only an internal means of extortion, i.e. the trial whether holding something as true can withstand the test of an internal hearing of the profession *under oath*) – can likewise 8:269
very well be used, if not to put a stop to the impudence of bold and in the end also externally violent assertions, at least to make it suspect. – Nothing more is expected by the human court from the conscience of one taking an oath than the admission that, *if there is* a future judge of the world (hence a God and a future life), the taker of the oath wills to answer to him for the truth of his external profession; there is no necessity for the court to require him to profess *that there is such a judge of the world,* because, if the first declaration cannot prevent a lie, a second false profession would cause even fewer scruples. By any such inner sworn statement one would be asking himself: Do you now, by everything which is dear and holy to you, venture to guarantee the truth of that important proposition of faith or of some other equally so held? At such an unreasonable demand conscience would be startled, because of the danger to which one is exposed of pretending more than one can assert with certainty – where holding something as true involves an object which is not attainable by way of knowledge (theoretical insight), though its assumption, while still always free, is commendable above all things because it alone makes possible the union into one system of the highest principles of practical reason with those of theoretical cognition of nature (hence reason's agreement with itself). – Professions of faith whose source is historical must, however, all the more be submitted to this trial of truthfulness by fire if they are set down as rules to others: for here the impurity and the simulated conviction is propagated among many, and the blame for it is the onus of whoever is the guarantor as it were of other consciences (for human beings are gladly passive with their conscience).[7]

[w] Spiritual torture

[x] *positiven*

ness of mind) is the least that we can possibly require of a good character (especially if we waive candor of heart) and it is therefore difficult to see on what that admiration which we reserve for such a character is based; it must be that sincerity is the property farthest removed from human nature – a sad comment, since all the remaining properties, to the extent that they rest on principles, can have a true inner value only through that one. None but a contemplative misanthrope (who wishes evil to nobody, yet is inclined to believe every evil of all) can hesitate whether to find human beings to *deserve hatred* or rather *contempt.* The properties for which he would judge them qualified for the first finding are those through which they do deliberate harm. That property, however, which appears to him to expose them to the second estimate, could be none other than a propensity which is *in itself evil* even if it harms no one – a propensity for something which cannot be used as means for any purpose; something which, objectively, is good in no respect.[y] The first evil would indeed be none other than the evil of *hostility* (or, to put it mildly, of lack of love); the second can be none other than *mendacity* (falsity, even without any intention to harm). The *first* inclination has a purpose whose function[z] is yet permissible and good in certain farther connections,[a] e.g. hostility against incorrigible disturbers of the peace. The *second* propensity, however, is to use a means (the lie) which is good in no respect,[b] whatever its aim, since it is evil and reprehensible in itself. The *evil* with which competence for good ends in certain external relations can yet be associated is in the constitution of a human being of the first kind;[c] it is a sinning in means, which are not, however, reprehensible in every respect. The evil of the second kind is *baseness,*[d] whereby all character is denied to the human being. – I am here restricting myself principally to the impurity that lies deep in what is hidden, where the human being knows how to distort even inner declarations before his own conscience. The inclination to external deception should be all the less surprising; it must then be that, although we are all aware of the falsity of the coin with which we trade, that coin still manages to maintain itself in circulation.

8:271 I remember reading in M. de Luc's *Letters concerning Mountain Ranges, the History of the Earth and Humanity* the following result of the author's partly anthropological voyage.[8] This philanthropist had set out presupposing the original goodness of our species, and sought verification of his

[y] *zu nichts*

[z] *Gebrauch*

[a] *andern Beziehungen.* A few lines later, with respect to the same inclination, Kant speaks of *äußern Verhältnissen.* One wonders if this earlier *andern* is a printer's error and ought to be read, rather, as *äußern,* i.e., "external."

[b] *zu nichts*

[c] i.e., as deserving hate

[d] *Nichtswürdigkeit*

presupposition in places where urban luxury cannot have such influence as to corrupt minds – in mountain ranges, from the Swiss mountains all the way to the Harz[9] and, after his faith in an unselfish inclination to help became somewhat shaky through an experience on the Swiss side,[e] yet at the ends he draws this conclusion: *As regards benevolence the human being is good enough* (no wonder, since benevolence rests on an innate inclination of which God is the creator) *provided that no bad propensity to subtle deception dwells in him* (which is also not to be wondered at, because to refrain from deception rests on the character which the human being himself must build within himself). And this result of the investigation is one which, even without traveling to the mountains, everyone could have met with among his fellow citizens – indeed, yet closer to home, in his own heart.

[e] *in den erstern*