

ON HYPOCRISY¹

Eva Feder Kittay

Introduction

There appears to be something puzzling about the moral opprobrium attached to hypocrisy. Consider, for example, a male employer who, although an unregenerate sexist but desiring to impress some woman with his "open-mindedness", hires a well-qualified woman for what is traditionally a man's position. Let us say further, that he manages to treat the new employee with proper consideration and respect. Why does it matter that in his "heart of hearts" he believes her to be naturally inferior to a man in a comparable position? If he successfully but hypocritically hides his sexist views, is he not morally superior to the outright sexist who would deny the woman that job and that same outward respect? Yet the sexist (or racist or anti-Semite, etc.) who is hypocritical is usually twice condemned.

If we are to investigate these questions and so clarify the moral status of hypocrisy, we must sharpen our intuitions regarding what we call hypocrisy and whom we call a hypocrite. In Part I of the paper we will attempt this conceptual ground clearing; in Part II we will employ the characterization of the hypocrite developed in Part I to ask if hypocrisy is always morally culpable and what precisely is objectionable in the hypocrite.

I

It is clear that hypocrisy is a form of deception. But not all deception is morally culpable and those forms of deception which are blamable are not all blamable for the same reasons. Our first task then is to delineate the deception which is hypocritical and in so doing show that the moral culpability of the hypocrite is not due to his being a deceiver.

The variety of forms that deception may take is formally made possible by its inherent conceptual structure. In order for a deception to take place, three, perhaps four, conditions must be fulfilled. First, there must be a deceiver; second, someone who is (or is to be) deceived; third, an object which is falsely presented or represented, which I will call the referent of the decep-

¹ I would like to thank the many friends and colleagues who have contributed their time and thought. This paper has, in essence, emerged from numerous discussions I have had predominantly, but not exclusively, with those mentioned here: D. Hausman, F. Suppe, E. Schlaretzki, S. Gorovitz, as well as other members of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Maryland, College Park; B. Banu, B. Baumrin, C. Landesman, C. Hoff, S. Ben Habib, and J. Ullian. Very special thanks are due to Malgorzata Askanas for the numerous hours we co-thought the paper, and to Jeffrey Kittay.

tion; and normally there is the fourth condition, a motivating cause or goal for the deception. To adequately specify a deception we may require further conditions, for example the instrument by which the deception is carried out. How these conditions are fulfilled will yield varying forms of deception. (See Table 1 below.)

Table 1

	Deceiver	Deceived	Referent	Motivation	Instrument
I Lying	A	B	fact or proposition ²	D	linguistic act
II Self-deception	A	A	C	D	E
III Self-referential deception	A	B	A	D	E
(a) spying	A	B	A	for obtaining information	some covert means

For example, "lying" is a deception in which the object is a matter of fact or a proposition and the instrument is a linguistic act. Self-deception occurs whenever that which satisfies the first condition (i.e. the deceiver) also satisfies the second condition (i.e. the deceived). Hypocrisy belongs to that species of deception in which the one who satisfies the first condition is also the referent, that is, the object falsely presented in the deception. This I will henceforth call "self-referential deception", a deception in which one pretends to be other than one is, or pretends to hold beliefs, have feelings, motives or attitudes other than those one truly has or adheres to.

Although hypocrisy is usually defined as we are defining self-referential deception, there are many cases of self-referential deception which are neither morally culpable nor hypocritical.³ The actor, in assuming a role, pretends to be what she is not and yet is not a hypocrite. Nor is the teacher who is putting forth and defending a position not her own or playing devil's advocate for didactic purposes. Interestingly, however, both these forms of feigning are captured in the etymology — though not in the current sense of the term — for the Greek *hypokrisis* means "a reply, acting a part", and the etymologically related term *hypokrinesthai* means to play a part, to contend or answer.⁴ The feigning of the actor or educator is made without pernicious

² It may be preferable to say that the object of the deception is always a proposition, in which case lying would only be specified as such by the added condition that the instrument be a linguistic act. If the referent is always a proposition, then in self-referential deception the referent is a proposition concerning that individual who is also the deceiver.

³ Part One is the product of a partly empirical, partly conceptual investigation in which I elicited from students, colleagues and friends, definitions of hypocrisy. Together we refined the naive dictionary-like conceptions which were generally too broad and encompassed deceptions which were not hypocrisy. The definitions and refinements were couched in terms of archetypal deceivers. What follows is a distillation of the salient cases.

⁴ See Jonathan Robison, *Duty and Hypocrisy in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind* (Toronto and Buffalo, University of Toronto Press, 1977) p. 115 for a discussion on the shift in meaning from the neutral Greek term cited here to its later negative sense.

intent and is not generally thought to be morally blameworthy. Indeed, conventions inform the audience that the actions, views, and attitudes put forward are a play-acting. The possible deception in the pretense is neutralized by an implicit understanding that what is presented is mere role-playing in which the sincerity and real beliefs of the person are not relevant.

Contrast these cases with those of two other self-referential deceivers: (1) the actor or media personality paid to advertise a product he himself does not in actuality, use, and (2) the con-man. Insofar as they may be, inadvertently or not, giving misinformation about their products, they are not self-referential deceivers.⁵

But in both cases, the person is often only persuasive if he succeeds in convincing others something about himself, namely that the product he is advertising or is selling is one which *he* believes to be beneficial, good-tasting, effective, etc. Unlike the benign pretense of the actor and educator, the con-man and the insincere actor doing commercials are misrepresenting their own beliefs, credentials, etc., in order to persuade someone to act in certain ways, which may be potentially harmful. But while the moral culpability of the con-man is unquestionable, that of the insincere actor is less clear. For the actor, here too, operates in a clearly defined role — although the role is constructed as to “break the frame”, to convince us that what is said goes beyond role-playing. The con-man is not presumed to be playing a part. He is assumed to be “for real”, to use an apt colloquialism.

The con-man is the first instance of a self-referential deceiver examined here whose pretense is not delimited by a conventional role. I will call all self-referential deceivers whose deception is generalized beyond such an acknowledged role, Imposters. The hypocrite is an Imposter. The deception of the hypocrite exists outside of the recognized and conventionalized play-acting. This is true of the spy and the charlatan as well. The spy is characterized by his particular motive (see Table 1), the charlatan by his particular means (i.e. the falsification of credentials). The specificity of hypocrisy is not derived by fixing any one of the conditions left unspecified in self-referential deception. It is rather that the hypocrite plays a part in just those spheres of life which others take most seriously. This is usually what offends us so in hypocrisy.

Indeed, we can say that the hypocrite deceives about herself in just those matters where one's sincerity, the genuineness of one's attitudes, beliefs and actions really matters. Consider the actor doing an advertisement and the con-man once more. While it is true that the success of both these figures depends on their ability to convince us of their sincerity, ultimately we are not concerned with their actual sincerity, but only with how convincing their feigned sincerity is. For if or when it is revealed that they were not sincere, it is the quality of the product that they have convinced us to purchase that

⁵ In the case of some con-men, the product is identical to themselves. Consider, for example, the gigolo, who pretends to love a woman, but is interested only in the cash return of the relationship.

we care about. Sincerity is valued only as a means by which to effect a transition.

When is sincerity truly important? Sincerity is doubtless critical for religious belief (at least as understood in the major religious traditions). Seemingly religious behavior will not give the agent any hope of salvation unless the behavior issues from a genuine religious conviction. A person who appears pious is either sincere or is not pious. Sincerity is also of the utmost importance in close or intimate interpersonal relations – relations of love and friendship. The mutual trust and esteem which form the core of such relations are impossible unless we can assume that the other is sincere in his dealings with us, particularly as these touch on feelings of affection and esteem.

Additionally, sincerity is generally considered critical in the realm of virtue.⁶ Through the presumption of sincerity we use overtly virtuous actions to conclude that these actions issue from what Kant claimed to be the only unqualified good – a *good will*.⁷ Without a powerful consequentialist ethics to inform us otherwise, we consider actions as virtuous only insofar as we consider them expressive of a good will, and our moral judgements are reserved not for the consequences of the actions, but for their intent. Sincerity serves as the tie between the expressive act and the ethical content, the guarantee that the outer words and actions are expressive of the morally desirable inner state. Insofar as sincerity is truly valued, it is valued in those areas where the inner state (e.g. the intent, the will, the emotion) is of primary importance and the outward acts are read as signs.

The domains which have served as instances of ones in which sincerity really matters are normative ones in which the requisite inner state and outer behavior are positively valued. This is most likely explained by an observation of A.M. Walker⁸ that we can only properly speak of sincerity with regard to things we positively value. For example, it would, at best, require an explanation to claim that a given action was “a sincere instance of miserliness”. Thus it seems reasonable to expect that in those cases where sincerity is of genuine importance we are concerned with some positively valued ideals or norms. The norms here may be nothing more than a set of expectations such that conforming to the expectations yields approval in the eyes of those who establish the norm. But in those domains in which sincerity really matters, the given expectations suppose something about the inner state of the agent.

A misrepresentation may occur in one of two distinct ways. An agent may

⁶ Although for some virtues, say thrift, sincerity is irrelevant. In the case of courtesy, it is not irrelevant, but beside the point. In the case of courtesy, only the appearance of sincerity is important. “Mere courtesy” is perhaps an institutionalized, morally accepted form of hypocrisy in interpersonal relations.

⁷ See Kant, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, first line of Sec. 1.

⁸ A.M. Walker, “The Ideal of Sincerity”, *Mind*, Volume 57, No. 348, Oct. 1978, pp. 481–97.

appear not to meet, or to fall short of the norms or expectations, but in fact does comply with them. In that case I will say that the person appears or pretends to be *worse* than she is. Imagine a person, extremely generous but embarrassed by any display of gratitude, who therefore makes all her contributions and gifts anonymously and refuses to contribute in direct solicitations. To the solicitor, she pretends to be less generous, i.e. worse than she is. Such a person we would not call a hypocrite. When one appears to meet, but does not truly meet these expectations, I will say that she appears *better* than she is. A hypocrite is one who pretends to be better than she is, given a norm or set of expectations within a domain in which sincerity really matters.

Although we have no term for the one who pretends to be *worse* than she is, we see that in the case we just cited, the self-referential pretense, which here too exists outside the bounds of role-playing, is not in itself morally culpable. This is also clear in the case of another character who pretends to be worse than he is: the ironic figure of which Socrates will serve as a paradigm. The ironic figure, however, unlike the previous unnamed case and unlike the hypocrite, carries on a masquerade which is intended to be penetrated. Just as ironic speech is marked in some way by the tone of voice or by a jarring incongruity, so the behavior of the ironic figure calls attention to itself, warning us that it is not to be taken at its face value.

Moreover, the ironic figure pretends to be worse than he is by virtue of a detachment from the prevalent moral values and at the same time reveals to us the falsity of the appearances by which we judge things. Socrates flaunts conventional morality and conventional wisdom to demonstrate how ill-founded the conventional attitudes are. By refusing to adopt conventional morality and conventional wisdom — that is, to pretend to be “bad” given the set of values which *appear* to be “good” — the ironic figure with an alternate and genuine set of values, behaves as the genuinely good person. In so doing he confronts society with its own moral deficiencies.

The hypocrite is a curious reversal of the ironic figure. For the hypocrite pretends to be “good” given some generally accepted set of values. But it may be that this “good” is merely an apparent good and that the hypocritical yet lucid adoption of the ideological good masks an alternate and morally superior set of values which the hypocrite, in fact, holds. This is the case of Julien Sorel in Stendhal’s novel *The Red and the Black*. Julien Sorel is avowedly a pious young man aspiring to the priesthood who venerates the Bourbon monarch and the aristocracy. He is in fact an agnostic who holds aristocratic society in contempt and venerates Napoleon and democratic principles. Because Sorel’s true beliefs are morally superior to his feigned beliefs and because he is not a self-deceiver, he has a great deal in common with the ironic figure. For both, the masking of true and morally superior beliefs is a means of opposing the prevalent conception of the ideological good when it is only apparently good. Both are responses to a corrupt ideal or norm, but the hypocrite here acts self-protectively; the ironic person acts provocatively.

II

Our "hunt" for the hypocrite is now over. We have found the hypocrite to be an Imposter, (i.e. a self-referential deceiver whose pretense is not bounded by conventionalized role-playing) who feigns conformity to some positively valued norms, ideals or expectations (thereby pretending to be "better" than he is) in domains of life where sincerity really matters (e.g. piety, virtue, love and friendship).⁹ With this full specification, can we now say what, in particular, is wrong with the deception that is hypocrisy?

The many instances of hypocrisy which present themselves are not all of the same sort. The hypocrite who merely says the right things but whose actions betray the true defective values to which she adheres is similar to the incontinent one of Aristotle's *Ethics*. If the hypocrite also deceives herself that she truly believes the values professed rather than those acted upon, then the hypocrite seems indistinguishable from the *akrates*. The hypocrite, however, may deceive not only in what she professes but also in her actions, whether or not she engages in self-deception concerning her true beliefs. This hypocrite, knowing the right thing, does the right thing, but for the wrong reasons. But why do her reasons matter; why is she morally culpable?

An important consideration here is consistency. We often despise the hypocrite because, at some critical moment, she acts on her true beliefs. If these beliefs are morally defective, then we may plausibly expect some injury to result. But generally the injury has resulted from the underlying morally deficient beliefs, not from the hypocritical masking. One may argue that the deception adds to the injury if it has permitted the hypocrite to *mislead* the deceived one. That *a* misleads *b* implies that *a* provides *b* with information, either directly or indirectly, which is false or incomplete or presented in such a context or such a manner that *b* is induced into forming conclusions which are not true. (E.g. *a* may utter a sentence in such a way as to suggest that she means its negation.) In cases of misleading, not only does *a* provide or suggest false information, but *a* does so with the aim or consequence (we can unintentionally mislead) of inducing *b* to act in certain predictable ways.

Similarly, a hypocrite might, inadvertently and even unknowingly, allow his mask to slip. We may think of the white liberal who unwittingly acts condescendingly to a black acquaintance. Or we can see an academic male, confident of his non-sexist attitudes, praise an intelligent remark by a female colleague as "charming". These slips are experienced as particularly painful because they are unexpected and because they issue forth from someone who is presumably not racist, sexist, etc. But in all of these cases, the injury

⁹ Some may remark that I have not included the political among these domains. If sincerity is possible only with reference to attitudes and activities which are positively valued, then politics cannot be a domain in which sincerity really matters. Politics is an amalgam of varying ideals, pragmatics and crude self-interest. However, the hypocritical political figure requires a complex analysis, most likely an essay in itself.

resulting from the defective values is only intensified by the hypocrisy and occurs by virtue of an imperfect masking of these values.

But what if the hypocrisy is *perfect*, so that the true beliefs are always concealed, so that the actions performed by the hypocrite seem always to be guided by a morally acceptable set of beliefs? Then what injury is done by the perfect hypocrite and why is the hypocrisy morally culpable? The question is perhaps best posed with regard to a hypothetical, but, I believe, nonetheless plausible case. The situation is set in Germany, just before, during and after the Nazi regime. Imagine two friends, Franck and Schultz.

Franck is a German-born Jew who barely acknowledges his Jewish identity and hides it from everyone. Schultz is an Aryan German who has little moral conviction but who, having been raised in a pious yet progressive family, feels a great need to win acceptance from those who hold the moral strictures of his parents. One such rule was that anti-Semitism violated the Christian doctrine that we must love our neighbors. Hence Schultz does not want to appear anti-Semitic. Indeed, Schultz even makes public pronouncements condemning anti-Semitism. Franck is taken in and reveals his Jewish identity. When the Nazis come into power, Schultz continues his hypocrisy, although the prevailing morality has changed. The need to win acceptance and be thought virtuous by those who hold his parent's views remains very strong even when Schultz himself is endangered by his public friendship towards Jews. Indeed, when Franck's true identity is suspected, Schultz, in spite of the risk, does not betray Franck. Let us go so far as to hypothesize that Schultz ends up dying in a concentration camp and Franck is saved through Schultz's action. Years later, Franck discovers, among the remains of his friend, a diary in which Schultz speaks of the "Jewish swine", confesses that to his last days he detested Jews and believed them all to be despicable. This masquerade, reveals Schultz, was due to his compelling need to be thought virtuous by those who condemned such behavior as anti-Semitism, although he, Schultz, believed anti-Semitism to be eminently reasonable and Nazism to be the correct course of action.

How are we to morally assess Schultz's hypocrisy? How would Franck react to the confession? What, if any, injury was done in this case? For Schultz, by his perfect hypocrisy, actually benefited Franck.

In speaking of the harm resulting from hypocrisy we have thus far considered only injuries to others. Perhaps Kant is correct in reminding us that we also have duties to ourselves, that we ought not to injure ourselves. Although Kant does not speak of hypocrisy when speaking of duties toward ourselves, is this perhaps why even perfect hypocrisy is morally culpable? If Schultz dies in protecting Franck, then he apparently has done himself more than a physical injury. But although Schultz may have sacrificed his life for Franck, a truly virtuous man during the Nazi regime may have done likewise and Kant would not wish to say that this is a violation of duties toward

ourselves. Duties toward ourselves are duties which preserve the dignity of our personhood. A hypocrite may be guilty in this regard, but need not be.

As hypocrisy is not inherently a violation of duties toward oneself, and it is not evident in what way Schultz violated any duties toward himself, we must look elsewhere for Schultz's culpability. Perhaps Schultz is not blameworthy. The categorical imperative applied to Schultz's overt behavior would justify all his actions for they are all capable of being formulated as universal rules. Moreover, if Schultz's inclinations were contrary to his actual behavior, so much the better from the Kantian standpoint. For it is possible to imagine that Schultz, like the virtuous Kantian, followed the moral rule rather than his irrational inclinations.

In order to form such a judgment we would have to be clearer on Schultz's inner state. If Schultz had believed in the rightness of his parents' moral code, and struggled with his anti-Semitic inclinations, then he could be viewed as the incarnation of the morally upright person even if his visceral reaction to Jews was still negative. For he would have recognized the deficiency of his inclinations as a basis for action, even would have attempted to change his inclinations and act morally in spite of them.¹⁰ But then Schultz would have acted sincerely, in conformity to a good will. Only if one believes that our inclinations and not merely our judgments deserve ethical scrutiny, would we call this man a hypocrite and morally culpable. Yet such a conclusion seems counter intuitive. If he had sincerely tried to do good, in order to be good, in spite of his evil intentions, then Kant's verdict seems more than intuitively appropriate: this would have been a moral man.

The portrait we have constructed of Schultz is, however, quite different. Schultz is an anti-Semite not by inclination alone. He believes Jews to be inferior, a menace, and deserving of Hitler's final solution. He acts in a contrary fashion only in order to be thought virtuous by those whose acceptance he feels he needs. His behavior belies both his inclinations and his judgments. It completely lacks sincerity and therefore is false through and through. We must, however, feel grateful to Schultz for the actual benefits received by Franck. Schultz may have exhibited a number of virtues in his behavior, such as bravery in the face of great dangers. He may have shown kindness to Franck. However, upon the discovery of his diary all his actions take on different meaning. For example, the bravery is revealed as extreme terror at losing the approval of those whose approval was so critical – the bravery is a sham – it is more truly cowardice.

Here we see that when we approve of an action as virtuous our judgment is directed at an act insofar as the act is a sign representing or expressive of an ethical content. The act is "read" to have a certain meaning. This is, of course, why there are few purely consequentialist ethics. Most all ethical theories require that ethical judgments consider the intent as well as the overt act.

¹⁰ This is perhaps the man Aristotle calls the *enkrates* (1146 a 10), the morally strong person, rather than the self-controlled one, the *sophron*.

As we observed earlier in this paper, the suture tying the act to an ethical content is sincerity. Insofar as our actions are sincere expressions of our inner states — whether these be thought of as inclinations, beliefs, a character (as in the Aristotelian ethics), adherence to the moral rule, etc. — we can make moral judgments concerning the inner state by reading overt (expressive) acts. The hypocrite severs the act from the intention, for the hypocrite is not sincere.

Lack of sincerity is not always morally culpable, even when we consider blameworthy forms of deception. The con-man, for example, while he may play on our gullibility, is blameworthy because he knowingly sells us a faulty product, not because he is insincere. Lack of sincerity is nonetheless precisely what makes hypocrisy morally blameworthy in those cases where the hypocrisy is blameworthy — that is, when there are no mitigating circumstances. This is because the hypocrite, as we said earlier, is insincere in just those domains where sincerity really matters — such as piety, virtue, love and friendship. These are three domains in which the overt acts are considered meaningful and instances of pious, virtuous or loving behavior *only* insofar as they bespeak a corresponding inner state. It is for this reason that the hypocrite is often accused of making a mockery of that to which he pretends. In *Tartuffe* the wise uncle accused the hypocritical Tartuffe of undermining piety itself by his imposture. Because the hypocrite demonstrates that the facade can stand without the dwelling, he undermines our belief in the appearance as being anything other than appearance.

But it is still not very clear why we cannot all be behaviorists and judge only the overt action. In that case the beneficial behavior of the hypocrite is on par with that of the sincere person and the rest matters not. The reason, I believe, is that we all experience ourselves as, at times, acting or speaking in a way which belies our true feelings and beliefs. In spite of Ryle we cannot, in this aspect at least, be philosophical behaviorists with regard to ourselves. When we behave hypocritically towards another we are only too well acquainted with the disdain we feel toward that other person and, I believe, we do not wish to be the object of such disdain ourselves. The Kantian categorical imperative may, after all, be pertinent to a discussion of hypocrisy, at least in the domain of love and friendship. In the case of interpersonal relations (and piety may be seen as the basis of an interpersonal relation in which one party is a personal deity) even when the hypocrisy is perfect and there is no apparent injury, there is a breach in a basic presumption of honesty, a presumption upon which the persons involved establish a relation of trust. Moreover, relations such as friendship and love are based on a mutuality of esteem, respect and affection. In a friendship, it is not merely the way in which friends help each other but the self-esteem we gain knowing that the other esteems us. If a presumed friend acts altruistically toward us, but does not feel affection and esteem toward us, we feel betrayed. We believed ourselves loved and accepted when, in fact, we were not. This is an injury to our dignity, to our perception of our worth in the eyes of those we value.

This is the injury incurred by the person deceived by a hypocritical friend. This is the injury incurred by Franck through Schultz's hypocrisy – and that injury is done whether or not the hypocrisy is revealed. This is, as a matter of fact, similar to other violations of trust in interpersonal relations, such as “using a person”.¹¹

But, in fact, the injury is more general than an injury done to an individual. Like the pious hypocrite, whose pretense is an offense to piety in general, the hypocrite who feigns friendship undermines friendship generally because he, like the pious hypocrite, throws into question the usual way in which we read expressions of friendship – that is, as signs of genuine affection and esteem. Here again, the presumption of sincerity is what allows us to see the expressive acts as expressive of the content of friendship. The hypocrite reveals how tenuous is the tie between the expression and content of friendship. If that is so, how then can we engage in the trust which is critical to the very institution of friendship?

When insincerity is found in the realm of virtue the injury is more indirect. We have remarked that seemingly virtuous actions which are not performed with sincerity are discounted as not virtuous. It is not self-evident why this should be so. Yet if Kant is correct that the moral rule demands that we treat all persons as ends and not as means only, that requires that at least some of the regard we grant in the interpersonal relationships of love and friendship be preserved in all our relations with our fellow persons. Thus if we perform seemingly altruistic actions but deny to the beneficiaries of those actions their due dignity as persons – which is what a hypocrite does, for the hypocrite performs those actions to gain an appearance of virtue and its accessory benefits thereby using the beneficiaries as means to that end –¹² then we do those persons an injury similar to the injury incurred by Franck. Moreover, here too the hypocrite undermines virtue in general for he shows how the activities whose value consists in promoting the dignity of man can be used to deny that very dignity.

The special threat posed by the hypocrite is explained, I believe, by the view that the hypocrite, in feigning sincerity just when sincerity really matters, undermines the very conception of that to which he pretends, be it piety, virtue or friendship. Indeed, the corrosive effects of hypocrisy are present as a possibility even if there never was a hypocrite. The mere conception of hypocrisy is already damaging in this way. However, if hypocrisy were not something we all engaged in at one time or another it is not clear that we would recognize that the expression and content of acts of piety, virtue and friendship are separable. Nor would we be able to understand the nature of the injury done by the hypocrite, especially as we consider the perfect hypocrite.

¹¹ See Larry Blum's “Deceiving, Hurting and Using”, *Philosophy and Personal Relations*, ed. by Alan Montefiore, Queens University Press, Montreal 1973.

¹² We see here an important sense in which hypocrisy is a “misuse of morality”, as Robinson claims it is for Hegel. See Robinson, pp. 113–8.

Hypocrisy, then, confronts us with the tenuousness of our religious, moral, and interpersonal interactions. But for the very same reasons, we recognize, in hypocrisy, a powerful form of self-protection in a situation of risk or danger. Consider again the story of Franck and Schultz, for there is still another hypocrite in this case and that is Franck himself.

Franck pretends to be other than he is. He pretends to be not a Jew, but a German like all other Germans. In the case we are considering, the prevalent ideology held Aryan Germans to be better, morally and in every other way than Jewish Germans. Franck's pretense then appears to be a case of hypocrisy.

Franck is perhaps a self-deceiver as well, for in the story we have portrayed him as one who barely acknowledges to himself that he is a Jew. Whether we regard Franck as a self-deceiver depends on what Franck and we consider to be conditions for considering oneself a Jew. Depending on how we answer questions of this nature, we may or may not consider Franck a hypocrite (and possibly a self-deceiver) for not presenting himself as a Jew.

Nonetheless, such a concealment will often entail behavior which is more clearly hypocritical. Franck, in order to be accepted as an Aryan German, may occasionally have to adopt mildly anti-Semitic attitudes and profess beliefs he does not hold. In that case, Franck would be a hypocrite, for he would be apparently assuming the prevalent set of beliefs thought to be good — the prevalent ideological good — and masking his true beliefs. Here the masking is done by the victim of the prevalent ideology, a lucid hypocrite, for whom hypocrisy is an instrument for making his way in the world and protecting his own sense of inner worth. The reason I include the rider that Franck be a lucid hypocrite will soon be evident.

Let say, then, that Franck, too, is a hypocrite. But his hypocrisy is significantly different from that of Schultz, or the hypocritical sexist employer. We may call Franck and Stendhal's Sorel Victim hypocrisies. The others we may call Victimizer hypocrisies. The former belong to an oppressed group, while the latter belong to a privileged group within their society, a consideration which, as we will see, is of great importance in evaluating the culpability of the hypocrisy.

Thus we must ask whether the hypocrite is a Victim or a Victimizer. In each case the hypocrisy may involve assuming the current ideology with its accepted values of what constitutes the good, i.e. the "ideological good", or it may involve adopting sometimes unpopular views, but ones which are truly good. Franck and Sorel dissimulate the ideological good; Schultz pretends to the true good.¹³

¹³ It is conceivable but unlikely that the Victim adopt "the true good" and the Victimizer the "ideological good", for the latter conception is, after all, tailored to benefit the privileged. While there is little additional benefit to the Victimizer hypocrite in adopting the merely ideological good, for the Victim it often is the means to mitigate his oppressions. If the ideological good is to some extent coincident with the true good, the Victim may benefit from adopting the true good, e.g. Tartuffe of Moliere's play. (See below Note 14.)

In the case of the Victim hypocrite, whatever the moral condemnation attached to hypocrisy is, it is greatly diminished. Hypocrisy appears to be yet another form of self-protection in a hostile environment. In a racist society, the black person is sometimes physically endangered, but more often he or she is endangered in more subtle ways through economic, social and political discrimination. The black person who passes as white may use hypocritical means to escape the menaces posed to those who are clearly black. The same may be said for the Jew who passes as a Gentile or the gay person who passes as heterosexual.

For Julien Sorel, who rises from a peasant to a powerful figure among aristocrats through his clerical posturing, hypocrisy was a means of preserving an inner sense of dignity — a way of preserving the worth of his own person against the aristocratic society of his age which would deny the equal human worth of a peasant. As such, hypocrisy, rather than violating a duty to oneself, serves as a means to fulfill the self-regarding duty of preserving the dignity of our personhood.

This is not to claim that Victim hypocrisy necessarily functions in these ways nor that it is always justifiable and is never injurious. There are at least two sets of circumstances in which Victim hypocrisy may be clearly injurious and not justifiable on grounds which are independent of those on which we have concluded hypocrisy, generally, to be morally culpable.

First, under certain historical conditions, a political moment may rise when change is possible and when the Victim's hypocritical masking of her beliefs and identity, although still prudential, is ultimately a violation of her duties toward herself and contributes to the misery of others similarly oppressed for she denies the opportunity to change the social, political or economic conditions which victimize her and others. The Victim may at such times benefit through her hypocrisy, but at the expense of others who are in similar Victim positions. Such behavior is as unjustifiable as any other actions which are self-serving at the expense of others. As we pointed out earlier, when the threat is palpable and the possibility of change virtually nil then a hypocritical concealment by the oppressed may well serve to preserve one's physical well-being and one's dignity and self-worth against society's calumny. But when viable social or political alternatives are available, then the morality of the Victim hypocrite is questionable, at best.

Note that Victim hypocrisy is not, however, incompatible with collective action. The Marron Jews of the 16th and 17th centuries in Spain and Portugal, who presumably were converts yet in secret maintained Judaism, would have been thought to be hypocrites by the Christian Inquisitors — and hypocrites twice over as they both pretended to be Christians and not to be Jews. Yet they acted collectively in their attempts to save themselves and their religion. Many slaves and freemen who participated in the Underground Railroad during the American Civil War period, must have hypocritically (in the eyes of the pro-slavery Southerners) espoused or assented to slavery so that they could engage in emancipatory work free of suspicion and harassment. Hypo-

crazy often is the alternative of collective and political action, but it can also be a ploy and a facade under which the Victim works with others to remove the oppressive conditions.

Second, I have, intermittently, suggested that self-deceptive hypocrisy, as adopted by the Victim, has special, often injurious results. Here I would like to put forth the speculative hypothesis that where the Victim hypocritically assumes the ideological good, but the hypocrisy is not lucid, the self-deceptive element masks a self-deprecation which is an *actual* adoption of the negative characterization of the Victim by the dominant society. The consequences of this double masking, I would further speculate, may be one of two seemingly contrary positions: the Victim may genuinely degrade himself (e.g. the obsequious servant, the Uncle Tom figure) or the Victim may become a ruthless victimizer of other Victims like himself (e.g. Senator Joseph McCarthy, himself a homosexual, who ruthlessly expelled male homosexuals from the government). In these cases, it appears that the injurious results are more the product of the self-hatred (which in the latter case is turned toward others like oneself) masked by self-deception, than of the *hypocritical* assumption of false values. Nonetheless, it appears that self-deceptive Victim hypocrisy is morally suspect in a way in which lucid Victim hypocrisy need not be.

The Victim hypocrisy of Franck and Sorel was used defensively and protectively in a threatening and aggressive situation. As such, it seems quite free of moral opprobrium. For, although we may concur with the general belief that hypocrisy is morally unacceptable, we might still say that as killing is not always blameworthy — for example, in self-defense — so hypocrisy is not always blameworthy — for example, as a means of social, psychological and economic self-defense.¹⁴ Moreover the ideologies prevalent in both Nazi Germany and Restoration France were, although in very different ways, and to different degrees, morally degenerate.

Where the prevalent ideology threatens us, where the ideological good is not coincident with the true good, the undermining, the mockery made of that ideological good by means of hypocrisy is a far lesser evil than exposure to the threatening situation. And to undermine a false conception of the good is not, I venture, blameworthy at all. This is particularly the case in which hypocrisy is lucid and the hypocrite's masked beliefs are morally superior to the feigned ideological good. As such hypocrisy is not so much blameworthy as it is a case of making one's way — given the way of the world.

STONYBROOK
NEW YORK

¹⁴ The hypocrite Tartuffe is originally a Victim — an impoverished priest who acquires enormous power in a wealthy household. Unlike Julien Sorel, Tartuffe uses this power offensively as well as defensively — the Victim having gained ascendance through hypocrisy becomes the Victimizer who now uses his hypocrisy in the service of victimizing others.